

DUFF-COOPER, ANDREW, editor. *Contests. Cosmos, the Yearbook of the Traditional Cosmology Society, volume 6.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990. 173 pages. Maps, figures, tables. Paper £20.00; ISBN 0-7486-0199-6.

The present volume, the sixth yearbook of the Traditional Cosmology Society, comprises a collection of ten papers on the subject of contests, originally read at the society's 1989 conference on the subject at the University of Dundee, Scotland. The articles, which deal with contests in the broadest definition, discuss the contests of various periods and various lands, including India, Lombok, Sumba, China, Japan, Mesoamerica, North America, and Europe. This variety is, as editor Duff-Cooper points out, the particular strength of the book, presenting future researchers with a wide range of perspectives on the topic.

One paper in particular attracted the notice of this Japanese reviewer: Joy Hendry's "Children's Contests in Japan." One of her main conclusions is that among members of the same game-group the Japanese attempt to eliminate competition and promote harmony, cooperation, and compromise; competition is directed exclusively at outside game-groups. She sees in this pattern of behavior—harmony on the inside, competition on the outside—the operation of the same dynamic that enabled Japan to become an economic power and surpass its rivals within a short time of opening its doors to the West 125 years ago.

Hendry's interpretation provides a fairly accurate explanation of why Japan was able to succeed so well in the modern business world. It would, however, be an error to conclude that since the Japanese prefer compromise rather than competition within the same group they are therefore traditionally groupist and lacking in individuality. A good example of how highly the Japanese valued individuality is provided by the *bushidō* ethic of the samurai warrior class in the Edo era.

Bushidō required a samurai to make self-control, not victory, his objective when facing rivals or enemies. Self-control was thus of primary importance, with victory seen as a secondary outcome that was the natural consequence of the self-controlled mind. Hence the training process (*shugyō* 修行) leading to the attainment of self-control was regarded as being of higher value than the issue of competition.

With the beginning of the Meiji period the samurai class disappeared, but bushidō remained as a form of national ethic, and continues to form the basis of Japanese behavior even today. Harmony, cooperation, and compromise are concepts that shape the relationship between the individual and the group, but they do not indicate that the individual is buried in the ground of the collective. We must perceive the dynamic of self-control operating behind these more superficial phenomena.

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DUNDES, ALAN, editor. *The Evil Eye: A Casebook.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992. ix+318 pages. Cloth US\$55.00; ISBN 0-290-13330-3. Paper US\$14.95; ISBN 0-299-13334-6.

The Evil Eye contains twenty essays by as many scholars, assembled by the editor from

a wide variety of sources. He adds to this material a final article that draws conclusions from the foregoing material and offers an interpretation of the evil eye.

The term "evil eye" is used for a wide-ranging phenomenon found in the folklore beliefs of many countries, in which the glance of certain individuals is said to cause sickness or death in people, livestock, or even plants. The majority of essays in the book are descriptive works that illustrate how the evil eye is employed, what kind of people are most likely to use it, and what measures can be used to prevent it from taking effect or cure the damage it has caused. The essays demonstrate that although such folk beliefs are most prevalent in the Mediterranean countries and east into India, they also extend into northern and western Europe and, through immigration, into North America. These largely descriptive essays are followed by several others that attempt to interpret the evil eye phenomenon. Some of the interpretations are based on comparative analysis, while others work on functional or psychological models.

Belief in the evil eye is extremely old. For example, the present volume contains the following account from third-century B.C. Sumeria: "Under heaven it approached and the storm sent no rain; unto earth it approached and the fresh verdure sprang not forth" (40). The evil eye was also known among the ancient Greeks and Romans, and appears early in the written works of the Jews and other nations in the eastern Mediterranean area. In many parts of Italy and its neighboring countries belief in the power of the evil eye is very much alive to this day, as it is among the descendants of Mediterranean peoples who emigrated to North America. As an example of the latter, the book presents the following example from the middle of this century related by an adult Italian woman:

Everybody for blocks around knew her aunt, Angela Trepasani, had the evil eye. And Angela made a great fuss about what a beautiful baby, and so on and so on—all the time wishing to herself that she could have had a child of her own years ago. And what happened that night? Little Joseph nearly died of the colic, and his foolish mother didn't even know what caused it and called in an American doctor! (153)

The two references above from Sumeria and North America capture the essence of evil-eye beliefs in the space of a few lines. I think one can also discern in them an essential difference that perhaps points to an evolution over the centuries in the beliefs associated with this phenomenon: in the ancient world the evil eye seems to have been directed at the universe in general and to have had dire consequences for all those living in a quite wide region, while in more recent times it seems to be aimed more at individuals and families, and to have little effect on those outside. It might be noted that the overwhelming majority of the essays in this book deal with the damaging influence of the evil eye in the limited world of everyday life.

Reading these twenty essays in succession, one sees how complex and diverse are the beliefs and traditions surrounding the evil eye, whether in regard to causes, forms, or remedies. For example, a child that has been weaned and then returned to the breast because its mother could not bear its crying is said to gain the evil eye. The evil eye can also stem from envy or from sexual factors. There are as many remedies for the evil eye as there are causes. One common defense is spitting, while another involves giving something to the bearer of the eye. Some people advise that it is best to direct countermeasures against the sexuality of the bearer, such as by injuring the breasts of a woman or the genitals of a man.

Owing to this complexity and variety, scholars have had difficulty formulating an

explanation that can account for all of the various elements. Dundes nevertheless attempts this in his concluding article, "Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye," and succeeds quite well. The article is written with great acuteness and excellent scholarship. One cannot help but agree with his main argument that the essential opposition of wetness and dryness, in terms of their relationship to the forces of life and death, forms the central explanation for the various aspects of the evil eye seen elsewhere in the book. One might wish, however, that more attention had been devoted to the other, more universal aspects of evil-eye belief as it occurred in the ancient world. I have little doubt that attitudes similar to those reflected in the Sumerian account can be found in ancient Scandinavian sources with possible roots in pre-Christian culture. For example, one Icelandic saga written before the middle of the thirteenth century contains an account of the execution of two magicians, both of whom had bags placed over their heads to prevent their using the evil eye. The bag of one was removed before he was drowned, however, and he uttered a curse upon a man and his family that later seemed to come true. The other magician, who was stoned, managed to see out of his bag with one eye and fixed his gaze upon a grassy mountainside, which was scorched black and never again supported a living thing (MAGNUSSON and PALSSON 1969, 135-38).

The Evil Eye will prove valuable for everyone involved in folkloristic research. I feel that the editor has, for the main part, succeeded remarkably well in his choice of essays for the volume, especially considering the vast amount of material available (though I would have liked to have seen at least one additional article from Scandinavia or from the mainland of northern Europe). The opening essay, "The Research Topic: Or, Folklore without End," forms a good introduction to the book as a whole, offering a serious look at the main challenge of study in folkloristics, yet presenting it in such an amusing fashion that the spirits of even the most serious of folklorists are certain to be raised.

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FOHR, SAMUEL DENIS. *Cinderella's Gold Slipper: Spiritual Symbolism in the Grimm's Tales*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, The Theosophical Publishing House, 1991. xvii+223 pages. Illustrations, appendix. Paper US\$11.95; ISBN 0-8356-0672-4.

Samuel Fohr proclaims in his introduction to *Cinderella's Gold Slipper* that he is going to demonstrate "beyond the shadow of a doubt" that all fairy tales "have a spiritual content expressed symbolically" (xiv), that they are "purposeful creations designed to teach spiritual truths" (187). His attempt to do so is based on the accumulated weight of many examples, with about fifty tales selected from the Grimm collection. In an appendix, he justifies his choice (against Ellis and Dundes), declaring that "one is on safe ground in analyzing the Grimms' collection in terms of traditional spiritual symbolism" (210). I shall give some examples demonstrating Fohr's approach to the task