

desideratum crept up, that is, the more unmanageable the amount of world folklore is getting, the more urgently are theoretical discussions needed. We must not become captives of the word 'folklore' taken in its literal sense. Still much abstract thinking has to be done, otherwise the many trees will be in our way to see the forest.

M. E.

OINAS, FELIX J. (ed.). *Heroic Epic and Saga. An Introduction to the World's Great Folk Epics*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington & London 1978, pp. viii+373. Cloth \$29.95, paperback \$10.95.

As the subtitle of this collection of 15 essays says, a wide field is covered, not only geographically but also thematically. Each paper introduces the reader into the tradition of heroic epics in a certain nation or among certain peoples. Whether the authors were given certain guidelines to be followed when writing the essays is not known to the reviewer. However, most of the contributions seem to adhere to a loose pattern in presenting a particular epic tradition. After a short introduction into the problems of text history and distribution of the story and its traditions, an outline of the epic(s) under discussion is given. Not in all but in most cases questions and characteristics of form and rhythm are discussed, and quite often the intriguing problems of the relation of the heroic actors and their miraculous feats with figures and facts of history are touched on. Within the limited space of the approximately twenty pages allotted to each author, most of the problems can only be touched upon *en passant*, and a more extensive and thorough study has to be left to the interested reader. Still, the reader in search for more is not abandoned half way to an uncertain fate. Every author extends a helpful hand by offering a basic bibliography, that includes editions of the original text and its main translations together with some of the more relevant studies on the subject. Whatever the merit of any particular contribution may be, this sort of bibliography will certainly prove to be very handy and most useful for everyone, who is not (yet) an expert in the field, but is looking for good information and especially for available texts. A short index, finally, provides a guide to locate the "Heroes and Main Characters" of the different essays. In this sense the book is a useful introduction into a large field.

The interest in the heroic epic is closely linked up with the study of the so-called Indo-European languages. Yet, as this very volume shows clearly, the heroic epic is not a privilege of Indo-European traditions. Recent research has provided us with fascinating evidence of living epic traditions outside of the Indo-European stream. Many of these traditions display an immediacy and impelling vigor, that can hardly be imagined from the study of those traditions only, which have already long ago become a fixed part of written literature. The insights Milman Parry gained from the study of oral poets, still keeping a long tradition alive in present day Yugoslavia, brought new light to the interpretation of the homeric epics. This, in turn, seems to suggest that, in the case of Homer's epics and in that of other epics as well, oral tradition and written tradition have to be seen as interacting with each other, even there where the living oral tradition is already lost. This sort of mutual feedback is especially well put forth by M. P. Coote in her paper on Serbo-croatian heroic songs.

For Biebuyck this particular problem is not relevant, since he has mainly to do with oral tradition, but he points out some of the difficulties an ethnographer has to face when trying to put such stories on record. He calls attention to the following problems. How can the foreign ethnographer, or any outsider to the society in question, record faithfully a process that includes much more than just the recitation of a more or less

fantastic story? How is he to capture gestures, tones of voice, atmosphere, circumstances of time, space, feeling and the reaction of the audience? Very appropriately Biebuyck calls the bard's performance a "total action", and he also shows, that such an oral tradition *in actu* is made up by three mutually interlocked factors: the bard and the story he knows; the actual performance, where a particular story is chosen and changed according to the requirements of circumstance; and the audience with its reactions.

He, then, makes still another point of general importance, viz. that such traditions are rich in information about the particular culture in which they live, and that exactly this factor makes it difficult to give a story lightheartedly away to an outsider. The second half of this statement may be of more limited importance, restricted to those cases, where the epic tradition is nothing than an oral tradition, but the first part certainly merits closer attention also for those epics where the living oral tradition is long lost. In this book there are some attempts made in this direction, but they are still rather timid ones.

To speculate about what the "heroic age" may have been or what is the relation of the heroes of the stories with the heroes of history, is certainly interesting and challenging. Almost every author in this collection tackles one of these questions and presents his interpretation based on his material. It may be impossible to find definitions or solutions that could be applied to each one of the different traditions or to the heroic epic in general. Dorson remarks in his introduction that the solution to the problem as to whether a certain episode is history or fiction, may be found somewhere in between the two extremes, depending on circumstances. Taking another hint from Coote's paper and from another collection published by Oinas¹, the relation of the two factors and the *momentum* each of them may have, seems to be closely connected with the struggle for self identity of a people, a kind of struggle, that does not have to be connected with the struggle for political power of the same people. However the case may be, this craving for one's own image demands that the hero be of one's own blood, and that he be linked conveniently to a people's "history", just as it fits the requirements of a given time and situation.

From this point of view it may, then, be useful to reconsider the "cultural conditions" of the epic in a wider perspective than the Chadwicks have done. At least Biebuyck's observations should make us more careful when judging other traditions. We may just not know yet the deeper cultural implications, or if we do know, we may know them only in fragments.

Western scholarship in the field of the heroic epic may be suffering from its own history. This can somehow be gathered from the organization of this book. It claims to be an introduction into the "World's Great Epics", but as one may notice from the table of contents, there is a heavy concentration on Europe or the wider area of Indo-European traditions. While Europe is given much weight by taking up the traditions country by country, other huge geographic areas like Africa or the area inhabited by Turkic speaking peoples of Asia are each squeezed into one article. Since the Germanic tribes are taken up separately one may ask if the many Turkic tribes are not as different among themselves as the Germanic tribes. In this respect the reader may hardly be more ready to accept this sort of bias if he is told, that precisely the turkic tradition is "the greatest epic tradition of the world." (310). And why is there no word in this introduction about Geser Khan and the Mongol epic tradition?

Dorson distinguishes two kinds of appeal these epics exert: one is tribalistic or

① Oinas, Felix J. (ed.). *Folklore, Nationalism, & Politics*. Columbus 1978.

nationalistic, the other what he calls "universalistic". This universalistic appeal is then explained as the way "Western readers respond to the adventures of a champion" (1). No doubt the reader of a text will be affected differently from the listener who experiences a lively performance of the same text. But why is the Western reader singled out for universalistic appeal? What about the kind of appeal those topics, motifs, and stories have that "travel" over huge distances and find a new home in an area, which may in many ways be different from the one where they originated? Could not this have as much or even more to do with a possible "universalistic" appeal of a certain story than just the reaction of a contemporary Western reader?

This book is an introduction, with the limitations that go with such a book, but it stimulates many thoughts that go beyond the realm of literature and even that of folk literature in the strict sense. In its form it has only one little defect: by mistake the chapter on the "Russian Byliny" got the wrong number in the text, it should be 11 instead of 12.

Peter Knecht

FREED, STANLEY A. and Ruth S. Freed. *Shanti Nagar: The Effects of Urbanization in a Village in North India*.

2. *Aspects of Economy, Technology, and Ecology*. (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. 55, part 1) New York 1978, pp. 1-153. US \$9.80.

3. *Sickness and Health*. (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. 55, part 5) New York 1979, pp. 285-353. US \$4.80.

Shanti Nagar is the pseudonym of a village, situated about 11 km from New Delhi where the authors had spent 13 months from 1958 to 1959. They hope that their reports would "document the life of a single village strategically located in space and time to reflect the beginnings of modernization" (1976:17)¹. The two volumes to be introduced here are part of a series of monographs in which the authors intend to present their findings, developed around certain topics. They, therefore, plan the series in such a way that social, economic, and religious or ceremonial life is taken up in different volumes. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition of facts, the more general data are given in one place only and are not repeated in others, although they may be relevant to the topic. This may create the impression that certain data are isolated to the degree that does not correspond with reality. So they may gain a certain prominence, which it is difficult to weigh appropriately especially for somebody, who although not too familiar with the field as a whole, may like to use certain of the data presented here. In such a case it could be difficult to judge the relative practical and also theoretical significance of the findings. The authors still promise further reports, a situation that limits also the scope of this review. Since a final pronouncement would have to wait until the last installment has appeared, we may point out a few things rather conditionally.

The first of the two reports is a very detailed description of the economic activities in Shanti Nagar and their material and ceremonial value as related to the different

1. Freed, Stanley A. and Ruth S. Freed, *Shanti Nagar: The Effects of Urbanization in a Village in North India*. 1. Social Organization. (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. 53, part 1). New York 1976.

castes and classes of the village. The reader is continually confronted with an impressive amount of detailed information on ownership, income and outlay, agricultural and professional production and disposal of the products. But what does all this mean in terms of the problem under investigation, namely urbanization? It is said, that an important consequence of recent and still ongoing changes is a growing dependancy of the villagers on cash and, therefore, on city jobs which provide it. In the judgement of the villagers themselves this new situation is of a somewhat ambiguous character. Some see it as a state of increased prosperity, but others think that they were better off in their younger days. This ambivalence, manifested already in the subjective judgments of the insiders, may then have to caution the reader of these reports.

In connection with the increasing availability of cash, the authors bring out some interesting facts. On one side, the villagers are very willing to use the opportunities for gaining more cash offered or promised by more lucrative crops, and this in spite of the fact that the use of these crops involves considerable risks. On the other side, however, they are reluctant to introduce new methods of production or machinery, that would change a traditional way of production. Furthermore, jobs in the city are welcomed as a source of cash, but they are seen as activity complementary to farming and readily given up when the person is needed to take care of the land in the village.

In the concluding chapter of this part on the village economy the authors take up the economic aspects of ceremonies, and come to the conclusion that at least in their village it cannot be assumed that ritual spending inhibits the formation of capital and therefore would impede economic development. Although in some cases such expenditures could and did endanger or ruin the budget of a family, in general, it rather provided a kind of safe investment, albeit without interest, and a basis for social security. Especially the latter point is emphasized by the numerous occasions where only small presents and small insignificant amounts of cash are exchanged.

Although the bulk of information concerns the one year the authors have spent in Shanti Nagar, there are some glances at what it used to be. But from this material it is difficult to show a real development under the impact of the city, except for a few elements. It also seems to be difficult to say something that would be more than commonplace about future developments. That more and more people may get higher and higher education and that more people can afford better housing does not say much yet about the character of the changes and their impact on the organization of a caste society. This is probably all the more true since the authors themselves show that the society of Shanti Nagar, in spite of a certain readiness to experiment with some new elements, is rather traditional in other important aspects such as social organization and ceremonial life. Especially the latter problem may receive more clarification in a coming report on the religious life of Shanti Nagar.

The authors say that they "found the irrational tradition-bound villager to be largely a myth". By modern standards of anthropological attitude, this is probably largely a truism. Isn't there, however, a danger of creating another myth, this time about the possible direction urbanization might take, by underlying a model, which is strongly coloured by the experience in western industrialized nations? Is that really the only way open? We find many hints in this report which suggest that social organization and ceremonial or ritual life do not easily undergo changes, even under the impact of hitherto foreign influences. And this fact would in turn affect the actual form urbanization is to take. But here again we have to say, that, in order to have a better platform from where we may see clearer, we have to wait for the promised report on the religious and ceremonial life.

Although technology is mentioned in the subtitle this aspect of the economy receives

only a rather general treatment as far as it enters into the description of certain economic activities and of certain professions.

A few words on part 3. Here sicknesses, their cures and curers, and the health situation of the village as a whole, are studied. The sicknesses are described and classified, the curers are characterized. The descriptions may be of interest to those in the medical field. A more general sort of interest could be aroused by the correlations, the authors show to exist between concepts of sickness and of their adequate cures on the one side, and certain religious ideas and religious traditions on the other. This has then further to do with other factors like family, distance of the source for cure and the success or failure of other methods of cure. In this sense the villagers attitude is described as syncretic.

In general these reports may stimulate comparisons with other areas in Asia. Finally, I wish to point out the numerous and very informative photographs in part 2. Each part is separately provided with an index of the most important terms.

Peter Knecht

Richard M. Dorson (Editor): *Folklore in the Modern World*. The Hague, Mouton Publishers, 1978. XII, 353 pages.

This book is one of the "World Anthropology: An Interdisciplinary Series". This series contains the results of the IXth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences held in Chicago in 1973. Never before came in an anthropological congress such a widely representative group of scholars together than in this congress. In it some two thousand papers were read. As the coordinator of the congress, Prof. Sol Tax states in the General Editor's Preface, the so-called "Third World", hitherto more an object of anthropology than subject, was, as now printed papers are concerned, far better represented than in any other previous congress. The contributions from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, altogether 360, come up to 18 percent of the 2.00 papers presented, that is ten times the number of "Third World" papers read at earlier congresses.

The organization of the IXth Anthropological and Ethnological Congress in Chicago was unique in so far as the papers were exchanged in pre-Congress sessions, the congress sessions themselves were given only to discussions. The pre-Congress Conference on folklore science took place at Indiana University, Bloomington, August 28-30, 1973. In his Introduction to the volume on *Folklore in the Modern World*, Dr. Richard Dorson, the Chairman of the Bloomington Conference, informs us that folklorists from thirty-one countries and four continents presented papers. It was Richard Dorson who selected the papers for publication in this volume. In Part one: *Folklore in the Modern World*, the following Sections are treated: 1. Folklore in the City, 2. Folklore and Ideology, 3. Folklore and Mass Media, 4. Folklore and Industrialism. As Prof. Dorson writes in his Introduction, the papers of Part two do not exactly fit into the four main rubrics of the Conference, but they are to some extent related to the topics of the four sections of Part One. They all deal with folklore and its actuality in modern times and not in the past. Countrywise the ambit comprises Nigeria with its oral history, Afghanistan with its folk theater, Asturia in northern Spain with its folk lyric, the U.S.A. with its Greek immigrants and their belief in fate. The paper by Roger D. Abrahams and Susan Kalcik on Folklore and Cultural Pluralism has the ethnicities within the U.S.A. as its background. "Oral Transmission of Knowledge" by Juha Paintikäinen is based on a given situation in Finland. This reviewer cannot