

not contribute to improving the poor scholarly niveau of Central Asian folkloristics. Quite to the contrary, such credit unduly given in foreign countries often works to the detriment of scholarship in the home country.

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CAMBODIA

THIERRY, SOLANGE. *Le Cambodge des contes* [Cambodia of the märchen].

Recherches Asiatiques. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985. 295 pages. Bibliography. Paper fFr 140,00; ISBN 2-85802-575-1. (in French)

This book is a revised edition of the author's thesis submitted in 1976 for her Doctorat d'État under the title *Étude d'un corpus de contes cambodgiens traditionnels. Essai d'analyse thématique et morphologique*. As can be gathered from the thesis' title the author undertakes to analyse the most well-known Cambodian märchen in terms of their themes and narrative technique. In doing so she describes the plot of each story step by step and points out the themes contained in it.

It is remarkable and surprising at the same time how much and how often books have been published concerning Khmer märchen, be it as translations or as commentaries. In more recent times (since 1970) many voluminous works on the tales have been published in rapid succession or almost contemporaneously starting with C. Velder's *Liebesgeschichten aus Kambodscha* (1971). Then R. Sacher published *Märchen der Khmer* (1979) with a long foreword (5-33) and commentary (361-426). Shortly after the present volume's publication appeared R. Gaudes' *Kambodschanische Volksmärchen* (1987), together with an afterword and notes (431-514). 1988 R. Sacher again published a new collection, *Sagen und Legenden der Khmer*, accompanied by an afterword, notes and commentary (137-233).

Contrary to these German publications Thierry' volume is not a translation. It is—as mentioned above—an attempt to describe the word of the Cambodian märchen in both their literature-historical and their socio-cultural context by the means of a descriptive analysis of *only* twenty märchen. For this work the author relies on earlier French translations (see her bibliography 283-291).

All these publications, no doubt, demonstrate the popularity märchen enjoy in works concerning Khmer literature in general. With the exception of some archaic

words and idioms, the märchen can be read without particular effort. However, in these publications we always miss thorough philological and linguistic research which would certainly help to better understand the texts and would possibly provide information concerning the origin of these märchen. This is a question of the methodology applied, but whoever speaks of literature also speaks of language at the same time, and the language of the Khmer märchen calls for a detailed analysis (concerning semantics, style, idiomatic expressions, and so forth) as a precondition for any attempt at an interpretation.

Thierry gives a short survey of Cambodian literature from its beginnings to the present in her first two chapters, where she emphasizes the importance of märchen as a type of literature which originates in oral tradition. Her discussion of oral literature (*littérature à tradition orale*) and its modes of transmission (*modalités de transmission*) cannot but lead the author to consider the role and function of the Khmer story-teller. She develops her formal analysis in the six chapters which follow, where she subdivides the twenty stories she takes up into five categories. But it is well known, there exist many opinions about how Khmer märchen should be classified.

Thierry observes quite correctly that the stories she analyses can transmit neither the whole "world of the Khmer märchen" nor a complete picture of Khmer society. Hundreds of other märchen would indeed need to be considered and a well founded comparison with marchen of neighboring countries—without excluding the Buddhist marchen—would be desirable in order to make the "Cambodia of the märchen" truly accessible.

In the last chapters, finally, Thierry discusses the narrative techniques applied and explains in detail some of the themes. It appears then that these folk märchen mirror the interrelations between social strata (from king to slaves), the interaction of human beings with nature and the animal world (tales about origins, animal tales), belief and religion (the role of *karma*), the concept of the family (marriage, kinship relations)—to mention but a few of the important themes.

Le Cambodge des contes is an important contribution to understand a particular form of expression in Cambodian literature. Also, as in any world's culture, it helps us to appreciate the Khmer people's mentality and character. However, in this revised edition of the author's 1976 thesis, one would have expected her to make a step further in research, outlining the specific contribution of Khmer folk literature as opposed to that of Cambodia's other literary genres. By now, such comparison would be carried out easily, since lots of texts have been made available to us through philological research. And such a comparative study would have helped both scholars and the large public to improve their knowledge of Khmer märchen, in order to arrive at a better grasp of Khmer culture.

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THAILAND

BRUN, VIGGO and TROND SCHUMACHER. *Traditional Herbal Medicine in Northern Thailand* with a list of medicinal plants by Terje Bjørnland and Trond Schumacher. Comparative Studies of Health Systems and Medical Care. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. xx+349 pages. Maps, illustrations, figures, appendix, bibliography, indexes of Northern Thai medical terms, of western medical terms and related terminology, of botanical vernacular names. Hardcover US \$48.00; ISBN 0-520-05271-4.

From June 1978 to February 1979, Viggo Brun, Trond Schumacher and Terje Bjørnland, accompanied by their families, lived in villages in Northern Thailand where they carried out intensive field work designed to enable them to describe and analyse the local herbal medical tradition.

Traditional Herbal Medicine in Northern Thailand is the first of two monographs resulting from their research and includes the ethnomedical results, with a compilation of ethnobotanical data attached as an appendix. The second volume, to be published at a later date, will include botanical and chemical data. *

The authors are to be congratulated for their perseverance in attempting to provide a rational description of what at first may seem to be a chaotic and endless profusion of medical and botanical data derived from a medical tradition which cannot approach uniformity in practice, owing to the secretive attitudes of many of its practitioners.

Their results published so far in this book will be a valuable guide for the layman as well as the academic interested in this field.

Brun and Schumacher have each contributed individual sections, the remainder being a joint effort.

Chapter 1 (Brun) provides the general historical and cultural background. Chapter 2 (also by Brun) attempts to outline what is sometimes referred to as the Royal tradition of Thai indigenous medicine, as opposed to the village practice described here. Not having read the particular manual discussed, despite Brun's belief that I have described it (note 7, p. 11), I am unable to comment on the details of this chapter except to note my preference for the clarity of the pharmacy handbook published by the College of Traditional Medicine at Wat Mahathat cited (note 8). The diagrams are intriguing, especially Figure 7, p. 33. This chapter contrasts noticeably with the excellent original research reported in the later chapters.

Traditional Herbal Medicine in Northern Thailand rightly begins at Chapter 3, with a summary of each of the important elements of the tradition. Diagrams illustrating parts of the body are followed by a list of medical terminology. The disease system is discussed. This chapter is clear, informative and interesting. In trying to classify diseases, linguistic terms combined with similarities of disease concepts are used to plot graphs which tend to show patterns of diagnostic relationship. This is a courageous effort! The authors conclude: