

appreciate the caste system in India or the occasional headhunt in Borneo, but these are places we can easily avoid unless we are anthropologists who deliberately choose to seek out and study such vital cultural patterns.

Nothing is relative like cultural relativism (to use a folk expression). Perhaps no one is more willing to recognize the vitality and meaningfulness of Aztec sacrifice or Ibo punishment than I. It is just a matter of rising above one's values. There are thousands of students in the university today who have no trouble at all rising above their culture's values (it is in this area that we have generally failed to recognize the roles of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon as great educators), before they reach the introductory anthropology lecture hall. They have internalized the concept before the instructor even succeeds in naming it. But cultural relativism is a concept meaningful mainly in the classroom. Outside we are called to evaluate and act. The world is shrinking (or is the universe expanding?). The headhunter from Borneo is my next-door neighbor and all that anthropology can offer is a criterion of functionalism with a dash of condescending romantic appreciation as tools with which to face the (hostile) world. Anthropology has taught us less than it believes if its entire moral philosophy is encapsuled in Every Man His Way. It's just not that simple.

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Ingersoll, Ernest. Dragons and Dragon Lore; New York, Payson & Clarke Ltd., 1928. 190 - xii pages. Index, bibliography, 20 illustrations. Reissued by Singing Tree Press, Detroit, 1968. L.C. 68-26577. \$8.50.

Another in the proliferation of Gale reprint editions, Ingersoll's Dragons and Dragon Lore is a popular work which synthesizes late nineteenth and early twentieth century English academic writings on dragons and dragon-like figures and their representational aspects in Asian and Western European religious belief systems and iconography. English attention to the sources and forms of dragon belief reached a highpoint in the period 1880-1930. The ascendancy of dragon lore scholarship was a natural outgrowth of Victorian interest in Indo-European cultural and historical relations, and the intriguing but highly problematic subject matter attracted the attention of E. S. Hartland, Thomas Bulfinch, J. C. Lawson, J. F. Campbell, and a host of other scholars, whose names are scarcely familiar today in folklore circles. Ingersoll patches together a commentary culled largely from these earlier writers to advance the thesis that dragon belief, although without factual basis, ultimately had its origins in Egypt and Mesopotamian etiological myths. From these beginnings, notions about grotesque, heterogeneous reptilian-mammalian-aquiline creations branched eastward through India to the Orient, and westward through Greece into Europe and Celtic Britain. Ingersoll suggests that dragon lore in the Far East has characteristically reflected traditional ideas about nature's power of benevolence and malevolence, procreation and destruction, while in the West the ambivalent aspects of dragon belief were almost wholly appropriated by Christianity during the Middle Ages and aligned with the devil as an allegorical representation

of paganism. In the final three chapters the author touches on dragon elements in Welsh romances and English legends, and in particular the importance of the dragon for the Christian legend of St. George.

Ingersoll's book, like the bulk of the material he worked through in its preparation, is the product of now-outdated thought and "shreds and patches" method in British historical diffusionism and its forebear, the 'solar school' of comparative mythology. Regrettably, in weaving together the strands of dragon lore scholarship in England prior to 1923 (the most recent date in the bibliography), the author fails to provide the kind of balanced consistency of argument and critical objectivity desirable in an area of research where speculative flights of fancy are commonplace. Ingersoll resorts to numerous citations yanked without critical commentary from their original context in an effort to hold together the framework of his discussion. The textual seam, as it were, is ragged and uneven, and alternates between excessive pedantry and unsubstantiated generalization. Stylistically, the discussion flounders in a mire of Victorian popular prose seemingly tortured into erudite guise. Most critical, however, is Ingersoll's over-reliance upon G. Elliott-Smith's The Evolution of the Dragon (Manchester, 1919), a work which epitomized the thinking of the short-lived, post World War I "Manchester School" of archaeology and historical anthropology. Under Elliott-Smith's leadership, the few serious proponents of the 'heliocentric' or 'sun-centered school' concluded that Egypt had been the principal source of a variety of widely-disseminated cultural phenomena. Although Ingersoll enthusiastically embraces the main ingredients of Elliott-Smith's treatise on the origin and spread of dragon lore, which he admits "have been of much use... in this connection" (p. 29), it is to the former's credit that he elects to limit his own trek to continental Asia and Europe (p. 30).

Despite major flaws in the substance and manner of this book, it is nevertheless difficult to dismiss the reasonableness of the overall implication that the 'meaning' of dragon lore in various geographical regions and temporal periods is discernable in its symbolic representation in oral, graphic, and plastic art. Ingersoll's treatment contains numerous suggestive leads for the perspective dragon sleuth well-versed in the tenets and historical relations of Indo-European religions. Still, few contemporary folklorists will want to rest their laurels solely on the basis of a skirmish with the material in this reprint.

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Beckmann, Petr. Whispered Anecdotes: Humor from behind the Iron Curtain;
The Golem Press, Box 1342, Boulder, Colorado 80302, 1969. Pp. 143.
\$3.25

Petr Beckmann, born in Prague in 1924, spent 1948-1963 behind the Iron Curtain at a time when you had to look around furtively to check if anyone was eavesdropping when you whispered anti-establishment jokes to your friends. The reader is warned: "Thousands of people have been jailed for telling one of these anecdotes." During these years, Beckmann, now a professor of electrical engineering at the University