

think that it was a reindeer. Many stories are told among the local Manchu population about the magnificent abilities of this shamaness who is said to have lived from 1662 to 1735 as healer, diviner, storyteller, and singer. She is also believed to be a deity of song and dance.

This Manchu creation myth describes the origin of the world, including that of the heavenly bodies and that of a triad of goddesses: Abka Hehe (Woman of Heaven), Banamu Hehe (Woman Mother Earth), and Ulden Hehe (Woman Light). These goddesses in turn then create humans (both men and women), all the other living beings, and more goddesses.

The goddess Aoqin, who has nine heads and eight arms, is a particularly wild and aggressive goddess. She becomes the androgynous demon Yeluri who then attempts to destroy the good goddesses in order to rule the world. This being is, therefore, some sort of Manchurian Satan. In the myth Yeluri personifies evil, destruction, deceit, coldness, and darkness. He is the foe of all that is good. The myth also tells of the continuous fight with the demon Yeluri who is capable of generating new demons. With the help of several theriomorphic goddesses such as the hedgehog goddess, the rat goddess, and the eagle goddess, to mention only the most important ones, the good goddesses finally succeed in beating back the attacks of the demon Yeluri and ban him to live under the surface of the earth.

Abka Hehe in the end becomes an immortal and invincible goddess of the universe who protects heaven and earth for future generations. She dispatches the divine eagle woman with the mission to raise on earth a small girl to become the first great shamaness. The first shaman (shamaness) being raised by an eagle (female eagle) is a motif widespread in northern Asia.

All of these events happen during the time before the flood, which in the Manchu myth is caused by the demon Yeluri and not by human misbehavior. However, the great flood constitutes a break in time that has universal consequences that affect the Manchu. It is noteworthy that shamanism originates in the time before the flood, a fact that is said to be proof of its being close to the divine. Abka Hehe continues to be active also after the flood but later she is replaced by Abka Enduri, the male god of heaven. Although today Abka Enduri and other male gods are prevalent, the myth is apparently meant to point out that until recently Abka Hehe existed and was of great importance. In any case, this tradition offers an example in which matriarchy had been replaced by patriarchy in the Manchu pantheon of deities. It is also quite likely that the tradition reflects two historical realities in the ethnic group: (1) that the vocation of a shaman was transmitted matrilineally among the early Manchu; and (2) that even matrilineal clans might have existed. Later on, the system of descent of the shamans in particular as well as the one within the clans in general may have changed in favor of patrilineal filiation.

Jörg Bäcker has to be commended for his achievement in translating this cosmogonic Manchu myth, and in providing it with an outstanding commentary. No doubt, the book will be most useful to all those concerned with the ancient cultures of East Asia and of the Manchu-Tungus populations. We are all much indebted to him for this work.

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CHAO GEJIN 朝戈金. *Kochuan shishi xue: Ranpile "Jiangge'er" chengshi jufa yanjiu* 口傳史詩學：冉皮勒馬《講格爾》程式句法研究。 [Oral Poetics:

Formulaic Diction of Arimpil's Jangar Singing]. Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 2000.

Chao Gejin ("Chogjin," in Mongolian) is an outstanding member of a group of younger scholars in the minority literatures section of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing who combine contemporary Chinese and Western theories in their works. In Chao Gejin's case, he follows in the methodological traditions of Chinese research on minority folklore, literature, and language studies that were pioneered by scholars such as Zhong Jingwen 钟敬文 (who, in his ninth decade, has written a preface for the book) and the late Ma Xueliang 马学良. Chao combines the work of these scholars with Western sources such as those written in the Parry-Lord tradition, the works of Lauri Honko and John Miles Foley on epic narrative, and with those works that have been influenced in general by performance folkloristics and related disciplines. Chao also presided over the recent translation of Foley's *The Oral Theory of Composition*.

Chao's study concerns the oral poetics of a Mongol epic singer named Arimpil and his versions of the Jangar epic cycle. The Jangar epics center around the exploits of the hero Jangar and his loyal warriors. Their many banquets are frequently interrupted by news that their domains have been invaded by the multiheaded *mangus* monsters that enjoy ravaging human communities. Jangar, or one of his heroes, resolves the crisis by subduing the giant anthropomorphs, who have a taste for human slaves and flesh.

The Chinese text of Chao's book is accompanied by an abstract in English and by clear and useful discussions of key terms drawn from Western theory such as "ethnopoetics," "register," "context," "formulaic density," and "composition in performance." (These terms are given in English with a Chinese translation.) The portions of the actual Jangar recitals are presented in romanized Mongolian, or in romanized Mongolian accompanied by a literal Chinese translation. One appendix includes the text of an interview with the singer. Such an innovative complement of the source materials is welcome in the scholarship emanating from present-day China.

In the first half of the book, Chao discusses theory and methodology, covering basic questions concerning orality and literacy, the nature of epic texts, text and context, texts and traditions of singing, and an assessment of various theoretical models, particularly the Parry-Lord oral formulaic tradition in regards to the texts examined in this study. It also reviews the question of formula in studies of Mongol epic poetics, noting Wálther Heissig's assessment that questions of the use of formula by contemporary singers needed to be examined in comparison with texts from previous eras (43). The second half of the work deals with the application of theory to aspects of a portion of the Jangar cycle called "Hundu Gartai Sabar in Bulug," which concerns one of the heroes in Jangar's group of merry men. As in the Parry-Lord tradition, the emphasis is on examining the formulas in the text, including epithets and diction (rhythm, meter, and parallelism), so-called "formulaic density," and the "systematic use of formula"(2). Stress is given to important features of Mongol prosody, namely "beginning" (or "head") rhyme, and vowel harmony. Beyond the comprehensive study of formulaic diction, Chao includes a discussion of context and performance. He stresses that caution should be used in making assumptions about Mongol epic based on written texts and acknowledges that an understanding of performance in context is necessary for a full understanding. To show this, he uses the examples of music and the live audience context as factors of oral performances not part of existing written versions.

In sum, Chao creates a synthetic theory by which to discern the nature and function of formula in the Mongol epic tradition, while at the same time providing a stimulating model of research for other Chinese scholars dealing with various aspects of the immense body of

oral and oral-connected lore, which is still largely inadequately studied within China and without.

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KNAPP, RONALD G. *China's Old Dwellings*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000. xi + 362 pages. Map, illustrations, b/w photographs, bibliography, index. Paper US\$44.95; ISBN 0-8248-2214-5.

Houses embody culture, particularly traditional vernacular houses like China's old dwellings, which embody the slow pace of civilizations and cultures that were bent on preserving, maintaining, and repeating human experience for over four thousand years. During the past two decades, China has been rapidly parting from its past, an unbroken tradition, at the highest speed and on the broadest scale in Chinese history. China's economic development and modernization has struck at the traditional culture and has changed ways of living. China's old dwellings, once a complete system, were alive in the city and countryside across China's vast lands only a couple of decades ago. Now this system is vanishing. I fear that the framework of this old dwelling system may disappear before we understand it thoroughly. To preserve and understand the valuable heritage of Chinese folk culture, systematic documentation is critical and urgent.

China's Old Dwellings, by Ronald G. Knapp, is a valuable volume on traditional Chinese vernacular houses. Knapp surveyed over two hundred references relevant to this topic in Chinese, most of them never translated into English and many offering valuable original research and field surveys. Knapp himself also did field investigations that make his survey more convincing. The records, with measured drawings and photographs of the old dwellings, are invaluable because they document, and thus preserve, Chinese vernacular dwellings that, once destroyed, are irreplaceable.

Owing to political isolation and cultural deference, there is a gap between Chinese scholars' publications and Western academic standards. Knapp bridges the gap by offering excellent translations, interpretations, definitions, and descriptions, and by using analogies with Western architectural elements. These efforts make this book easy to understand for a non-Chinese reader. Such a task can be done only by someone fluent in both Chinese and English, who understands both Chinese and Western cultures. Merging Chinese and Western traditions of scholarship, this work helps reveal the original research in Chinese to the world. Knapp's book is a respectful work on Chinese folk architecture.

China's Old Dwellings is largely descriptive, but it also stresses theoretical and analytical issues. The information it provides is valuable for professionals in architectural design and research, and also useful for scholars in other fields, e.g., anthropology, folk cultures and arts, and Asian studies. With a clear style and over five hundred illustrations and photographs, this book is accessible to students and laypeople.

The first chapter examines the history of research on Chinese vernacular houses during the twentieth century by recollecting the efforts of individuals to document existing houses and by summarizing building traditions throughout China. Few scholars, even among the Chinese, have done such surveys. This chapter helps the reader to understand the background and supplies an overview of the Chinese research on the old dwellings.

Chinese old dwellings, in general, have strong patterns that embody the Chinese model