

## Reviews

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KLANICZAY, Gábor – PÓCS, Éva (eds.): *Witchcraft and Demonology in Hungary and Transylvania*. (Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic). 2017, London: Palgrave. 412. ISBN 978-3-319-54755-8

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This collection of studies is the outcome of a long-term cooperation of Hungarian historians, ethnographers and archivists working on early modern witchcraft documents. The interdisciplinary research group of witchcraft and demonology studies was originally formed thirty years ago, underwent several minor and major changes over the years, published a great number of source editions (exceeding 6,000 pages in 15 volumes) as well as studies both in Hungarian and English. However, a representative overview accessible to international audiences was still missing. More recently, thanks to an ERC advanced grant in 2013, the research group received considerable new impetus and prepared this volume (among other outputs). The book is edited by Éva Pócs and Gábor Klaniczay, both members of the research group from the start, organizers of two major international conferences (1988 and 1998), and authors of books and articles on witchcraft and demonology issues in Hungary and Transylvania.

The appeal of witchcraft documents attracts scholars who wish to directly reconstruct the great number of trials, their causes and consequences. As a matter of fact, such documents provide information about many further details of historical people's lives: their attitudes, beliefs, fears, everyday life, and so on. A historical anthropologist interested in such issues can indulge in the abundance of judicial sources. It is for this reason that Le Roy Ladurie starts his famous *Montaillou* with a foreword on the close relationship of inquisition and ethnography and Carlo Ginzburg portrays the inquisitor as an anthropologist. Religion and its folkloristic representations, the normative role of religion in micro and macro communities, religious norms and worldviews, conflicts among different confessions and nationalities, the cult of saints, communication with the supernatural, demonology, ethno-medicine, creation myths, practices of cursing and incantations, everyday conflicts and the magical world view of early modern rural life are topics on which the documentation of witch trials provides the richest sources, and of which the erstwhile inquisitors prove to be the earliest experts.

The preface of the volume emphasizes the belatedness of witchcraft accusations in the Central European area. The number of trials increases after 1686; two thirds of the cases are dated after the reoccupation of Buda. We are aware of 2,275 trials altogether, 4,263 witches (3,673 women and 590 men) were accused, and – according to our present understanding – 702 capital punishments were delivered.

The first study is a translation of a chapter from a 1998 book by Ildikó Kristóf on early modern trials in Debrecen and Bihar county (*Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*:

*a boszorkányüldözés társadalmi és kulturális háttere a kora újkori Debrecenben és Bihar vármegyében*, 1998, Debrecen: Ethnica). The original research focused on the period of 1575–1766, reviewed 217 trials (303 accused), and – following a historical-anthropological methodology – reconstructed everyday conflicts that underlay the accusations in this urban milieu. The Calvinist environment viewed the benign magic, divination and healing practices with skepticism, suspecting that such activities go against divine providence. Ildikó Kristóf includes medical documents in addition to the usual judicial ones and points out how close the “victim” and the witch lived to each other in spatial and socio-cultural terms. Those who were “far” and did not participate in these everyday conflicts – Gypsies and Roman Catholics – would be left out of the accusations.

László Pakó approached the issue from the opposite direction. By choosing György Igyártó as his subject, a corrupt and selfish procurator in Kolozsvár (today: Cluj-Napoca, Romania) famous for accusing of witchcraft those who accused him – probably rightly – of adultery, corruption, and so on, Pakó provides an example in which it was not local, everyday conflicts of more or less equal actors, but power, influence and ambition that underlay the accusations.

A third party, that of healers, plays the central role in Gábor Klaniczay’s study. Modeling the usual structures of witchcraft stories in Kolozsvár, Kiskunhalas, and Hódmezővásárhely, the author emphasizes that besides church demonologists and official prosecutors, healers were the main perpetuators of witchcraft beliefs. Ironically, the boundaries between healing and bewitchment were not always clear, as both were interferences with the mechanisms of the supernatural world, and unsuccessful healing could be easily interpreted as cursing, thus the profession of the healer was not always without dangers.

Judit Kis-Halas reviews the interaction of magic and healing in Nagybánya (Baia Mare), and explores the functioning “medical market” of the town. Specialists of folk magic, divining, treasure hunting, and love charms are just as important actors of the story as the witch herself. A recurrent topic in the volume, also discussed in this study, is how Protestant demonology and Catholic conceptions influenced witchcraft beliefs.

In “Shamanism or Witchcraft?” Éva Pócs examines 35 *táltos* (24 women, 9 men, one boy, and one girl) in the documents of 18<sup>th</sup>-century trials. A *táltos* could find himself or herself in both roles: that of the healer and that of the witch. *Táltos* had themselves serious convictions about their own supernatural capacities, as theirs was not seen as a punishable activity in itself. In other cases, though, the role of the *táltos* was merely used by some actors as an excuse to evade punishment or simply to get money. The author also reconsiders the continuity theory of the *táltos* with the pagan Hungarian shamans of the early medieval centuries.

Péter Tóth G. tries to reconstruct the end of the story, which is not all that easy, as witchcraft accusations considerably post-date their official ban in the 1740’s. The decriminalization of witchcraft was a long story (1740–1848), partly because the attitude of the Habsburg court was somewhat ambivalent, and partly because some magical activities (fraud, cemetery exhuming, etc.) remained punishable long after witch accusations were prohibited. Maria Theresa banned witch accusations only from the judicial courts, not from the scene of public morals.

Dániel Bárány contrasts 18<sup>th</sup>-century Catholic Enlightenment with the enduring accusations and points out how conflicted the Catholic leaders’ attitude was towards

miracles and white magic, and how they tried to denounce them as folk superstitions. A case study of self-appointed exorcists is highly informative about the unease the Church felt about the concepts of benediction.

Finally, Ágnes Hesz shows that the story is not really over; in her narrative analysis, she reviews the explanations of an unnamed contemporary rural community in Transylvania and points out how witchcraft beliefs help structure the world and interpret life, and how it is in fact necessary for certain contemporary communities to maintain such beliefs.

I find the volume an exciting read not only because it is the most recent selection of witchcraft studies in Hungary, which it certainly is, but rather because through its case studies and historical models, it brings close historical people's lives, fears, and activities. As historical anthropology and micro-history usually does: it brings history close to the reader.

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PÓCS, Éva – HESZ, Ágnes (eds.): *Orvosistenektől a hortikulturális utópiáig. Tanulmányok a Kárpát-medence vonzaskörzetéből* [From Gods of Medicine to Horticultural Utopias]. 2016, Budapest: Balassi. 416. ISBN 978-963-506-981-1. (Vallásantropológiai tanulmányok Közép-Kelet-Európából 2.) [Religious Anthropological Studies from Central and Eastern Europe 2.] ISSN 2416-0318

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*Orvosistenektől a hortikulturális utópiáig* [From Gods of Medicine to Horticultural Utopias] is the second publication in the series of Anthropological Studies of Religion from Central and Eastern Europe. Despite the studies being organized around a single topic, the editors' concept was to provide the most comprehensive presentation of the research group's activities. This is reflected not only in the thematic diversity indicated by the title but also in the objectives of the interdisciplinary study and its methodological versatility. The analyses provide a broad cross-section in time and space, and these two aspects (time and space) define the volume's structure. Following the editors' preface, the series of studies is opened by Judit Anna Tóth's article titled *Animal masquerades in the late Antiquity – St. Augustine's testimony?* By presenting ancient and medieval sources regarding the celebration of Kalendae Ianuariae, the author mediates the various phenomena of community religious life in the centuries of the evolution of Christianity through intersections of interpretation axes such as paganism–Christianity, Antiquity–Middle Ages, east–west, institutionalized cult and spontaneous, grassroots organizations. The focus of Ildikó Csepregi's study, *The emergence of the divine physician and physician saints*, is the special form of sacred communication related to saints and sacred places called incubation. The framework of interpretation is once again provided by the transition from paganism to Christianity, as well as the many parallelisms that can be demonstrated in the phenomena she examines. Many elements of the narratives of ancient healing deities providing cures through a dream can also

be found in the stories of Christian healing saints. Bea Vidacs's study, *A Hungarian and a Lebanese Seer*, presents two women who are separated by a huge geographical distance but linked by their visions of the suffering of Jesus. The scientific representation of the Lebanese seer and the material of the documentary about her is compared with her own research experience with the Hungarian seer. One of the common features of the cults that developed around the two persons is that they are both localized in the [habitat?] of the seers, and an interpretation that goes beyond the Christian creed and correlates the sufferings of the Passion with the fate of one's own nation can be observed in both. Éva Szacsuvay's writing, *On the workings of the devil of the storm: "On the nature of natural phenomena..." Lessons from a translated sermon*, deals with the Hungarian adaptation of a German sermon and investigates the causes that brought on the modification of the text. The differences in the Hungarian translation are manifested primarily in the use of Hungarian beliefs as examples and the simplification or lack of scientific explanations. For the latter, the author seeks the explanation in the educational background of the two (Hungarian and German) pastors, but also refers to the possibility of formulation tailored to the understanding of Hungarian audiences. It seems that, to the Hungarian pastor, more important than a preparedness in the subject of physics was a rhetorical motivation, that is, the presentation of examples that could be interpreted by the audience. Laura Iancu's study, *"Religion should be slowly taking root." Historical data to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century religiosity of Moldavian Catholics*, explores local doctrinal religious phenomena and their impact on individual lives. In his study, *"In his left hand, his little written book." The relationship between book, literacy, and "science" among the Csángós along the Trotuş river*, György Takács focuses on literacy and its magical aspects by analyzing an excerpt from a prayer common in Csíkszék that regards the book as a symbolic object. He enumerates the important connotations of the verb 'read' in terms of ethnographic/anthropological interpretation and highlights the common semantic range of reading and praying. The importance of the unchanged repetition of the text emerges in the linguistic relationship of reading and praying. In her study, *Love as a disease: The notions of the Hungarians of Gyimes regarding romantic love and love spells*, Judit Balatonyi deals with a topic less often studied by anthropologists: love, its symptoms and its social interpretations. The work, rich on data gained from extensive fieldwork and numerous interviews, approaches the subject primarily through the medical-anthropological definition of the disease, but through its descriptions and conclusions, it organically connects with the literature of a much wider scope on spells and witchcraft. Éva Pócs's *Shamanism or witchcraft? The táltos in witch courts* examines the community role of a specialist called táltos based on the testimonies of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian witch trial documents. The author revises the former concept of the táltos, reinterpreting and supplementing it in many respects. The sources indicate that it is only in their name that the táltos differ from the magical specialists with other supernatural abilities of the period being examined. In this sense, the táltos and witches appear in a common system in the contemporary beliefs and ritual practices of Hungarians. Lehel Peti's writing, *The gifts of the Holy Spirit and charismatic rites in the Pentecostal communities of a Moldavian micro-region*, presents the various local adaptations of the movement through the example of three local Pentecostal groups. The understanding of the function of Pentecostalism in communities with different socio-cultural backgrounds is examined primarily through the concepts of gifts from the Holy

Spirit and their ritual representation. Judit Kis-Halas's study, *Horticultural utopia: The local interpretations of a global spiritual movement*, aims to present the interactions between globality and locality based on the example of the Hungarian reception of the Russian New Age movement of Anastasianism. According to the author, the humble reception of the movement in Hungary may be explained by the fact that the ideology of an environmentally conscious economy that returns to old techniques and organizational frameworks, which is of central importance to the Anastasians, has already been „claimed” by the more established eco-village initiatives (along with the social base susceptible to such ideology). Ilona Nagy's article, *From apocrypha to folk bibles*, the closing essay dealing with issues of textual folkloristics, discusses the examination of parabiblical narratives about the Old Testament in Hungarian folklore in the context of apocryphal documents. She presents the literature of apocrypha spanning multiple disciplines, focusing mainly on the problems of defining the concept.

Terminology and conceptual definitions often define research topics, directions, methods, and may influence their conclusions. The need to reconsider definitions emerges not only in Ilona Nagy's study but also in Éva Pócs's, such as regarding the semantic domain of *táltos* canonized in ethnography. Its association with the pre-conquest shamanistic practice of the Hungarians was most probably facilitated by the Finno-Ugric origin of the word and its correspondences in current-day related languages. The essential issue that links several studies in the volume is the relationship between literacy and orality. Writing and book appear as magical entities in traditional village communities separated by time and space as well as in contemporary, esoteric movements of diverse composition (György Takács and Judit Kis-Halas). Éva Szacsavay presents the combined effect of orality and the written forms of elite culture in the translation practice of sermon literature, while Ilona Nagy points out that although oral and written literature are different, they cannot be separated. The studies of Lehel Peti and Judit Kis-Halas are linked by the examination of the effects of linguistic and cultural discrepancies. They reveal the specific interactions between globality and locality and investigate the possible causes of local adaptations considerably diverging from the initial phenomenon. Lehel Peti's research also illustrates how the disappearance of pagan healing and divining specialists brings on the emergence of alternative Christian solutions for functions for which there is still a strong social demand.

The monographic studies that appear in the volume and the writings presenting the initial phase of a particular research are combined with novel questions and adequate conclusions based on rich data and thorough fieldwork. By aligning philological studies with contemporary ethnographic and anthropological field experiences, not only do processes of change emerge, so do significant motifs and phenomena appearing in newer and newer contexts, connecting the present and the past.

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MISKOLCZY, Ambrus (ed.): *Felvilágosodás és babonaság. Erdélyi néphiedelem-gyűjtés 1789-90-ben.* [Enlightenment and Superstitions. Collecting Folk Beliefs in Transylvania in 1789-1790]. 2016, Budapest: L'Harmattan – PTE Néprajz Kulturális Antropológia Tanszék. 297. ISBN 978-963-414-165-5 (Fontes Ethnologiae Hungaricae XII.) ISSN 1586-2062

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In recent decades, significant changes have taken place in the Hungarian research of folk belief texts. Myths, legends, folk belief texts and their cognates collected “from the people” continue to be published in succession. The devotional practices of Christian denominations are being studied more and more by scholars of “folk religiosity.” Since they rely on mostly written (and even printed) sources, the textological value of historical sources has increased and more and more of them have been published (witch trials, incantations, etc.).

An appropriate examination of all these calls for historical philology and accurate source editions. After all, written texts are much clearer in their references to parallels than orally transmitted data. Anyone who has worked with such texts knows that even the most well-known texts are unique, often containing a real surprise. And their presentation requires deep textological knowledge. Fortunately, the text editions directed by Éva Pócs (see, for example, the previous volumes of *Fontes Ethnologiae Hungaricae*) encompass both Hungarian and international perspectives. The present volume provides a remarkably thorough commentary: about 40 percent of the book is comprised of the introduction of historian-philologist Ambrus Miskolczy, which, in fact, makes it a mini-monograph. He was the best specialist for accomplishing this precise edition (following many long years of work). That some documents of an Enlightenment-era Transylvanian folk belief survey have been preserved has been a known fact. However, Miskolczy’s overview clarifies what was done differently in this survey than we thought and what we still cannot paint an accurate picture of.

In the spring of 1789, Michael Brukenthal (1746–1813), the governor of the military district of Fogaras at the time, assembled a questionnaire and handed it over to about twenty pastors. According to the Hungarian-language version dated April 26, 1789, he „... wished to know what superstitions and false beliefs prevailed ...” in individual settlements, especially among ordinary people. (The document is now in the Hungarian National Archives, which Miskolczy addresses on pages 131–134.) The Hungarian circular had ten addressees. The German version of the circular (... Waß für Vorurtheile und Aberglauben noch unter dem gemeinen Mann herschen ...) that was also sent to ten recipients is similarly in the Hungarian National Archives, and Miskolczy addresses it on pages 134–136. The governor expected to receive the responses to the questions by October of that year. All in all, the texts that were found came from three Evangelical Saxon, three Calvinist Hungarian, and one Greek Catholic Romanian priest in Transylvania.

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the social sciences of the Enlightenment attempted to change habitual lifestyle, among other things, by trying to acquire specific, systematized knowledge first. The superstition survey served this same purpose, so that, after

polemicalizing the world view it revealed, rationality may win. Evaluating some of the questions and answers is still complicated today, and even more so as the individual communities represented a very complicated social environment.

But by the time the texts of the Brukenthal survey were produced, the age of the French Revolution had arrived, and not only the Catholic Church but the ruling class were also frightened by the actions of the wildly secularized French state and the French peasants that were encouraged to be anti-religionist. The Viennese court was no longer concerned with the criticism of peasant superstitions and customs. Contemporaries knew something about the survey, but not the details of it. Remarks that arose about the whereabouts of the responses turned out to be rumors. Nor was it true that it was Emperor Joseph who had the questionnaires prepared. Saxon cultural historians have seen some of these responses, and some of them have even been published. As we understand it now, after complicated inheritance battles and money-making schemes, they were sold on the manuscript market and made their way to the National Archives in Budapest, but not at the same time and not into the same fonds, not even the related documents.

As a result of Miskolczy's philological detective work, this volume provides all the important texts. The German and Hungarian questionnaires are three pages long each, and they even provide "sample" answers to some of the questions. Based on these, it is clear that the two texts are not translations of one another, since the German or Hungarian superstitions used as examples are different.

The present edition provides each answer in its entirety and separately: in the only truly useful way. Since the answers have no "order," Miskolczy grouped them according to their value. The first one is a precise text (two printed sheets) by Sámuel Köpeczi Bodos, the Calvinist pastor of Kóbor. The author was obviously interested in the subject, returning to certain questions: a veritable mini-treatise on superstition. The author of the second writing is the Unitarian priest of Keresztúr, János Bodor (seven sheets): he only answers precisely the questions. (It seems that he did not have accurate knowledge of some of the topics.) The priest of Fogaras, Bán Baló, provides similarly precise answers. At times, an exaggerated rationality common among the Protestants of the time also emerges, such as referring to the "superstitious watering of Easter and the childishness of painted eggs." He describes the superstitions in a systematic way. Ion Halmaghi, the vicar of Fogaras, is familiar with "Greek Catholic" folk superstitions; he knows of three main groups: divination – charms – superstitious acts. Johann Samuel Barberius, who taught in Brassó, discusses beliefs and witches separately. Michael Binder's thorough description is about 50 sheets long. J. G. Schenker of Segesvár submitted a veritable monograph of superstition (*Aberglaube*).

In short: so many responses, so many documenting styles and approaches. Miskolczy does not address the individual texts, and he does not examine the beliefs or customs that show up in them. Because of the thousands of motifs mentioned, this would have been impossible. However, he delivers an introduction of great breadth, in which he addresses the concept of superstition at the time and the views of the representatives of the Enlightenment on superstitions. He provides a European outlook on all of this and presents contemporary "Hungarian" reports of superstitions, such as vampire beliefs, witch trials, and even references of occultism.

Commentary on some of Miskolczy's chapters could yield a volume in their own right. "The World View of Collectors of Superstition and the Superstitious" (sheets 84-

100) outlines the mentality of the participants of the survey in a believable way. In a separate chapter, he discusses the contemporary debates on the origins of the Saxons (and Transylvanian Romanians). This is what Freemason and Josephinist Joseph Carl Eder (1760-1810) found himself in the midst of, whose estate eventually ensured the survival of the materials of the Brukenthal survey.

Miskolczy is masterful in his illustration of the era's convoluted research of religion and superstition. The issue would warrant a separate study. Of course, however multifaceted the material of the survey is, it only reflects the observations of a small social and religious group. The reader will first look up the beliefs held in certain settlements, then the grouping of the superstitions, ultimately arriving at the ideology. From this point of view, the volume is just as much of a novelty in terms of the history of culture and the history of religion as it is in terms of its data. This source publication is another important achievement in our historical folkloristics (I almost wrote *intellectual history*). My recommendation to everyone: read it first with paper and pencil in hand, ready to note down the curiosities. Then start re-reading it, this time by plowing through Miskolczy's introduction.

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TÓTH G., Péter – PAKÓ, László (eds.): *Kolozsvári boszorkányperek 1564–1743* [Koložsvár Witch Trials 1564–1743]. 2014, Budapest: Balassi Kiadó. 427. ISBN 978-963-506-930-9. (A magyarországi boszorkányság forrásai. Várostörténeti források 4.) [Sources of Witchcraft in Hungary. Sources of Urban History 4.] ISSN 1589-6080

TÓTH G., Péter – BRANDL, Gergely (eds.): *Szegedi boszorkányperek 1726–1744* [Szeged Witch Trials 1726–1744]. 2016, Budapest – Szeged: Balassi Kiadó – Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Csongrád Megyei Levéltára. 478. ISBN 978-963-506-979-8. (A magyarországi boszorkányság forrásai. Várostörténeti források 5.) [Sources of Witchcraft in Hungary. Sources of Urban History 5.] ISSN 1589-6080

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As a result of a decades-long research exploring and publishing sources of Hungarian witch trials, two new volumes on the witch, wizard and libel suits of Koložsvár and Szeged have been published. The editions are the latest in the Sources of Urban History series that started with Nagybánya and continued with Segesvár and Sopron. In the 1980s, a research group that brought together historians and ethnographers was founded on the initiative of Éva Pócs, the aim of which was to treat and analyze the already published Hungarian witch trial files and to find the latent or little-known and hard-to-find documents. As a first step, *Witch Trials in Hungary: A Collection of Source Publications*, edited by Gábor Klaniczay, Ildikó Kristóf and Éva Pócs, was published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1989. The series continued with two volumes by József Bessenyei (*The Sources of Hungarian Witchcraft I-II*, 1997 and 2001) and

by historian-archivists András Kiss and Pál-Antal Sándor (*The Sources of Hungarian Witchcraft III*, 2002). Their work was greatly helped by Péter Tóth G., who has already compiled a *Register of Sources on Witchcraft in Hungary* (Veszprém – Budapest, 2000). Since 2003, he has been coordinating the exploration and publication of trials, and the forthcoming fourth volume has been published under his editorial oversight.

Based on Péter Tóth G.'s idea and with the involvement of local archivists, the *Sources of Urban History* series, which published the documents of urban community witch hunts, was launched in 2003 with the aforementioned volume on Nagybánya, edited by historian-archivist Béla Balogh. Péter Tóth G. took on this project with plenty of verve, as the diverse documents of urban archives provide an excellent opportunity for studying the social processes underlying the accusations of witchcraft in the context of micro-historiography or historical anthropology. In the international research on witchcraft, this trend has enjoyed unwaning popularity since Paul Boyne and Steven Nissenbaum's pioneering monograph on the Salem witch trials (*Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*, 1976). In the Hungarian context, Ildikó Kristóf produced an excellent micro-sociological examination of the witch trials of Debrecen and Bihar county ("*I have not pursued an evil craft*": *The social and cultural background of witch trials in early modern Debrecen and Bihar county*, 1998). The logical structure of publishing and processing the sources, which is consistently applied in all volumes of the Urban History series, reflects the series editors' well thought-out and conscious concept. Each volume is divided into three main sections: 1. in the introductory, explanatory and descriptive section, the basic principles of text publishing and the social-historical aspects of the sources are presented in a preface; 2. followed by the source texts; 3. the appendix contains the indexes (personal names grouped by their role in the trial and place names), the glossary, and, finally, the notes with the full bibliography. In fact, this method of text publishing makes possible not just the exploration of the micro-sociological context of the witch trials by allowing identification of the network of accusers and defendants based on the indexes and the topographical environment of the accusations. Such presentation of sources can also provide a starting point for further exploration of the talking and emotional communities of early modern urban societies. It also means that these documents may offer an attractive research subject for many disciplines besides history and ethnography.

This statement is particularly valid in the case of Kolozsvár and Szeged, as both cities have played a prominent role in the research of the history of witchcraft in Hungary from the beginning. László Pakó (Kolozsvár) and Gergely Brandl (Szeged) provide a brief overview of these historiographical antecedents in the volumes' introduction. In the case of the Kolozsvár trials, László Pakó highlights the work of historians Andor Komáromy and András Kiss. He recalls and considers the research methods of Komáromy to be still valid today: on the one hand, because he examined the correlation of local event history and witch trials by considering a wide variety of sources, such as municipal legislative records. On the other hand, because he insisted that the history of witchcraft in Kolozsvár could only truly be presented in a wider perspective of witch trials in Transylvania and Hungary, by virtue of comparative criteria. Pakó emphasizes that András Kiss, who compiled this current volume, essentially followed in the footsteps of Komáromy and included new sources (such as municipal ledgers) in his analyses, and his exciting case studies depicted several figures who played a key role in the Kolozsvár witch trials. László Pakó not only completed the editing when András Kiss passed away, but, as a true disciple, deliberately

follows the line he designated in presenting the figure of city prosecutor György Igyártó, who generated and directed witchcraft accusations (*Witchcraft Accusations in the Service of Financial Interest and Revenge*, 2014). Finally, László Pakó points out that sources on witchcraft in Kolozsvár have always been used efficiently by researchers, and that it is thanks to Hungarian experts such as Gábor Klaniczay and Péter Tóth G. that Kolozsvár is on the international scene of witchcraft research. According to Gergely Brandl's introduction, the situation is somewhat similar as far as the general knowledge and scientific treatment of the Szeged witch trials goes. The difference lies mostly in the fact that, unlike Kolozsvár, the name of Szeged became known throughout Europe after the "great trial" of 1728 and continued to be included in 19<sup>th</sup>-century descriptions of Hungary as a gruesome curiosity. The majority of these trial documents were also published at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, just like with the Kolozsvár trials. The texts were published in János Reizner's multi-volume urban history work in 1900, along with the author's thorough study. Another similarity with Kolozsvár is that nearly seven decades passed after the first edition of Reizner's benchmark work before further trial documents from Szeged were published. Gergely Brandl emphasizes that from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the documents of witchcraft in Szeged were used more in local history research, and this local perspective slightly distorted the image of the local witch trials. Comparative studies of the Szeged materials were mainly carried out by ethnographers (Tamás Körner, Éva Pócs, Melinda Égető) and historians dealing with witch hunts (Gábor Klaniczay, Ildikó Kristóf). Thanks to them, the Szeged witch trials – just like the ones in Kolozsvár – have made their entry onto the international scene of research.

The reviewer was concerned with two issues when reviewing the volumes. The first is actually a matter of rhetoric and not so much a real issue. If the documents of the witch trials of Szeged and Kolozsvár have already seen a number of publications and have been a decisive factor in Hungarian and international witchcraft research for a long time, why it is necessary to republish these sources? After all, the Urban History series has published mostly as yet unexplored source materials. The editors themselves provide convincing arguments to this effect in the preface. They believe the revision of previous editions and the results of recent archival research justify the republishing of the Kolozsvár and Szeged witch trial documents supplemented by the latest documents. The fact that the texts that have already been published need to be revised in many places, such as for incompleteness or an erroneous transcription, supports the need for republishing. If we take into account the Kolozsvár cases published so far, we find that the 88 cases published in the present volume are more than double of the 36 cases published by Andor Komáromy. In the case of Szeged, the number of new documents may not reach the level that the Kolozsvár materials did, but the 62 files published by János Reizner and later by Ferenc Oltvai have been supplemented by 27 newer ones, which is also a considerable quantity. And if we consider that – for the first time in the history of the publishing of witchcraft sources – the editors of the Szeged edition have published the Hungarian translation of a vast amount of Latin texts, including a glossary of frequently occurring Latin terms, their intention of making these sources accessible to a much wider community of readers and researchers than ever before becomes quite clear. The monographic treatment of the history of witch trials in Szeged or Kolozsvár has yet to be written, but these two new text publications with their related aids could be a good starting point for such a big endeavor.

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The second issue is also not a real dilemma but rather a thought about the legitimacy of traditional paper-based publishing in the era of digitization. The publication of witch trial documents in electronic format is not a novelty. I will just mention two examples here. As a result of a successful transcription and digitization project, since 2002, the entire documentation of the Salem witch trials can be accessed and searched online, supplemented with diaries, notes, maps, relevant contemporary literature, and a few other annexes (<http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/home.html>). In 2003, the database of Scottish witch trials containing 4,000 records was added to the Internet, courtesy of the research team of the University of Edinburgh (Julian Goodare et al.) (<http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/>). Péter Tóth G. is not only coordinating the publication of witch trial materials, he has also been working for years on the digital archive of the entire Hungarian trial material (about 7,000 records and about 4,600 trials or trial fragments), currently as a member of the “East–West” Research Group on the Ethnology of Religion at the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, within the framework of ERC project No. 324214. However, this large-scale endeavor is not yet complete, and until the full source material becomes available, and probably even afterwards, tangible, physical copies of books like these two provide a secure point and serve us well in the sea of digital data.

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BÁRTH, Dániel: *A zombori ördögűző. Egy 18. századi ferences mentalitása* [The Exorcist of Zombor: The Mentality of an Eighteenth-century Franciscan Friar]. 2016, Budapest: Balassi. 316. ISBN 978-963-506-983-5. (Vallásantropológiai tanulmányok Közép-Kelet-Európából 3.) [Religious Anthropological Studies from Central and Eastern Europe 3.] ISSN 2416-0318

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The author approaches 18<sup>th</sup>-century religious life, and especially demonic possession and exorcism, through the story and letters of Rochus Szmendrovich (1727–1782), a Franciscan friar of Croatian origins. Analyzing a well-documented scandal, he sets apart Pater Rochus from the multitude of contemporary monks. Rochus was the protagonist of the exorcism scandal that caused quite a stir at the regional level in the city of Zombor in Bácska (today Sombor, Serbia) between 1766 and 1769.

What happened in the parish church run by the Franciscans? What were the intentions and aspirations of their service to the local and neighboring faithful? How did they fight Satan to cure demonic possessions? What role did the outsider friar play in the inner political life of the Catholic and Orthodox population? What lied behind the fascination with him? Who was Rochus, this anti-hero of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Catholic Enlightenment made famous by his scandal? And finally, how was the Catholic Enlightenment received locally?

Many of these questions have been raised in the volume, for which Báth, deciphering the causes of the erstwhile conflict, outlines a variety of contexts (and possible answers)

in terms of social, ecclesiastical, liturgical and the history of mentality. The volume goes beyond the boundaries of a case study at several points: Bárth models the differences in 18<sup>th</sup>-century ecclesiastical ways of thinking and the diversity of clerical attitudes along the intentions and motives of the participants and outlines the different intentions of those utilizing the services of the exorcist. He places the participants of the story in the context of the Enlightenment, and particularly in the context of the Catholic Enlightenment.

This excellent biography about the life of the exorcist of Zombor is not the first time the author tackles the subject of possession and exorcism. As he writes in the epilogue: “today, a historian rarely holds out hope that the biographical narrative of an individual historical actor can be reconstructed in all its details.” Choosing biography as one of the possible genres, Bárth basically offers his readers a socio-historical narrative. By finding the central documentation of the Zombor exorcism scandal in Kalocsa’s church archives and by untangling the threads and contexts of the scandal, we are presented with a fresh and readable work. It is thanks to Bárth that Pater Rochus emerged from the obscurity of “anonymity” among thousands of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Franciscan friars. We can read about him and with the author reinterpret his half a hundred folio-length correspondence, gain insight into the most important turning points of his life, browse with him among the books in his parish and his friary – and we can almost hear him in the spectacular, public exorcism ritual as he shouts the exorcism formulas he deems most useful, utilizing all available tools of Baroque dramatics, and as he explains, educates and cures with expansive gestures. We might believe (or laugh at) his demonically mediated ramblings, imagine (or see) the patients’ physical signs caused by possession syndromes, witness their suffering, the worst of their agony and anguish. We get a picture of the protagonist’s conspiratorial intentions, his zeal, his human weaknesses, the depths and heights of the craze he ignited. We can see him being brilliant and being brought down by the clergy.

The book allows us to examine from several perspectives the issue of “who in fact may have truly been there and then.” Keeping the reader on the edge of his seat, the author successfully outlines the local, socio-cultural and cultural-historical contexts of the given situation, the strategy of the individual actor. We can see that the historian selecting, contextualizing and “analyzing” the sources unintentionally develops a subjective image of the story at the center of his attention, and we can sense that the author comes to love his protagonist.

The sources he studied depict a person who was socialized in a rural social milieu which he partially ascended through his education, but in terms of his existential relations, he was trapped for most of his life. When compared with the opinions of his contemporaries, the letters of Pater Rochus diverged from the “standard” official correspondence articulations of their time. In the official sessions where his circulars and long-winded letters were read, his ecclesiastical and secular superiors often became nervous and troubled. It is no coincidence that the responses to the candid, gratuitously conspiratorial reports of the Franciscan Pater were much the same in the Archbishopric of Kalocsa, the governing body of the Franciscan Province, or the current department of the Hungarian Royal Council. Szmendrovich tried to reinstate an earlier pastoral practice in a transitional era. He talked about curses and blessings at a time when alternative blessing/curse texts seemed to be permanently disappearing from the liturgical and material (sacramental) roster of ecclesiastical practice. Pater Rochus tried to reactivate this obscure and superstitious toolbox when “the removal of magic from the world”

was almost complete. Even being on the ecclesiastical side, in the eyes of his superiors, his suspicious activity did not differ much from the contemporary folk or quasi-folk charlatans and itinerant miracle workers for whom he himself was a competitor in the contemporary “market of magic.”

By revisiting Hungarian exorcism scandals, Bárh moves from the discussion of the highly formalized and ritualized side of the sacred communication of church ordinances to the informal forms of communication with demonic forces. It was also from these case studies that he learned of the circumspect way official regulations had prohibited clerics from engaging in a lengthy chitchat with the devil. Their purpose was to limit the space the devil would have for his deceptive and divergent chatter, and only allow him space for answering what they were asking during the exorcism. Just like in a court hearing. Besides, spectacular exorcisms staged for the local community also amounted to torture: hearing the words, seeing the consecrated devices, the demons experienced painful agony. It is this staged exorcism that the more enlightened clerics wanted to eliminate from use in public, because they sensed, they knew that social peace would be at stake if they allowed the beliefs of the devil to break loose instead of being kept within the confines of the Church.

Looking at it from the enlightened 18<sup>th</sup>-century courts, it was exactly these exposed scandalous cases that triggered the more conscious separation between the clergy and the lower priesthood that encouraged the former practice. Even though the Roman ritual ordinance warned priests against listening to the devil talking about the future through the possessed individual, a parish priest in today Ciucsângeorgiu, Romania still grabbed a pen in the 1720s and noted down all the predictions of his possessed patient. The same priest quoted in his letter of defense the statements of the possessing demons, which, absurdly, related to their own expulsion. To church leaders, however, these notes were evidence of the lack of the possessed person’s credibility and the priest’s ineptitude. The Franciscan friar of Zombor, Pater Rochus, set the bar even higher when he presented himself to both the faithful and the clergy as the most serious opponent of Satan. Since he had already been successful in his battles with demons before his arrival in the city, subsequent narratives suggest that the devil himself had respected him as an opponent. It is no coincidence then that the activities of the charismatic Franciscan – who has maintained a “mediated” relationship with demonic forces, has been highly successful with his alternative methods, and enjoyed popularity at the local level regardless of language or religion – has eventually been noticed by the diocesan leadership driven by the ethos of Church Enlightenment. So much so that he was removed from the city following a lengthy, adventurous (and fortunately well-documented) procedure.

The main charge, as articulated by the clergy, at center of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century exorcism scandals elaborated by Bárh – the 1727 case in Csíkszentgyörgy and the 1766–69 case presented in this book – is the illegal use of alternative methods. Both the parish priest of Csíkszentgyörgy and the Franciscan friar of Zombor argued that the official rituals (of Esztergom and Kalocsa, identical to each other and verbatim derivatives of the Roman Order) simply did not achieve success, thus, to avoid further failure, they had to turn to the alternative – and in the eyes of the clergy, outdated and illegitimate – handbooks that contained more powerful tools and texts. The Franciscan of Zombor achieved particularly spectacular successes, his popularity consequently growing rapidly beyond the city limits, even among the Orthodox faithful, the news of which created a delicate situation with the clerical leadership.

The ideological currents that emerged in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but especially in the last third of the century, were aimed at implementing and accelerating new reforms within the Church whose perspectives were influenced by the Enlightenment. In the Catholic Church, changes first occurred at the elite level of theological thinking, and gradually became part of the world view of the various layers of the priesthood through the mediation of seminaries. Bárth's book presents the process in which this thinking and knowledge, sometimes at the behest of authority, reaches the level of the lower priesthood, bringing about among them at times incomprehension, at other times a veritable resistance. The story of Bárth's book takes place in an era when the ethos of Catholic/Church Enlightenment was already embattled – amidst fierce scandals – with the “enthusiastic,” curative movements described by H. C. Erik Midelfort (*Exorcism and Enlightenment. Johann Joseph Gassner and the Demons of Eighteenth-Century Germany*, Gruyter, 2005). These conflicts point far beyond the scope of the priesthood. The scandals symbolized the struggle between the ecclesiastical “elite's” rational, changed mentality imbued with the ethos of Catholic Enlightenment and the medieval, “folksy” religious attitude of the members of the Franciscan order. The latter attitude roughly corresponds with the mentality of the so-called Counter-Enlightenment (*Gegen-Aufklärung*). Of course, such conflicts did not only develop around the Franciscans. Standing out among the European analogies is the activity of Johann Joseph Gassner, the most famous exorcist of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which occupied the attention of not only the contemporary European media but also the highest levels of church and state leadership. The state administration also formed an opinion on his person – Joseph II. expressed his displeasure regarding the noisy miracles – so that shortly before his own death, Gassner would eventually give up his curing activity after receiving a proscription from the highest existing level: the pope. The influence of Gassner's contemporary, Pater Rochus, and the media attention that surrounded him was much smaller in scale. Nonetheless, he left a remarkable story for Hungarian church history, and thanks to Dániel Bárth, an exciting biography for us 21<sup>st</sup>-century readers.

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BALATONYI, Judit: *A gyimesi lakodalmak. Közös kultúra és különböző identitások?* [Weddings in Gyimes. Common Culture, Dissimilar Identities?]. 2017, Budapest: Balassi Kiadó. 250. ISBN 978-963-456-008-1 (Vallásantropológiai tanulmányok Közép-Kelet-Európából 5.) [Religious Anthropological Studies from Central and Eastern Europe 3.] ISSN 2416-0318

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The reviewed work examines the wedding and “wedding culture” in its social contexts and, using Mauss' terminology, as a “total social fact,” and fits into “a line of research on rituals that [...] attempt to grasp the functioning of local society in its complexity along one segment of ritual life. By analyzing wedding festivities [i.e., nuptials staged

for *presentation* purposes, VG] and [*real*, VG] weddings, the book aims to contribute to the European discourse and debate [...] about the past, present and possible future of multi-ethnic communities” (p. 11). This new approach and research problem evolved as a result of a lengthy fieldwork uncommon in Hungarian ethnography and folkloristics, the details of which are discussed by the author on pages 19–22.

*Wedding in Gyimes* is a novelty in Hungarian ethnography and folkloristics for at least four reasons. First, abandoning the essentialist concept of tradition, the author views tradition as a dynamic construct and examines the process by which “the participants of the wedding organize, create, operate and interpret the ritual processes based on their preliminary concepts, and occasionally even diverging from them,” as well as the way they “pick from the symbolic repertoire of weddings the ritual accessories that are considered most appropriate for the occasion of the particular wedding ceremony” (p. 148). In the spirit of and with the arsenal of performance theory, in the second part of the book, based on case studies, the author investigates *how* certain individuals with different background knowledge, desires, and personal histories try to steer – successfully or unsuccessfully – the course of events in a certain direction. The main question, therefore, is how “tradition” is constructed. In view of the above, and contrary to the conventional approach in Hungarian ethnography and folkloristics, the author’s concern in this process lies not in the general patterns of the wedding but, first and foremost, in the dissimilarities that can be observed in the weddings and broken down to the level of individuals, and the reasons behind them.

Moreover, the author examines the wedding traditions of not *one* village, Gyimesközéplak, and within that of the Hidegség, but of three villages (Középlak, Felsőlak and Gyimesbükk), that is, a small but in many ways non-uniform region. This region, and Gyimesbükk in particular, is known as the boundary of the Hungarian and Romanian language area, of Eastern and Western Christianity, Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, a transition zone where – and this is another great novelty of the book – the opposing and even competing cultures, religions, languages, and identities interact with one another and “hybridize,” *despite all their separation efforts*.

In the first half of the book, the author focuses her examination on the macro- and meso-level contexts that shape hybridity: the political-economic frameworks, public community discourses, the role of local and non-local knowledge elites, the identity-forming activities of local churches and schools, and the education and pastoral care taking place at these scenes. One of her important observations is that “while ethnic, cultural and religious boundaries are being constructed, strengthened and represented and the culture of Gyimes is being safeguarded at the macro and meso levels of local society, at the micro level of local society, boundaries are being continuously crossed by human relationships, friendships and love” (p. 235). Although this is actually natural, few have stressed it so far: in a contact/conflict zone, at the micro level, the slow but continuous interaction of coexisting cultures, religions, ideologies and identities is inevitable, in which the role of the catalyst, as the author keenly observes, is played by friendships and romantic relationships. These are “centrifugal forces [...] that make individuals move away from their identity [...], one of their identities, and move towards heterogeneity” (p. 105), that is, as per the reviewer, towards hybridization.

It then follows – and this is the third important positive – that the author examines the wedding culture not only from the perspective of the Hungarian population of

Gyimes, but also from the Romanian perspective, that is, she places the investigation in an interethnic framework. The significance of this viewpoint can be truly understood and appreciated only if we are reminded that in both the Hungarian and Romanian literature on Gyimes, which could fill a library, one can count on *one* hand the number of writings whose author approaches the subject from an interethnic perspective, even though we are dealing with a region of mixed populations and cultures!

Finally, the fourth novelty or positive. Judit Balatonyi's study encompasses not only the "traditional" wedding but also the "new/modern" wedding ceremonies, the present-day wedding industry, and all the changes that have by now reached this "archaic" region's society through globalization. Moreover, she examines not only "real" but also staged "*nuptials*" and "*children's* [pretend] weddings," that is, all the phenomena and processes that are nowadays described and examined *by* and *through* terms like "festivalization" and "heritagization," formerly "folklorism" and "invented/staged tradition." She does this because, as we have seen, in her perception and reasoning, tradition is not some essence given from the start and remaining static for centuries, but a very dynamic reality that is constantly changing. This constant change is also the reason why the study initially designed as a contemporary study and using contemporary studies as a starting point has been inevitably supplemented with a diachronic aspect over the years: that is to say, the research has extended to the investigation of the most distant past accessible. The perspective, however, is inverse compared to what we are used to in Hungarian ethnography and folkloristics. Here, the past is inevitable for the interpretation of the present, and the present is not a corollary of the past that interest is focused on.

Perhaps I was able to convey with the above the importance of this publication and the novelty of the study. I must say, however, that while the book is exemplary in its objectives, the implementation is not always consistent. There are chapters that one can "race through" because they are easy to read, where one is fascinated by the richness of data, the "smell" of the terrain, the style of the wording; and there are parts that are less readable and more cumbersome, feeling more like a task. For example, the reviewer enjoyed reading the parts about friendships, mixed marriages, or the strategies of wedding gift-giving and reciprocation. However, despite the holistic objective, the parts do not always come together as an organic whole, brilliant hypotheses are not always elaborated, and at times some statements are rather issues that need to be proven.

All these remarks do not retract from the value of the work. In fact, the author's goal was not to examine the wedding itself, but to look far beyond it, at the correlations of wedding and society, wedding and ethnic identity and/or ethnicity, wedding and social memory. This is what sets her book apart from other books about weddings, this is why this work is not just another one among the many similar books, but a book that everyone who deals with the subject needs to know and use.