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Rooting Routes

(Non-)Movements in Southern Albania

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Act One: Routes

Albania, 1 August 2005, 8 A.M. – a long line of cars is slowly moving along the coastal road, most of them going from the Greek-Albanian border to different destinations in Albania. Though the majority of cars display Greek number plates, their drivers are Albanian migrants who have been living and working in Greece for many years already, and who return by 'the routes of their roots' (Clifford 1997) every August for the collective holidays in Greece and Albania. Also among this swarm of migrants are those who are going to the Himarë (official Albanian name) or Himara (local Greek name)[1] area of southern Albania to spend their summer holidays there. Most of them were born after the 1950s and declare themselves as Himariotes despite never having lived in this area themselves, as it is the place from which at least one of their (grand)parents originates. Before the older generation migrated to Greece following the fall of the communist regime in 1990, many of these migrants lived in the cities of central or northern Albania. They moved with their parents after the establishment of the communist cooperative in Himara in 1957.[2] Migrants return to the villages of Himara almost exclusively in the summer months to spend their holidays on its coastal plains. Bonds with the area are created either through links with their parents who live there, through houses and/or tourist facilities that they run on the coast

in the summer, or simply through feelings of nostalgia. The narrow coastal road with its long line of passing cars could easily symbolize the route that leads migrants to the roots of their 'home-place'.

This chapter questions how migrants living in Greece forge their feelings of rootedness and home through various modes of (im) mobility.[3] The ethnographic focus is on various practices of (non-) movement and return to a natal place. The meaning of 'home' does not relate to a single place or location but is spatially and temporally diverse and multiple (cf. Janko-Spreizer; Repič; Salazar, this volume). As migrants move between various homes, past and present, deserted and newly built, imaginary and material, and so on, the meaning of home continuously shifts (Rapport and Dawson 1998).

The chapter draws a parallel between the seasonal return of migrants, visits to the coastal plains and the religious pilgrimage to Stavridi, enacted annually on the evening before Dormition of the Mother God (*Kimisis of Theodokos* in Greek). Through all these physical movements in/through the natal place (*vendi* in Albanian) the people of Himara make their home and place of belonging. The repetitive rhythms formed by various modes of movement generate new meanings of home, through which the migrants ensure attachment to their natal place. Similar to the meanings of place, the meanings of home and belonging are relational since they are constituted through different practices of (im)mobility of people, things, ideas, places and landscape.

Traditional Mobility Practice, Kurbet

As noted in the introduction, mobility and movement in this area is not a phenomenon confined to the twentieth century, since its people have been mobile throughout history. In Albania, movement is an important part of *kurbet*, a traditional mobility practice that was prevalent throughout the period of the Ottoman Empire. Etymologically, *kurbet* originates from the Arabic, *l ghurbeh*, meaning 'a journey to, or a sojourn in a foreign land' usually for work purposes, or being far from home and homeland; it is thus associated with alienation and pain (see Juntunen 2013: 58–61). Even now, the Albanian term *kurbet* still carries the idea of pain (*dhimbje*) and longing for home and family. Numerous Albanian folk and literary works (e.g., Çajupi 1990: 79) describe *kurbet* and the related suffering of migrants (*kurbetilli*) and their relatives. According to Papailias (2003: 1064), *kurbet* means 'being in the world' and it 'naturalizes' gender hierarchies and labour divisions, associated as it is with the

male domain. A well-known proverb says 'a man becomes a man out in the world [*kurbet*] / a woman becomes a woman over the cradle'.[4] In this perspective, *kurbet* used to be part of a man's initiation ritual (cf. Salazar, this volume).

Due to land erosion and a lack of land suitable for cultivation, as well as other economic, social and political changes, many people of Himara left for *kurbet* to what is today Italy, Greece, Turkey, France, Egypt, the United States, etc., over the course of the past centuries (Gregorič Bon 2008a: 7–27, 2014; see also Polo 2001). Many interlocutors describe *kurbet* in positive terms, noting that it has brought civilization (*civilizim*), economic development (*zhvilim*) and general well-being to the area and its people. While the meaning of *kurbet*, typical of the interwar period, often gets idealized, *kurbet* is also, paradoxically, described in several rhapsodies as a painful loss experienced on the part of migrants leaving their homes and heroically making sacrifices for their families (Pistrick 2010).

Kurbet is also an important part of material culture, materialized in different objects brought from abroad (*nga jashtë/apo okso*)[5] and through foreign influences registered in architecture and in the place in general. Many of the houses that were built with the money or material that *kurbetilli* (migrants in the interwar period) sent from abroad are called 'the American houses' (*shtëpija Amerikane/ to Amerikaniko spiti*). Similarly today the houses built with remittances sent by migrants living in Greece or Italy are called the Greek (*shtëpija Greke/Eleniko spiti*) or Italian houses (*shtëpija Italiane/ Italiko spiti*) (see also Dalakoglou 2009).[6]

In the communist period, when the totalitarian regime of Enver Hoxha forbade private ownership of cars and all border crossings, as well as limiting intra-country movement (see Gregorič Bon 2008a: 51 fn. 18), the mobility practice of *kurbet* was stopped. After 1990 and the ensuing massive migrations to Greece, Italy and later the United States and other European countries (Mai and Schwandner-Sievers 2003; King and Vullnetari 2003; Vullnetari 2007: 14), this practice was revived again and, in many conversations, *kurbet* became akin to migration (*mëgrim*). While the term *mëgrim* is often used to describe administrative and political movements, *kurbet* addresses the way of being in the world and bears a wider moral, social and psychological meaning in Albanian society. Similar to Indonesian *merantau* (Salazar, this volume), *kurbet* is still an important institution of mobility in Albania.

Due to the continuous movement of people and things for economic and/or social reasons connecting areas of present-day Albania

and Greece, the Himara people experience and narrate the polity border as the 'road' (*to dromo* in the local Greek dialect) linking the region with Greece and 'Europe' (see Gregorič Bon 2008b: 83–105). The mobility of the Himara people is made possible with the status of co-ethnicity that gives its inhabitants the right to apply for the Special Cards for Aliens of Greek Descent, which, in turn, gives them social and health insurance and allows for unrestricted border crossings over the Albanian-Greek border, as well as others within the Schengen area. But this status is not recognized in the Albanian constitution. In practice, most of the bilingual inhabitants (speaking Greek and Albanian), as well as migrants from the Himara villages, rarely travel to other countries in Europe; however they see and portray their ability to travel 'freely' within its borders as symbolic capital with which they differentiate themselves from 'other' citizens of Albania. Namely, for the Albanian residents, discounting the members of the Greek minority living in Albania, these borders were hardly passable until the liberalization of the visa regime in December 2010.[7]

Movements of People and Places

The Himara area is not only characterized by the movement of its people but also by its shifting landscape. The area stretches about twenty-five kilometres along the southern Albanian coast. It encompasses eight villages and the municipal town that bears its name. Its size has continuously changed throughout history. Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the number of villages varied between eight and fifty. In around 1930, the area acquired a configuration that has remained more or less unchanged until the present, extending from Palasa to Qeparo (see Sotiri 2004: 263–64; Duka 2004: 64–66; Bixhili 2004: 12; Gregorič Bon 2008a: 46).

The mountainous terrain and the seasonally wet Mediterranean climate are the two main reasons for erosion and land degradation in the Himara region and elsewhere on the southern coast and in the mountainous areas of northern Albania (see Dedej 2002: 12). All these movements, of land, landscape and people, which took place in different historical periods, constituted and defined various locations of Himara in its wider geopolitical and social space.

Oral stories recounted by elderly villagers of Himara, which date back to the period between the two world wars, describe their ancestors' routes, movements and trading with places over the sea and the mountains (see Gregorič Bon 2008a: 169–190). The stories about

overseas trading routes relate Himara and its people to Greece and Italy where, despite the present economic and fiscal crisis, the storytellers emplace civilization, economic development and general well-being; the stories of paths and movements over the mountains relate the village and its people to Albania, where storytellers emplace poverty and lack of civilization. Through these stories, the storytellers reconstruct the land and water routes and redefine the location of their village. The latter stretches between the sea and the mountains or between Greece and Albania (see Gregorič Bon 2008a). Moreover, the stories illustrate how routes, political and economic divisions and boundaries relate the region to various places that are understood as 'civilized' or economically and socially better off according to the geographies of power. The storytellers use the remembrance of their ancestors' movements to both reconstruct their past and recreate their present, upon which they also base their sense of belonging to the village.

Locations have always been defined in relation to other people and places through which the local people and migrants have moved. These continuous movements, connections and separations of people and places ultimately generate the various locations of the area and its surroundings. Indeed, as argued by several scholars (Ingold 2000; Gupta and Ferguson 2001 [1997]; Green 2005), people and places are always constituted through a dynamic interrelation with other people and places. Hence places are not characterized by their homogeneity, but through a set of relations with other people and places.

Act Two: Home

Dhermi, 1 August 2005, at 7 P.M. – a dusty Mercedez Benz with Greek number plates parked by the side of a narrow road in Dhermi village in the Himara area. Dimitris, a man of around fifty, stepped out of the car and began stretching his arms and legs. His tired gaze looked up the hill, where old stony houses were spread out. Some seconds later, his wife, Zaharula, stepped out from the back of the car and quickly went to open the front door in order to help an old woman alight. The tired travellers began to ascend the hill, taking a path that led towards one of the old stony houses. Both the man and the woman helped the old woman to climb the hill.

Zaharula and Dimitris are migrants who emigrated, together with their children, to Athens after the collapse of communism in 1990. They both come from Dhermi originally. Soon after their wedding,

and during communist times, they moved to the nearby coastal city of Vlora, where Dimitris worked as a mechanic and Zaharula in the sewing factory. In 1991, they migrated to Athens with their children. In 2000, when Dimitris' father died, his mother moved to live with them in Athens. According to Dimitris, she was too old to live on her own in the village. In the first years of their life in Greece, Zaharula and Dimitris did various kinds of jobs, from construction, to house cleaning, to farming, etc. Dimitris later got a permanent job in a construction company while Zaharula was employed as a cleaning lady in a primary school in Athens. Almost every summer, they return to their natal village. Their children are now grown up and married and live in their own apartments in Athens. According to Zaharula, they could not wait for summer to arrive, so they could return to the village and see their relatives and friends again whom they had not seen for a year or more.

'Every time I walk up the hill from where I see my house and have a view of all the village, the mountains, and the sea, I remember that my roots are here in Drimades', noted Zaharula in one of our conversations. She continued, 'Though nobody, except loads of work, is waiting for me in this house, I still crave to see and smell it. This is my home/house [*spiti/shtëpi*]. No matter that I have a home in Athens, too; this home is different, because here are my roots [*rrënjët/rizes*].' Zaharula continued describing the chores and obligations awaiting her whenever she returns to the village. The migrants' return visits include the set of repetitive performances and ritual acts such as driving in bumper-to-bumper traffic, cleaning houses, visiting relatives, etc., all of which re-establish their sense of presence, despite their long social absence from the village community.

Shtëpi, *Institution of (Im)mobility*

In Albanian, as well as in Greek, there is no distinction between 'home' and 'house' (Dalakoglou 2009: 63fn.). Though people often use the word *shtëpi* (Albanian) or *spiti* (Greek) for either in daily conversation, the meaning is not always synonymous. *Shtëpi*, alongside the term *fis* (patrilineage), refers to one of the core units of the Albanian kinship (de Rapper 2012a: 81). In the Himara area, the *shtëpi/spiti* is the basis of the individual's mode of 'dwelling' (Ingold 2000). Michael Jackson (1995: 148) writes of Warlpiri in Australia that 'sense of home is grounded less in a place *per se* than in activity that goes on in a place'. Similarly Zaharula, Dimitris and other migrants generate their *shtëpi/spiti* through various activities (cleaning and rebuilding the house),

emotions, such as nostalgia and longing, as well as communal practices (visiting relatives, gift-giving) on their return journeys.[8] Though none of them plan to return to Dhermi on a permanent basis, they define their village as the *vendi/topos* of their roots (*rrënjët/rizes*).

Stef Jansen argues that home-making is 'a dynamic social process in which relationships to places and persons are produced' (Jansen and Löfving 2007: 16). In Dhermi, this process of home-making is part of a ritual act and thus it is continuously reproduced through memories, feelings of belonging, partying, visiting relatives, cleaning old houses, etc. Home-making is a material manifestation of the migrant's perpetual state of homecoming and of their claims to a definite locality (see also Dalakoglou 2010: 733). *Shtëpisë/spitai* (houses) stand in as the material presence of absent migrants because they materialize the relationships between the migrants and the *shtëpi/spiti* they have left behind.

The *shtëpi/spiti* not only eradicates the spatial distance between Athens and the Himara area but also temporally merges the past with the present and the future. This temporal merging is also present in the migrants' homecomings, which seem to culminate in different (im)mobility practices. Similar to the Slovenian diasporic community in Argentina (Repič, this volume), the migrants of Himara idealize social relations in nostalgic memories of their erstwhile home-places and sensory feelings (e.g., Zaharula's smelling of home), transcending the mundane and often difficult realities of their migrant lives in Greece as their 'host country' and Albania as their 'home country'. In this manner, they redefine the meaning of home, which they often experience, and describe, as being sacred.

Act Three: Visit to Coastal Plains

Dhermi, 13 August 2005 at 12.30 P.M. – a long line of cars, most with Greek number plates, were slowly descending towards the village coast. Even though the village is only about a kilometre away from the coastal plain, the migrants and other tourists, coming from different areas of Albania, tend to go to the beach by car because of the summer heat. Ana, a teenager, and I were sitting on the back seat of the car driven by Ana's father. Ana's mother was sitting in the front passenger seat. After the fall of the communist regime, Ana and her parents migrated to Athens. Every summer holiday they return to the village of their (grand)parents where they spend up to twenty-five days in the house of Ana's grandfather.

Many drivers coming down the opposite lane were greeting each other, sometimes even stopping their cars and stepping out to say hello and exchange a few words. Inevitably, this only made the traffic jam worse. During our drive to the coast, Ana's father was proudly showing me the village, its small churches and chapels, and fields where his *fis/soi* have orchards of mandarins and plantations of olive trees.[9]

After about forty minutes we finally reached the coast, where it seemed to be total chaos due to the traffic jam, pedestrians and retail sellers all driving and walking along the narrow street. Ana's father, Nikos, managed to find a parking space in the car park in front of the nightclub that is owned by his cousin Petros. While Nikos went to 'walk around' (*xhiro/volta*) the coast, Ana, her mother and I went to the beach, next to Petros' bar, where he was renting out deckchairs and sun umbrellas to tourists.

The beach was crowded with people lying on deckchairs or swimming in the sea. Next to us, sitting down, was a group of youngsters (between eighteen and twenty-five years old) with whom Ana and I entered into conversation. They told us that their parents come from the Himara area but they live in Athens, where they emigrated to after the fall of communism. One of the girls spoke of her experience of Himara beach, saying (and I cite verbatim):

> I really enjoy it here in my native village, the village of my parents, where my grandparents also live, and where my roots are [*rizes*]. It is a pity I can't stay longer than twenty-five days as I love this village. Drimades has a wonderful beach and beautiful sea. Here I meet my cousins whom I do not see very often though they live in Athens, too. During the day we enjoy ourselves on the beach, playing volleyball, while in the evening we have fun in the nightclubs.

She continued describing the history of her parents' families (*fis/soi*) which her parents had related to her.

Marko, in his forties at the time of the interview, shared similar experiences to the young woman. He, too, was born in one of the villages of the Himara area and now lived in Athens with his family. He said the following:

> We always swim on this side of the beach, where most of the locals are. On the other side of the beach there are mainly foreigners [tourists from other parts of Albania] and I have never felt comfortable there. The summer is great as you can meet a lot of locals here [on the beach] even those who live outside [abroad] … For us this is not just a beach, because it has its history. Our ancestors were trading here, and over there [point-

> ing his finger at the rocky pier] used to be a port. Every *topos* has its name. Do you know those white sandy beaches there that you can see from Llogara [the hilltop from where you descend to Himara area]? It is *Meghalihora*. And before *Meghalihora* is *Grammata*, then *Perivolo* and here it is *Jaliskari* [showing the rocky pier in the distance].

'Roots Tourism'

Jaka Repič (this volume) argues that return is not defined as a single act. Similarly, I interpret the return movements of Himara migrants as a set of journeys, either physical (a series of repetitive acts) or imaginary (memories and nostalgia). In other words, returning has both spatial and temporal implications. It does not only relate to the return to another place but also to another time, which is then related to the present and/or to the past.

The section above shows how the returning of the younger generation is different from the returning of the older one. The return movements of young people are not permeated with emotions and past memories as is the case with their parents' returning; rather, their returns are comparable to 'roots tourism', as defined by Basu (2004). He contends that roots tourism is a metaphorical as well as a physical journey, based on claims of belonging, origins and home (2004: 173). When the younger generation are in Himara, they tend to declare themselves as Greeks; yet when they are in Greece, they rarely declare themselves as Albanians, due to the stereotypes and pejorative connotations. Moreover, numerous locals from Dhermi often define them as tourists who are in transit. As one of my interlocutors said:

> They are in transit, they only travel through [the village] … They see the village as the place where they go to the beach and play volleyball. Then they go to Panorama [a bar and night club] to drink frappé [Nescafé-frappé]. This is Dhermi! And then there is a house, where an old lady lives gives them *buke me djathe* [bread with cheese] to take with them to the beach.
>
> So, this is the place where they play volleyball on the beach, drink frappé in Panorama and sleep in the old house where the old lady lives who happens to be their grandmother.

He went on to say that the younger generation does not know the history of the Himara area, nor its toponomy, and that they are not even interested in these things because they do not want to belong to the village community but only wish to belong to their environment in Athens, where they live.

The returns of the first generation of migrants, however, are somehow different. They are permeated with nostalgia and sometimes painful journeys to the past, through which they generate their home-place. Their journeys to the coast could be read as an imitation of their seasonal returns to their home(-place) comprising motorized, physical and imaginary journeys, meetings of their relatives, friends and colleagues, and memories of their past places. Returning is thus a diverse and multiple process and conjoins various modes of (non-) movements and (im)mobility. Through them, individuals incessantly recreate their own locations in relation to other people and places, either past or present, 'domestic' or 'foreign', distant or close, physical or imaginary.

Act Four: Pilgrimage to Stavridi

Dhermi, 14 August 2005, 4 P.M. – Zaharula, her niece Eleni and I set out on the journey towards the monastery of Stavridi ('the Cross' in Greek), which is situated in the hinterland of Gjinvlashi Mountain that rises behind the village of Ilias in the Himara area. Almost a decade after the fall of the communist regime in the 1990s, which forbade any kind of religious practice, the monastery became an important pilgrimage site where every 14 August, on the eve of the Dormition of the Mother God or the *Panayia*, one of the important Christian Orthodox feasts, many local people, returnees and migrants gather. In contrast to many other places of pilgrimage in Albania, which are recognized as mixed religious sites and which regained their importance after the fall of communism (de Rapper 2012b), Stavridi is a location that is mainly visited by Christian Orthodox followers from the Himara area. During the pilgrimage in 2005, for example, there were only four Muslims in Stavridi, of whom two were women, one a teenage girl and one a young man.

While walking along the pebble-stone path through the valley, Zaharula described her ties to her home-place in Himara. Her husband's family used to be one of the most prosperous *fis/soi* in the village. The house which her husband inherited was built in 1920 with the money remitted by her brother-in-law from Naples, where he worked as a vocational worker. Thus, even today, their house is referred to as *Italiko spiti/Shtëpia Italiane*. Although many migrants return to the village after retirement, Zaharula does not plan to return because she thinks that poor infrastructure and inadequate social and health support means that the village does not offer as many

possibilities as Athens. While Zaharula, Eleni and I were talking, the path began to ascend gradually towards Stavridi. On the way, we met other pilgrims who were walking in groups. Some pilgrims went to Stavridi by car.

After an hour of walking, we reached the monastery. Some pilgrims had already gathered in the courtyard where they were waiting to enter a small church, light a candle and dedicate it to the icon of St Mary. Others were setting out mattresses in the courtyard, greeting each other and chatting. With dusk arriving, the place was crowded with pilgrims, most of whom were elderly village women from Himara, migrant families and youths.

When darkness fell at nine o'clock, the evening Mass started with only a few pilgrims, mainly older women, attending. After that, dinner followed. While eating, I chatted with Marko and Violeta, a couple whom I knew already, and who attend this pilgrimage almost every year. According to Marko, Stavridi is a place where he can meet others who come from the area but who now live in Greece. He noted that he misses the village a lot because his roots and sense of belonging are here. Asked whether he would return, he responded similarly to Zaharula, because he believes that life in the village does not offer much for a young family like his. However, he went on to add that although he has a house in Greece he will not forget his roots (*rrënjet/rizes*).

> The locals know me here. I will never forget an old woman who stopped me when I was walking down to the village one day. Though I never saw her in my life she joyfully greeted me and said that I must definitely belong to the Duni family. She was talking very highly about our family … I have been living in Athens for many years now, where I have *spiti* and lots of friends, but nobody there knows my family and its history like this local woman does. Therefore, I know that my *rizes* [roots] are here in this village, and not in Vlora where I grew up nor in Athens where I live now.

In our continuing conversation, Marko talked about the *kurbet* of his great-grandparents and about their trading relations with today's Greece and Italy, which were typical of some of the more prosperous families living in Himara: 'But this was in times when the road was open [*otan to dromos itane aniktos*] [referring to the Albanian-Greek state border in Greek language]'.

The migrants, in a range of settings, seek to recreate their past in order to protect or build their home-place and a sense of belonging. In their pilgrimage to Stavridi, pilgrims redefine their identity through

their relations and meetings with other people. This allows them to compensate for their feelings of displacement. Identification is thus spatially constituted and related to the processes of home-making; likewise home-making is related to the processes of identification.

In the course of our conversation, what began as pilgrims chatting away with each other developed into a full-fledged party. This was especially true for the younger migrants, some of whom were dancing to the beat of modern Greek music played on the radio, drinking alcohol and talking loudly, while others were playing different games, such as cards. While the youngsters partied into the early hours of the morning, most of the elderly women and some families with young children went to sleep in the open air. At around five in the morning, when the first sunrays touched the monastery, preparations for the morning Mass started. Everybody was awake, packing up the mattresses and cleaning up for the church ceremony. Around two hundred pilgrims gathered around the small patio by the church, where the Mass was held. Many of them arrived that morning.

Pilgrimage as a Way of Movement

In the past, many scholars working in Southeastern Europe focused on the pilgrimages and religious identity of people living in this part of the world (Hayden 2002; Bowman 2012; Albera and Couroucli 2012; Henig 2012, 2015; Eade and Katić 2014; Barkan and Barkey 2015). Many of these studies dwell upon Hayden's (2002) concept of 'antagonistic tolerance' that permeates the sacred spaces where different religious groups meet, coexist and 'share' the sacra of religious sites (Barkan and Barkey 2015). Contrary to the well-established theme of relations between pilgrimage and movement in the contemporary migrations studies on Western Europe, Africa and Asia, less attention has been paid to this issue in studies of Southeastern Europe. Such studies relate pilgrimage to various modes of movement and conceptualize it in the context of transnational journeys (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990; Tapper 1990; Morinis 1992; Basu 2004; Schramm 2004; Liebelt 2010; Uusihakala 2011). Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (1990) locate pilgrimage within a broader context of profane journeys. Pilgrimage is a mode of mobile performance (Coleman and Eade 2004) and is often analogous to homecoming. In order to encapsulate and reframe its dynamic nature, Paul Basu (2004) and Katharina Schramm Schramm (2004) see rootedness as one of the feelings that pilgrimage evokes. In his analysis of the Scottish diaspora homecomings, Basu (2004: 158) sees roots tourism

as a response to migrants' feelings of dislocatedness and their aim to relocate themselves in space and time.

The pilgrimage to Stavridi, along with other modes of movement (visits to coastal plains and seasonal returns to the village), is akin to contemporary movements and returns to Himara. Both pilgrimages, as well as homecoming, are tropes for routes, with their spatial and temporal implications related to the process of place-making. Here, a parallel can be drawn with David Henig's (2012) choreography of sacred sites in Ajvatovica and Karići in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the author, the choreography generates not only the intracommunal contestations but also their relations. Parallel to this, the Christian pilgrimage to Stavridi shows the importance of relations, separations and contestations, but it also accents people's movements, which are enacted either in their homecomings, visits to the coastal plains or in pilgrimages to Stavridi. These movements draw a choreography of Stavridi alongside a choreography of home-location.

Pilgrimage is a social event and a basis for social interaction, upon which the migrants constitute their social memory. The villages of the Himara area, their coastal plains and the hinterland of Stavridi are locations of social cohesion and reaffirmation of the present-day real or imaginary social relations. The meaning of cohesion, however, is not synonymous with the meaning of *communitas*, as defined by Victor and Edith Turner (1978: 15), but it expresses the world of mobility and ongoing movements with which the migrants reaffirm their roots. In line with Coleman and Eade (2004) and Michael Sallnow (2000), who view pilgrimage as a kinaesthetic mapping of space, I argue that the migrants collectively re-enact the routes of their perpetual returns as well as redefining their sense of home and belonging through their pilgrimage to Stavridi. The pilgrimage is based on the seasonal return of migrants and thus can be viewed as an imitation of their 'homecoming'.

In the local Greek dialect of the Himara, no word exists that directly corresponds with the meaning of the English word 'pilgrimage'. When referring to the 'pilgrimage', the local people and migrants use descriptive terms such as 'going to Stavridi' (*shkojmë në Stavridh/pame yia Stavridi*). Only a few of the migrants use the word *proskinima*, which, in a literal Greek translation, stands for a set of devotions performed when entering the church (Winkelman and Dubisch 2005: xiv). Jill Dubisch (1995: 95) writes, in her study of pilgrimage on the Greek island of Tinos, that the pilgrims do not, even temporarily, break off from their locality: it remains part of

their everyday life. Likewise, the pilgrimage to Stavridi relates less to the set of devotional practices, such as consecration of the holy icon of *Panayia*, and more to the pilgrims' journey and the production of social networks between the migrants and the local population. In other words, journeys to Stavridi are filled with a sense of home-place and nostalgia, through which past and present belonging is remade. Homecoming can be interpreted as a journey that is imbued with 'sacredness' (cf. Liebelt 2010: 263).

Rhythms of (Non-)Movement

The content of this chapter explains how the rhythms of various (non-)movements, from migration, return visits, pilgrimage, etc., coincide. Like pilgrimages, various practices of (non-)movement comprise a series of repetitive acts, which together constitute a rhythm that, according to Henri Lefebvre (2004: 8), relates, as well as separates, the cyclical and linear processes, continuation and discontinuation, repetition and difference through which a unit is constituted. Every rhythm, according to Lefebvre, includes repetitions in time and space, reprises and returns. However, these are never identical or absolute repetitions or returns. Every repetition includes a difference and moreover also generates it (Lefebvre 2004: 6–7).

Rhythm does not differentiate between movement and stasis/enclosure or between mobility and immobility but it conjoins them in a continuum. Hence the traditional practices of (im)mobility, such as *kurbet* and *shtëpi/spiti*, constitute the continuum through which the rhythm of time and place is generated. When migrants/people in transit (tourists or pilgrims) return to their natal villages, or when they are socializing on their coastal plains, taking part in the pilgrimage, they forge rhythms that transcend differences between the past of their village lives and the present of their lives in emigration. This enables them to surpass, at least momentarily, the problems that they face in the Himara area as well as in their migratory destination in Athens.

The migrants' roots are not grounded in a single location but are, according to Tim Ingold (2011: 10), defined as lines connecting various locations, entangled in a *meshwork* where human dwelling unfolds: 'Lives are led not inside places but through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere' (Ingold 2000; cf. Ingold 2011: 33). Like the lives of the Roma people of Krško in Slovenia (see Janko Spreizer, this volume) or Latvian migrants in Guernsey

(see Lulle, this volume), the lives of migrants coming from Himara unfold through the pathways of their journeys, not only in the places they inhabit. To paraphrase Ingold, the Himara migrants dwell in the world as *wayfarers* who ceaselessly move between Himara and Athens. Accordingly, the migrants' feelings and claims of rootedness and home are derived from their *wayfaring*, because these exact claims enable their dwelling in the world of (non-)movement.

The migrants' seasonal return journeys could be seen as homecomings, where the meaning of home not only refers to the materiality of the house, nostalgia, feelings of belonging, holidays and leisure, but also to the meshwork of places to and from which they move and travel. For example, Marko considers having a home (*shtëpi/spiti*) in Athens as well as in Himara to constitute having 'roots' in the latter place. Such a conceptualization of home builds the relation between Himara and Athens and transcends their geographical distance. The location of the places mentioned is thus relative and relational and it is conditioned by *wayfaring* between particular places through which the relations as well as separations between people and places are generated (see also Janko Spreizer; Repič; Salazar, this volume). Home is made through a set of messy relations and separations, and this makes it a 'relative location' (Green 2005).

Conclusion

Mobility in Albania is not only a 'norm' of contemporary life but has been part of the population's way of dwelling throughout the centuries. Various modes of (im)mobility, such as *kurbet* and *shtëpi/spiti* have significantly marked the history of the Himara area. *Kurbet*, as an important social institution, is inscribed in various folk songs, collective memories and individual narratives about the past and present movements to Greece, Italy and elsewhere. Through them, local people and migrants constitute and reaffirm differences, as well as similarities, with other people and places, and reconstruct feelings of belonging and rootedness in their 'home-place'. The meanings of belonging, home-place and home (*shtëpi/spiti*) are defined through migrants' claims of rootedness on the one hand, and through their movements through/in/from the Himara area on the other. When migrants express their feelings of belonging they generate the meaning of home (*shtëpi/spiti*) as well as their ability to move (*kurbet*). The relation between movement and home engenders a continuum between mobility and immobility, both being part of the

same process (Salazar and Smart 2011). Like a place, home is not a fixed location but a relational process, because people in the given historical, political, economic and social context continuously shift its meaning (see also Repič, this volume). In line with Stéphane de Tapia (2010) and Loretta Baldassar (2011), who draw upon the circularity of migrations, the traditional practice of *kurbet* as well as its contemporary variation migration (*mëgrim*), emphasize its circularity, which brings not only depletion and loss but also feelings of emplacement and belonging.

The status and power that people ascribe to particular places (such as Greece, Italy, Europe and the United States) are economically, politically, socially and historically conditioned and generate 'power geographies' (cf. Massey 2005). From this perspective, some places and territories are defined as central and others as peripheral. The central and peripheral positions are ever shifting because they are conditioned with the (non-)movement and (im)mobility of people, things, ideas, economic and political capital (see also Janko Spreizer; Kozorog; Lofranco; Virtanen, this volume). When Zaharula and Marko describe their village past and the trading relations of their ancestors, they give their village the central position, but this becomes peripheral when they compare it to the living standard in Greece.

The migrants of Himara are like wayfarers who, through various modes of (non-)movement, create relations between their 'home' and other places. This gives them a feeling of rootedness that can vary with each generation. Feelings of rootedness enable them to constitute their identity and reaffirm their attachment to a physical or imaginary place of 'origin' and home (*shtëpi/spiti*). Through roots and routes of return, they build the location of Himara as a series of meetings and translations. When they manage and negotiate their feelings of belonging, they expose their past and present (non-)movements and define their belonging as the way of 'dwelling-in-travel' (cf. Clifford 1997).

Pilgrimage is one of the important processes in building social relations and feelings of rootedness in a particular place. The pilgrimage to Stavridi is permeated with feelings of home-place and nostalgia more than feelings of religiosity. Hence, return movements can be interpreted as pilgrimages because they embody 'sacred' journeys. The feelings of sacredness have spatial implications because they are based on the migrants' claims to belonging. The meaning of belonging is not singular but contextual and contingent. Continuous movements and claims of rootedness endow migrants from Himara with feelings of emplacement to a particular location which is shaped by their routes between Athens and Himara.

The location of Himara is relative because it is relocated through a series of (non-)movements in/through places and relations with other people and places. (Non-)movements are important social institutions in the Himara area. They are not only embodied in people's practices, daily and seasonal movements but are also part of Himara's landscape. Hence, it seems that (non-)movements are not only the way in which people dwell in the world, but are also a part of their life experience itself.

The rhythms that are generated through various modes of (non-) movements constitute interrelations between Himara as the location of roots and the past and Athens as the location of the present. Moreover, the relative location of Himara is generated through peoples' movements through/between/in places and through geomorphological movements of the region itself. The soil erosion that is characteristic of this area brought geomorphological, along with demographic, changes to the region. As noted in the introduction, it is not only people who move, but also places that shift their location on the geopolitical and geomorphological maps.

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Acknowledgements

To preserve the anonymity of my interlocutors, all names are pseudonyms. I am grateful for their help and confidence. Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the *EastBordNet* COST IS0803 'Remaking Eastern Borders' conference at the University of Catania in 2011, and at the seminar 'Ethnographies of Mobility' at the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana in 2013. I am grateful to the participants of both events for their insightful comments and suggestions.

Notes

1. Despite the bilingual name of the area and its villages, I use the English name in the rest of this chapter.
2. In the communist period, intra-country movements were strictly controlled and one needed a special permit from the local authorities to be able to travel from one place to another within Albania. On the other hand, the communist government encouraged youth from all parts of Albania to study at different universities in the urban areas of the country. Following this initiative, many young people from Himara went to study either in Vlora or Tirana. After completing their studies, many of them found jobs, got married and settled there, so that they could stay on in the city after completing their studies.
3. Using Salazar and Smart's (2011) definition, I conceptualize (im)mobility and (non-)movements as 'two sides of the same coin' that 'should only be separated for analytical purposes' (Salazar, this volume).
4. '*Burrin e njeh kurbeti/gruan e njeh djepi*' or literally '*kurbet* knows the man / cradle knows the woman' (see Pistrick 2010: 30, fn.1).
5. Because the people living in the villages of the Himara are bilingual, I will refer to the southern Albanian and local Greek dialects.
6. Due to the economic and fiscal crisis which started after 2008, remittances of any kind have now become rare, so that in some cases we can speak about reverse remittances.
7. Despite liberalization, border crossings are still controlled, but not fully restricted for Albanian citizens. They have to present a letter of reference from a physical person or a legal institution when they cross the Schengen border. Besides this, they have to prove on-site that they carry enough money with them (at least fifty euros per day for the duration of their stay).
8. According to Seremetakis (1991), the etymological meaning of 'nostalgia' derives from the Greek word *nostalgos*, where *nostó* means to return or travel back to one's homeland, and *algó* means desire or longing for something with a burning pain, as in longing to undertake the journey back.
9. Whenever people of Himara discuss family clusters that share the same second name, they use the term *fis/soi*. Although the mentioned terms are used interchangeably and have the same meaning, they are defined differently in the studies of other authors. According to my conversations with the local people of Himara, *fis/soi* consist of patrilineal descendants who share common ancestors, the surname, the 'same blood' and some plots of land such as forests and pastures.

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