



Chapitre de livre

2016

Accepted version

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How to cite

SOHIER, Estelle. From the invention of an imaginary to the promotion of tourism: Greece through the lens of the photographer F. Boissonnas (1903-1930). In: Tourism imaginaries at the disciplinary crossroads: place, practice, media. Maria Gravari-Barbas, Nelson Graburn (dir.) (Ed.). [s.l.] : Routledge, 2016. p. 308. (New directions in tourism analysis)

This publication URL: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:92170>

Chapter 1. From the Invention of an Imaginary to the Promotion of Tourism: Greece through the Lens of the Photographer F. Boissonnas (1903-1930)

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The notion of "imaginary" (*imaginaire*¹) is often used today in French historiography. Though it remains undertheorized and doesn't correspond to a specific field, the use of this notion reflects historiographical changes since the 1970s, including new ways of questioning past societies, the creation of new research objects, and the mobilization of new kinds of source material.

In France, the concept of the imaginary was adopted by historians at the end of the 1970s, arising out of the history of mentalities (*histoire des mentalités*). Georges Duby and Jacques Le Goff, eminent historians of the journal *Les Annales*, authored pioneering works (Duby, 1978; Le Goff, 1985). The imaginary was defined as a field made up by all the representations that overstep the limits established from experience, and the chains of deduction allowed by them, whose territory covers the whole field of human experience, from the collective to the most intimate (Patlagean, 1988, p. 307). The concept is acknowledged to be fluid (Le Goff, 1985), and has proven quite useful in many scholarly investigations.

Jacques Le Goff sought to distinguished the notion from the symbolic, the ideological and from representations: the imaginary is seen as a collective, social and historical phenomenon, that "nourishes and makes humans act" (Le Goff, 1985, p. II and VII). Beyond the

¹ The translation of the word *imaginaire* is difficult, as in French it serves both as a noun and as an adjective, and as a noun it is different from the term *imagination*. In the context here, however, it may lay close to the English term "collective imagination."

history of representations, the aim is to study the way representations act upon the "real". Social imaginaries become an important issue of cultural history (*histoire culturelle*), giving priority to commonly shared values, forms and symbols, over individual intellectual creations.

One of the characteristics of the approach for most historians is to refuse to search for permanent features of the human mind. *They* devote special attention to the temporal and spatial contexts, but also to the diversity of possible interpretations and to the polysemy of objects. Discourses are contextualized in their social environment of production, media and itineraries. Ways of reading and seeing are interrogated, as well as modes of accreditation and veridiction² (Chartier, 1989). The aim is to better understand the way human beings of each era and social category have interpreted previous schemes and reintegrated them to a coherent body of representations and practices.

The use of the notion by historians of all periods encouraged the inclusion of new kinds of source material such as literature and art. A wide range of documents are mobilized: written, oral and iconographic (*i.e.* myths, legends, poetry or popular literature, but also ceramics, statuary, illuminated miniatures, paintings, photographs and animated images for more recent periods). The contents of the documents are deciphered, but also their functions and uses in permanently changing social, political, ideological and technological contexts.

The imaginary is not generally considered in itself (with some exceptions as Boia, 1998) but connected to other objects, which explains the frequent use of the concept. New objects of history have been built through its use: the body, dreams, feasts, the relation of self and others, a history of sensitivity magnificently developed by Alain Corbin. Its use also allows the

² Assessment of truth from a particular subject position, not necessarily 'objective.'

revitalization of approaches to belief and religion, social movements, sciences, or political history, including the history of ideas, parties and collective entities (villages, nations, empire, etc.), as developed in the seminal works of Pierre Nora and Benedict Anderson (Anderson, 1981). Geographical imaginaries are also an object of history (*i.e.* Schwartz, 1996), approached by both cultural history and geography.

Greece occupies an old and exceptional place in the European geographic imaginary, as well as in the histories of both tourism and photography³. Since the Renaissance, the region has been visited by learned individuals who consider it the cradle of Europe. Emblematic places of Greek antiquity, such as Athens, became part of the route of the Grand Tour of European aristocrats and intellectuals at the end of the Eighteenth century. Following the foundation of the new State, in 1833, the country attracted ever more, and more varied, visitors. The Parthenon in this way was photographed in October 1839, just two months after the announcement of the invention of the daguerreotype in Paris (Schwartz, 1996, p. 21). The Olympic games organized in 1896 are considered a pivotal moment in the development of seasonal tourism, hotels and occupations linked to such activities (Dritsas, 2003). And if mass tourism dates only from the 1960s, Greece saw a boom in organized trips already during the 1920s and 1930s, always linked to classical European culture.

The work of Fred Boissonnas was realized in this last period, which also coincided with the boom in mass media and photographic reproduction in various forms. The Genevan photographer's encounter with Greece was fortuitous. He traveled there originally in 1903, at the

³ Article translated from the French by Daniel Hoffman.

request of an English aristocrat who wanted a photograph of Mont Parnassus on the model of Boissonnas's prized photograph of Mont Blanc shown at the Universal Exposition of Paris in 1900. During the following three decades, Fred Boissonnas undertook some dozen additional voyages across Greece, taking tens of thousands of photographs.

Many amateur and professional photographers had already been active in Greece, following 1839, yet Fred Boissonnas was able to bring a new gaze to the country, still recognized as such today (*i.e.* Peltre, 1997, pp. 298-299)⁴. A substantial part of his photographic archive was purchased by the Greek government coincident with the 2004 Olympic Games and deposited in the Thessaloniki Museum of Photography. Various exhibitions were mounted to honor his work, and several of his books were translated and republished, particularly the deluxe volumes realized with Daniel Baud-Bovy (Baud-Bovy, Boissonnas, 1910; Baud-Bovy, Boissonnas, 1919⁵). According to one advocate of Greek heritage to the outside world, the work of Boissonnas continues to hold currency today not only for its artistic and historic values, but also because his photographs had contributed to the "formation of European public opinion regarding Greece," making him an "ambassador of modern Greece."⁶

⁴ For the author, Fred Boissonnas may even have contributed to the renewal in the way painters looked at Greece during the interwar period.

⁵ The two deluxe, large-format books realized by Daniel Baud-Bovy and Fred Boissonnas were recently reissued in facsimile: *En Grèce par monts et par vaux*, Athens, Militos, Eleftheroudakis, 2007 [1910]; *Des Cyclades en Crète au gré du vent*, Athens, Militos; Eleftheroudakis, 2007 [1919]. See also BOISSONNAS, 2001, published to accompany an exhibition held in Thessaloniki and London (Hellenic Centre) during 2002-2003.

⁶ Published interview with the director of the Foundation for Hellenic Culture, Sofia, Bulgaria, November 2009. http://www.grreporter.info/en/trip_mount_athos_through_eyes_fr%C3%A9d%C3%A9ric_boissonnas/1237

In their time, Boissonnas's photographs were disseminated in Greece, and throughout Europe and the United States, via exhibitions, public lectures accompanied by lantern slides, and a myriad publications -- including art books, international newspapers, illustrated magazines, brochures, and postcards. Though Fred Boissonnas attained international renown through his photographs, he was also in fact a publisher, writer and businessman. Parts of his photographic work, his private papers, and his correspondence with the Greek government reveal that the photographer was engaged with a wide chain of actors internationally, and that his vast production was put to many ends, yet foremost to the promotion of tourism.

The power of images and their role in the construction of tourism have been amply demonstrated in studies carried out since the 1970s (among recent works, see in particular Crouch, Jackson, Thompson, 2005 and Robinson, Picard, 2009). If tourists do not necessarily register social and economic realities, they do on the other hand respond strongly to circulating images (Crouch, Lübbren, 2003). An integral element of this phenomenon, photography has played a central role in the process of constructing geographical imaginaries in society. If we define the idea of a geographical imaginary as an ensemble of physical and mental images which interact to confer meaning and coherence to a space, for a group of people at a given time (Debarbieux, 2003; Sénécal, 1992), we can consider that Fred Boissonnas created and promoted a new geographical imaginary regarding Greece.

This case study allows an analysis of the relationship between photography, geographical imaginaries, and tourism in one of its earliest manifestations, that is the manner in which images were perceived and then disseminated through mass media in the 1920s and 1930s to instill a vision of Greece that would promote tourism, several decades before the rise of mass tourism more broadly. The work and career of Boissonnas can help us understand the manufacture and

deployment of this imaginary by inscribing this process in time, deciphering its media, and identifying its actors and their social, political and economic motivations.

Greece in the world, by way of image and text

Fred Boissonnas's work concerning Greece is vast and took form in diverse media during the first three decades of the twentieth century: photographs, heliographs, postcards, art books, illustrated brochures, decorative stickers...The correspondence exchanged between the photographer and the Greek government between 1918 and 1922, today preserved at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Athens, helps better discern the context of this production, to retrace its diffusion internationally and, above all, to better apprehend the ways this work was perceived and used by different actors. It clarifies the role given to images, and to the imaginary.

Propaganda through images

A well-known photographer in Switzerland and beyond, the owner of several photographic studios in Europe, Fred Boissonnas at the close of the First World War offered his services to the Greek government, by way of the Greek consul in Geneva. A few months later, in March 1919, a contract was signed between the artist and M. Politis, the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Greek government made the substantial sum of 600,000 Swiss francs available to Boissonnas, to allow him to establish a publishing house and to "pursue the

publication of his illustrated works and the preparation of photographic material needed for exhibitions and lectures about Greece."⁷ The correspondence exchanged between the photographer and the Hellenic government leading up to the contract is explicit as to its purposes. It allows us, as well, to retrace the stages in the development of his Greek work. Between 1903 and 1913, Fred Boissonnas traveled on various occasions to Greece with the art historian Daniel Baud-Bovy and other collaborators, assembling some ten thousand images. The photographs were reproduced in various works, most notably *La Grèce par monts et par vaux*, published in 1910 (with an English edition, in 1920: *In Greece: Journeys by Mountain and Valley*). The exceptional quality of this monumental art book was recognized not only in Switzerland, but also in Greece and beyond in Europe. Already by April 1913, Fred Boissonnas was entrusted by the Hellenic government, through M. Romanos, to photograph the newly conquered provinces, especially Epirus, Macedonia, and Crete, "in order to release as quickly as possible popular illustrated books which will make their beauties known."⁸ Following a series of military victories, the Greek government wished to ratify through European diplomacy an increase by nearly 70% in its national territory (Clogg, 2002, p. 79).

In 1919, the primary objective was the same, but the project, of longer duration, also had explicitly touristic goals. From 1905 on, Fred Boissonnas had written memoranda to the Greek government on various occasions to demonstrate the potential political, commercial, and touristic

⁷ Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-2.

Contract signed March 27, 1919 between M. Politis and M. Boissonnas in Paris.

⁸ Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-2.

Letter of F. Boissonnas to M. Kapsambélis, general consul in Geneva, August 21, 1918, p. 4.

usefulness of his photographic work.⁹ In 1919, he proposed developing a deliberate, structured and rapid propaganda campaign: "this great launch, combining exhibitions, lectures and the distribution, on a large-scale, of our popular photo books and special brochures, not only will have a great political impact but could have incalculable results toward tourism, and it isn't an exaggeration to say that a few hundred thousand francs, invested this way, would bring millions in return to the country of origin."¹⁰

Dedicating a significant share of its budget to Fred Boissonnas's project, the Greek government shared its objectives.¹¹ In December of 1918, the Minister of Foreign Affairs transmitted a brief report on his meeting with Boissonnas together with the Greek head of state, Eleftherios Venizelos: the three explored the foundations for a "far-reaching photographic organization destined from now on to serve our national propaganda and thus to become a permanent publicity organ for development, commerce, industry and tourism in Greece."¹² This propaganda was intended to influence the Peace conference where Greece aspired to win

⁹ " Je préconisais alors des voyages méthodiquement organisés non seulement à travers les contrées de la Grèce de 1905, mais aussi à travers les terres qui devaient revenir à la mère-patrie". (I recommended then methodically organized trips not only across the Greek regions as of 1905, but also across the lands that should return to the mother-land.) Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-2. Letter of F. Boissonnas to M. Kapsambélis, general consul of Geneva, August 21, 1918, p. 5.

¹⁰ Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-2. Letter of F. Boissonnas to M. Kapsambélis, general consul of Geneva, August 21, 1918, p. 9.

¹¹ This study until now has been based only on the French-language correspondence.

¹² Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-2. Confidential telegram of M. Politis to the Foreign Minister in Athens, December 14, 1918 from Paris.

territory. It was inscribed within the dominant ideology of the Greek state since the nineteenth century, that of the "Great Idea" which aimed to restore the Byzantine empire by incorporating all the zones of the Near East where significant portions of the population were culturally Greek, with Constantinople as the capital (Clogg, 2002, pp. 46-47). In parallel, the government sought to develop and channel tourism in Greece.

The different clauses of the contract were quickly put into effect, but not for long. For political and economic reasons, the Greek government soon lacked the means to pay its bills; the Great Idea fell apart in 1922, after the military defeat against the Ottoman Empire and the massive population transfers that ensued. In the wake, Fred Boissonnas's publishing house filed for bankruptcy, leading to the financial demise of the enterprise. In the meanwhile, other means of propaganda through images had been created, and would be exploited again later, even if in a less ambitious framework. This contract was just one moment in the career of Boissonnas, which all the same allowed the establishment of an ambitious and concerted initiative. For us it is an invaluable document in so much as it makes explicit the means, the potential uses and the goals of image production.

To make new spaces known, to give them signs and sense

The collaboration between Boissonnas and the Greek government is evidence of a shared belief in the power of images and their potential impact for the country's economy. The photographs of Boissonnas were chosen to lead a pro-Greek propaganda campaign for several reasons. The most obvious is the high formal quality of Boissonnas's photographic work,

universally praised and recognized in Greece and in the rest of Europe. The second reason was expressed by Daniel Baud-Bovy in a letter where he defended the economic stakes of their project:

“It involves undertaking for Greece, its industries, its natural products, its waters, etc. an intense and methodical propaganda campaign through images. The majority of men are like St. Thomas. They want to see to believe. So many people have laughed in my face when I've spoken to them of the forests of Greece. Greece, for them, is nothing but an immense Attica. Show them views of the forests of Arcadia, of the Pindus, or of Olympus, and then they are convinced right away. Hence, it is a powerful means, long proven, to solicit the interest of the foreigner, the traveler, the capitalist.¹³”

Fred Boissonnas crisscrossed Greece as no other traveling photographer had before him, photographing different regions, both ancient and new, as they became integrated to Greek space. The distribution of these images opened new spaces and new perspectives to the European imaginary, signaling their existence, estheticizing them and giving them meaning.

Fred Boissonnas gave meaning to his images in varying ways. He frequently relied on implicit or explicit references to other iconographic or literary works when composing his shots or when reproducing them in various media. By publishing his photographs alongside different

¹³ Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-2.

Copy of a letter from Daniel Baud-Bovy to Fred Boissonnas, October 29, 1918, p. 1.

texts, particularly travel narratives or extracts from classical European literature, he turned to culture and collective memory to give sense to his iconographic documents and to "inscribe" their meaning. His work was the vehicle for a new geographic imaginary in that he proposed a new approach to Greek space, as well as time, by juxtaposing, even confounding, ancient and modern Greece. This was explicitly the goal in his collaboration with the renowned French Hellenist Victor Bérard (1864-1931), translator of *The Odyssey*. In 1912 the photographer accompanied the archeologist on a journey around the Mediterranean to document and prove through images Bérard's thesis: Ulysses' journey took place in a real geographic space which can be retraced¹⁴ (fig. 12.1 and 12. 2).

Fig. 12. 1

¹⁴ The expression « Victor Bérard's complex » is now used by literary critics to describe the way some travellers believe that, in the course of their journeys, they have found places cited in works of fiction. Christine MONTALBETTI, *Le Voyage, le monde, la bibliothèque*, Paris, PUF, 1997, 259 p. For a brand new version of a photographer's traveling around the Mediterranean along the path of Ulysses, see photographer Stefano De Luigi's 2012 *iDyssey*. Jessie Wender, "Stefano de Luigi's idyssey, *The New Yorker*, September 24, 2012. <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/photobooth/2012/09/stefano-de-luigi-idyssey.html>. I thank Daniel Hoffman for this reference.

Fig. 12.2

The reading of literary works in anticipation of travel, or while moving between sites, was a common practice, one which Fred Boissonnas drew upon to create a body of work that would bring together literary fictions, past and present travel narratives, and images. The search for the locations of the different stages of *The Odyssey* and the association of myths with real places was, beyond its scientific purpose, a way to confer meaning on space. The photographs of Fred Boissonnas gave substance to the myths, linking them to the landscape, encouraging in this way travel simultaneously in space and time, two fundamental elements to the geographical imaginary of tourists.

This approach furthermore was propitious for the expression of a collective Greek sentiment in relation to a territory that was still in a process of construction. The imagination is sometimes an "essential key for arriving at the idea of the real", making it possible to face a chaotic, often hostile, environment, devoid of any *a priori* meaning (Sénécal, 1992). Through the imaginary that it carries, the work of Boissonnas was used to lend coherence and meaning to a Greek territory that was undergoing great transformation. The work of Boissonnas was used for propaganda not only because it arose from a recognized artist, but also because it constituted, more broadly, the synthesis of a collective imaginary: a synthesis of the new Greek territory, a

synthesis of its past and its present, but also a synthesis of the myths that underlay it.

His production, however, could not be the vehicle of a new geographical imaginary if it couldn't be disseminated. Fred Boissonnas wasn't satisfied to imagine, produce and publish his documents; he endeavored to make them consequential --and profitable-- by using as effectively as possible the visual economy of the first decades of the twentieth century. He advocated the systematic distribution of his images throughout European society, and through them, an ideology resting on a new geographic imaginary.

Photography and the visual economy of the 1920s-1930s

The distribution of images to targeted publics was an integral part of the initial proposals of Boissonnas to the Greek government. After enumerating the various forms of "material which would allow reaching every walk of life," the photographer advocated setting up exhibition halls in all the important cities.¹⁵ His proposals were inspired by the Swiss touristic model: "there isn't among us a single place, a single business, that doesn't print illustrated publicity. Here in Greece, nothing. Isn't it the moment, then, to begin? I have thousands of photos to illustrate everything that you could want."¹⁶ He suggested as well the opportunity of creating official tourist

¹⁵ Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-1. Letter of Fred Boissonnas to the consul in Geneva, October 28, 1918 from Geneva.

¹⁶ Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-1. Report written by Fred Boissonnas to the Minister, M. Politis, July 1, 1920, from Athens.

information bureaus in Athens and Salonika "as we have in Geneva and all the cities of Switzerland,"¹⁷ adorned "with views of the region in paintings and photographs, run by a man knowledgeable about touristic issues, who would offer, as in our case, invaluable services."¹⁸ The rise of a tourism infrastructure offered new channels for the distribution of images destined to tourism promotion. The photographer contacted, for example maritime companies and railroads to distribute his albums in their branch offices and on their ocean liners.¹⁹

Boissonnas similarly envisioned a whole series of derived products aiming to reach distinct publics. In addition to his works conceived as fine art, where the photograph and the quality of the impression had as much importance as the text, he published series of postcards, heliographic plates, and stickers, as well as more mass-market books, in ordinary or deluxe versions, in English, French and German.²⁰ Beyond these, his images were reproduced in the illustrated press around the world.²¹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁹ Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-1. Copy of a letter from the General Office of the French railways and navigation administrations and companies in Switzerland ["office général pour la Suisse des Administrations et Compagnies Françaises de Chemin de Fer et de Navigation"] to Fred Boissonnas, July 25, 1921 from Bern.

²⁰ The list of the books published in the early 1920^s was sent to the Greek government together with a report in 1921. Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-1. Letter of Fred Boissonnas to the Greek government, November 17, 1921.

²¹ The *Centre d'Iconographie Genevoise*, of the Genevan public library, and the Photographic Museum of Thessaloniki, in Greece, maintain folders of press clippings featuring photos by Boissonnas, gathered from

The ultimate failure of his publishing house, precipitated by the Greek political crisis and a rise in the exchange rate which hindered the sale of Swiss merchandise in the European market, did not, for all that, bring an end to the photographer's engagement with Greece. In 1930, he published a brochure titled *Tourism in Greece*, with 40,000 copies, disseminated in four languages (French, English, German and Spanish). This publication stood apart from earlier guides for the number and quality of its illustrations, reproduced by heliograph (fig. 12. 3 to 12. 5). Boissonnas again enacted some of the stronger ideas he had developed in the 1919 contract and in his deluxe volumes, such as the juxtaposition of ancient Greece and modern Greece, urbanized and industrialized (fig 12. 5). The rapidly improving means for reproducing photographs in the 1920s and 1930s contributed to this revolutionary tool for creating new geographic imaginaries, destined to ever larger and more diverse publics.

Fig. 12.3

Fig. 12.4

Fig 12.5

Fig. 12.6

A new imaginary for new practices

Greece, up until then, received an elite cultural tourism limited to a few regions which were visited exclusively for their Greek and Byzantine heritage. Through his photographs, Fred Boissonnas promoted simultaneously new destinations and distinct touristic practices.

A greater Greece, united in space and time

Boissonnas's photographs and publications appealed to a new relation to space, in so much as they covered the whole of Greek territory and surrounding lands, even anticipating territorial conquests (for example, Macedonia). The diversity of Greece furthermore was highlighted by way of the variety of its landscape (cities and countryside, forests and mountains, sea and coastlines), its people, and things to be seen there (archeology, certainly, but also folklore, agriculture, monastic life, etc.) (fig. 12.7 and fig 12. 8). The photographer invited the viewer to go beyond ruins, to consider also a relationship with the local populations, which he portrayed as warm and welcoming. His convivial scenes allowed viewers to imagine themselves in the spaces photographed, and instilled an interest in travel.

Fig. 12. 7

Fig. 12.8

Distinct social groups of the population (city-dwellers, peasants, women, the elderly) were photographed, with particular attention given to signs of folklore (costumes, local celebrations). Viewers are again invited, by way of these encounters, to travel in space and time: "One of the great appeals of traveling off the beaten path is encountering these ancestral virtues, these customs, this nobleness which extends back to antiquity. (...) This entire people has so much wit, such veneration for their past, such attachment to their age-old customs! They show hospitality with the ease of the heroes of the Odyssey. Mentor and Telemachus were no better received in Pylos than we at Zemenon"²² (Boissonnas, 1930, p. 25). Beyond the rhetorical

²² "Un des grands charmes du voyage en dehors des voies ordinaires est de retrouver ces vertus ancestrales, ces usages, cette noblesse qui reportent à l'antiquité. (...) Tout ce peuple a tant d'esprit, un tel culte de son passé, un tel attachement aux antiques usages! Il exerce l'hospitalité avec la simplicité des héros de l'Odyssée. Mentor et

effect, at play is a wish to superimpose geographies, epochs, as well as fiction and reality.

This new vision linking the past and the present is reflected in Boissonnas's iconographic approach to ancient ruins, the most striking example of which is the case of the Parthenon, a common object of travel photographs since 1839 (See Yiakoumis, 2000). Boissonnas however managed to renew the image of the monument both at the formal and symbolic levels, choosing quite an original angle, but also especially in drawing from the elements: the sunlight, the water, the clouds (*i. e. doc. 6*). He developed, more generally, a sensitive approach to the ruins, which he photographed much as he photographed the living and dynamic elements of the modern Greek landscape. His photographs invited the viewer to move beyond an intellectual approach alone to the ruins, appealing as well to the senses, opening the way for new notions of tourism in these regions.

A country for investors

The relation to time in the work of Boissonnas is paradoxical, given that a significant emphasis is also given to change. Books and sets of postcards juxtaposed a timeless Greece, "eternal," and signs of its demographic and economic transformation (fig.12. 5):

"in this still new Greece, so interesting for its intense modern activity, the development of its ports, its commerce and industry, the prodigious assimilation of more than a million and a half of refugees, each day offers a contrast, an ancient vestige and, not far, a factory or a new city

Télémaque ne furent pas mieux accueillis à Pylos, que nous à Zéménon.”

popping up as in America. "²³ (Boissonnas, 1930, p. 29)

A land of contrasts is put forward, complicating any vision of the country that merely valued its ancient and Byzantine past.

Diverse audiences were in fact targeted by these documents in order to favor the development of a tourism industry: on the one hand, the potential tourists; on the other, foreign investors, and among them perhaps especially members of the Greek diaspora who were playing a significant role in the country's infrastructure development (Dritsas, 2003). In his letter to Greek authorities making the case for the economic stakes of their project, Daniel Baud-Bovy drew up a list of tourism infrastructure and businesses to be established following the Swiss model: beach resorts (for example, at Piraeus), health spas (on the flanks of Olympus), more rail stops, and hotels.²⁴ The illustrated brochures were conceived to reveal spaces, give birth to notions and desires, and to demonstrate the touristic possibilities of certain regions. The images of a "modern" Greece, endowed with diverse means of transport, normal and ordered city planning and businesses, should have encouraged these investors by allowing them to see the resources that would be available to them, and by inviting them to join a process already under

²³ “ dans cette Grèce toujours nouvelle, si intéressante par l'intense activité moderne, par le développement de ses ports, de son commerce et de son industrie, par la prodigieuse assimilation de plus d'un million et demi de réfugiés, chaque jour offre un contraste, un vestige antique et non loin de là, une usine ou une ville nouvelle sortie de terre à l'américaine. ”

²⁴ Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-2. Copy of a letter from Daniel Baud-Bovy to Fred Boissonnas, October 29, 1918.

way.

During the 1920s and 1930s, tourism did go through a period of transition in Greece. The end of conflicts, the pacification of various regions, the opening of transportation routes, the increase in automobiles, and the development of rail links at the national level as well as internationally (with the Orient Express) unlocked new geographical horizons, creating new possibilities for exploiting tourism (Dritsas, 2003, p. 188).

Cruises following Ulysses, mountaineering on Olympus

During his career, Fred Boissonnas collaborated with various writers and scholars such as Victor Bérard, mentioned above. If the results of that latter partnership were not published until 1933, as *Dans le sillage d'Ulysse* [In the wake of Ulysses], their undertaking had echoes in Europe well before. Communicating to the Greek government in 1919, Fred Boissonnas explicitly presented this scientific approach as a possible means for developing cruise-ship tourism:

“ This last work awaited by all the intellectual elite of the two worlds, is regarded an immense success. It brings Homeric studies to the fore of current events at the same time as it will spark a whole series of Homeric cruises along the coast of Greece.”²⁵

²⁵ “ Ce dernier ouvrage attendu par toute l’élite intellectuelle des deux mondes, est appelé à un immense succès. Il

This new view of the world offered by science, relayed through media such as photography and its derivatives, was seen as a means for promoting new tourist practices. In this way, the photographer wove a connection between intellectual, political and artistic circles in order to propose a political and economic application for the new notions of the world and the past arising from archeology.

The "Homeric cruises" were not the only touristic products envisioned by the photographer. Fred Boissonnas and Daniel Baud-Bovy were the first to scale Mount Olympus, in 1913, just after the incorporation of the region to Greece. On the occasion, they took photos which later were widely disseminated in various formats (fig 12. 3). In 1918, the two Genevans suggested to the Greek government the notion of creating a health spa on the "flanks of Olympus."²⁶In 1927, Fred Boissonnas again climbed Olympus, but this time as part of a collective ascent, in the company of twenty five tourists of various nationalities, and just a few days after the establishment of a Greek Alpine Club, the creation of which he had encouraged. In several writings published during the same period, the photographer proposed the systematic exploitation of the sportive, curative and hunting resources of this mythic place.

mettra les études homériques au premier plan de l'actualité en même temps qu'il déclenchera toute une série de croisières homériques sur les côtes de Grèce." Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-2. Letter of Fred Boissonnas to M. Kapsambélis, general consul in Geneva, August 21, 1918.

²⁶ Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. Archives of the central service, 1922, folder 98, sub-folder 4-2-2.

Copy of a letter from Daniel Baud-Bovy to Fred Boissonnas, October 29, 1918, p. 8.

“ We could thus imagine the extensive trails that this uninterrupted succession of summits, which we were just listing, and which have a mean altitude of 2,700 meters, would offer skiers. Imagine this marvel, to float above the Aegean sea, at the height of the snow fields of the home of the gods! To flutter from peak to peak in the azure ether. But it would still be necessary to get there without too much time or trouble.”²⁷ (Boissonnas, 1930, p. 48)

In the same document, Boissonnas advocated the creation of curative establishments along the Swiss model, all while protecting this zone by giving it the status of National Park.²⁸ His various writings promoting tourism at Olympus are illustrated with emblematic and suggestive photographs. Two photographs, of the highest peaks of Olympus, were especially used in conference series, invitation cards, magazine illustrations, books, and brochures. The captured elements (clouds and snow, abrupt and polished cliffs), the range of light (from the most bright to the most dark), as well as the captions ("Tarpeian Rock," "Victory Peak," Throne of Zeus") demonstrated all at once the beauty of this geographic site, its accessibility, and its touristic possibilities (skiing, climbing), all while retaining its mythological aura. The recurrent use of these same images inscribed these sites in the collective imagination, and prepared their

²⁷ “ Nous pûmes ainsi nous figurer les immenses champs de course qu'offrirait au skieur cette suite interrompue de sommités que nous énumérions tout à l'heure et dont l'altitude moyenne est de 2 700 mètres. Imaginez cette merveille, planer sur la mer Egée du haut des champs de neige de la demeure des dieux! Voltiger de cime en cime dans l'azur éthéré. Mais encore faudrait-il y parvenir sans trop de peine et de temps. ”

²⁸ Boissonnas, 1928 and Boissonnas, 1930, p. 52.

staging for tourism.

In making visible the Greek territories now united within one State, though distinct and often unknown, yet laden with meaning for classical European culture, the photographs of Boissonnas permitted the creation of realm between the Greek State, still in formation, and potential travelers, both Greek and foreign. Disseminated through lectures, exhibitions, postcards and diverse publications, the photographs functioned as lures, all the more effective in that their interpretation was not closed, but open, and accessible to diverse publics. Lending themselves to multiple readings, the photographs furthermore were used by a variety of actors.

One imaginary, multiple uses

Elefthérios Venizélos was the first Greek statesman to request the editorial and photographic services of Fred Boissonnas as part of his program of government, briefly initially during his first mandate as Prime Minister in 1910-1915, and later, on a more ambitious scale, in 1919 with the signing the contract alluded to earlier (See Boudouri, 2003). Communication is one of the greatest political qualities attributed to Venizélos (Kitromilides, 2008, p. 5), considered the founder of modern Greece. Recourse to the work of Fred Boissonnas and the geographic imaginary that it conveyed was one of the means used by Venizélos to defend Greece on the international stage, and to promote an independent Greek territory within expanded borders. The photographs were also conceived as instruments for the development of the tourist

sector, the importance of which the statesman had already recognized prior to the First World War (Dritsas, 1999).

The development of an imaginary through texts and images to promote tourism carried dimensions that went beyond commercial and economic interests alone. It was a tool as well for developing the national identity of the young State, for claiming recognition and rights on the international stage, and for furthering the consolidation of a still-unstable national territory.

After 1922, the terms of the contract between Fred Boissonnas and the Greek government were no longer applicable, and the involvement of the photographer in promoting Greek tourism took other forms.

Tourism, a new bridge between Greece and Europe after 1922

Following the considerable difficulties which Greece confronted at the beginning of the 1920s, the time of the "Great Catastrophe," various actors within Greek society and its diaspora sought to draw attention again to tourism (See especially Peltre, 1997, pp. 295-301). Internal and external tourism was then promoted toward several ends: in addition to its economic interest, it was intended to create a popular touristic consciousness (Boudouri, 2006, p. 61) but also, with regard to a foreign public, to counterbalance the mishellenism²⁹ resulting from the war against the Ottoman Empire. Some Greek politicians considered ways of developing propaganda using text and images, especially photography (Boudouri, 2006, p. 60), even if not under an explicit

²⁹ The antithesis of the more common Western European attitude of Philhellenism.

program. In 1929, Venizélos established the Hellenic Tourism Organization to better organize this new sector, counting especially on images, which were sought and used immediately. The tourism organization in Greece today indeed still relies on glossy photo albums (Dritsas, 2003, note 8 p. 203).

Businessmen were also involved in tourism promotion. Magazines were published toward this end during the 1920s and 1930s, where photography was granted an important place. Several of them used images by Boissonnas. *Le Voyage en Grèce*, the most sumptuous of these publications, has been the object of several recent studies and one book. Published between 1934 and 1939 and directed to Cruise passengers, this periodical had been established to "create a tie between Greece and its visitors by way of writers, artists and contemporary scholars » (Basch, 2006, p. 1). Fred Boissonnas had a direct and indirect influence on this editorial project, at several levels. The attention given to the layout of the magazine echoed the two art books about Greece published by Fred Boissonnas and Daniel Baud-Bovy. Additionally, various issues included photos by Boissonnas, conferring through their quality and layout a unique status to the magazine (Vedrine, 2006, p. 119). Far from serving as simple illustrations, these images demonstrated Greece as "frozen within an eternal present" (Vedrine, 2006, p. 126).

The influence of Boissonnas is also discernible at another level. The magazine was published under the direction of Hercule Joannidès, a Greek national with ties to Venizélos, exiled in France, and also director of the Neptos company which organized cruises to Greece. The 1930s saw a boom in organized voyages and cultural tourism, paralleling the rise of a leisure society and paid vacations in certain European countries. The goal of *Le voyage en Grèce* was to promote archeological cruises organized under the sponsorship of French national museums and the School of the Louvre (Basch, 2006, pp. 1-2). The company notably proposed a cruise

following the path of Ulysses, for which renown figures, including writers, poets and academics, were invited along for free. Fred Boissonas and Victor Bérard's approach was explicitly followed (Boudouri, 2006, p. 59). Though it is impossible to know exactly the role played by Fred Boissonas in this phenomenon, the photographer formed part of the network of businessmen, politicians, and artists involved in the process. It was in connection with Hercule Joannidès, for example, that Boissonas returned to the summits of Olympus in 1927.

The touristic cruise industry in part grew out of the ideas and imaginaries developed earlier by Fred Boissonas and his collaborators. The creation of a geographic imaginary by way of diverse iconographic and textual documents, therefore, preceded the development of infrastructure or the establishment of corresponding touristic practices. Boissonas's role demonstrates that the boom in the tourism industry owed to a diverse network of actors, among them the artists who constructed images of certain destinations prior to their becoming objects of tourism.

The Metaxas dictatorship and the imaginary promoted by Boissonas

Further along in the 1930s, Greek political power found new uses for tourism and the imaginary which underlay it, renewing interest in the sector. Coming to power in 1936, General Metaxas installed a dictatorial and retrograde regime, with a manner of communicating based in a nearly fascist style and rhetoric (Clogg, 2002, p. 115). Following the model of contemporary

fascistic regimes in Europe, he promoted, for example, the idea of a "third Hellenic civilization," combining the (contradictory) values and prestige of both ancient and Byzantium Greece (Clogg, 2002, p. 116). Starting in 1936, a post was created for a Subsecretary of State for the press and tourism, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, having among its duties the organization of tourism in Greece and the development of propaganda abroad (Dritsas, 2003, p. 190-191). Tourism promotion was made an integral part of propaganda efforts more generally. One magazine, *In Greece*, appeared between 1936 and 1939 and was directed to foreign travelers in order to project the image sought by the Greek government. Photographs by Fred Boissonnas were published there, but beyond being mere pictures, their gaze of Greece was taken to advance an idea of the racial and cultural continuity of the Greek people since antiquity.

In 1938, Fred Boissonnas was decorated by the Metaxas regime.³⁰ Beyond the convenient image of Greek geographic and historical unity promoted in his work, it was without doubt the rural, traditional and folkloric Greece highlighted in his photographs that caught the interest of this ultra-conservative regime. The attention brought to tourism by the Metaxas regime did not respond to political and economic interests alone, but also to social goals, the Greek government seeing it as an instrument for mobilizing all sectors of the population, especially women and rural-dwellers (Dritsas, 2003, p. 191).

A geographic imaginary used for tourism promotion is a semantic reduction useful as well for reifying the image of a country. It doesn't just engender tourism and help accumulate foreign reserves; it is also a potential tool for varied political ends, to be deployed toward distinct publics. Fred Boissonnas was just one gear in a chain of actors who used the imaginary he helped

³⁰ Personal communication from M. Hercules Papaioannou, September 2010, Thessaloniki Museum of Photography.

create for diverse, even opposing ends.

The twenty-first century: reactivation of an imaginary?

In recent years, various of Fred Boissonnas's works have been republished in Greece, where the government also acquired, on the eve of the 2004 Olympic games in Athens, a large portion of Boissonnas's photographic archive. Since the 1990s, several traveling exhibitions have been organized, including one dedicated to Mount Athos. And many of Boissonnas's photographs are also available now on the internet. This (re)appearance of images by Fred Boissonnas in Greek public space is undeniably linked to the renewed interest that photography has held in our societies since the 1980s-1990s. But it also corresponds to shifting conceptions of tourism in Greece: after several decades of developing mass tourism, government policy since the 1990s has changed owing to several factors, particularly environmental degradation and deindustrialization. Efforts have since been made to diversify touristic offerings by developing, for example, cultural tourism, agrotourism, and health-related tourism. This phenomenon corresponds not only to a growing concern with environmental preservation in Greece, but also with highlighting and enacting heritage for cultural and educational purposes (Dritsas, 2003, p. 199). Tourism has been increasingly seen as a means to balance regional development by mobilizing communities hitherto excluded, particularly in rural areas, so as to bring them into the market and generate employment.

The purchase and development of Boissonnas's Greek photographic archive reflects,

above all, its heritage value.³¹ This renewed interest is perhaps consistent with a wish to again enrich tourist practices by emphasizing new aspects of Greek culture. We might ask if the utilization of these photographs is not equally a way of reviving the imaginary that had been fashioned by the photographer, just as Greece again needs to renegotiate its identity in the face of internal and external challenges. The philhellenists Fred Boissonnas and Daniel Baud-Bovy saw in the promotion of beach, cultural, health or rural tourism several interests for Greece:

“There would be a double action: on the one hand, to develop that which we call the "foreigner industry," and on the other, to work in order that the results of this campaign contribute to embellish Greece, so that it prospers with regard to its natural beauties, its local architecture (...) Once again, the experience gained in Switzerland would be so useful, be it in the one sense, be it in the other.” (citation reference?)

Their optimistic conception regarding the role of a tourist industry is still meaningful, nearly a century later.

³¹ Personal communication from Irène Boudouri, May 2011, Athens.

Conclusion

The photographer Fred Boissonnas played a pioneering role in the establishment of tourism in Greece by creating an imaginary linked to the promotion of novel touristic practices. His work found echoes in Greece as well as abroad because it was the product of both a hybrid and collective imagination, arising out of both Greek and European culture. The association of images and texts is an effective tool for establishing an imaginary: the iconography gives force and attractiveness to the message, while texts give meaning and depth to the images, linking them to additional referents. By putting literature and photographs side-by-side, by disseminating the same spectacular images across an entire range of documents, such as in the case of views of Olympus, Fred Boissonnas created "markers" (MacCannell, 1976 and Crouch, Lübbren, 2003, p. 8) -- making places known, showing their beauty and accessibility, and changing their meaning. He thus prepared them for investment by the tourist industry. The case of this photographer illustrates the importance of the 1920s and 1930s for the creation of geographic imaginaries for tourism, the history of such imaginaries being inseparable from the media that served as their vehicles. This period was fundamental in the spread of geographical imaginaries, all the more evident given that many images produced during this time are reentering circulation again today, still functioning as markers.

The various reutilizations of the work of Boissonnas for different political ends illustrate the manner in which a single geographic imaginary can be exploited, both inside and outside a country. The stakes are not economic alone, but also social and political. They raise the question

of the links between a geographic imaginary directed toward tourists and the policies of the receiving nations, for whom the control of the imaginary may be inscribed in relations of power with foreign states. The career of Fred Boissonnas equally shows how the media sought to construct and promote a tourist imaginary arise from an array of actors. Through his images, the photographer linked the scientific world, the political sphere, and investors with a broader public.

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Illustrations

Fig. 12. 1: BERARD Victor, *Dans le sillage d'Ulysse: album odysseén*, 1933: "Les grottes d'Eumée".

Fig. 12. 2: BERARD, 1933: "Les fureurs d'Eole".

Fig 12.3 : BOISSONNAS Fred, *Le tourisme en Grèce*, Genève, 1930, pp. 2-3.

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Fig 12.5 : BOISSONNAS, 1930, pp. 18-19.

Fig 12.6 : BAUD-BOVY Daniel, BOISSONNAS Fred, *En Grèce par Monts et par Vaux*,

1910. Plate n. 1, frontispiece: “Le portique Nord de l’Erechtheion”.

Fig 12.7: BAUD-BOVY, BOISSONNAS, 1910, p. 45: "Zéménon. Un four"

Fig 12.8 : BAUD-BOVY, BOISSONNAS, 1910, plate 10, p. 54: “Argos. La citadelle de Larisse”.