

## BOOK REVIEWS

*International Folklore Review*. Volume 1, 1981. Edited by Venetia Newall. London: New Abbey Publications, 44 Lupus Street, London SW1V 3EB, England. 80 pp., illustrations. U.K. £6.00, U.S. \$15.00. Published annually.<sup>1</sup>

Here is yet another new journal dedicated to folklore, though this one seems aimed at providing general introductions rather than specific scholarship. Originating from England, one of the journal's three aims as stated by its editor is "to make the work of folklorists from overseas available to scholars in the British Isles." How well this has been accomplished in the first issue is debatable, but I shall deal with this point below.

The journal is also intended "to interest scholars outside our discipline, . . . and so enhance their understanding of what folklore is seen to be in other countries," and to "assist in promoting the growth of international understanding and cooperation" (p. 3). To this end the first issue carries a total of eleven articles (one of which might be better called a "statement"), and has a general focus on Bulgaria, if two articles and a statement on the 1300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state can be called a "focus."

The authors are certainly of a general high calibre, and one is interested indeed to see contributions by Linda Dégh, Dan Ben-Amos, Peter Dinekov or the late Robert Wildhaber, though in truth it must be admitted that the most interesting articles are those based on primary research, and authored by scholars less well-known than those listed above, namely Yvonne Milspaw and Elizabeth Tucker.

Tucker's article—"The Cruel Mother in Stories Told by Pre-Adolescent Girls"—makes for particularly fascinating reading, and it would have been nice to have had a much more complete treatment of the subject than was possible in five pages. Milspaw writes on the folklore of the Three Mile Island disaster, and is also to be congratulated for a fine piece of work.

Another fascinating article is that of Wildhaber, "Animal Portraits: A Folklife Study." This article has given the journal its cover picture, a portrait of the horse with "the longest hair in the world," and there are several other delightful pictures included. Indeed, reading this article leaves one with a totally new perspective on the old saw, "I don't know much about art, but I know what I like"; the pictures may not be called "art" by some, but they are extraordinarily likeable. The article, however, amounts to little more than a catalogue, and one wishes for some of the substantial analysis that a scholar of Wildhaber's calibre could have provided.

For the rest, the articles tend to be very introductory. Rather than concentrating on a single subject, they are more essay-like, and offer very few examples of the folklorist at work. Ben-Amos is an exception to a certain degree, but rather than concentrating on the use of folklore in the two Hebrew authors he has studied ("Nationalism and Nihilism: The Attitudes of Two Hebrew Authors Towards Folklore"), he describes their *attitudes*, and the piece shows little in the way of concrete analysis.

The Dégh article was especially disappointing, for it contains nothing that Dégh—easily one of the most brilliant folklorists in the world today—has not already said before, in more detailed form. The articles on Bulgaria offer a history of the development of folklore studies in that country, and are very vague, in contrast to the highly concrete nature of the works they cite.

So one must wonder if anyone will really be “introduced” to the “work” of various folklorists through this generalized approach. It seems to me that inclusion of more substantial, concrete studies would be a far better introduction, and that a person who read the articles here as a scholar “outside our discipline” might come to the conclusion that folklorists are a fuzzy bunch indeed, who avoid specific studies of concrete issues (excepting the articles by Wildhaber, Tucker and Milspaw, of course). It is easy enough to second guess, of course, and I do not mean to imply that the journal is not worthwhile. It is handsomely done and does offer one at least a glimpse into some unfamiliar worlds.

One of those “unfamiliar worlds” that seems to be lacking, however, is Asia. The editor does not say whether she intends to focus on a different country or part of the world in each issue, or give any indication of what future issues might look like, but it is to be hoped that she will begin to include scholars from India, China and Japan, as well as other parts of Asia. Folklore is a more thriving discipline here in Japan, for example, than it is in virtually any Western country, and a journal such as this could go a long way toward alerting the rest of the world to what is going on here.

Unfortunately, one has the feeling that “international” is defined much as it seems to be in the “International Folklore Bibliography” discussed in the journal, as dealing with America, Europe and the Slavic states. The first and second worlds, in a word, are well represented, but the third world remains out in the cold. Perhaps this is an oversight that will be corrected with subsequent issues; at least we can only hope so, for, if nothing else, such approaches rob the word “international” of any meaning at all.

It is regrettable, then, that the first issue of this new journal cannot be greeted with more enthusiasm, but it is also premature to make hasty judgments on the basis of one volume alone. Certainly the promise is there, and the effort is to be commended, and we can but await the next issue with hopes that it will provide more specific articles on a wider area of the world.

NOTE:

1. For information about subscriptions and where to order see announcement in AFS XLI, 1982, p. 122.

W. Michael Kelsey  
Nanzan University, Nagoya

IWAI HIROMI 岩井宏美, Editor. *Shinsen, kami to hito to no kyōen* 神饌. 神と人との饗宴 [Offerings. Feasts for Gods and Humans]. Kyōto: Dōhōsha, 1981. 260 pp. Illustrations in color and black/white. ¥6,800. ISBN 4-8104-0240-1.

Food and its historical and cultural implications first attracted the interest of folklorists quite some time ago. Considering this fact the book under review does not open a new topic, being also about food and the way it is prepared and used. Its special