

Kyoto, 10 December 2009

Dear Sirs,

please let me first spell out very clearly how deeply honoured I am to be here today in this most noble ancient township of Kyoto to receive this award.

“Carnival King of Europe”, the film that has won your attention and your praise authored by young cinematic maestro Michele Trentini in conjunction with myself as a sort of anthropologist- playwright, has in fact been the concern and the result of over three years of consistent joint efforts, led by our Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, the “Museum of Folkways of Trentino”, an important ethnographic institution rooted in the Eastern Italian Alps, which has embraced another four European countries – France, Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia - within the virtuous framework of a project directly funded by the Cultural Department of the European Union in Bruxelles.

This has meant, beyond the making of the film, fieldwork carried out in five countries, museum research, the making of a website www.carnivalkingofeurope.it, an itinerant exhibition that has traveled from Italy to the Southern Balkans, and a number of other activities that were carried out under the spell of a growing awareness of the common European identity, which invariably comes to the surface and is brought into play wherever these ancient rituals are performed.

European history and European culture have been often and still are represented as the sum total of a number of very different, and often irreconcilable, national identities. Our work on Carnival begins to challenge this view, and to show that it is not necessarily so, and it certainly was not so throughout long periods of the European past.

So, besides the infinitely debatable and cumbersome colonial legacies of Europe, and the manifold pangs of its nations and blocs throughout the past two centuries, new grounds can be found today to show that its peoples, for most of their history, shared the very same system of ancient agrarian beliefs, the same religion of old, the same rituals.

That this can be still shown today, 15 hundred years after Europe’s final demise of its own original political unity under Rome, is an astonishing fact that shows how much good work there is still to be done within the scope of some unbiased comparative ethnographic framework.

And to be able to come here today in Kyoto to offer you such a synthetic, and maybe also original view of our continent and of the living experience of its peoples, is a both a rare privilege and a challenge for the future, of which we are very happy, and very proud.

Thank you.

Giovanni Kezich