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# Folk=Lore

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## ON THE RELATIONS OF FOLKLORE AND GEOGRAPHY

BY KARL A. SINNHUBER

RELATIONS between folklore and geography, a common ground for these two subjects? I feel certain that in this country the first reaction of many folklorists as well as geographers will be an emphatic denial that these two branches of learning should have anything in common. How could they? Is not the field of the geographer the land, the earth's surface, and that of the student of folklore the traditional beliefs and superstitions of the people? Has not the eminent French geographer Vidal de la Blache rightly said: "Geography is the study of places, not of men"?

At a first glance there is indeed little that would justify speaking of a close affinity between these two fields. Nevertheless by attempting to look more closely at folklore with the eyes of a geographer, and *vice versa*, I hope to be able to show that the apparent dissimilarity is merely superficial, that these two fields have a good deal in common, and that a sound knowledge of one greatly assists the work in the other. An indication of this is, for instance, that Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, who is considered the founder of folklore studies (or *Volkskunde*) as a separate branch of learning in Germany, wrote about "Land and People" (1853) and is also claimed as one of their number by the geographers. Writing in 1931, Robert Gradmann in his highly praised regional geography of South Germany devoted one section to the folklore of the region and stressed the need for further research. Herbert Schlenger, in discussing this question in a number of papers, came to the conclusion that the entire folk-culture, visible and invisible, should be given weight in a modern regional geography, that folklore maps should be an integral part of such a treatise, and lastly that every human geographer should be a competent folklorist. We need not go far afield to see this demand translated into practice. Herbert John Fleure is certainly equally competent in either field as is

for instance shown in his recent book, *A Natural History of Man in Britain*, and the same applies to E. Estyn Evans, whose book *Irish Folk Ways* has just appeared.

True as it is that "geography is the study of places" there are, however, few places on earth which do not owe their present and past appearance and character to the interaction of nature and man. Thus to understand and interpret the personality of a place—beyond doubt the geographer's task—he needs more than the knowledge of its physique; he must know about the people who have been shaping the landscape, he must know about their attitudes and beliefs in order to be able to appreciate the spiritual forces which have been at work to make a place what it is today, and thus folklore takes its place in geography together with history, religion, politics and economics.

To describe as the object of folklore studies merely the collection and explanation of traditional beliefs and superstitions is similarly much too narrow a point of view. The object of folklore studies transcends far beyond these narrow limits and is in fact a way of approach towards the study of man in his regional variation, not in a physical but in a psychological and cultural sense. The aim of elucidating the complex personality of the people of a given area is the unifying concept of the field of folklore studies. All the items of folk-culture, be they spiritual or material, are but different facets of manifestations of what has been called the "folk-soul". Like the rays of light, which only become visible when they strike an object, so the folk-soul escapes one's grasp until it finds its expression in the manifold constituents which make up folk-culture. As in any field of study the continuous expansion of knowledge makes it only natural that one person may not be able to work on all the different items and aspects of folk-culture. The field of folklore studies, however, must embrace them all if it is not to forfeit valuable lines of approach; this demand implies that even items which may seem insignificant should be included if the final outcome is to be a faithful portrait of the folk-personality.

By thus having expanded the aims and objects of these two fields of study the notion of a close relationship between them no longer appears as extraordinary as it may have seemed at first glance. Geography has to take into account the attitudes of people, folklore studies must see its objects against the natural basis, and the cultural landscape, the resultant of physical and spiritual forces, offers a common ground of study to both fields.

This relationship which I have outlined I will now attempt to sketch in

somewhat more detail by means of examples. Due to my greater familiarity with Middle Europe rather than the British Isles, most of the examples are taken from the former region. Since, however, the purpose of these examples is to illustrate principles, I trust it will not detract from the validity of the argument they are meant to support.

#### FOLKLORE STUDIES IN THE SERVICE OF GEOGRAPHY

The first task of a geographer in studying a major part of the globe or a country is to divide this area into regions of manageable size which lend themselves to treatment as units. Obviously, though there are many different ways of doing this, the geographer's aim is to arrive at a regional hierarchy which comes closest to reality. A great deal has been said and written about the criteria which should be used in order to achieve a division which is most representative. It is quite clear that a division which is *only* based on physical nature does not do justice to the complicated intermixture between physical and human phenomena, whose particular association or pattern a geographer has to study. A division based only on physical criteria would immediately imply the tacit assumption that the human elements of an area are no more than a response to physical nature, and it would deny the existence of independent cultural forces. Since, however, the cultural forces are the agents and nature the raw material, the emphasis in choosing one's criteria should rather lie on the cultural side. The fact that culture is something less tangible than physical nature is no valid reason for considering it only marginally. In trying to delimit the boundaries of geographical regions a geographer might therefore with advantage also take into account the distribution patterns of items of folklore which in some cases at least may be a more faithful indication of the extent of an all-embracing geographical region than visible man-made features of the landscape.

A very important field of geography is the study of rural settlements, including their field patterns and field systems. In this connexion an important problem facing the geographer is for instance to account for the reasons why one region is characterized by large compact villages with "open fields", whereas in another region the typical settlement consists of isolated farms, their farmland being either in one piece or divided into a number of parcels. Towards the end of the last and during the earlier part of this century, the "deterministic phase" of geography, geographers tended to explain these differences almost exclusively by reference to the nature of the environment. A frequently heard argument was, for

instance, that difficulties of water supply had been responsible for nucleated settlements. Lately, most geographers have abandoned this attitude and have come to realise that the main reasons for the existing differences have to be sought for in human motives. But what were these motives? Was it perhaps at least partly due to the different attitude of people in one region as compared with another? Looking at Germany one *does* get the impression that there may be some truth in this notion. The Westphalian farmer obviously likes to be on his own, to be a little king on his own soil, whereas the Swabian peasant prefers company. The study of the folklore of these areas can show whether this attitude is brought out also in other items of folk-culture like customs, dances and songs.

It has been argued that a certain type of village of circular layout, which is frequently found along the medieval ethnical boundary between the German and Slav peoples and the subdivision of the farm land into small irregularly shaped parcels, are an inheritance from an earlier Slav population. This would indicate that the German colonists who came during the Middle Ages formed only a thin veneer and that the people, though speaking German, are really of Slav ancestry. The study of the folklore of these areas can show to what extent the various items of folk-culture are of either German or Slav origin and can thus also make an important contribution towards the solution of the problem as to whether these villages and other landscape features of the "colonial" territory are of German or Slav origin.

Speaking about the colonization of Eastern Germany during the Middle Ages, a historical geographer especially would like to know from where the settlers of a particular region mainly came. Was it a long distance movement or a gradual advance, the children of earlier colonists moving further east in each generation? Did it involve the transfer of large groups of people from one area, or did the settlers come from all over western Middle Europe? There are certainly various clues given in historical records, or in place names which repeat a name found in the old *Volksland* or refer to the region of origin of the colonists. A familiar example of the first category is the repetition of the place name Frankfurt (on the Main) by a place of the same name on the Oder river; or as an example of the second the Fläming hills south-west of Berlin indicate the presence of Flemish colonists. Nevertheless, documentary and place name evidence is either scanty or haphazard and for a more complete elucidation of the process of the eastern colonization the study of the local folklore of the colonized territories and its comparison with the folklore of the old *Volksland* can

make valuable contributions. It is well known that colonists take with them a good many items of their folklore, a fact which makes them feel at home much sooner in their new habitat, and, as in the old homeland, the folklore is passed on to later generations. A modern example illustrating this is that with the influx of refugees from eastern Germany, the mountain ghost R $\ddot{u}$ bezahl, whose home was in the Giant Mountains, Silesia, has now been "seen" in the hills of Lower Saxony, in Western Germany. The best way of finding out whether there is a complete mixture is by a cartographic presentation of a detailed survey. Two countries of Middle Europe, Germany and Switzerland, have published or are publishing a folklore (*Volkskunde*) atlas, and some of the maps are immediately of direct value to the geographer in the sense I have indicated.

Map 5 of the atlas of German folklore, for instance, which shows where Friday is considered a lucky or an unlucky day brings out that there is on the whole a clear division. In south and central Germany it is believed to be unlucky, whereas in north Germany it is considered lucky. East Prussia, however, shows in this respect a dichotomy: in the western part Friday is unlucky, and in the eastern part it is held to be lucky. What is of interest to the geographer is not whether Friday is considered lucky or unlucky, but the distribution pattern of this belief. In this case it would lend support to a theory that eastern East Prussia was settled by people from north Germany coming by ship, whereas western East Prussia was colonized by settlers from middle or south Germany coming over land. This theory is also supported by map 4 of this atlas, which shows where Thursday is considered to be lucky or unlucky. Here again the same distribution pattern emerges. In fig. 1 an attempt is made to reproduce the salient features of these maps and combine them in one single sheet. Other maps in the same atlas also bring out a similar picture but it must be emphasized that much more evidence is necessary to arrive at valid conclusions.

These examples will already have shown that the importance of folklore to the geographer is frequently due to the fact that much of the local folklore has its roots in the past. Since one branch of geography, historical geography, is directly concerned with past geographical conditions, it is natural that the greatest direct assistance of folklore to geography will be in that branch of the subject. So far we have been mainly concerned with the cartographic presentation of items of folklore. Not all items are, however, suited to this kind of treatment; nevertheless amongst this category there is also much material which is equally important to geographical research.

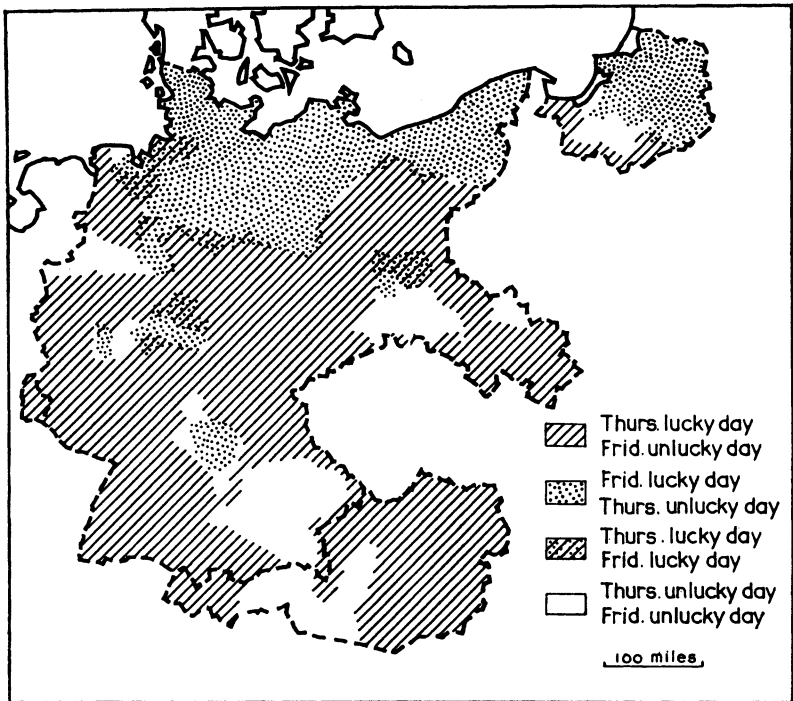


FIG. 1. THURSDAY AND FRIDAY AS LUCKY OR UNLUCKY DAYS  
 (Based on *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde*, maps 4 and 5)

Of this material one source of information to be considered is, for instance, folk legends which are at least in parts "the archive of the early history of a people". They must not of course be accepted uncritically; but critically treated, *i.e.* separated into those which are indigenous and those which are tales of foreign origin, and then stripped of all embellishments and later additions, they are indeed valuable sources which can be of great help in the task of reconstructing "past geographies". Legends of forest spirits in now open country may help in the reconstruction of the former extent of continuous woodlands, and legends telling the story of the origin of a place or where its inhabitants came from, often contain the basic truth. Legends of buried treasures in the area of Germany once occupied by the Romans proved valuable in helping to establish the sites of former Roman villas, and other legends to trace the course of Roman roads. Outside this area similar legends which refer to a treasure lime tree, a buried churchbell or a haunted spot were frequently found to

mark the site of a settlement which was deserted during the later Middle Ages when about 50,000 German villages went out of existence. Not much work has been done yet in this field but a Ph.D. thesis of Bonn University submitted a few years ago showed how much *can* be done. By means of an interpretation of legends, anecdotes and local customs, the author was able to find out about, and *locate* a number of deserted medieval villages of whose existence nothing had previously been known. Documentary evidence which was later searched for and discovered confirmed in all cases the results gained by the method developed on folklore material.

Legends telling of treasures may, of course, be of *secondary* origin and may be due to occasional finds of potsherds or coins thrown up by the plough or moles, but the persons in the anecdotes mentioned previously clearly represented individuals and not types. In some cases legends may even go back much further, such as that attached to the tumulus of Seddin in Brandenburg. It told of a king buried in a threefold coffin. When the tumulus was excavated the result showed the legend to be virtually true: it contained a burial of the Late Bronze Age, *i.e.* about 1000 B.C.; the ashes were in a bronze vessel which was inside a large earthenware container and this in turn stood inside a stone chamber which was covered over by earth. None of this could have been known by anybody except the people who witnessed the burial; thus the basic information must have survived 3,000 years and at least two complete population changes from Teutons to Slavs and then to Germans.

Another field of study of direct value to the historical geographer is the study of tutelary saints. Since when Christianity came, certain saints were substituted for certain pagan spirits and endowed in the popular belief with the qualities of the former, the study of the patron saints of parishes and churches certainly comes within the realm of folklore studies. But how are results of these studies to be of value to the historical geographer? Saints who are supposed to have had some dealings with a dragon, and thus have a dragon as their emblem, St George and St Margaret especially, frequently indicate that the areas where they are used as patron saints were areas of early clearing and draining. St Wolfgang, the founder of churches, and St Koloman, who crossed the wilderness, also come into this category. Other saints are frequently associated with a certain population group, like St Theodul and St Nicholas with the Walser, whose home region was the Upper Rhone valley and who colonized extensive areas in the Alps in Switzerland and western Austria. Where in the areas in question, these patron saints occur, the likelihood is very great that the origin of the village was due to the Walser colonization of



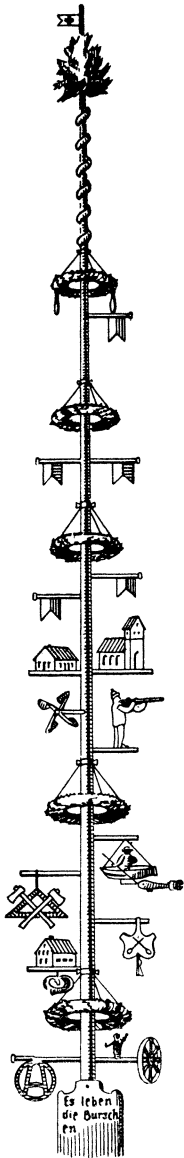


FIG. 2. A MAY-POLE  
IN UPPER BAVARIA  
(Based on A. Spamer, *Die  
Deutsche Volkskunde*,  
vol. 2, 122)

the late Middle Ages. St Barbara is the patron saint of mining, because of her emblem, a wheel, and a church dedicated to her indicates that the origin of the village was most likely due to mining, even if mining ceased afterwards and it became a purely agricultural settlement.

Returning to the study of regional geography of the present I should like to touch upon one last aspect in this section on folklore behind geography, *viz.* landscape features which are part of the folklore and which therefore have to be explained in terms of folklore. It is true that on the whole these features are relatively small in size, that they might be considered mere embellishments. Be that as it may their small size alone does not mean that they need be unimportant. As long as they are characteristic of a region they should not be ignored by the geographer.

This topic can, however, only be discussed satisfactorily with the help of many illustrations, which it is unfortunately not possible to include here.

One item in this field is the tree in the role it plays in folklore. In an agricultural community growth and fertility are all important and many customs and much of the symbolism have as their objectives the promotion of these. The symbol used most frequently is the tree. The most striking and best known of its uses as a symbol is the May-pole. Its erection on 1st May is a custom found in many parts of southern Germany and Austria and throughout the year the May-pole is part of the village scene. It is always a tall fir tree but it may vary in details of its adornment. Sometimes the bark is removed and only the very top left in its original state. The young men of the village can then show their skill in climbing it—a very difficult task when the surface is made particularly slippery by treating it with wax or soap. Sometimes the May-pole is decorated with figures and ornaments made by the village carpenter to

represent the community who erected it and for whose protection it stands (fig. 2). That this protective function really is the underlying reason for its erection is expressed in many little poems sometimes spoken when the task is accomplished. One of these reads :

Be greeted tree from the green wood  
be greeted in your new home.  
Bring us this year good spirits and health  
and protection from the dangers of hail and fire.

Though the most striking, the May-pole is by no means the only instance how the belief in the life spending and protecting properties of the tree finds its expression. Similar features are found earlier and later in the year. An example are the *Palmbuschen*, poles with tops of evergreen plants and pussy-willows. These poles are taken to church on Palm Sunday and are blessed and then placed on the fields, in the byre, stable and house to assure growth as well as protection against hail and lightning. In the Åland Islands two tall fir trees are erected in front of the house of a newly-married couple and left there until the arrival of the first baby—the function of fertility promotion could not be expressed more clearly.

Another instance of the life-tree, as the tree as a symbol is called, is the *Queste* in Questenberg in the southern Harz mountains. It is placed prominently on the hill-top above the village and consists of an oak trunk with a cross-beam. By means of a wreath, which is renewed annually at Whitsun, the cross becomes a crossed wheel, the sun symbol. The same idea underlies the custom of adorning mountain peaks in the Alps by a cross. This is one of the numerous instances which show how Christianity has taken over an originally pagan custom and given it a new meaning.

The life-tree need not be a real tree, it may be a painting or carving of a tree on the timber framework, frequently the door posts, as found on many German farm houses, particularly in Lower Saxony. Many other symbols, besides the tree are also found, and it is often these symbols, though they may now be considered merely ornaments, which make the farm houses so very attractive and characteristic of a particular region. This applies especially to the use of gable boards, shaped as horses' heads, which are a striking feature of the Lower Saxon type of farm house, though they are also found in other parts of Germany and even in northern Poland (fig. 3). We know of the great veneration of the Teutons for horses, of their horse sacrifices and of the important role the horse played in their mythology, but this is not the only reason in support of the argument that

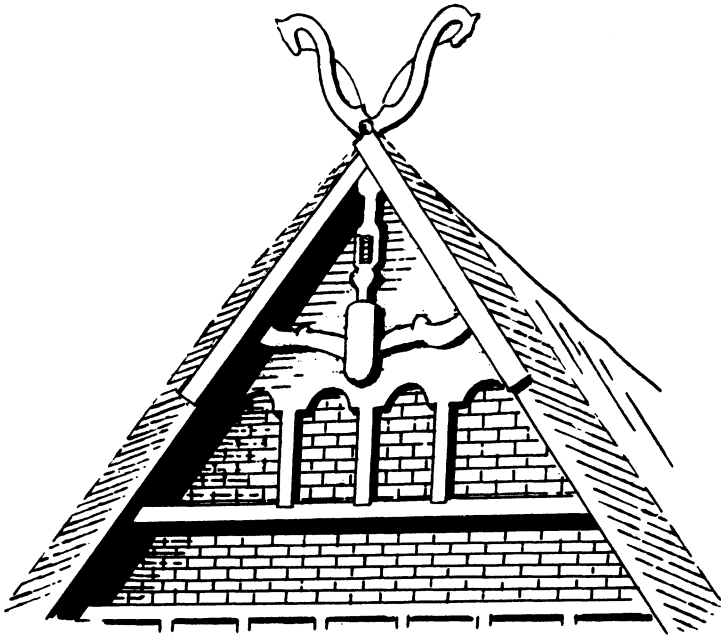


FIG. 3. GABLE BOARDS IN THE OLDENBURG MÜNSTERLAND  
(After a photograph by the author)

the function of these gable boards is protection of the house. The fact that in South Germany and Austria we frequently find a cross, the symbol of Christianity, taking their place certainly points in the same direction.

Vegetation and animal life about the house, the flowers on the window sills, the herbs in the garden and the plants on the graves are other instances where interpretation will often have to be in terms of folklore. Poplars beside the house protect from lightning and storm and so do the swallow and stork, of whom the latter are encouraged to nest on roof-tops by putting old wheels there specially.

In the peasant garden not only the common vegetables are found but also various herbs traditionally applied in folk medicine, and the flowers on the graves are not only chosen for their bright colours but selected according to their ability to defer evil spirits.

To conclude this section one last instance of folklore in the landscape is the traditional fires which burn at certain times of the year, most frequently at midsummer. When we consider that the map (fig. 4) only represents a selection of places and that many dots stand for more than one fire, it

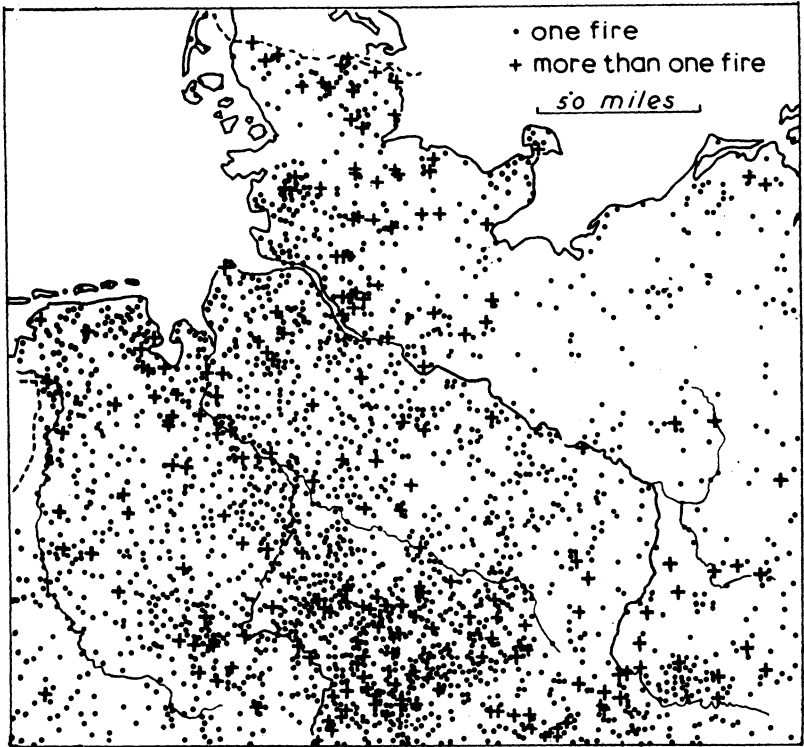


FIG. 4. THE CUSTOM OF BURNING OF FIRES IN NORTH GERMANY  
(After *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde*, map 26)

becomes clear that this custom gives rise to a striking feature. Anybody who has watched from a vantage point the impressive sight of mountains with numerous fires on peaks all around will agree that this is something of the folklore of a country which the geographer should not ignore.

#### GEOGRAPHY IN THE SERVICE OF FOLKLORE STUDIES

In the same way that a knowledge of folklore is relevant to the geographer, there are a good many instances where geography has advanced the study of folklore and where it holds the key to an interpretation of folklore material.

The most basic affinity between the study of folklore and geography is the importance of the location and association of the objects it studies ; consequently the study of folklore from this aspect has been referred to as

the "geographical method". When folklore studies began, it was the historical and philological methods which stood in the foreground. The aim was, mainly by means of literary evidence, to penetrate as far as possible into the past in order to find the earliest beliefs, customs and the like. This method, important as it is, nevertheless brought the inherent danger of losing sight of the proper object of study, *i.e.* the folk-culture of the *present* in its great complexity. It was certainly due to the advances within the field of geography that folklorists became increasingly aware of the importance of the areal association of the different facets of folk life, and further to see folk life against the background of its environment. It is now an accepted opinion that the *sine qua non* for an item of folklore, be it material or spiritual, is to know the place where it was found or recorded. Without this the most interesting item lacks any research value. Absence of information about the time when it occurred, important though this may be, is of secondary consideration. This different emphasis is the principal variation between the study of folklore and the study of the so-called "high" or "individual" cultures. In the latter the position in the time scale is the most important fact. That, once this principle of the importance of location was established, folklorists should follow the geographers by using the cartographic method for recording their information, as a means of research and for the presentation of results, is only natural. The great folklore atlases bear witness to the strong geographical trend that has entered into the study of folklore.

It is, of course, not the concern of a folklorist to *study* the physical environment as such, but he must constantly be aware of it so that he can ascertain which items of folklore are to be attributed to the *present* environment and which may have originated in a *different* environment; further, and perhaps even more important, so that he can appreciate to what extent a "lore" or any aspect of folk life is a genuine achievement of folk-man. For information about the environment itself, however, the folklorist must turn to the geographer.

I should like to illustrate this close link between the folklore of an area and its physical nature by a few examples.

The belief of bodily life after death, the fear that the dead may return, has been a general characteristic of all primitive societies the world over and at all times, and is thus clearly independent of any environmental influence. If we, however, examine the various beliefs where the dead or, under the influence of Christianity, the condemned souls, go to, we can see immediately how a particular environment makes itself felt. This abode of the dead invariably has the most inimical characteristics of

physical nature in any given environment. In the zone of cool temperate climate, where the sun is the obvious source of all life, it is the cold and excessive damp which are the characteristics of this "other place". Winter and death are seen as one person and it is in particular in mid-winter, the period of the *Rauhnächte* (21st December to 6th January) that the dead come to visit the living. In a number of Austrian mountain valleys, the *Perchten*, masked folk who represent the dead, appear. They roam from farm to farm, dance, and have a right to steal. To interfere with them may bring death, but the faith that death is a source of new life is brought out in the belief that the fields over which the *Perchten* have run will be particularly fertile. In the Alps glaciers were believed to be places of banishment of condemned souls and a glacier advance was interpreted as indicating that a great number of souls were suffering there at the time. That the underworld in the mythology of the Teutons was a damp and cold place is well known. The dark coniferous forests, which are difficult to penetrate and where many poisonous plants and fungi grow beneath the trees, were full of witches and evil spirits, as is clearly shown in many legends and fairy-tales. That they were also thought of as being an abode of the dead may be indicated by the custom, found in the Alps, of fixing on trees small shrines in memory of a deceased person and asking the passer-by to say a prayer.

Mountains in their fearsome majesty also became the realm of the dead, particularly limestone mountains, since their many caves appear as gates to the underworld. Legends warn people not to enter them and tell of those who disregarded this warning and were never seen again. Caving is not, and never has been, a harmless sport, even with modern equipment. Sometimes it may be particular dead who are thought of as being inside such a mountain; legends tell of a great emperor—in most cases Charles the Great or Frederick Barbarossa (who did not return from a crusade)—who sleeps inside the mountain surrounded by his knights and men and who is destined to awake before the day of judgement to lead the forces of the good in the final battle against the forces of evil.

But not only the dead dwell inside mountains. Mountains, in particular isolated, barren mountains of striking shape, were considered the places of gods and spirits, friendly or evil. Many churches on mountain tops are the heirs of this former cult; at other places the demons had either always been thought of as evil, or more frequently were made evil by the Christian missionaries.

A good illustration of how these beliefs are based on the physical characteristics of the mountain is afforded by the Brocken, the highest

peak of the Harz. Its formation of Tertiary lava makes for picturesque shapes which appear to be ever changing and at times grow to a gigantic size when clouds begin to form on this outpost of the German uplands. Striking cloud formations as such, because of the low foreland visible over a great distance, or the reflexion of the shadow of a lonely wanderer, thrown by the setting sun greatly enlarged on to a fog bank, gave rise to the belief in the *Brockengespenst* or generally to the belief that the Brocken was inhabited by ghosts and witches.

Other mountains also have their spirits. A well-known mountain ghost is Rübzahl, mentioned above, who usually appears to the lonely wanderer as a giant, but also in other guises. His home is in the Riesengebirge, characteristically again a mountain range which rises from a low-lying foreland to considerable heights, so that its peak is often hidden in clouds and the wanderer may easily lose his way in a mist. It also has its picturesque surface features due to glacial erosion, since it is one of the few mountains in the German uplands where local glaciers were formed during the Ice Age.

Until not so long ago it was generally believed that legends telling of places now covered by a glacier or rock debris, once fertile summer pastures, are pure products of imagination. In fact in those places where they originated—they have also wandered and become attached to other places—they may well go back to about the time of the birth of Christ. It was then that the glaciers of the Alps, which had disappeared almost completely during the postglacial period, began to form again and advanced rapidly as a result of climatic deterioration.

With this mention of climate we come to the last group in this selection of examples about the assistance which may be rendered by geography, *i.e.* weather lore or folk-meteorology. This is a fascinating field of study but the folklorist can adequately deal with it only in collaboration with the climatologist.

For the origin of weather lore two principal causes are responsible: the importance of weather and climate to a peasant civilization, and the changeable character of the weather in our cool temperate regions. In this field of weather lore three main groups of items may be distinguished: actions meant to influence weather; forecasting on the basis of data which science has proved to be quite irrelevant; forecasting based on observation and experience. As regards the first two groups climatology has been able to show that they lack any foundations in reality; as regards the third group climatologists have analysed a number of these weather sayings and shown the extent of their correctness.

To the first group belong for instance actions meant to prevent lightning and hail ; such actions are the burning of fires or of blessed black or red candles—the ancient fire magic—the reciting of special prayers, and the ringing of churchbells—the old noise magic. A bell in Erfurt Cathedral characteristically bears the following inscription : “ *Fulgur arcens et daemones malignos.* ” Some bells were believed to have a particularly “ sharp voice ” and consequently were rather unpopular with the neighbouring villages. The age of reason tried to give this ringing of bells a rational basis by thinking that the vibrations of the air would cause a premature outbreak of the thunderstorm before the hailstones were formed or had assumed a large size. The firing of guns is still practised in a few places for the same purpose although it was proved to have no practical effect whatsoever. Their force is in comparison quite insignificant ; a modest thunderstorm releases as much energy as ten atom bombs. This firing of guns is merely a combination of the two traditional apotropea, fire and noise. Taken in a wider sense one may include within this first group the various customs of burning the winter (in the form of a straw dummy) in order to help the spring and the sun along by this action.

To the second group belong the various forecasts based on the position of the horns of the moon and on the lunar phases. The position of the horns in the same attitude remains constant all the time, and there is no evidence to show that there is any connexion between the moon's phases and change of weather. The reason advanced why the moon should influence the weather is that, due to gravitation, the moon causes tides of the atmosphere as it does of the oceans. Climatologists are, however, agreed that these atmospheric tides are too insignificant to effect the weather. In fact forecasts of this type might properly be called “ astrological ” ; very likely they are not of indigenous origin but stem from the eastern Mediterranean. To this second category also belongs the belief, merely based on the analogy of numbers, of forecasting the weather for the twelve months of the following year from the weather of the *Zwölfsten*, the twelve days from 25th December to 5th January.

The beliefs so far discussed may rightly be called “ superstitions ”. The sayings of the third group, weather forecasting on the basis of observation and experience, have, however, in many cases been substantiated by recent climatological research. Within this group of weather sayings we may distinguish three different types : short-time forecasting ; long-time forecasting on the basis of the weather of a particular day or period ; statements that certain days or periods are generally characterized by a particular kind of weather.



It is easiest to understand how the sayings of the first type originated. If two events frequently follow each other, a person who is as dependent on the weather as the peasant or the sailor will remember their sequence and draw his conclusions. The best known and possibly the oldest sayings in this group are those which forecast the weather of the day, or next day, from the colouring of the sky at sunrise or sunset. In a *Bauernpraktik* (a little book containing practical advice for the farmer) of 1508 it says: "*Nocte rubens coelum, cras indicat esse serenum.*" I will omit the physical explanation for the phenomenon and the significance of the sky's colouring, this may be found for instance in Kimble's book, *The Weather*. What is important in our context is that modern meteorology has provided statistical evidence as to the degree to which these sayings apply. According to Kimble the reliability in the south of England is as follows: red sunrise to be followed by rain within 24 hours in seven times out of ten; red sunset to be followed by 24 hours fine weather at least two times out of three.

Other short term weather forecasts are based on colouring or sharpness of definition of the moon and these forecasts can also be explained and justified on meteorological grounds. The explanation of the saying that a pale moon or a moon with a halo presages rain is that this appearance of the moon is due to a high cirrostratus cloud which indicates an approaching depression. That a white and clear moon indicates fine weather is due to a dry atmosphere, characteristic of anticyclonic weather, a weather with fine days and cold nights. These are only a few examples of this first type. There are many more, for instance those based on the visibility or kind of cloud formation of a particular mountain, or quite outside the field of the geographer sayings based on the behaviour of plants or animals which react to impending weather changes before a human being is able to sense them.

A great number of sayings belong to the second type—that is the forecasting of the weather for some period in the future on the basis of the weather of a certain day or period earlier on. As an example of these I quote the following: "As warm as St Jacob's day (25th July) as cold will be the winter." These sayings cannot be dismissed as being completely without foundation, but so far no judgement as regards their validity is possible. To arrive at worthwhile results they need careful critical sifting as regards contradictions contained, and as regards the area and time of their origin.

The third type of rules and sayings which generally indicate that certain days or periods are characterized by a particular kind of weather

poses a number of difficulties to the attempt to test their validity. One difficulty is that weather rules have migrated from their place of origin, sometimes over long distances, so that their validity can in fairness only be judged as regards the area where they originated. The occurrence of the figure 40 sometimes found in weather sayings may indicate their origin in the eastern Mediterranean where the figure 40 played an important role in Semitic mythology. A second difficulty lies in the fact that at least some weather sayings go back to very early times, possibly to the Neolithic or even the Mesolithic Period (about 8000 B.C.) when the climate of our regions was considerably different from today. But even if weather sayings are not quite as old we must remember that the Gregorian reform of the calendar in 1583 results in a ten-day shift of the saints' days, that many of these rules were not adjusted accordingly and in consequence again must have lost their validity. The popular protest against this calendar reform was in fact largely because of the high esteem accorded to the weather sayings and the well-founded fear that they would lose their value. Another earlier reason which had its detrimental effects on the weather rules was the substitution, due to Christianization, of saints' days for days of the prior pagan religion. There was at first not always a saint's name available for exactly the same day and consequently some rules became falsified by becoming fixed on a different day.

Due to the traditional attitude, the conservative way of thinking of the country people, sayings once established or taken over were faithfully passed on long after their original applicability may have gone due to a change of climate. One characteristic example from the fairly recent past is the belief in the "Ice Saints" (11th-13th May) of whom the saying goes: "*Servazi, Pankrazi und Bonifazi sind drei kalte Bazi!*" (Servatius, Pankratius and Bonifatius are three cold cads.) On their name days frost could be observed frequently until about 1840 but not since.

Considering the various causes I have outlined which affect the applicability of weather sayings today, considering further that many Saints have not only one but a number of days in the calendar, which raises the additional difficulty of a lack of certainty to which day a weather saying is meant to apply, it is not surprising that amongst these sayings we find again a good number of contradictions, and also forecasts which climatological study has proved to be without foundation. What really is surprising is that a great number of these sayings still apply and that the country people should have mastered the difficult task of remembering, without proper records, the usual weather of particular days and periods over such a long time and thus accumulated the knowledge which under-

lies these sayings. Climatologists have only during the last two decades or so found out for certain by most laborious statistical calculations that such regular weather tendencies exist at all. Two leading German climatologists who have been working in this field, August Schmauss and Hermann Flohn, have called this achievement of the folk "most remarkable" and "worthy of respect by the scientist". If the same kind of weather really did occur on the same day or during the same period year after year, this achievement would be less remarkable. What does happen, is that there is merely a tendency for a certain type of weather, a weather "genotype" from which the actual weather, the "phenotype" frequently diverts. Only on the basis of weather observation over long periods is it possible to draw valid conclusions as regards the genotype which at best is brought out in the actual weather in fifty years out of a hundred; in most cases these "singularities" are represented by a much smaller proportion.

It would require too much space to go right through the calendar and set the weather sayings against the background of the average weather sequence of a year as established by climatologists. One example for each season must suffice. Winter: "St Dorothy (6th February) brings most of the snow." The period from 3rd-12th February is established as a time of pronounced winter weather. Spring: "St Gertrude (17th March) lets the plants grow." The period 14th-25th March brings fine weather with great regularity. Summer: "Rain on St Barnabas day (11th June) lasts forty days." It is very usual for the weather to break between the 10th and 20th June, the time when a kind of "European summer monsoon" commences. The figure 40 is to be considered as a magic number and must not be taken literally. Autumn: "If St Michael's day is fine, it will stay fine for four weeks." This saying refers to the pronounced tendency of the so-called "*Altweiber Sommer*" (old women's summer) or "Indian summer".

With these weather sayings which show the power of observation, the wisdom, and the long tradition of the "folk" people, I have come to the end of this survey. Relations between folklore and geography, a common ground for these two fields of study? Yes indeed! I hope I have not only shown that these relations and this common ground exist, but that this ground is a potentially fertile field worthy of the labour of geographers and students of folklore.

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