

Dominik Schröder: Aus der Volksdichtung der Monguor. 2. Teil: In den Tagen der Urzeit. (Ein Mythos vom Licht und vom Leben). Aufgenommen und übersetzt von Dominik Schröder. Asiatische Forschungen, Band 31. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1970. 158 pages, 2 photos, 9 drawings.

We received the above named monograph when printing of the present volume of our journal was already in an advanced stage. Dominik Schröder, for many years professor of anthropology at Nanzan University in Nagoya (Japan), had already earlier introduced himself with several publications on the Tujen, or Monguor, in the Chinghai province, among whom he had done fieldwork for several years. Some bibliographical notes on Schröder's research results will interest our readers.

Einige Hochzeitslieder der Tujen. In: *Folklore Studies*, Supplement No. 1, pp. 306-354, Peking, 1962.

Zur Religion der Tujen des Sininggebietes (Kukunor). In: *Anthropos* 47 (1952), pp. 1-79, 620-658, 822-870; 48 (1953), pp. 202-249.

Aus der Volksdichtung der Monguor. 1. Teil. Das weisse Glücksschaf (Mythen, Märchen und Lieder). Asiatische Forschungen, Band 6. Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1959.

Of this latter volume the present volume 31 of *Asiatische Forschungen*, dealing again with popular poetry of the Monguor, is as part 2 a continuation under the heading "In the days of the primeval time. A myth on Light and Life." In a systematic way the author proceeds by first taking the reader through the complex of those Indian and Buddhist concepts which form the matrix into which the Monguor cosmogonic myths are embedded. Then follows the presentation of the myth in its original text with parallel literal translation and exhaustive linguistic notes, and finally a version of it in smooth German. In an appendix a treatise follows on the Monguor farmhouse in which we see religion intimately interwoven with the daily and annual life cycle, a microcosmos in the macrocosmos. The myth on Life and Light was sung for the author by an expert native singer, the author finds that in it the Hainuwele and the Prometheus type of mythologeme are combined. M.E.

Schüttler, Günter; Die letzten tibetischen Orakelpriester. Psychiatrisch-neurologische Aspekte. Forschungen zur Ekstase. Monographien und Expeditionsberichte. Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden 1971, xi + 163 pp. mit 22 Abbildungen.

The present book is the account of an expedition the author had undertaken with a small group of experts to explore the phenomenon of the oracle-priests of Tibet. But for well-known reasons he could approach only those priests who are living among the Tibetan emigrants on the southern slopes of the Himalaya and in South India.

As it is suggested in the subtitle the author takes up mainly the psychological and neurological aspects of the priests' life, their predisposition for the task of an oracle-priest and their falling into trance and ecstasy.

After a few remarks on Tibetan religious beliefs the author describes a number of meetings he was able to have with about five oracle-priests. The highest ranking among them was the state oracle of Netschung. Yet the liveliest description of a priest's behavior as well as of his trance and prophecies is the

one of the oracle-priest of Kalimpong. In this case the author himself could attend a session and make tape recordings. Furthermore, this particular session is well documented with good and informative pictures by Dr. Sagaster, showing the different stages of the priest's ecstasy. After each priest's life history and the description of his trance follows a clinical and psychological diagnosis.

The reviewer is not qualified for a discussion of the psychological and neurological interpretation of the findings. The more descriptive part proceeds more or less in the following pattern: Some of the priests interviewed have had other oracle-priests in their families. Around the period when he reaches puberty, the individual might show some striking behavior like becoming angry very easily or reacting in a way which is not at all expected. He might fall sick, a fact to be interpreted as a sign that a God or a spirit is about to enter the body of this individual. Then he is brought to a monastery and introduced into the ways of meditation by a lama. It is also possible that a monastery or a village is in need of an oracle-priest just at the time these symptoms appeared. So, an individual showing the necessary symptoms, has to undergo a test and after passing it he will be officially recognized as the new oracle-priest. This means, it is publicly recognized that a God can slip into the body of the priest and manifest his will. This sort of procedure makes it clear again how much the interpretation of psychological symptoms depends on cultural factors.

During the sessions the priest is able to repeat answers, if they were not understood and to distinguish the persons and things in the room; but he is unable to remember things that happened after a certain instance in the process of preparation. This seems to be the moment in which the strings of his helmet or hat are fastened. The author shows three reasons for the state of narrowed consciousness during the sessions: suggestive force of the conjuring ritual, intoxication through incense, and finally a partial strangulation by the strings of the helmet bound tightly under the chin.

To supplement the descriptions the author adds some remarks on traditional Tibetan medicine, results of thematic apperception tests and Tibetan meditation. He attempts a broader description and interpretation of his findings than just from a medical point of view. But his remarks about Tibetan religion do not say more than that there exist beliefs in spirits beside the buddhist teachings which were introduced centuries later. Furthermore, terms and names are used rather unspecified. It is difficult, e.g., to see whether a term designates the name of a god, of a person or of a place. In this respect it might have been helpful to add a list of the most important terms in Tibetan and a register. And finally, is it possible, in order to find the anatomically normal, to compare the anatomy of two individuals specifying one by the term "of western culture" and the other by the term "of Tibetan nationality"? "Culture" and "nationality" are they not of quite a different level?

The book makes interesting reading. It permits us a glance at the struggle awaiting an old culture which is forced to adjust itself suddenly to new circumstances and at the same time tries to retain its old traditional values and beliefs. A brief summary in English is added.

**Peter Knecht**