

BOOK REVIEWS

ALAN DUNDES (editor): *Varia Folklorica*. The Hague, Mouton Publishers, 1978. X, 266 pages, with Index of Names and Index of Subjects.

This book belongs to the series World Anthropology of which Sol Tax is General Editor. Prof. Sol Tax informs us in the General Editor's Preface how *Varia Folklorica* was made. In 1973 the IXth International Congress was held in Chicago which brought together a very widely representative group of scholars from many countries, developed and developing. In this representation the folklore science was also included. The volume under review, prefaced by Alan Dundes, contains eleven papers. Of the authors two are Americans, nine belong to ten different countries. Maybe our readers want to see at least a skeletal profile of the authors and their topics.

In the first paper Francis Lee Utly treats "The Folktale: Life History vs. Structuralism". His concern is theoretical and methodological, and he speaks strongly in favor of the application of structuralism to folklore research, which he considers a progress as compared with the old Aarne-Thomson school. In the next paper the Finnish authors Julia Pentikäinen and Satu Apo discuss "The Structural Schemes of a Fairy-Tale Repertoire: A Structural Analysis of Marina Takalo's Fairy Tales." Marina Takalo, an illiterate old lady and a renowned storyteller, a White Sea Karelian, was a tradition bearer. To the tales as told by her the authors apply Vladimir Propp's morphology of the folktale, Propp being the applier of structuralism to the body of Russian folktales. Bengt Holbeck, a Dane, in his paper "The Big-bellied Cat", is also a structuralist. Harold Scheub's paper "Oral Narrative Process and the Use of Models" is again of a theoretical nature, using as illustrations folk narratives from many ethnic areas, and trying to analyse the psychological processes evoked by the storytellers in their audiences. The Frenchman Sory Camara in his "Tales in the Night. Toward an Anthropology of the Imaginary" deals with the Mandingos of eastern Senegal in West Africa, whose conceptions of society, of the life of the individual in it, and of man's relations with his natural environment and his past were determined. These investigations were carried out with the assistance of the Centre de Recherches Anthropologique, Musée de l'Homme and the Université de Bordeaux II. Perhaps we may say the object of investigation was the socio-psychological mechanisms which determine the process of storytelling. A rarely treated topic we find in "Purpose and Function in Modern Local Legends in Kentucky" by William Hugh Jansen. In this paper there are amusing stories of known characters in the village of Williams-Corners in Kentucky; the purpose of the storytelling is nostalgic and didactic. The well-known Swiss scholar Robert Wildhaber has interesting things to tell us in his contribution "Variation in Place-Names, Intonation and Rhythm as an Expression of Varying Frames of Mind". The geographical scope of this paper covers not only the author's Swiss home country but practically all of Europe. By frame of mind is meant satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the outcome of economic efforts and expectations in agricultural life. People pronounce the name of their place of origin distinctly and with pride and when they are happy about that place, otherwise they use a dialect form for the place-name and add a sigh. Light or heavy mood is also expressed in the interpretation of

mechanically produced sounds, for instance, the clattering of mills or the ringing of church bells. In a well-to-do wine growing town in Bavaria, as one report has it, the bell rings *vi-num bo-num, vi-num-bo-num*", however, in a poor town the bell sounds "Appelwein! Grumbeer! Appelwein! Grumbeer! [Apple wine! Potatoes!]. Wildhaber has several examples of texts to the clattering of mills in good and bad times. In the old Austrian army, when in the first world war food rations were meager, the soldiers had a line to the drum beating when the band was beginning to play a military march, first for the small drum, then for the big drum: Kein Butter, kein Brot, kein Butter, kein Brot, kein Rauchtabak: Hunger, Hunger, Hunger!" So the reviewer heard it from a service man. Wildhaber crosses over into several language areas and also reaches the Pennsylvania Dutch. In his bibliography he lists A. Bossler: Tierlaut und Schalldeutung, in: Hessische Blätter für Volkskunde 8: 1-17, 1909.

In her short essay, "Some Traditional Symbols in Slavonic Folk Poetry", Vera Sokolova, folklore section head in the Institute of Ethnography in Moscow, examines the origin, history, and the variations in the parallel between nuptial and burial poetry: death is a kind of wedding, and wedding is a kind of death. Her bibliography consists of Russian and other Slavonic literature exclusively.

Hary Sūna, who wrote "The Baltic Origin and Developmental Tendencies of Latvian Dance", was and is holding key positions in Latvian choreography, and completed his graduate work in the Department of Choreography of the Moscow State Theater Arts Institute, and has also published many books and articles in his special field. In his contribution to the book under review the sentence "Pronounced primitive Baltic features persisted in Latvian choreography up to the beginning of the 19th century" may perhaps indicate the main artery of the essay.

The next paper takes us to Southern Italy. A. Pasqualino, a surgeon, writes on "Transformations of Chivalrous Literature in the Subject Matter of the Sicilian Marionette Theater". The last paper 50 pages long, was written by L. P. Vidiarthi on "Folklore Research in India". The author, holding a doctorate from the University of Chicago, is Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Ranchi, India. His interests and activities comprise many branches of Indian anthropology proper and of folklore. His profound essay on folklore research in India first states that folklore as an independent discipline is still new in India, it was, until recently, considered part of Indology. The same was true also of other fields, for example, Chinese or Japanese folklore, and it seems to us, to a great extent this will also have to be so in the future. Only from within the structure of national cultures can folkloristic items be authentically interpreted. Just as native speakers of a language can hardly ever be replaced by others, so native folklorists, if properly trained, are the only authentic interpreters of the folklore of their country. Most true, to say so, is this in the case of India. There is hardly any other country where so many peoples and languages co-exist as they do in India, and this with a uniquely deep historical background. Even Prof. Vidyarthi admits this in his contribution to the book; on account of the vastness of the subject and of the many language barriers, there are bound to be hundreds of omissions. He surveys the main geographical, linguistic, and tribal areas and concentrates on folksongs and folktales. His report on work done in these fields makes an overwhelming impression. Can any outsider dare to write lightheartedly on just "Indian Folklore"?

The book under review here brings it home to us what a huge science folklore science is. No human mind, however brilliant, can ever master the bulk of the folklore of the world. Through *Varia Folklorica* new vistas for further fieldwork have been opened, good samples of up-to-date methodology given, and much folklore of the so-called third world shown to us. In this reviewer's mind, while reading the book, one

desideratum crept up, that is, the more unmanageable the amount of world folklore is getting, the more urgently are theoretical discussions needed. We must not become captives of the word 'folklore' taken in its literal sense. Still much abstract thinking has to be done, otherwise the many trees will be in our way to see the forest.

M. E.

OINAS, FELIX J. (ed.). *Heroic Epic and Saga. An Introduction to the World's Great Folk Epics*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington & London 1978, pp. viii+373. Cloth \$29.95, paperback \$10.95.

As the subtitle of this collection of 15 essays says, a wide field is covered, not only geographically but also thematically. Each paper introduces the reader into the tradition of heroic epics in a certain nation or among certain peoples. Whether the authors were given certain guidelines to be followed when writing the essays is not known to the reviewer. However, most of the contributions seem to adhere to a loose pattern in presenting a particular epic tradition. After a short introduction into the problems of text history and distribution of the story and its traditions, an outline of the epic(s) under discussion is given. Not in all but in most cases questions and characteristics of form and rhythm are discussed, and quite often the intriguing problems of the relation of the heroic actors and their miraculous feats with figures and facts of history are touched on. Within the limited space of the approximately twenty pages allotted to each author, most of the problems can only be touched upon *en passant*, and a more extensive and thorough study has to be left to the interested reader. Still, the reader in search for more is not abandoned half way to an uncertain fate. Every author extends a helpful hand by offering a basic bibliography, that includes editions of the original text and its main translations together with some of the more relevant studies on the subject. Whatever the merit of any particular contribution may be, this sort of bibliography will certainly prove to be very handy and most useful for everyone, who is not (yet) an expert in the field, but is looking for good information and especially for available texts. A short index, finally, provides a guide to locate the "Heroes and Main Characters" of the different essays. In this sense the book is a useful introduction into a large field.

The interest in the heroic epic is closely linked up with the study of the so-called Indo-European languages. Yet, as this very volume shows clearly, the heroic epic is not a privilege of Indo-European traditions. Recent research has provided us with fascinating evidence of living epic traditions outside of the Indo-European stream. Many of these traditions display an immediacy and impelling vigor, that can hardly be imagined from the study of those traditions only, which have already long ago become a fixed part of written literature. The insights Milman Parry gained from the study of oral poets, still keeping a long tradition alive in present day Yugoslavia, brought new light to the interpretation of the homeric epics. This, in turn, seems to suggest that, in the case of Homer's epics and in that of other epics as well, oral tradition and written tradition have to be seen as interacting with each other, even there where the living oral tradition is already lost. This sort of mutual feedback is especially well put forth by M. P. Coote in her paper on Serbo-croatian heroic songs.

For Biebuyck this particular problem is not relevant, since he has mainly to do with oral tradition, but he points out some of the difficulties an ethnographer has to face when trying to put such stories on record. He calls attention to the following problems. How can the foreign ethnographer, or any outsider to the society in question, record faithfully a process that includes much more than just the recitation of a more or less