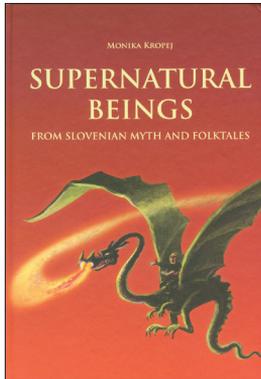


SUPERNATURAL BEINGS IN SLOVENIAN FOLKLORE



Monika Kropej. *Supernatural Beings from Slovenian Myth and Folktales*. Ljubljana: Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2012. 284 pp.

The book entitled *Supernatural Beings from Slovenian Myth and Folktales* by Slovenian ethnologist Monika Kropej gives a detailed overview of more than 150 supernatural beings in Slovenian folklore. As source material, the author uses mainly folktales, along with historical and literary treatments, and draws parallels with the lore of other European countries (and, to a lesser extent, also non-European cultures), also suggesting possible literary influencers. In addition, the author's attention focuses on regional peculiarities (quite a few creatures are known only regionally or by different names in different regions). At the end of the book, the reader can find a sizable bibliography of cited works and a register of Slovenian supernatural beings.

In the introductory part, the author presents an overview of the history of myths studies and outlines the current situation in traditional Slovenian folk tradition. The author argues that, although folktales and other fields of lore have nearly ceased to be presented in traditional contexts, an overall increase of general interest in folklore can be observed. However, the modern spheres of folklore application (e.g. entertainment and tourism) largely differ from those of the past.

The main part of the book is presented in four subdivisions. The first one discusses supernatural creatures in cosmology. Here the reader can find depictions of the creatures related to the motifs explaining the creation and functioning of various phenomena in the world, such as a huge fish carrying the earth on its back, or a bull, whose movements cause earthquakes, as well as different deities, such as Kurent, Veles, Kresnik, or Mother Goddess Mokoš and her derivatives. As an equivalent of St. George, Slovenian folklore has Zeleni Jurij (Green George), and the author gives an interesting explanation about the origin of beliefs related to him. The second subdivision gives an overview of mythical animals (e.g. the unicorn, the seahorse and the centaur), as well as dragons, snakes and birds, and also the roles attached to them. A well-known creature is the snake king (or -queen) guarding treasures, who, as many other mythical creatures, is depicted as white, as well as house snakes in the role of mythological home guardians. The next subdivision, 'Between Heaven and Earth', examines giants, creatures that are connected to concrete natural environments (e.g. forest and mountain beings, water sprites), creatures foretelling the future, and fairies. About a dozen water sprites with different names are mentioned, several of which have predominantly had the function of intimidating children. The last subchapter, 'Demons and Bewitched Souls', enables us to have a glance at the images in Slovenian folklore related to the afterworld. The reader is given the reasons why some people wander around on the earth as spirits; for example, people who have died an unnatural death or unbaptised dead children can turn

into restless spirits; nor can cursed people or unpunished criminals find their peace. This subchapter also includes descriptions of more commonly known creatures, such as werewolves and vampires. However, by Slovenian religious beliefs, some of the deceased return to the world of the living with good intentions, for example, to redeem a promise or reconcile with an enemy. An interesting overview is given about the personifications of various troubles and dangers, such as death, epidemics (e.g. plague) or voracity.

The book ends with a glossary of supernatural beings, which provides a concise summary of their main characteristics. In conclusion I can say that the book features creatures that are known both in Estonian and other beliefs, as well as those typical of only Slovenian folklore. Therefore, it serves as a valuable source material for all researchers interested in supernatural beings; yet, due to its affable style, it could also be well received by a wider readership.

Reet Hiimäe

RESCUED EPICS¹

Kádár, László & Katū, Balčigīn. *Аврагдсан туульс. Rescued Epics. Three Heroic Epics from the Repertoire of the Bayit Bard Uwxīn Bat.* Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiado, 2012. 215 pp.

Mongolian epics as a folklore genre are well known in Europe especially thanks to a multi-volume edition *Mongolische Epen* initiated in 1975 by Nicholas Poppe. Dozens of texts, published in their full length or as short presentations of plots, mostly in German, opened the wonderful world of epics to Western scholars as well as to the readers interested in the phenomenon. It is obvious that much less can be said about English translations of Mongolian epics; and it is exactly the reason why we are going to briefly present a new book, jointly prepared by László Kádár and Balčigīn Katū under the editorship of Ágnes Birtalan and Zsolt Szilágyi.

The history of this volume goes back to 1962, when a young doctoral candidate László Kádár tape-recorded three epic stories from the storyteller Uwxīn Bat in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. It took 46 years for his tape-records to finally be digitalised and transcribed by the Mongolian folklorist Balčigīn Katū and, after being translated into Hungarian and later also into English, appear in a printed form. In his very vivid preface to the book the collector describes his work with the storyteller, and one can but admire both

