

discipline and vice versa, this book brings a new light to the study of Greek folklore scholarship.

#### NOTES

1. Demetrios Petropoulos, "The Study of Ethnography in Greece," **Midwest Folklore** II (1952): 15-20.
2. Alki Kyriakidou-Nestoros, "The Theory of Folklore in Greece: Loagraphia in its Contemporary Perspective," **East European Quarterly** V (1972): 487-504.
3. Gregory Gizelis, "Historical Event into Song: The Use of Cultural Perceptual Style," **Folk Lore** 83 (1972): 302-320.
4. Ibid., p. 302.

**Hungarian Folk Beliefs.** By Tekla Dömötör. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. Pp. 324, bibliography, index of names, index of subjects and place-names. \$17.50.

Reviewed by Felix J. Oinas.

For the majority of the Finno-Ugric peoples, surveys of folk religion have been compiled some time ago, viz. of the Ob-Ugrian peoples by K. F. Karjalainen, of the Permian peoples, Mordvins, Cheremis, and Lapps by Uno Harva, of Finns by Harva and Martti Haavio, and of Estonians by Oskar Loorits and Ivar Paulson. The only nation for whose beliefs we did not have an up-to-date survey was Hungary. Now this gap has been filled by Professor Tekla Dömötör with the publication of her **Hungarian Folk Beliefs**.

Actively engaged in the investigation of Hungarian folklore and especially folk beliefs for many years, Dömötör has collected assiduously in the field and has published numerous studies. In her survey of Hungarian folk beliefs, she has drawn extensively on this fieldwork experience, supplementing it with data from the collections of others. Dömötör's inclusion of the most recent fieldwork data and of contemporary beliefs should be singled out as the outstanding feature of the work.

In her emphasis on the contemporary state of folk religion, Dömötör does not neglect the past. On the contrary, she succeeds in striking a happy balance between the past and the present.

Dömötör's survey is broad and comprehensive, broader than many of the extant surveys of the popular religion of the Finno-Ugric peoples. The work provides an historical overview of the research in this area and particularly stresses the merits of three scholars: Arnold Ipolyi, Géza Róheim and Vilmos Diószegi. It includes a brief discussion of the popular religion of the Hungarians up to the nineteenth century, and a more detailed survey of their beliefs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The major sections of the work are devoted to animistic beliefs and various mythical beings, the "cunning folk," healers, magic, nature, laicized traditions of the church, and the dead.

Hungarian beliefs about mythical supernatural beings are rather meagre. More prominent among these beings are the *lidérc* or *ludvérc* (*ignis fatuus*) and the "fair lady" (*szépasszony*). The *lidérc*, hatched from an egg under the armpit, changes its shape at will and appears frequently as "cohabiting *lidérc*." The "fair lady" dances in storms and hail showers, abducts children and casts spells, frequently at noon, and especially on men. The vampire and werewolf are alien to Hungarians; they are known only in the outlying areas of the country and have originated among the Hungarians' neighbors-- the South Slavs, Rumanians, and Austrians.

An important place in Hungarian tradition belongs to people with special skills-- the so-called cunning folk: the *táltos*, the wandering scholar (*garobonciás*), the conjurer of the dead (*halottlátó*), and the clever coachman. The *táltos* and the conjurer of the dead obviously continue the traditions of early Hungarian shamans; both obtain their power through trance. The wandering scholar draws his skills from a book. The clever coachman's power may come, according to one scholar, from the ancient Hungarian custom of burying horses together with their masters.

As for magic, one of the specifically Hungarian practices is the so-called black fast. Total or partial abstinence of food is undertaken in order to cause physical

harm or destruction to an enemy, or to identify a thief. This type of fast is known also in Ireland. Dömötör surmises that in both cases the fast is a survival of an earlier, widespread European practice. The discussion of the use of magic in love, marriage and sexual life is particularly fascinating, such as three girls shouting simultaneously into the stove, the loft and the chimney the names of their admirers, and the various uses of the pubic hair.

The survey of the laicized church traditions is revealing, for it demonstrates the mixture of the ecclesiastical and the superstitious practices. We fully subscribe to a close correlation between exaggerated religiosity and exaggerated superstitiousness, as Ortutay has asserted.

The topics mentioned are but a few of the central ones discussed in Dömötör's book. There are numerous others, equally important and fascinating, such as the figure of St. Lucy, who appears as a terrible witch and possibly a pig; the plague-woman, who can be stopped by riddles and puzzles; the midwife-witch, who causes harm to the mother and child; the power to bind and release with a material representation (e.g., the knots used for safeguarding against unfaithfulness); the dialogue conducted with fruit trees to increase production; the wandering land-surveyor as revenant; and forwarding items to the deceased.

Dömötör raises a question about the meaning of the midday demon among the East Slavs. She remarks, "It is not at all clear whether this demon of the noon is the personification of a truly ancient folk belief, or whether it owes its existence to the quirk of an erroneous translation" (p. 95). I submit that this spirit should be viewed in the context of critical moments in nature, which are felt to be dangerous. These include the turning points of morning and afternoon (i.e., the noon), of day and night (midnight), of the week (midweek), the changes from one season to another (solstices), and from one year to another (new year). In their dangerousness, they correspond to the moments of crises in a person's life-- his birth, initiation, marriage and death. Representing the turning point of the day, the midday spirit draws to herself the dangers that threaten people at noon and early afternoon and thus becomes an evil demon and a scare figure for children.

Dömötör derives the Hungarian kinship term for

daughter-in-law (**meny**) from the word for weasel (**menét**): "this bears witness to the wedding gifts offered in bygone years, when great importance was attached to the valuable skins of furry animals, including that of the weasel" (p. 126). Actually, it is vice versa: the name of a young woman has been carried over to a slender, graceful beast of prey. The function of animal names for young women, especially the daughter-in-law or bride, is generally **captatio benevolentiae**. The transfer of the term for bride to weasel appears, for instance, in some Balkan languages (e.g., Greek **númfítza**) and in some Romance languages (e.g., Portuguese **norinha**). (E. Stankiewicz in **JAF**, 71 (1958), p. 119.)

Discussing magic, Dömötör notes: "Frazer calls the two major forms of magic imitative and sympathetic" (p. 166). In his **Golden Bough**, Frazer classifies the magic rites as (1) homeopathic or imitative, and (2) contagious. Both of these types of magic were given a general name--sympathetic magic, "since both assume that things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy." (James F. Frazer, **The Golden Bough**, I [New York: Macmillan, 1935], p. 54.)

**Hungarian Folk Beliefs** by Professor Dömötör is a significant work. It brings together all the basic information scattered in a great many sources and gives a trustworthy picture of Hungarian folk religion. Its coverage is all-inclusive and broad, paying special attention to beliefs and practices of recent times. The work successfully, though belatedly, brings to a close the circle of surveys of the Finno-Ugric beliefs.

**The New Comparative Mythology: An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of Georges Dumézil.** Third edition. By C. Scott Littleton. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. Pp. xvii + 319, bibliography, index. No price, paper.

Reviewed by Hugo A. Freund.

The study of comparative mythology was a predominant interest of the 19th century scholars in what are today called the fields of anthropology and folklore. Through