

BALLADÁK KÖNYVE: ÉLŐ ERDÉLYI ÉS MOLDAVAI MAGYAR NÉP-BALLADÁK. Collected by *Zoltán Kallós*. Edited by *Attila T. Szabó*. Budapest: Magyar Helikon and Európa Athenaeum, 1974. 877 pp. + 4 records. 55 Ft. without records. 106 Ft. with records. 163 Ft., special binding and records.

Although the 259 ballads in this attractive volume—adorned with colored pictures of Moldavian-Transylvanian folk art and with four records sampling from forty ballads—were collected from singers of only four Hungarian ethnic regions of Rumania, they are representative of the total body of Hungarian balladry. The ballad, which emerged as the most artistic form of Hungarian peasant lore during the sixteenth century and became the target of research of nineteenth-century pioneer folklorists, entered its decline in the twentieth century, and has now almost completely vanished under the pressures of modernization of the peasant economy. In fact, the oldest layer of ballad poetry had already retreated to the more isolated random areas of the Hungarian language territory in the early nineteenth century when it was first discovered among the Székelys in Transylvania. It is surprising, therefore, that Kallós could trace the Magyar ballad stock in this several-centuries-old Moldavian-language island as well as in three small Transylvanian ethnic pockets embedded in Rumanian surroundings. This material, collected between 1943 and 1970, illustrates the spatial and temporal expansion of Hungarian balladry—with textual and stylistic changes over the ages, and the adaptation following dissemination under minority conditions.

The value of this collection lies not only in its completeness, but also in its authenticity. Zoltán Kallós transcribed each text and melody after repeated recordings with the informants. One must note, however, that folklore scholars will regret his total neglect of the sociocultural context. Listing the name, age, and location of informants, with the number of ballads they knew—one knew thirteen and another even nineteen—gives little indication of the singers' creativity or of the role their knowledge plays in the community.

The editor arranged the texts according to conventional but not very meaningful categories: A: Old style ballads, B: New style ballads. The first category included three classes of so-called classical ballads: (1) those without historical references, (2) those with historical references, and (3) those with humorous outcome and/or with novelesque themes. The second category includes broadside ballads about outlaws, love-murders, family disasters, and personal tragedies. There is also a third group containing both old and new style lyrical songs, without epic content—mostly complaints that incorporate ballad phrases and commonplaces. The scholarly value of this book is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of more than one variant of the texts (in many cases six to fifteen variants are presented). The editor revised the dialectal transcription of the texts while ethnomusicologist János Jagamas supervised the musical notation and added an index for the section of melodies following the main text.

From all the above, one would conclude that this publication is intended for ballad specialists. However, the editor's brief comment after the texts seems addressed to the lay reader. Szabó offers a small ballad bibliography, but his notes on the origin, distribution, and parallel occurrence of the ballads lacks depth. One can only regret the ambiguity in the handling of this superb collection—it leaves both the specialist and the lay reader somewhat dissatisfied.

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