

and sympathies, I consider this concern a profoundly valid and legitimate reason to engage in anthropological research. What I want to highlight here (by way of conclusion) is not the research methodology and how it affects the validity and persuasiveness of the authors' findings and suggestions. Rather, I want to challenge the pastoral *and* anthropological soundness of the core suggestions put forward by the editor, Franco Zocca – namely, that we need to expose these magical beliefs as dangerous superstitions, encourage Melanesians to accept scientific and verifiable explanations for sickness, death, and misfortunes, and to seek no further than the natural causes. While this recipe gives away a good measure of concern, frustration and anger, it blocks the way to a deeper cultural and human understanding of Melanesian sorcery beliefs and experiences, and precludes a pastoral ministry that is truly helpful and transformative. I see a more appropriate and promising approach in the reflections of one contributing research team (Gibbs/Wailoni): “Ultimately Sorcery beliefs are cultural variations on the age-old problem of evil. It is not so much a matter of dismissing Sorcery as mere superstition or thinking that conversion will mean the substitution of a Christian way for the tradition. Rather, the Christian response must be to engage with the beliefs and practices in question so that people, young and old, can come to see ‘evils’ such as sickness, death and misfortune through the eyes of faith” (2009: 89). As one important task the authors identify the development of a culturally sensitive pastoral theology of death because without it “little will change with regards to Sorcery as an explanation for death” (2009: 88) – another worthy challenge for the MI and its research team.

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## The Diary of Saint Faustina Kowalska Objectified in a Religious and in a Village Community

### The Case of Rybno

Anna Kapusta and Agnieszka Późniak

At that moment I felt transconsecrated.  
My earthly body was the same, but my soul was different;  
God was now living in it with totality of His delight.  
This is not a feeling, but a conscious reality that nothing  
can obscure.

(Kowalska 2006).<sup>1</sup>

Hooray! We found the house from “the Diary”!  
We settled at the ruined presbytery. And this name: Rybno  
becomes like the symbol of Christianity.  
(Jakimowicz 2006).

### Preface

Drawing on the results of our field research, we would like to present how a ritual script supports playing ritual roles, or in other words, how a ritual text changes into social practice. We regard narrative practice as a vital component in a culture's ongoing creation and negotiation of its shifting forms. The ritual text that we will discuss is the “Diary” written by Saint Faustina.<sup>2</sup> Our aim is to show it as a social construct, a phenomenon and idea that is “(re)constructed” and developed through social practice. We observed this process in a recently founded cloistered women's order.

### Fieldwork Research: Preliminary Considerations

Our fieldwork was based on observations which were initially not given any theoretical framework or structure. An area of investigation was not conceptualized before setting about the project. We were not familiar with the topography of Rybno (both the convent of the Sisters Handmaids of God's Mercy and the village) before going there. Because we were using electronic means of collecting data, the audio registration, we did not keep the classic explorer's diary. Our own comments on the events of the day were recorded in the evening of the same

<sup>1</sup> All further *Diary* quotations are from this source.

<sup>2</sup> Kowalska (2006). First published in 1981; since then a new edition has been published each year.

day. The conceptual framework which was used to formulate specific problems to be investigated was constructed during the postrecord analytical process.

### **Operational Definitions (Ritual Script, the Role in Ritual, Social Practices)**

To describe the reality of Rybno, we are going to apply several concepts. Thus, we use the term “ritual script” in the sense of performance (multiple actualizations) of a ritual screenplay (i.e., the sequences of actions resulting from the text of the “Diary”). Such performance manifests itself in the concrete social practices observable in the everyday life of the convent, such as forms of cult, kinds of interaction, the specific “vocabulary,” and the patterns of behavior, as well as the iconographic designs present in the space of the cloister. As a role played in a ritual, we define any significant and purposeful verbal and nonverbal behavior that, in the case of Rybno, is evoking the symbolic “reality” of the “Diary.” To create this reality, the Sisters use some strategies observable in various aspects of communication (language, ways of dressing, the “body language”). Finally, we define social practices as significant narrative units (the fragments of a “tale”) that are recreating in the “actual” reality of the convent the “symbolic” reality of the “Diary.” Those practices belong to the mythico-practical strategies as defined by Sahlins (1985).

### **The Hidden Observation and Natural Experiment: The Reasons for Using Hidden Observation**

Applying the method of hidden observation we assumed a noninvasive way of exploration of the field of research. In our interactions with the Sisters, we benefited from their comprehensive acceptance of our role as pilgrims. This was in accordance with the charisma of that religious order whose members stress the importance of conversations with pilgrims. Our interactions could be seen as a kind of natural experiment which, however, does not disturb the symbolic structure of the social world under investigation. As this experiment was conducted on the Sisters’ own “territory,” it was not fully controlled by us. We only observed changing circumstances and reacted to them. The hidden observation conducted this way became, in our opinion, a specific kind of natural field experiment. We felt free from ethical dilemmas, such as the risk of disturbance or the risk of imposing worldly values on the commu-

nity we were studying. In this way we did not violate the structure of knowledge and convictions of the community that we studied.

Hammersley and Atkinson write about situations where a researcher chooses a role of the observer in field investigations. They refer to this as utilizing the category of an “acceptable ignoramus”. We also developed and supplemented our observations by utilizing additional sources, such as informal interviews, newspaper reports, and devotional brochures provided by a Rybno resident. We also used the material distributed by the Sisters themselves. Our work in the field oscillated, therefore, between the pattern of a “participant as an observer” and “an observer as a participant” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2000: 112). Asking questions “about Sisters” we exposed our “externality” to the social world observed. However, by spending time in the convent we interacted with the Sisters as ordinary pilgrims. The village administrator’s acceptance of our being there provided us with a public legitimation of our identity. We were also able to conduct and record an interview with the wife of the village administrator.

Discussing ethical concerns connected with fieldwork, Hammersley and Atkinson have established five principal categories of possible ethical dilemmas: “conscious consent, privacy, harmfulness, using, and consequences for future investigations” (2000: 269). It was not possible to formally obtain the “conscious consent” for our project. Still, the charisma of the community, specifically the principle of “open apostolate,” provided us with an equivalent form of the “consent.” The infringement on privacy did not take place, as we never crossed the limits, neither “territorial” nor “symbolic,” designated as accessible only to the sisters. We were moving about the area accessible to pilgrims (a chapel, room with the book of intentions, road to the settlement, etc.), while, during conversations, we mostly pursued motifs selected by our interlocutors. As for the “harmfulness,” we assumed that the goal of our investigation is, primarily, to produce anthropological knowledge, limited only to social researchers and not to the so called “public opinion.” This being the case, we believe that we have limited any harm. The problem of consequence of our research for “future investigation” is currently in the phase of discernment. We intend, however, to continue the study of this topic, but the character and extent of this research has yet to be defined.

## Sister Faustina – Her Life as a Nun

Sister Faustina (Helena) Kowalska is today one of the most popular and well-known Catholic saints. She was born as the third child to a poor peasant family. It is said that she had already felt the first stirrings of a religious vocation at the age of seven. Around the time she was considering her entering religious life, on August 1, 1925, she had a vision of the suffering Christ. She claimed that God himself was calling her to be a nun. She entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy and began her life as a nun on April 30, 1926, under the name Sister Maria Faustina of the Blessed Sacrament. She spent thirteen years in that order and worked in several houses in Cracow, Plock, and Vilnius, where she worked as a cook, gardener, and portress.

Sister Faustina was an unconventional nun. She claimed she had visited Purgatory and Hell. She allegedly received some extraordinary gifts, such as revelations, visions, hidden stigmata, participation in the Passion of the Lord, the gift of bilocation, the reading of human souls, the gift of prophecy, and the rare gift of mystical engagement and marriage (see Siepak and Dłubak 2005). She is also said to have seen and spoken to Jesus and Mary several times. During those conversations, Jesus told her to spread the devotion to the Mercy of God. Thus, during one of the visions, Jesus appeared as the “King of Divine Mercy,” wearing a white garment. His right hand was raised in a sign of blessing and the other hand was touching the garment at the breast. From beneath the cloth came two large rays: one ray was red, the other white. A picture of that vision was painted according to Faustina’s instructions. It became very popular and today has several versions. In her diary, Faustina described the visions of Jesus and recorded his wishes. The diary was later published under the title “Divine Mercy in My Soul. The Diary of St. Faustina. Thus, we read in the “Diary” (1693):

Secretary of my most profound mystery – said Jesus to Sister Faustina – know that your task is to write down everything that I make known to you about my mercy, for the benefit of those who by reading these things will be comforted in their souls and will have the courage to approach me.

As Faustina writes further in the same diary, Jesus chose her to be the Apostle and “Secretary”<sup>3</sup> of His Mercy (Diary, 1588):

3 Jesus said to Saint Faustina: “You will be the secretary of My Mercy, both in this life and the next” (Diary, 1605).

In the Old Covenant – he said to her – I sent prophets wielding thunderbolts to my people. Today I am sending you with my mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to my Merciful Heart.

During the apparitions, Jesus gave Faustina three tasks: (1) reminding the world about the merciful love of God toward every human being; (2) spreading the news of God’s mercy for the world, particularly for sinners. She should do this through the practice of new forms of devotion to the Divine Mercy, described by Jesus in her visions, such as the veneration of the image of the Divine Mercy with the inscription: “Jesus, I Trust in You,” by celebrating the feast of the Divine Mercy on the first Sunday after Easter, by reciting the chaplet to the Divine Mercy and praying at the Hour of Mercy (3 P.M.). Jesus attached great promises to the above forms of devotion. The third and final task in Faustina’s mission was to establish a group devoted to the Divine Mercy which was to undertake the task of proclaiming and begging God’s mercy for the world. She was not able to fulfill this last request, however. Faustina unsuccessfully tried to found a “congregation which will proclaim the Mercy of God to the world, and, by its prayers, obtain it for the world” (Diary, 436). She was constantly denied the permission to leave the convent to pursue this goal. Although she was unable to establish the religious order which Jesus had asked for during her own lifetime, she left clear rules for the life of such community, were it ever to be started. In 1941, the Institute, known as “The Apostolic Movement of the Divine Mercy,”<sup>4</sup> was founded indeed, but it was a movement of lay Catholics rather than the cloistered convent that Faustina had intended.

## Sister Faustina Reinterpreted

According to the official information provided by the Sisters on their internet webpage,<sup>5</sup> the Community of Sisters Handmaids of God’s Mercy came into being:

as the answer to the demand directed to Sister Faustina Kowalska by the Lord Jesus, related to the creation of a cloistered group of religious nuns dedicated to obtaining God’s mercy for the whole world, with special regard for priests and other religious.

4 See: <<http://www.faustinum.pl/faustinum.php>> [13.08.2010].

5 See: <<http://www.misericordiadei.eu/>> [13.08.2010].

**Fig. 1:** The cloister in Rybno  
(© Kapusta and Późniak)



The cloistered group was separated from the active community of Sisters of the Merciful Jesus. Three women received permission from the proper church authorities to create the new establishment. The “founder’s myth” which they recount relates the following events:

Decades after Faustina’s death several women (not knowing about each other) began to look for the cloistered order described in the Diary. They couldn’t find it, so they went to Myslibórz to enter an active order. They entered with the idea that they wanted to be cloistered. They were accepted, though women who put this sort of conditions in advance are usually not admitted, as Sister Gertruda Kamieniecka related. They said to themselves: “We will wait, even to the end of our life. Supposedly God only needs our prayer and our dedication. Maybe the convent will be created after our death?” And here it is – Jesus played a trick on us: He created it by our hand (Jakimowicz 2006).

The symbolic beginning of the community is said to have taken place on the 29th September 2001. On this day, the ordinary bishop of the Łowicz diocese, Alojzy Orszulik, gave his permission to open the first house of the community in Rybno near Sochaczew, in the Mazovia region of central Poland, and at the same time formally accepted the Sisters into his diocese. The first members and founders of the community were: Sister Gertruda (Jolanta Barbara Kamieniecka), Sister Jana (Dorota Monik) and Sister Scholastica (Anna Maria Porąbka). The Holy

Sister M. Faustina Kowalska, however, is considered to be the spiritual founder of the Community of Sisters Handmaids of God’s Mercy. Sister Faustina described in the “Diary” in exact details the conditions and the principles on which the community should function. All the guidelines defining the aim, tasks, way of life, and dress of the Sisters of Rybno is taken from the text of the “Diary,” transforming it into the ritual script, that is to say, the holy text to which they refer to even more often than to other orthodox texts.

### Rybno as a Ritual Script

We became interested in this small village near Sochaczew in the fall of 2008. From various Catholic magazines we learned about the existence of a new phenomenon: the creation of a new, cloistered convent. We decided to visit this place and do some research. We expected to find a special kind of community, perhaps even to witness the process of its creation. What seemed to be somewhat different about that new cloister was the way the community related to visitors. What we also found interesting was a spirituality and way of life that are based primarily on the “Diary” of Sr. Faustina rather than on more conventional texts. Indeed, the “Diary” as a sacred text seems to be more important than the Bible itself. Faustina’s words are used to legitimize their whole reality, the space, the dress, the charism, the rules, and the relationships. The “Diary” be-



**Fig. 2:** The interior of the cloister's chapel (© Kapusta and Późniak)

comes the main reference for behavior and interpretation of the world. It seemed to us that the fundamental purpose of that community was to carry out the work of turning the ritual text into a way of life.

We conducted our observations between the 30th of April and the 4th of May 2009. Before going there, we tried to contact the Sisters to negotiate conditions of our sojourn. The first contact was established through the web page, but the e-mail we sent failed. Our request was also denied during the phone call we made. The Sisters seemed wary of scientists and researchers. After a few failed attempts, we decided to conduct the hidden observation. This is an essential method when dealing with exclusive groups because it allows the researcher to get reliable information and to observe “natural” behavior. We also conducted interviews with lay people, a local priest, representatives of the local authorities (village administrator – Polish *sottys*), and pilgrims.

As Mark Schneider notes, “For some semioticians and semiotic anthropologists, culture is everywhere textual, everywhere telling a story that needs to be ‘deciphered and interpreted.’ With culture at least, if not with the world generally, there perhaps *is* nothing outside of texts, from which it would follow that anthropology, sociology, history, and the like should be disposed to interpretive *reading* as the primary tool of understanding” (1987: 809). This is why we have also read and analyzed all the available texts – including the written prayer requests from the “books of intentions” – as well as

the appearance and organization of the space, the look of the Sisters, their behavior and language, the press articles, etc. What we observed was the crucial role of the “Diary”: it became the sacred text, the script for rituals, for the routine of everyday life, and the source of the Sisters’ discourse. Sister Faustina says, for example:

On one occasion, when I entered the chapel, I saw the walls of a building in a state of disrepair. The windows were without panes, and the doors had only frames with no paneling. Then I heard these words in my soul: this is where the convent will be (Diary, 559).

This vision was transformed into the “official myth,” the story that is presented by the Sisters, of how they settled down in that particular location. This story also became a part of the popular knowledge about the “reality” of the convent:

We went to Rybno. We saw a cottage, crumbly and covered with mold, without doors, with the floors torn up, without panes in windows, and we were standing delighted. We asked quickly where the church was. When it turned out, that it was nearby, we were overjoyed. Only one small thing ... the altar, the one that Faustina described, was supposed to have an “Hour of Mercy” and angels. When we were told that the temple was known as Saint Bartholomew’s, we grew sad. However, God had his own plans. We went into the church, looked at the altar and to our amazement we noticed that it was as if it were taken directly from Faustina’s description. As we were

standing and looking, we felt an unusual internal quiet. We had found our place which was prepared for us by our Lord Jesus (Knie-Górna 2007).

As we have seen, there are quotations to be found in the “Diary” that describe the location of the convent and the general look of the place. Also the name of the place seems to confirm its sacred nature: “Hooray! We found the house from the Diary! We settled at the ruined presbytery. And this name, Rybno,<sup>6</sup> is like the symbol of Christianity.” The presence of the Sacred in this place is confirmed by many miracles. Two main kinds of miracles are emphasized, those connected to nature and to the people/pilgrims who come here. According to the Sisters as well as the entries in the “books of intentions,” there is always good weather in Rybno, even if it rains everywhere else. The whole neighborhood is also blessed. After the frosty spring, for instance, all flowers on fruit trees were frozen but later, miraculously, the fruit abounded anyway. Another manifestation of Jesus’ blessing for that place was the fact that a strong wind helped the sisters during the haymaking season or when an old ash tree was hit by lightning which then provided fuel for the winter season. More importantly, it all happens in accordance with the words of Christ in Faustina’s diary, which is yet another instance of the impact of that text on the construction of reality:

With great desire, I wait and long for the time when I shall take up my residence sacramentally in your convent. My Spirit will rest in that convent and I will bless its surroundings in a special way (Diary, 570).

Moreover, in conformity with that ritual script, the Sisters in Rybno also present a characteristic look, especially in the choice of colors of their habits. And again we find the proper reference in the “Diary” (526):

When I got to my feet after this prayer and walked to my kneeler, I suddenly saw Jesus next to it. ... In His hands He was holding a white garment with which He clothed me and a cord with which He girded me, and He covered me with a red cloak like the one He was clothed with during His Passion and a veil of the same color, and He said to me. This is how you and your companions are going to be clothed.

In the convent of Rybno, we noticed the presence of one more special kind of space – a place for con-

<sup>6</sup> *Ryba* = fish. The name of the village, “Rybno,” could be translated as „fishery” or “fishpond.”

fession. Reference to it is also found in the “Diary” (699):

And fear nothing, dear soul, whoever you are; the greater the sinner, the greater his right to your mercy, o Lord. O incomprehensible goodness! God is the first to stoop over the sinner. ... My daughter, tell the whole world about my inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of my tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of my mercy. The soul that will go to confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day are open all the divine floodgates through which graces flow.

Finally we cannot forget about the most important element of the symbolic landscape of Rybno – the famous image of Jesus with two huge rays and the words “I trust in you” at the bottom. “Visitors to the monastery are greeted by the big painting of Divine Mercy hanging from a tree. Under Jesus’s feet is the inscription: ‘I trust in you.’ We have many such paintings with inscriptions in different languages. This one was the first. ‘We wanted to wait for a Polish version, but Mother Superior said: Hang it!’” (Jakimowicz 2008). This is what happened in Rybno, again as it was said in the “Diary”: “The Image is to be on view ... and not within the enclosure in that convent. By means of this Image I shall be granting many graces to souls; so let every soul have access to it” (570).

“From a human perspective,” one reads in a Catholic newspaper, “in Rybno there is nothing. An old, 200 years old, dilapidated, community house, meadow and fields around it ... One would need a vivid imagination, to name this place ‘a monastery.’ It really feels, however, as if the air would be different here.” (Knie-Górna 2007). This deep conviction about the uniqueness of this place is a result of a story developed later and also based on the ritual script (the Diary), which (re)constructs the reality. As Jesus said (through the words of Faustina’s diary of course):

There will never be splendid houses, but only a small church with a small community consisting of a few souls, not more than ten, plus two externs to look after the external affairs of the community and of the church (Diary, 536).

In Rybno, we were able to observe the role of a performative text as an existing phenomenon where the “Diary” can be treated not just as a literary text but

as a social project. Another special text is the corpus of individual intentions of pilgrims coming to Rybno, and inscribed in the “books of intentions.” They can be found in different spaces – in the “sacred” space of the chapel as well as in the “private” space of the guesthouse. Based on all of these texts one can also interpret Rybno, a village in the centre of Poland, on the crossroads of north-south and east-west roads, as “the sacred centre of the world” in Eliade’s sense (1974).

### Rybno in the Context of Symptoms of the “New Spirituality”

The formula of religiosity presented and practiced by the Community of Sisters Handmaids of God’s Mercy shows formal similarities to the Catholic tradition of the “new spirituality” (Leszczyńska i Pasek 2008: 12f.). It meets the need of religious expression of individual emotional sensibility, sometimes called the “spiritual intelligence.” The spirituality of the convent in Rybno resembles the present form of the Catholic charismatic movement, which Ariel Zieliński terms “Pentecostal.” Zieliński states that this sort of spirituality “is manifested in spectacular religious phenomena which are defined as ‘charismas,’ such as for example speaking in tongues, healing, prophesying, chasing demons away” (2008: 166). The charism of the Sisters from Rybno conforms to this pattern very well. For instance, one can observe in their religious behavior the formal traits of charisma, as defined above, such as the hermetic language as well as importance given to conversation as a catechetical tool. Still, these features are valorized in opposition to the same techniques applied by members of the New Age movement. In the case of Rybno, one should therefore agree with Zieliński’s diagnosis that points to the adaptation of a discourse with a parallel reversal of its axiomatic valorization: “The similarities mentioned above notwithstanding, the defining of the Catholic neo-charismatic movement as a version of New Age spirituality is, in my opinion, incorrect, as the participants of that movement are overtly against this type of religious behavior. It should rather be seen as a counter-proposal in relation to the New Age. The Christian New Religious Movements appeared for the same reasons as the movements identified as New Age, and they respond to the same spiritual needs. However, they intend to accomplish it within the limits of the traditional Christian institutions” (2008: 172). And exactly for these reasons, in the room that functions as the parlor of Rybno’s cloister, the space that “demons stay away from,” one

can see, framed and hanging on the wall, the official blessing of Pope Benedict XVI.

### Conclusion

The qualitative analysis of press reports as well as audio and visual material obtained during the observation conducted at the cloister in Rybno confirmed the hypothesis that there exists a conceptual relationship between the notions of “Jesus” and “Sisters” in the discourse of the Sisters Handmaids of God’s Mercy in that community. These notions create a common semantic field that includes certain components of mythical thinking. Moreover, the “Diary” of Faustina Kowalska functions as a source of myth – a Holy Book – which, however, along with “canonical” generates also “apocryphal” texts. Consequently, the specific charism of the order is supported both by the content of the “Diary,” and sensational stories about miracles and extraordinary events and deeds. As such, this charism is a version of a postmodern Catholic orthodoxy, “a quasi-orthodoxy,” which negotiates new meanings in the course of social praxis. Moreover, it is being constructed in the same way as the texts that are its carriers – namely, fragmentarily, and eclectically. The element that connects that heteronomic code is a strong emotionality, present even in scientific texts concerning contemplative spirituality. It is also worth mentioning that the discourse about the community of Rybno found in Polish Catholic press is also clearly gendered. Quantitative analysis of word usage frequency demonstrated, for instance, that the word “Jesus” occurs in analyzed texts 66 times, while the word “Sister” – 105, which symbolically inverts the traditional Catholic model of a contemplative female order.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The data used in this statistical analysis were extracted from articles concerning the community of Rybno and published in Catholic press in Poland. All those articles are available online, on the official website of the order (<http://www.misericordia.eu>). The analysis was performed by applying the program Nvivo 8.

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## Reserves and Mediterranean Niches in Marseille

### The Meaning of Patron–Client Relations, Cultural Memories, and Innovations

Barbara Peveling

The purpose of this article is to discuss a Mediterranean microregion and the set of associated cultural reserves. The relation between space and human behaviour is the main focus of this analysis. I will analyze cultural reserves as they appear in a local community created by a Muslim–Jewish

(*convivenca*)<sup>1</sup> in an Arabic quarter of Marseille. The study is guided by a methodology mainly based on case studies concerning patron–client relationships. The data were obtained during my one-year field research (2006–2007) conducted in Marseille. My informants were members of the lower middle class, such as shop keepers, and those belonging to the lower working class. The informants from both groups defined themselves as religious practitioners.

## 1 Reserves and Niches

Idealistic and materialistic methodological approaches have been associated with the notions of “cultural reserves” and “microecology.” Here, I refer to the theory of reserves developed by Thomas Hauschild, who defined them as “immaterial, cultural potential that expands the possibility of action for human collectives” (2008: 218). Reserves – cultural, social, or religious – are always activated and mobilized through human action (cf. Gronover 2006: 205), which occurs in a specific environment. The term “microecology,” in turn, refers to the unique specificity of a local environment. Horden and Purcell noted, for example, that the fragmented Mediterranean landscape is characterized by its “micro-ness.” Therefore, the Mediterranean should be defined as a “mosaic” composed of independent microregions that complement each other (2000: 465). Braudel (1985: 9), on the other hand, suggested that, in spite of its ecological diversity, the Mediterranean as a whole forms a distinct unity because of its cultural continuity. In this article, I argue that the Arabic neighborhood of Belsunce, in the center of Marseille, constitutes such Mediterranean microecology,<sup>2</sup> a space that offers social actors, who are embedded in that context, various possibilities to revitalize the cultural reserves of their past, which at the same time confirms, on the local level, the cultural continuity and connectivity of the entire Mediterranean.

## 2 Marseille, Belsunce

Marseille is one of the Mediterranean cities that has never ceased to function as an intermediary between East and West (Abulafia 2006: 71). The city was founded by the Phoenicians and possesses one of the oldest ports in the region. Marseille is frequent-

1 *Convivencia* means the local interaction between different groups; see Driessen (1992).

2 Horden and Purcell (2000: 49).