

Asia included as well. The editors consider Russia to be a part of the "Far East" tradition. More legitimate Asian stories include one from China, one from Japan, one from Korea, one from Tibet and two from Cambodia.

In spite of its title, then, the book is primarily a collection of *Western* folktales, and one soon notices in the cross references listed at the end of each story that the editors have spent very little time looking through their Asian source material. Many legitimate references are omitted, and stories basically unrelated to the story in question are sometimes listed as "parallels."

The student of Asia might thus feel somewhat disappointed with the book, for here might have been the chance we were all waiting for to place Asian material in a larger, comparative light. Alas, this is not to be, and the mixture of teachers and Friends of Folklore that the book is intended to service is apt to come away with the impression that the folktale is more western than anything else. There is a touching account of the members of an elementary school class dressing up like Africans and presenting a "traditional" evening of African storytelling, but this serves mainly to further the impression that non-western stories are "exotic." (It also says something about the state of elementary education in the United States, but we will be better off not opening that can of worms.)

It is probably not fair to expect a single collection to present a perfect balance of stories. On the other hand, the book advertises itself as being a "resource collection" of "world folktales," and the annotations are included for those who wish to pursue comparative studies. Comparative studies are highly valued by the editors, who obviously feel that their own contributions are important. So a certain amount of grumbling that the book contains only six stories from Asia out of sixty-six, or that the Japanese and Chinese selections are far from being representative of the traditions of those two countries, or that the annotations reveal a large gap in knowledge of Asian traditions, etc., is justifiable.

Perhaps the book will have some utility to people who want a mish-mash of Stories From All Over for whatever class they are teaching ("Use of the Opening Formula in Interpersonal Relationships and Childrearing Aesthetic Practices," perhaps?), but it will be of little or no use to folklorists. Its notes are too spotty, and all the stories are available elsewhere.

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PAPUA NEW GUINEA

STANEK, MILAN. *Geschichten der Kopffäger. Mythos und Kultur der Iatmul auf Papua-Neuguinea* (Stories from the headhunters. Myth and culture of the Iatmul of Papua New Guinea). Köln: Eugen Diederichs, 1982. 256 pp., plates. Cloth DM 32.00. ISBN 3-424-00752-8.

Staneck carried out his fieldwork among the Iatmul, a people of the Middle Sepik River area of Papua New Guinea, for two years from 1972 to 1974. Applying Malinowski's method of participant observation, he concentrates his research on Palimbei, which he variously describes as "village," "villages," "village area" or "people." As a result it remains uncertain from how many of the Iatmul or Palimbei villages the material was actually collected. In view of the fact, however, that the Iatmul language con-

sists of two dialect groups, *viz.* Nyaura with twelve villages and Palimbei with fifteen villages (Staalsen 1969: 69; Laycock 1973: 26), it would have been helpful had the author provided more detailed informations as to the exact source of his stories.

We have to admit, though, that this book is obviously written for a general readership and apparently tries to appeal to those interested in hearing about so-called "savages" and headhunters. Although the author does not hide his sympathy for his Palimbei people I wished he had justified calling them "headhunters" in spite of the fact that the practice was given up a generation ago and he did not even have an eyewitness to it among his informants.

Other instances, too, cast a shadow of doubt on the objectivity of some of the author's reporting, because at times he would ask rather suggestive questions in order to elicit certain information he was apparently aiming at instead of just having an informant tell his story the way he chose. On the other hand the author has to be credited with a general respect for informants' feelings both because he would not reveal secret names entrusted to him in confidence, and because he points out the esoteric nature of some of the stories. Yet here again I wished he would have dealt with this esoteric aspect of the stories in more detail.

It goes further to his credit, albeit with the limitations I have already mentioned, that he is among the few authors who let us know how they obtained their material in the field. However, this alone does not eliminate the nagging question of how objective and complete such a documentation can be and what role has to be allotted to the informant's attempt to adapt his story to the assumed expectations of the white interviewer. Problems of this sort are not addressed at all, but from some instances in the book under review as well as from my own experience I know that they are very real.

For the scholar interested in stories or legends the book presents still other problems apart from those already mentioned. Much valuable material lies buried and scattered in the text or is hidden behind unreliable wording, which might have to be seen as an attempt to cater to a non-sophisticated readership. There is a list of all the texts (pp. 244-247), but it is only of partial help. Although it is called a list of stories, it includes not only short resumés of the stories, but also songs, conversations, etc. But since the author makes no attempt at cross references or comparisons, one has to search for clues in the material itself, a quite painful endeavor.

And as the title explicitly speaks of myth and culture, one has to see this relation as one of the author's main points of interest. However, the relationships the author tries to show between the stories and their social setting are often doubtful at best because he relies too much on first sight and superficial interpretation.

One example of this is Stanek's interpretation of story No. 2 (and No. 3). The story tells of a woman that has access to an abundant food supply. Through the curiosity of a man access to the food is lost. The man kills the woman in an emotional outburst. Stanek interprets this story as dealing with the relations between men and women, extolling the women's dominant role. There can be no doubt that this is in fact a point of the story, but it is highly questionable that it is the only or even the main point, for that matter. I for my part am convinced that rather than being a story extolling the woman's dominant role it is a legend of the cargo cult, because the woman was the keeper of an abundant food supply. To my mind there is an underlying question, unheard by the author: "Is the old time with easy access to foodstuff coming back with the arrival of the European author?"

Further, the fact that the woman is killed would not mean that the food comes from the land of the dead. However, it does come from the other world. There is

certainly not always a clear distinction between those two worlds as far as details are concerned, but it is clear enough that they have to be seen as two different worlds. But Stanek does not distinguish and rather tends to see the "other world" as being identical with the "world of the dead." By doing so he forgoes the possibility of a correct interpretation of a story like the one mentioned.

This is enough of details. In spite of a number of good points the book is a mixture of items varying rather heavily in value and so one comes away with the impression that the author could not decide whether to write a story book or a documentation of stories.

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JAPAN

KELSEY, W. MICHAEL. *Konjaku Monogatari-shū*. (Twayne's World Authors Series 621) Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982. x+174 pp. Cloth US \$18.95, ISBN 0-8057-6463-1.

Nobody is sure who wrote *Konjaku Monogatari-shū* 今昔物語集 ("A Collection of Tales of Long Ago"), but Twayne has rightly included it in its World Authors Series on the strength of the work's importance. *Konjaku* is an enormous collection of *setsuwa* 説話, the Japanese term for a generally short narrative which recounts an intriguing incident or anecdote, and which often (as in the present work) comments briefly on the story in order to make an edifying point. *Konjaku* was compiled about 1100. It is not the earliest *setsuwa* collection, but its 1039 surviving stories (originally there must have been about 1100), and the care with which these stories are organized, make the collection outstanding both in bulk and in quality. Thus *Konjaku Monogatari-shū* may be seen as the fountainhead of a great outpouring of *setsuwa* collections which appeared in the three succeeding centuries and which continue even now to be of interest to folklorists, historians and scholars of literature.

Michael Kelsey has written a useful introduction to *Konjaku*. His book, like others in the same series, is addressed less to specialists than to interested readers outside its own field, but only another seasoned student of *Konjaku* would learn nothing new from it. Kelsey's long familiarity with Japanese scholarship on *Konjaku* comes through clearly. On the overall character of the work Kelsey writes, "*Konjaku Monogatari-shū* is made primarily for the education and salvation of its readers, but at the same time it shares many traits with those collections intended for entertainment" (p. 99). In other words, and as Kelsey's study shows, *Konjaku* has a serious purpose, but also provides amusing reading.