The Academic Position of European Ethnology in North America

In Canada and the United States, European ethnology, to the best of my knowledge, nowhere is taught (or even thought of) as an independent discipline. In exceptional and extremely rare instances only is an effort made to study the material culture of European folk cultures. Certain aspects of culture spirituelle, to use the French for which an English term is lacking, frequently are studied by American folklorists, often in the context of Germanic, Romance, or other language studies. Social culture of European peasants, in recent years, has become a field of considerable interest to American anthropologists.

So far as I know, there is not one university or college in Canada and the United States where there would be an independent department of European Ethnology, or where there would be at least a chair or an institute within some other department. Where European folk literature and the social organization of European peasant cultures are taught, in many instances these subjects come under the department of anthropology. (A list of institutions, as far as I have been able to find out about them, will be given at the end of this survey.)

While at some institutions (e.g. at the University of California at Berkeley, the University of California at Los Angeles, Indiana University, and the University of Pennsylvania) it is possible to graduate in Folklore or in Folklore and Folk Life Studies, I know of no institution where European ethnology presently is a separate field acceptable for the B.A., the M.A. or the Ph.D. These degrees would be awarded in anthropology, in sociology, in history, or in English.

On the other hand, the study of American Folk Culture (which may be considered an outgrowth, or even a part of, European Folk Culture) finally has come to be acknowledged as an academic discipline. "The New York Historical Association and New York State University College at Oneonta offer two graduate programs leading to a master of arts degree" with emphasis on material culture. "The History Museum Training Program is designed to train personnel for positions in museums and historical societies, while the American Folk Culture Program combines the techniques of social, cultural, and literary historians, anthropologists, and folklorists." This most promising development is due mainly to the successful efforts of Dr. Louis C. Jones, director of the Cooperstown Museum and of the Cooperstown graduate programs.

In addition, some other items reflect a growing interest in European ethnology and the related field of the material aspects of folk culture:

a. At the 1965 annual meeting of the American Folklore Society a session was devoted to Material Folk Traditions in the United States. Of the papers read, Norbert Riedl's "Folklore and the Study of Material Aspects of Folk Culture" is particularly pertinent for European ethnologists. Although the other papers primarily dealt with American ethnology, they definitely are of interest also for the student of the ethnology of Europe. The session met under the chairmanship of Bruce R. Buckley, New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown. Besides Riedl's paper, the following were read:

Warren E. Roberts (Indiana University): The Lean-to House in Southern Indiana

Henry Glassie (Philadelphia): The Southern Mountain Cabin Types

William I. Schreiber (The College of Wooster): The Pennsylvania Dutch Bank Barn in Ohio

Austin E. Fife (Utah State University): Western Rural Mail Boxes

b. In January 1967, a conference on Central and North European Peasant Cultures took place in Chicago, under the auspices of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. The conference was organized by John J. Honigmann of the University of North Carolina. The objectives of the conference were "(1) to take stock of what has been

---

accomplished in Central European community studies, noting both substantive and theoretical contributions; (2) to delineate... patterns of behavior and structure in Central European rural communities; (3) to examine relationships between patterns of behavior and to trace behavior communities; (4) to orient patterns to their ecological, historical, psychological, or other foundations; and (4) to orient patterns in future research in the area. The countries with which the conference was concerned were Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. The topics were: Ecological relationships, including *Agrarethnographie*. Archaeological perspectives. Historical development, persistence, and change. Kinship and other factors in social structure. Trade and other economic relationships. Rural-urban relationships. Impingement of national institutions on rural communities. Transition from peasant to farmer. Secular and sacred symbols. Rituals and ceremonies. Ethnoscience. World views of peasants, including ethos. Culture and personality.

According to the Preliminary Program of the 1967 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, the following papers, of particular interest to Europeanists, are scheduled to be read at the symposium on *East European Anthropology* under the chairmanship of Bela C. Maday (National Institute of Mental Health):

Irwin T. Sanders (Council for Education in World Affairs): *Ethnology in Bulgaria and Greece*

Paul Leser (Hartford Seminary Foundation): *Ethnology in Czechoslovakia and Germany*

Linda Dégh (Indiana University): *Ethnology in Hungary*

Danguole Variaiokis (California State College, Long Beach): *Folk Culture Studies in Lithuania S.S.R.*

Sula M. Benet (City University of New York, Hunter College): *Ethnology in Poland*

Joel M. Halpern (University of Massachusetts) and Eugene A. Himmel (University of California, Berkeley): *Ethnology in Yugoslavia*

Furthermore, in other sessions of the 1967 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, the following papers will be offered:

Erhel Norge (McMaster University): *Population Composition in a German Village*

Eric R. Wolf (University of Michigan): *Peasant Traditionalism and Modern Revolutions*, with case studies drawn from Russia (and non-European areas)

Philip K. Bock (University of New Mexico): *Some Generative Rules for English Kinship Terminology*

Pertti J. Palto (University of Minnesota): *The Snowmobile Revolution* (dealing with Finnish Lapland)


d. For many years Margaret Arnott (University of Pennsylvania), the leading American authority on Greek ethnology, has promoted the recognition of European ethnology in the United States by reading papers at annual meetings of learned societies;

American Folklore Society, 1958: *Greek Easter Breads*

American Folklore Society, 1959: *The Anastenaria: A Study of a Thracian Firewalking Group*


Regional Folklore Society, Bloomington, Indiana, 1960: *Easter Fires in Greece*

The Society for the History of Technology, 1961: *The Candles for the Dead*

American Folklore Society, 1962: *Breads and Customs for the Twelve Days of Christmas in Greece*

Scholars having graduated in European ethnology might find openings in university or college departments of anthropology, or folklore, or history. A graduate in European ethnology who had also studied American culture of the 17th to the early 19th Century would possess a basis for employment in institutions such as the Farmers' Museum at Cooperstown, N.Y.; Old Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts; The Mercer Museum at Doylestown, Pa.; or the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

The following information is based mainly on the Guide to Graduate Departments of Anthropology for the year 1967-1968 published by the American Anthropological Associations:

Southern Illinois University offers a Special Program in the Ethnology of Europe, especially Western and Central Europe.

Instructors on the graduate level familiar with "Europe" (field of interest is given as listed in the "Guide"):


Prof. Paul Lesor, Hartford (Connecticut)