

HEISSIG, WALTHER. *Mongolische Epen VIII*. Übersetzungen von sechs ost-mongolischen Epen nach den Aufzeichnungen von Lhisürün, Ganjuurjab, Orgil, Dorongya und Pajai. Asiatische Forschungen, Band 60. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979. Paper, 379 pp., DM 98,—. ISBN 3-447-01997-2, ISSN 0571-320X.

Walther Heissig, the foremost authority of Mongol Studies in Germany, introduces six heroic epics which all have been recorded and published in Eastern Mongolia after 1938. Line by line he confronts the transcription of the Mongolian original with his German translation. This sort of procedure is not always to the advantage of the German text, because at times the resulting unusual sequence of words make their meaning difficult to grasp. On the other hand, the reader is able to countercheck the translation at any point with the original, and to savour at least to some degree the original diction and rhythm of these epics even in the translation.

The six epics brought together in this volume are as follows: "King Firehail," two versions of "The red, three-year-old Bull-calf Hero," "The story of how the Man-devourer was suppressed," "King Goldbright's giant Stone-hero," and "The Hero Geser." The last one is published under the name of Pajai (1902-1960), a famous rhapsodist. Pajai had authored the present rhymed edition of the epic, which was published for the first time in 1959. He had based his work mainly on the fourth chapter of a 1716 woodblock prose edition of Geser Khan's epic that had appeared in Peking.

In the introduction to this volume Heissig argues that also other epics in this collection show the hand of Pajai. This can be recognized by certain formulas and patterns by which situations, heroes and their horses are described. Heissig isolates some of Pajai's idiomatic formulas and goes on to show how they recur in the epics that are positively known to be by him: "The story of how the Man-devourer was suppressed," and "The Hero Geser." The first thing to be made clear by this method is, that Pajai considerably elaborates on a theme that is given only in its main lines in the 1716 woodblock edition, and that he does this in a manner that is peculiarly his. By this approach, Heissig can demonstrate that although the material of the Geser epic is of Tibetan origin, it is presented in a manner that is distinctly Mongolian because it makes ample use of the cultural situation of the Mongols. And since already in the edition of 1716 there are elements that cannot be found in the Tibetan epic, he assumes that there must be an older Mongolian tradition of the epic of Geser, which could account for these episodes.

Heissig also makes it clear, that formulas and patterns that are idiomatic for Pajai's work, can be found even in the other epics that are not directly known to be composed by Pajai. From this arises then the problem, whether Pajai actually had a hand in all of these epics or whether these formulas and patterns rather hint at the existence of a group of rhapsodists that was active in the eastern parts of Mongolia in the first decade of this century. Heissig does not believe that there is enough material available at the present stage of research to give a definite answer to this problem. However, he is rather inclined to assume such a group, an assumption that leads him to collect these six epics in the same volume under the heading "east Mongolian" in spite of the fact that he first refers to some of the texts as having been discovered in southern Mongolia.

The translation and the world it opens up to our eyes speak for themselves. With the introduction to the collection Heissig treats us to a stimulating contribution to

the comparative study of patterns and the role of individual singers and rhapsodists in a still living and active epic tradition. A glossary that is very helpful to a reader who has still to struggle with Mongolian, and a list of names of persons as well as of famous horses complete this volume.

Peter Knecht

POPPE, NIKOLAUS. *Mongolische Epen IX*. Übersetzung der Sammlung C. Ž. Žamcarano, Proizvedenija narodnoj slovensnosti mongol'skich plemen, t. I. Asiatische Forschungen, Band 65. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980. Paper, 515 pp., DM 176,—. ISBN 3-447-02033-4, ISSN 0571-320X.

The four epics presented here in German translation have been collected and recorded by Žamcarano among the western Buriat in the years 1903–1906 (Žamcarano 1913–1918). A further fragment from the Žamcarano collection is not included in this volume, since it is already available in an English translation (Rudnev 1924). With the exception of some unusual German expressions it is a pleasure to read this translation. Poppe is to be highly commended for this immense piece of work through which he opens up another large part of the fascinating world of Mongolian epics. The four epics included are: 1) The Boy Alamži Mergen and the Girl Agui Gökhon, collected from Šalbagai Jolbön, 1903; 2) The fifteen-year-old youth Aidūrai Mergen and the Girl Agū Nogōn, collected from Botoškhi Burlajev, 1904; 3) The ninety-five-year-old great Old Man Jirensai and Untan Dūfai Abakhai, collected from Mansut Imegejev, 1905; 4) Khā Ošir, Son of Bügdür Khān, collected from Šalbagai Jolbön.

Aside from the translation itself, Poppe restricts himself to only a few introductory remarks, but he lets the collector speak by including Žamcarano's own introduction. By doing so he makes the experience and the reflections of this gifted collector and interpreter of Mongol folklore accessible to a wider public, and I think rightfully so. Since these notes were written in 1914, some of them are dated if seen from the standpoint of more recent anthropological research. Nevertheless, one is struck by the collector's keen observation, the critical and discerning mind and his congenial understanding for these epics and the circumstances of their composition or singing. Reading these pages gives me the impression of being shown *ad oculos* how "participant observation" works.

The fact that these observations were written down seventy years ago does not detract the least from their actuality. Žamcarano has the reader take part in his difficulties of finding able rhapsodists as well as sincere shamans. Part of the problem is, that these songs are bound up with certain situations or that they are well guarded by their owner, a shaman, who does not want to expose them unless there are the proper surroundings. This has eminently practical consequences. The rhapsodist needs a high degree of nervous tension in a ritual situation in order to be able to sing his epic in the right way. Any interruption by an inexperienced observer may make him to lose his line and bring disorder into the story. Besides this kind of tension, the rhapsodist also needs the cooperation of his listeners. They help create the atmosphere in which the song can freely develop and unfold itself.

Finally, Žamcarano does not forget to mention that there may be also difficulties

of a political kind that could hamper the faithful collection of such songs: e.g., the elders fear that such material would then be used to help the cause of "russification" (Russifizierung) of the Buriat people and their cultural heritage.

Žamcarano then engages in a somewhat longer comparison of the songs of the two main groups of people he came into contact with, the Ekhirit-Bulgat and the Khoriburiat. He especially relates the characteristic forms and contents of the songs with the character and the situation of these groups.

Poppe has done us a great service by translating not only the four epics but also the still stimulating and thought-provoking introduction by their collector. I think we still can learn a lot from this introduction, not only methodologically, but also in terms of the ethnography of shamanism.

Peter Knecht

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BERNBAUM, EDWIN. *The Way to Shambhala, A Search for the Mythical Kingdom beyond the Himalayas*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc./Anchor Press. Paper, 336 pp. Illustrations, photos, index, and bibliography. US \$6.95.

While Edwin Bernbaum was with the Peace Corps teaching in Nepal, he asked an abbot whether the mythical Kingdom of Shambhala really exists. The answer he got and the reports on hidden valleys where spiritually advanced people actually saw the ideal kingdom, prompted Bernbaum to embark on the search for the origin of this myth.

The belief in the existence of Shambhala as a mystical kingdom north of the Himalayas has been upheld by the people of Tibet and Mongolia for centuries. It is said that when all spiritual values in the world outside will be lost in war and destruction, a great king will emerge from this sanctuary to defeat the forces of evil and establish a golden age. Indologists are immediately reminded of the legends around the god Vishnu whose tenth and last incarnation, Kalki, will bring a turn of events when the world has reached the highest degree of depravity. Buddhists will think of the future Buddha Maitreya who will restore Buddhist teachings and mark the beginning of a new era. When we, furthermore, think of the waiting for the Messiah in Judaic/Christian traditions, we recognize the archetypes behind these legends: the ideal kingdom (paradise) and the hero or savior who will defeat evil and restore peace and harmony.

Bernbaum is switching the levels of understanding throughout the book. This is reflected already in his chapter headings—Behind the Ranges, the Existence of Shambhala, the Hidden Valleys, the Underlying Myth, the Wheel of Time (Teaching of the *kalācakra sūtra*), the Inner Kingdom, the Guidebooks, the Inner Journey and the Inner Prophecy. On one hand, he explores actual hidden valleys and interprets