



## On the Doorstep of Europe: Asylum and Citizenship in Greece (The Ethnography of Political Violence)

By Heath Cabot



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### On the Doorstep of Europe: Asylum and Citizenship in Greece (The Ethnography of Political Violence) By Heath Cabot

Greece has shouldered a heavy burden in the global economic crisis, struggling with political and financial insecurity. Greece has also the most porous external border of the European Union, tasked with ensuring that the EU's boundaries are both "secure and humanitarian" and hosting enormous numbers of migrants and asylum seekers who arrive by land and sea. The recent leadership and fiscal crises have led to a breakdown of legal entitlements for both Greek citizens and those seeking refuge within the country's borders.

*On the Doorstep of Europe* is an ethnographic study of the asylum system in Greece, tracing the ways asylum seekers, bureaucrats, and service providers attempt to navigate the dilemmas of governance, ethics, knowledge, and sociability that emerge through this legal process. Centering on the work of an asylum advocacy NGO in Athens, Heath Cabot explores how workers and clients grapple with predicaments endemic to Europeanization and rights-based protection. Drawing inspiration from classical Greek tragedy to highlight both the transformative potential and the violence of law, Cabot charts the structural violence effected through European governance, rights frameworks, and humanitarian intervention while also exploring how Athenian society is being remade from the inside out. She shows how, in contemporary Greece, relationships between insiders and outsiders are radically reconfigured through legal, political, and economic crises.

In addition to providing a textured, on-the-ground account of the fraught context of asylum and immigration in Europe's borderlands, *On the Doorstep of Europe* highlights the unpredictable and transformative ways in which those in host nations navigate legal and political violence, even in contexts of inexorable duress and inequality.



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Cabot's ethnography is artful, sensitive, and engaging... emotionally and intellectually gripping. It will appeal to scholars and students of globalization, European anthropology, and particularly researchers of urban problems, processes, and populations of a Greece in transition." - Kathryn Kozaitis, American Ethnologist

"As both a timely and in a sense timeless study of law and politics, crisis and justice, *On the doorstep of Europe* will appeal to scholars of Europeanisation, immigration, rights frameworks and humanitarian intervention. This work is an engaged and important contribution to anthropology and socio-legal studies, and indeed, it embodies the very transformative power of the complex dramas it illuminates." - Michelle Statz, Social Anthropology

"*On the Doorstep of Europe* is particularly timely, as the international community weighs what are sometimes seen as competing interests of rights and security and as asylum regimes are themselves threatened. Importantly, Heath Cabot's work illustrates ways that protections can fall short in that the systems that are set up to ensure that persecuted individuals receive safe haven can become unworkable for the very individuals they are designed to serve."—Susan Bibler Coutin, University of California, Irvine

"A 'good read' for anyone interested in this topic but also for anyone interested in exploring further alternative approaches to research (as demonstrated through ethnography) and for those with a particular interest in modern Greek dilemmas and responses."—*European Journal of Social Work*

"Original, vividly written, and ethnographically rich, *On the Doorstep of Europe* breaks new ground as a contribution to the anthropology of law, globalization studies, and the ethnography of the eastern Mediterranean. In particular, it illuminates the increasingly complex dynamics of a country newly confronting cultural diversity and rapid urbanization."—Michael Herzfeld, Harvard University

"[Cabot's book] contributes significantly to the international literature on asylum seekers and refugees and the impact of policies on them as well as on the societies that receive them. . . . Cabot, through detailed narration and extended analysis, highlights the stories, field notes, and participant observation material that she has collected from her interviews in a way that brings the reader into the life events of the refugees and NGO professionals."—*Journal of Modern Greek Studies*

"This book is an excellent contribution to an overlooked, yet extremely important, aspect of the asylum system, the humanitarian aspect, which deserves to be widely read by scholars, advocates, students, and researchers. . . . A joy to read"—*International Journal of Refugee Studies*

#### About the Author

Heath Cabot teaches anthropology at the College of the Atlantic in Maine.

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