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## PHILIPPINES

- REVEL, NICOLE, Editor, and MÄSINU INTARÄY, Performer. *La quête en épouse. Mämiminbin, une épopée palawan chantée par Mäsinu* [The Quest for a Wife. Mämiminbin, a Palawan Epic Sung by Mäsinu]. Collection UNESCO d'oeuvres représentatives. Littératures de la voix. Trilingue palawan-français-anglais. French translation by N. Revel; English translation by N. Senné, P. Railing and N. Revel. Paris: Éditions UNESCO, Langues et Mondes/L'Asiathèque, 2000. 428 pages. Photographs, musical notation, graphs, bibliography, CD of the first 45 minutes of the story's performance. Paper FF 295.00; ISBN UNESCO: 92-3-003722-X; ISBN: 2911053-575.

Nicole Revel presents us with a book that is a pleasure to read. It is as warm and friendly as the author herself. The fruit of thirty years of field work and of cooperation with the Palawan highlanders (who live on one of the southern islands of the Philippines), the work is a valuable addition to world literature. The book gives the reader a unique experience, and is not simply clever and insightful. Thorough knowledge of the language and the fine poetical and musical feeling of Revel, herself a linguist and ethnologist, enabled her to understand and to transmit to the reader the artistic world of the "others" (i.e., those of another, completely foreign culture). The book includes a sound recorded version of a Palawan story in verse that was performed to a specific melody by a singer named Mäsinu. French and English translations are given on facing pages. Following the discussion, the author provides relevant ethnographic data, musical notations of the performance, a description of its literary qualities, and information on the recording and editing of the text in both French and English. The singer and his art are also described, and the story is compared to more versions of the same story

and to other Palawan stories recorded by Revel. The book ends with a bibliography that will introduce the lay reader to Philippine tribal literatures.

The work of literature presented is part of a culture completely outside the Euro-Afro (Mediterranean)-Asian sphere, in spite of Arabic, Muslim, and Hindu influences mentioned below. Revel labels the story a “épopée,” “epic,” which is an ethnopoetic genre identified in the Euro-Afro-Asian culture area (which encompasses Christian Europe, Muslim North Africa, the Near and Middle East, Central Asia, and Hindu and Muslim India). The present reviewer doubts that non-Euro-Afro-Asian oral literatures can and should be classified with the same conceptual tools and measured according to the same scales as Euro-Afro-Asian oral literatures. Each culture and cultural area will have its own literary genres. In addition, there is a problem with the very definition of the ethnopoetic genre of epic in the Euro-Afro-Asian culture area, but here is not the place to discuss this problem (see JASON n.d., vol.I, Part A).

Another question I would like to raise concerns what the Mämiminbin story is about? Is it a story about winning a wife, or is it a story teaching that custom (*adat*) should be scrupulously observed? The question can be answered only in the framework of the whole repertoire of the Palawan oral literature—a repertoire that is unfortunately not at the reviewer’s disposal.

To conclude, I humbly offer some practical suggestions. The reader would benefit from an alphabetic glossary with explanations of the Palawan terms and names scattered throughout the book. Such a glossary would reduce the number of notes and make it easier for the reader to look up quickly the meaning of a term that he forgot. At the same time, the linguistic properties of a term could be touched upon. For example, the term “*adat*” means “good manners,” “custom,” “customary law” (see page 393), while in Arabic *âdât* means customs; and the term “*diwata*,” which can be translated as “Master of things,” or “other being” (i.e., non-human higher force [see page 389]), is similar to the Hindi term *devata*, which can be translated as a “godling,” or a “lower divinity.” As the concepts that these two terms designate are rather central to culture (any culture!) and consequently to our understanding of the workings of a society, it is significant to know that they are taken over from specific other cultures.

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#### THAILAND

HINTON, ELIZABETH. *Oldest Brother’s Story: Tales of the Pwo Karen*. Photographs by Peter Hinton. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2000. v + 89 pages. 34 photographs. Paper US\$14.95; ISBN 974-7100-91-6. (Distributed by University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA 98145-5096).

For anyone with experience in the northern Thai hills, this book will probably recall delight-