

Book Review: Ethnography of European traditional cultures: Their role and perspectives in a multicultural world.

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Ethnography of European traditional cultures: Their role and perspectives in a multicultural world. European Seminar - Proceedings. Ed. E. Karpodini-Dimitriadi. Athens: Centre of Vocational Training - Institute of Cultural Studies of Europe and the Mediterranean, 1995. 305 pp. Figures, Plates, Photographs, Paper bound.

The chapters in this edited volume were all papers presented at the European Seminar, organized by the volume's editor, and held in Athens, Greece, in March 1-31, 1995. It is an exemplary volume for students and scholars alike for what an international seminar ought to be; how it should be structured, by relying on local as well as international experts; how a multicultural student body can be gathered; and, finally, how, with the financial assistance of the European Commission, material presented there should be edited for a successful volume. The volume is handsomely crafted, full with drawings, maps and photos, with most of the articles are printed in their original English version; three are, however, in French.

The book contains five separate thematic sections, each containing several chapters of meticulous and well-researched subjects. After the shorter introductory "Methodological Approaches," more specific issues emerge which could be of interest to European scholars and researchers alike. Titled "Cultural Identity: Cultural Heritage, Contemporary Life," this section contains fine descriptions of masked rituals in Greece (Karpodini-Dimitriadi, Ekaterinidis), music and dance (Loutzaki, Mavroeidis), costumes and ancient heritage (Tsaves, Kouria, Valsamaki), the role of nutrition (Polymerou-Kamilaki) and the meaning of Mount Athos, a holy Greek place of present-day monasticism (Lavas).

The third and fourth sections concerns with the definition of cultural heritage, both movable and intangible, and ask specific questions as to the current nature of museum management, safeguarding of archeological and local artifacts, and by what means legal uses may provide protection on an international level. Interestingly all authors in this section are Greeks, which reveals the seriousness with which Greek scholars approach this subject.

Three "western" organizations are discussed in detail which stand out specifically to creating a unified

working method and legality in the protection of cultural heritage: the Council of Europe (D. Therond), the European Union (A. Bouratsis), and the UNESCO (A. Schina). In discussing the latter, the author provides a brief but faithful and useful advertisement of the European Centre for Traditional Culture (ECTC), which was in its formation during the time of the European Seminar, a nice gesture which is much appreciated.

The final section contains the papers given by the students who participated in the Athens seminar. Clearly, this volume functions best at this level: on the one hand, we are provided with glimpses of what European scholars are concerned with at this moment; and, by allowing the students to present their own materials in a written form, what the future generation of ethnologists, anthropologists, folklorists and musicologists will be in the coming decade on the other. There is no doubt in my mind that most of these chapters would be better detailed and analyzed if their approaches to their topic would have been benefiting from closer scholarly scrutiny. Yet, as they are, most of the chapters are much better than the average student paper one reads as seminar papers. This is so, no doubt, because of the editorial care which went into making this volume.

The book closes with a short section discussing the "Identity of the Participating Museums," seven Greek institutions which all were visited by the seminar participants. These vignettes are useful in highlighting what these museums have to offer to the visitors, but, at the same time, how they may be utilized for international educational purposes. I only hope that the European seminar will become a European institution of its own kind, with many more seminars to follow; moreover, that its proceedings will provide the solid foundation for the subsequent issues to come.