

TAUBE, ERIKA. *Volksmärchen der Mongolen. Aus dem Mongolischen, Russischen und Chinesischen übersetzt und herausgegeben*. München: Biblion Verlag, 2004. 500 pages. Bibliography, commentary, glossary. Paper, €22,80; ISBN 3-932331-47-8. (In German).

A detailed introduction of Erika Taube is hardly necessary since her name has grown to be inseparable from the development of Mongolian and Tuwa studies of the last decades of the twentieth century. She published numerous articles and books on folklore, folk religion, belief systems of various Mongolian ethnic groups, and Tuwas living in Western Mongolia. Many of her studies, which are based on fieldwork results, are especially valuable. Within her oeuvre she has helped save the heritage of these folk groups for generations to come.

Apart from her academic career, Erika Taube has kept the popularization of scientific insights in mind, and has occasionally published articles and translations for the wider public. In order to make the texts (tales and, in her previous publications, songs) more comprehensible, she used a transcription for Mongolian terminology easily understood

by German readers. In *Volksmärchen der Mongolen* she translated folk tales from various Mongolian dialects, from Khalkha, Buryat, Kalmyk, and Monguor, and also from Russian and Chinese. The majority of the tales are well-known among researchers and Mongolian readers, but there are some unique and less known ones (e.g., the Monguor tales).

In this book she follows the traditional genre typology of Mongolian tales, based on their content:

1. Aetiological tales
2. Animal tales
3. Magic tales
4. Heroic tales
5. Tales on everyday life
6. Comic tales, riddle tales

She gathered in a separate category tales about foolish monsters, which are traditionally ranged with comic tales. She added brief, but pithy explanations to each tale, short masterpieces containing identification numbers in the Aarne-Thompson catalogue and in the Catalogue of Mongolian tales compiled by László LÖRINCZ (1979), the source of the tale and also remarks on the story, the motifs, and the parallels.

The comprehensive scholarly postscript includes a detailed history of collecting folk tales by early European travellers (e.g., B. Bergman) and later researchers (e.g., A. Pozdneev, G. J. Ramstedt, and N. Poppe) emphasizing the significant contribution of Germans in discovering the Mongolian tales. The name Gábor Bálint (1844—1913), a Hungarian traveller and researcher, could be added to the list of learned collectors of nineteenth-century Mongolian dialects. Bálint visited the Kalmyks (a Mongolian-speaking group living in the lower Volga region) in 1871–1872 and collected large amounts of folklore material, including fifteen folktales. His unpublished manuscripts are kept in the Oriental Collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (NAGY 1959). Concerning research activity of the twentieth century, one more leading scholar could be mentioned, namely B. Ja. Vladimirtsov, who carried out fieldwork in Western-Mongolia and also recorded tales from various Oirad ethnic groups using academic transcription, thus preserving the original dialect in this way (VLADIMIRCOV 1926). Taube also surveyed the rich material collected and published by Mongolian researchers (B. Rintchen, P. Khorloo, D. Tserensodnom, and Kh. Sampildende) mainly in the second half of the twentieth century. The author declares that she had no access to the presumably numerous text collections published in Inner Mongolia. The collecting and publishing activities of Inner Mongolian researchers have picked up since the 1980s and there have certainly appeared many texts in separate books and also in literary journals from various areas of China (Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Qinghai, and Gansu) where Mongols live.

Erika Taube's volume of translations does not only serve the aim of introducing an important part of Mongolian culture, the folk tales, to the international (and, first of all, German) public, but with its elaborate postscript and analysis it is a noteworthy contribution to the academic research of Mongolian folklore as well.

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