

A HUNGARIAN HUNTING ANECDOTE AND REALITY

(Abstract)

According to Hungarian anecdotes the hunter captures the wild-duck by covering his head with the rind of a pumkin. Two holes are cut in the rind for the two eyes. Covered with this mask the hunters sits into the water so that nothing but the pumkin can be seen. If a wildduck swims next to him, he catches its legs and pulls it under the water. Practised in several Hungarian moorlands (Bodrogeköz, Great-Sárrét) this capturing method is mentioned not only in anecdotes but in ethnographical descriptions as well. With the exception of Australia, it is actually known in every continent (China, India, Egypt, different South American tribes, Mexico). Instead of the pumkin mask the hunter often uses a dish or the skin of a bird. In India, for instance, the skin of a duck serves as mask. In the same regions the duck-skin mask is eventually replaced by a tame cormorant sitting on the hunter's head. This capturing method (by means of a pumkin mask or a dish) is already represented on a copperplate by Antonio Tempesta (1555—1630). On the different continents these methods have developed indepentantly from one another as a consequence of ecological conditions. Since in Europe the plants *Cucurbita pepo* and *Cucurbita maxima* were cultivated in the post Columbian period only, the original mask was probably made of the *Lagenaria* sp. In earlier times the hunter may have been masked with water plants, grass or bird skin.

Béla Gunda