

BOOK REVIEW

Kristina Lindell (co-editors Jan-Öjvind-Swahn and Damrong Tayanin):
A Kammu Story-Listener's Tales. Scandinavian Institute of Asian
Studies Monograph No. 33. Lund, Curzon Press, 1977. 113 pages.

In her Preface Kristina Lindell tells us about the Kammu people and about her and her cooperators work among it. The Kammu are a so far little known minority in Laos and in northern Thailand estimated to be about 500,000 strong. The Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies has a field-station in Lampang in northern Thailand. Lindell acknowledges the excellent working conditions she enjoyed there when doing research work on the tales of the Kammu. She had at her side a local expert, Mr. Wong Chayawongse of Lampang, who speaks the Kammu language and is fluent in English. He helped the author in the first translations. Early in 1973 Mr. Damrong Tayanin joined her as co-worker, as such being invaluable because of his familiarity with the language and the traditional culture of the Kammu. In 1974 he was given a chance to come to Sweden to there continue his work full time. The other co-author of the book, Dr. Jan-Öjvind, Assistant Professor of Folklore at the Universities of Lund and Gothenburg, was an advisor regarding folktales.

The author lays her cards open concerning her chief informant, Mr. Keet, who actually did the story telling. He was at that time a man in his early forties, born in northern Laos. Since his early youth he lived in Thailand and is now a Thai citizen. Though now economically fairly well off, he had never had in his youth a chance for schooling and is still illiterate. He and his wife are doing everything to send their four sons to school. When approached by the author, Mr. Keet very much approved of the project of recording Kammu tales though talking to the microphone was new to him. Professional story tellers are not found among the Kammu and thus Mr. Keet had no practice whatsoever in it. He said that all the stories he knew he learnt in childhood sitting on his grandmother's lap. When speaking into the microphone, Mr. Keet did it distinctly with a clearly audible voice. In general he did not mean to speak to an audience but did his best to get his stories into the microphone. His entire attitude was remarkable in so far it showed how a representative of a culturally simple people carefully complied with the purpose and expectations of Western researchers who take so much interest in the cultural heritage of his tribe.

In order to achieve the best possible translation of the recorded tales, the field-station of the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies organized weekly seminars with the story tellers and other interested Kammu people in which Mr. Keet also took part. The 20 tales translated belong to various motif types. The author tries to bring them in line with Stith Thomson's Motif Index; he finds however that the similarity is not always complete. In many cases the author is suggesting new motifs. This reviewer remembers a conversation with the octogenarian Stith Thomson in which he said that his motif index fits better into the Western World than to the Asian cultures.

The field-station of the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies was able to collect 320 stories. The 20 examples translated in Lindell's book represent the

following motif categories: The Clever Man; Possessed People; aitiological tradition; "tales of Magic". We learn that the Institute so far has brought the 320 collected tales into ten groups. It has been found, however, that stories exist which cannot be integrated into any group.

In the light of its Monograph No. 33 we can anticipate that the Institute will in due time greatly and reliably contribute to the corpus of folktales of the world.

M. E.

Dieter B. Kapp: Ein Menschenschöpfungsmythos der Mundas und seine Parallelen. Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes XLIII, 2, Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, Wiesbaden 1977, IX, 64 pages.

The author's aim was to close the gap which has existed in our knowledge of the rich mythology of the Munda peoples. The aboriginal tribes living in the former province of Chota Nagpur have a myth about man's creator's first conflict with an antagonist. The central motif we find in numerous variations, is the formation of usually two human figures, one a male and the other a female. In the absence of the god, an antagonist, mostly in the shape of a horse or horses, destroys the clay figures before the god can animate them. The creator then lets the figures be guarded by dogs against the malignant horses, and finally animates the figures by blowing life into them. The horses are punished by having their wings cut off and made to serve man as a riding animal and beast of burden, whereas the dogs are made the friends of man.

The author has gathered 28 versions of this myth from written sources, of which he gives account in footnotes and in an extensive bibliography. He finds that the creation myth is a tradition of the Munda tribes. The Dravidian-speaking Oraon, now also living within the former Chota Nagpur province, have the myth as taken over from the Munda. The question is left open whether or not the Gond and other non-Munda versions are directly connected with the traditions of the Munda tribes. The possibility exists that even versions among the Galela in Halmahera of Indonesia are related to the autochthon Munda traditions. In analysing and comparing the different versions of the myth on the creation of man as the Munda tribes tell them, the author has done a remarkable job on which further research work on the myths of the Indian aborigines can rely.

M. E.

Nai-tung Ting and Lee-hsia Ting: Chinese Folk Narratives. A Bibliographical Guide. Chinese Materials and Research Aids Service Center, Inc. Bibliographical Aids Series No. 4. San Francisco 1975, 68 pages.

If a critic finds that a book says "*non multa, sed multum*", it is a high praise meaning that the book does not talk about many topics, but that what it says

has much weight. In the case of this book however we must say that it says *multa et multum*, that is with weighty authority many things. In his Introduction the author states that his bibliography is selective because of the enormous mass of pertinent books existing. He intended his book as a bibliographical guide for incipient scholars who want an initial orientation. For them the expert evaluation of the many publications on folk narratives listed are of great help in their attempt to hit on the right sources from the beginning. The scope of the book is limited to publications existing in major American and West European libraries and the author's private collection. The content is presented in three parts, 1) bibliographies, 2) classical literary versions, and 3) modern oral versions.

No special bibliography has ever been compiled for folk narratives; they have to be found in general bibliographies, such as the *Ssu k'u ch'üan shu tsung mu* by Yüan (1824-1805), *et al.*, which devotes an important section to "fiction and anecdotes" (*hsiao shuo chia*), including narratives published before 1770. There are many earlier literary collections of the *ts'ung shu* type, well known to sinologues, and from 1959-1963 appearing in three volumes—something of a general catalogue of catalogues, the *Chung-kuo ts'ung shu tsung lu* (Peking, Chung Hua Book Co.). Sinologues know that bibliography is a vast subsection within their science. There is no point of course in elaborating on the intricacies of Chinese Bibliography for non-sinologues. The folklorist in general, for whom folklore is a kind of world literature, will have to rely on good translations and, for their location, on bibliographies in a Western language. Even for a seasoned sinologue it is no easy task to locate folkloristic material in the immense forest or, if you like, in the ocean of Chinese literature which is the oldest, and for the pre-modern time, the richest in the world. A remarkably great amount of it became in the course of time available in translation.

From Prof. Ting's Bibliographical Guide we also learn that research work on narratives did not come to a standstill under the present political climate in China; it has made progress as far as geographical areas covered are concerned and the amount of publication goes. Ten years ago our journal published the extensive study by Yen Chung Chiang: *Folklore Research in Communist China* (*AFSt*, XXVI, 1967, 1-62). In it there is pointed out that the Communist totalitarian regime is re-interpreting folktales for political purposes. In Ting's Bibliographical Guide we find few indications of this manipulation; and the author even states that "traditional narratives still dominate" (p. 53). A considerable amount of publications coming out of New China is already available in Western translations. To have given a report on recent folkloristic activities in China is the special merit of Prof. Ting's meritorious Bibliographical Guide.

May we be permitted to add a few complementations.

Chao Wei-pang: *Modern Chinese Folklore Investigations*. *Folklore Studies*, I, 1942, 55-76; II, 1943, 79-88. Chao Wei-pang: *Yang-ko*. The Rural Theatre in Ting-hsien, Hopei. *F.St.*, III-1, 1944, 17-38.

Paul Serruys: *Children's Riddles and Ditties from the South of Tatung*. *F.St.*, IV, 1945, 213-290.

Paul G. Brewster: *Some Parallels between Fêng-Shên-Yên-I and the Shahnameh and the Possible Influences of the Former upon the Persian Epic*. *Asian Folklore Studies*, XXXI-1, 1974, 115-122.

M. E.