

Rechtsgeschichte und Volksbräuche (Ausgewählte Studien). By Ernő Tárkány Szücs. Edited by Janka Teodóra Nagy and Szabina Bognár.

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It is the expressed aim of the *Ungarische Rechtshistoriker* series to make Hungarian legal history research accessible to the general public in a foreign language. Its sixth volume, *Ernő Tárkány Szücs: Rechtsgeschichte und Volksbräuche (Ausgewählte Studien)*, published in 2021, does much more than that: it introduces a perhaps lesser-known, outstanding legal historian and ethnographer, provides an insight into his most important Hungarian works, and brings together all his writings published in foreign languages over almost twenty years so that the interested reader need not look any further. This book is an excellent resource for researchers and readers in a wide range of academic fields interested in the work of Ernő Tárkány Szücs.

The book is structured in four parts: a preface, selected studies, an epilogue, and letters. In the preface, there are four essays. After a classical foreword, an essay by Janka Teodóra Nagy introduces the book's 'protagonist', lawyer and legal ethnographer Ernő Tárkány Szücs, born in 1921, primarily through his major works, highlighting the many international awards he won and his relevance far beyond his death in 1984. In the third essay, it is again Janka Teodóra Nagy who provides an insight into Ernő Tárkány Szücs' monumental seminal work, *Hungarian Legal Folklore*, published in 1981, which is a significant and authoritative work documenting research results for representatives of legal history, legal cultural history, ethnography, history, legal sociology, and legal anthropology. That book has been the subject of numerous reviews and is listed as recommended reading in several

Hungarian university departments. In the essay, Nagy actually continues the biography begun in the previous essay in that she reports on how Ernő Tárkány Szücs had conducted his research in the most authentic research atmosphere during the last decade and a half of his life and inspired new generations of legal ethnographers with his methodology and research results long after his death. The last essay in the preface part of this volume describes the activities, research and publication results of the Tárkány Szücs Ernő Legal Cultural History and Legal Ethnography Research Group, founded in 2011, which can be considered the intellectual heritage of Ernő Tárkány Szücs.

Perhaps two main achievements are worth highlighting with regard to the life, work and legacy of Ernő Tárkány Szücs that the editors of this volume, Nagy and Bognár, acknowledge with deep respect and professional admiration. First, he never ceased his research and work despite the lack of support or acknowledgement from his immediate surroundings, and second, he had an education in multiple disciplines, which helped him conduct his research and publish his findings in a way that made them accessible to members of all disciplines. His work, including extensive research on-site on multiple locations, collecting and documenting folk customs, wills, legal mining practices, or the labelling of animals, etc., has been well received abroad and to this day provides a rich well of information as the basis of contemporary research. Yet, in his home country during his life, Tárkány Szücs had difficulty finding a permanent academic position and advancing his career. His interdisciplinary focus makes his work accessible to many, and his findings provide valuable bases for subsequent research. His groundbreaking findings have been reprinted even after his untimely death, and his legacy is maintained, i.e., through the work of the research group dedicated to him, or this volume presented here.

The second part, selected studies, is the core of the book and contains eleven pieces of writing. The first is a German-language summary by János Connerth of Ernő Tárkány Szücs' *Majtély's Ancient Legal Life*, published in Hungarian in 1944. The second is a summary of the contents of the *Testaments of Vásárhely*, also published in Hungarian in 1961. The subsequent nine pieces are Ernő Tárkány Szücs' foreign-language studies, published during his lifetime, in chronological order. The four English-language and five German-language papers were published between 1967 and 1981 and have received considerable positive responses. The works primarily present the results of empirical research in the field of legal folklore and make them accessible to the non-Hungarian-speaking audience. One of the main merits of the book published in the *Ungarische Rechtshistoriker* series is that it presents these studies in chronological order so that the interested reader does not have to look for Ernő Tárkány Szücs' earlier writings in foreign languages as they are all available in this volume. Perhaps it would have been even clearer to the reader if the

editors had separated the first two texts from the other reprints, but of course, the interested reader will probably want to read through all the texts, and it will be clear to him or her which are by Tárkány Szücs and which by other authors.

The third part is the epilogue, where Szabina Bognár first commemorates this outstanding researcher, Ernő Tárkány Szücs, on the centenary of his birth. In this piece of writing, the interested reader can learn more about Ernő Tárkány Szücs as a person and about his scientific career. It tells of his early research and interests, as well as the difficulties he faced in the 1960s in trying to establish his research in the field of legal history. Success came when he was invited to join the Ethnographic Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1975, followed by a number of other academic opportunities. His major work, published in 1981, brought him the long-awaited national recognition, and six months before his death, after a long struggle, he was awarded the title of Doctor of Ethnography on 30 November 1983. The results of his work have been carried forward by many legal historians and ethnographers, including those in the Tárkány Szücs Ernő Research Group. In the second piece in the third part, Janka Teodóra Nagy paints a realistic picture of the achievements and state of Hungarian legal ethnography research after 1981. The author does not fail to emphasize the importance of Ernő Tárkány Szücs' work since his paper *Hungarian Legal Folklore* from 1981 can be seen as the foundation of legal ethnography research. The scientific research results from that book fill a gap between many disciplines and contribute greatly to a full interpretation of the research results. The development of several modern legal fields, such as legal cultural history, legal ethnography, legal sociology, and legal history, have benefited greatly from research on empirical origin over the last forty years. Even the transnational and international legal disciplines look back to the past for future insight. That is why the work of Ernő Tárkány Szücs is significant and worthy of recognition and was perhaps somewhat overlooked during his lifetime, which situation is being remedied by the diligent work of the scholars who care for his intellectual legacy, including through the volume presented here.

In the fourth and last part, the editors publish some of the original, never before published correspondence of Ernő Tárkány Szücs, which is kept in the archives of Hódmezővásárhely. Ernő Tárkány Szücs' first addressee was Karl-Sigismund Kramer, the German ethnographer and professor at the University in Munich and from 1966, that of Kiel, with whom ten of his letters exchanged between 1959 and 1969 are published in German in the volume. Herbert Spruth, a German lawyer and genealogist, corresponded with Ernő Tárkány Szücs in 1962; three of these letters are included in the book. Hermann Baltl, an Austrian jurist and legal historian, head of the Austrian Institute of Legal History at the University of Graz, wrote to Ernő Tárkány Szücs in 1982, offering assistance with his research in Vienna at the time. Louis Carlen,

a Swiss jurist and politician, exchanged letters with Ernő Tárkány Szücs in 1982 as Professor of Legal History and State Canon Law at the University of Freiburg, two of which appear on the last pages of this book.

In conclusion, the book, published in 2021 by Janka Teodóra Nagy and Szabina Bognár, is a great help for readers interested in legal ethnography and the work of Ernő Tárkány Szücs. It has the extraordinary merit of bringing together previously published works in English and German, making the researcher's biography, life's work, research results, as well as summaries of his main writings accessible to those not well-versed in the Hungarian language. This is a wonderful help for the international promotion of Hungarian research results.

