

On the Illustrated Genealogy, with Uygur Inscriptions, of Mongol and Temürid Dynasties at the Topkapi Library" (by E. Esin), "Mongols in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Kirghiz Epic" (by A. T. Hatto), "Some Ethnic Designations in the 'Secret History of the Mongols'" (by L. Bese), "Dayan Khan in the Battle of Dalan Terigün" (by H. Okada), and "The Origin of the name Sibir" (by O. Pritsak) will appeal to the historian.

With its varied and resourceful articles, this volume is one that the student and the scholar in Altaic and Mongolian studies will read with profit and interest. One only wishes that the articles were longer, that contributors followed the same rules of transliteration, and that editing was more thorough. Unfortunately, glaring typos can be found throughout the volume.

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MONGOLIA

HEISSIG, WALTHER. *Erzählstoffe rezenter mongolischer Heldendichtung* [Narrative material of recent Mongolian heroic poetry]. Parts I and II. Asiatische Forschungen, Band 100. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988. xi+936 pages. Appendix of structural typology of motifs, list of names and titles of epics, bibliography, subject index, one foldout table. Cloth DM 378.—(set of two volumes); ISBN 3-447-02675-8; ISSN 0571-320X. (In German)

In 1979 Heissig proposed a typology of motifs as a means of assessing the structural features of Mongolian epics (HEISSIG 1979). The fast-growing body of collected and translated epics had created a need for such a typology to account for the use of formulaic elements in a more systematic manner. An analysis of their motifs promised to be of use also in comparative studies with European epic literature, due to the increased availability of Mongolian epics in translation.

Over the years the series *Asiatische Forschungen* has been instrumental in introducing translations of the Mongolian epics. It is fitting, then, that Volume 100 of the series is dedicated to an analysis and classification of epic motifs. Heissig's work, utilizing the typology he proposed in 1979, does not confine itself to epics already in translation; indeed, of the 55 considered, 53 hitherto existed only in the original. Heissig introduces each epic by means of a resumé, in which he isolates the constitutive steps of the action, identifying each structural feature by the corresponding number in his typology. He then discusses questions of the epic's transmission and of the vagaries and changes of its important formulas within a particular geographical or cultural area. Quoting significant sections in the original and in translation, he demonstrates *ad oculos* how the singers use structural formulas to describe the heroes, their horses, the features of their tents, etc., enabling even a reader unfamiliar with Mongolian to clearly appreciate the high degree of identity among the various formulas. In the process Heissig manages to preserve the poetic characteristics of the originals, such as alliteration at the head of the successive lines.

Such basic poetic features lie at the bottom of larger, highly formulaic units out of which the singer skillfully constructs an epic. Heissig calls these units "motifs" and their logically assembled sequences "motif chains" (*Motivketten*). Their identification and classification enable Heissig to compare their patterns of transmission in

two directions. In "horizontal comparison" (2) he traces the diffusion of motifs among the singers of a specific geographical area, demonstrating changes in their content and showing the influence of such outside literary forces as Chinese storybooks; in "vertical comparison" (3) he probes demonstrable historical teacher-disciple relations, or relations in which a singer could tell the source of a particular song or parts of a song even without having himself been a direct disciple of the teacher in question.

The geographical considerations of Heissig's horizontal comparison largely underlie the division of his work into two volumes. Volume one is mainly concerned with material from east Mongolian groups, while volume two is devoted to material from both sides of the Altai range. This comparison clarifies the idiomatic uses of formulas by a singer or a group of singers, leading to the book's further division into eleven sections. The consideration of idiomatic usages, in turn, introduces the issues dealt with in Heissig's vertical comparison.

In his attempt to unravel the message (*Botschaft*) (2) of narratives or motifs, Heissig makes another important point about historical connections by showing that certain motifs can be traced back to Činggis Khan and the "Secret History," or to other historical figures and events. These events are no longer treated as individual historical facts, however: they have been given a symbolic value and so present behavior of a particular type as being either desirable or undesirable. Such comparisons can, nevertheless, show that certain motifs—blood pacts, for example, or the joining of families through a hero's marriage—originate in social relationships, religious ideas, or memories of incidents from the distant past (such as the conquering of populations). Heissig warns, however, that in most cases it is difficult to pinpoint particular events, and that one must consider the whole range of a motif's usages before a reasonable conclusion can be reached (although I would venture that such conclusions are more in the nature of educated guesses than proofs of verifiable facts).

Heissig addresses an astonishing number of quite detailed issues in his discussion of the various epics—questions of form, tradition, or meaning—yet he never loses sight of his two "directions." As a result the reader is always aware of the encompassing framework.

In his introduction Heissig emphasizes that, in spite of the degree to which formulas are used, each recitation is an "entirely new creation" (4) due to the singer's individual disposition and the specific expectations of that performance's audience. This is an important point to keep in mind while reading this book: we are faced with the formulas as they appear in print and can thus compare and analyze them only in this form, but such written versions are simply attempts to fixate a tradition that lives by the spoken word. Heissig succeeds admirably in showing how formulas that appear moribund in print come to life in a singer's narrative. We are in his and his team's debt for making a living epic tradition accessible beyond linguistic barriers, and by so doing for providing us with an idea of what ancient and medieval epic traditions in Europe must have been like.

Heissig's discussions are always interesting, and his own narrative talent makes even the resumé a pleasure to read. The size of the book is formidable, but the material is made easily accessible by detailed summaries at the head of each chapter and indices that enable quick reference. Unfortunately, the text suffers from numerous misprints, and would have benefited from a thorough editing to straighten out sentences with beginnings and ends that do not quite connect.

This book should prove of great value not only for Mongolist scholars but also for anyone with an interest in the analysis and comparison of narratives.

REFERENCE CITED:

HEISSIG, Walther

- 1979 Gedanken zu einer strukturellen Motif-Typologie des mongolischen Epos [Considerations concerning a structural typology of motifs in the Mongolian epic]. In Walter Heissig, ed., *Die mongolischen Epen. Bezüge, Sinndeutung und Überlieferung* [Mongolian epics: Relations, interpretations, and transmission]. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 9-27.

Peter KNECHT

INDIA

HANCHETT, SUZANNE. *Coloured Rice: Symbolic Structure in Hindu Festivals*. With contributions by Stanley Regelson. Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1988. xx+335 pages. Price not given; ISBN 81-7075-006-7.

In the Preface the author states that "in 1966-67 Dr. Stanley Regelson and I lived for sixteen months in the villages we came to call 'ours'. . . . In the villages I call Chinapura and Bandipur, the duration of our joint work and the great skill of our assistants enabled us to gather a wide range of cultural and social survey data" (xi). The result is this interesting study of Hinduism and the Hindu family through the rituals and festivals currently observed in those two villages. Early in the book the author also observes:

The folk festival is one of India's greatest arts. It ornaments the daily life of Hindu villagers with ritual and mystic designs. Festival activities, choreographed around vessels of water, give form to cultural concepts of men and women, of the family as a whole, of life and death. (1)

There is no denying that the "life cycle" of a Hindu family is interwoven with colorful ritual-offerings having their roots in the remote past. But we have no way of confirming the author's statement that "the coloured foods offered in the festivals are intended to delight the gods" (1).

The symbolic use of colored rice, flowers, and food in various Indian festivals bears a deep, mystical meaning within the ethnic culture of each particular area. Color symbolism has a significant role in Indian iconography and ritual drawing also. Rice being the major food of people living in India, it is used abundantly in the rituals of numerous Hindu deities. Similarly, colored rice is conspicuously used in Hindu marriage rituals all over India. Yellow being the symbolic color of fertility or of a fertilized egg, or even of menstrual fluid, it has a functional meaning in Hindu rituals.

Part I of the book is devoted to the study of "The Cultural Setting," and the remainder deals with "Family Festivals." In a study that is both interesting and scholarly, the author has meticulously deciphered the inner and socio-cultural meanings and processes of transformation of color in ritualistic Hindu functions taking place in the two villages. Vermilion (red) and turmeric (yellow) are commonly used by married women in Hassan District for the dots on their foreheads (61). "There are seven colour terms in local Kannada usage with generally accepted meanings" (60). "The benign goddesses of wealth and married woman status are adorned with golden flowers, and their rituals make much use of turmeric root and powder. Violent spirits, especially feminine ones, receive both red flowers and blood, expressing the wasted vitality that their stories and images represent for Karnataka villagers" (60-61). Green