



Bodies of Knowledge: The Medicalization of Reproduction in Greece

Eugenia Georges

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Recipient of the 2006 Norman L. and Roselea J. Goldberg Prize for the best project in the area of medicine.

The author, a second-generation Greek American, returned to Greece with her young daughter to do fieldwork over the course of a decade. Focusing on Rhodes, an island that blends continuity with the past and rapid social change in often unexpected ways, she interviewed over a hundred women, doctors, and midwives about issues of reproduction.

The result is a detailed portrait of how a longstanding system of "local" gynecological and obstetrical knowledge under the control of women was rapidly displaced in the the period following World War II, and how the technologically-intensive biomedical model that took its place in turn assumed its own distinctive signature.

Bodies of Knowledge is a vivid ethnographic study of how a presumably globalizing and homogenizing process like medicalization can be reshaped as women and medical experts alike selectively accept or reject new practices and technologies. Georges found, for example, that women in Rhodes have enthusiastically embraced some new technologies, like fetal imaging during pregnancy, but rejected others, like medical contraception. They are also avid consumers of popular childbirth manuals.

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