

literary period, which includes mention of his meetings with Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong. In addition, there is aesthetic pleasure to be had in the sweet and sour cover portrait of the novel's duck and butterfly, and the three illustrations within the text. How could we wish for more? My sole disappointment here was the utter lack of Chinese characters to match titles and names in the afterward and—shame on the publishers!—the same deplorable fault in the otherwise valuable twenty-six endnotes. Surely a writer of Zhang Henshui's abilities and importance deserves better than that.

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MONGOLIA

HEISSIG, WALTHER. *Götter im Wandel. Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Synkretismus der mongolischen Volksreligion*. Studies in Oriental Religions, Volume 38. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996. 281 pages. Tables, illustrations. Paper, DM148.—; ISBN 3-447-03702-4. (In German and English)

Götter im Wandel is a collection of essays (one in English) that Heissig has published in various places over a period of about thirty years (1964–1992). They all treat topics related to Mongol folk religion, a field that has been one of Heissig's main research interests for many years.

The arrangement of the essays disregards the time order in which they were originally published and gives precedence to the interrelatedness of their topics, a point that is explained in the introduction. In this way the reader is led rather naturally from one topic to the next. In the first essays Heissig traces changes in the names and cult of divinities (*ingri*) and discusses their significance. He continues with a brief description of an unbloody offering or consecration of animals to divinities. This leads him to an extended discussion of the fire sacrifice, especially that of the fox, and to a comparison of its prayers with prayers for purification. The analysis of purification prayers then reveals their similarity with rites for banning illnesses. And finally, an analysis of fire offerings to Gesar Khan allows Heissig to come to conclusions about the possible time when the epic of Gesar Khan might have been introduced among the Mongols.

A common feature of all the essays is that they make ample use of texts, both vernacular and their translations. In this manner the reader is given the opportunity to see the evidence for Heissig's arguments. Heissig himself emphasizes the importance of text analysis and comparison in order to achieve a better understanding of aspects of folk religion. His own impressive command of original texts allows him not only to analyze their structure, but also to show how many passages of similar content are used in quite disparate types of texts, such as prayers, epics, or legends. It is particularly striking that such passages are often used in very similar, if not even practically identical, formulas. Comparison of such texts in addition allows Heissig to draw conclusions or make at least informed guesses about possible historical connections between the different traditions he isolated. This procedure is possible on two levels. On a literary level he suggests how oral or written traditions share an earlier (written) source, and how the tradition has transformed the source in the process. On the level of content, i.e., as far as the texts contain information concerning religion, he is able to isolate

strands of pre-Buddhist folk religion, of shamanism, and of later Buddhism (Lamaism). This procedure allows him to show how, for example, Lamaism has readapted earlier beliefs and cults to its own religious world.

The collection will no doubt be useful to students of Mongol and also Asian folk religion and folk literature. It provides further material and analyses to add to topics treated in earlier publications, such as his treatise on Mongol (folk) religion (HEISSIG 1970). Since all the essays are mechanically reproduced, no attempt has been made to eliminate typos. This is unfortunate, because in some cases they make understanding of the text difficult, especially for those not fluent in German.

REFERENCE CITED:

HEISSIG, Walther

- 1970 Die Religionen der Mongolei. In *Die Religionen Tibets und der Mongolei*, eds. Giuseppe Tucci, Walther Heissig. Stuttgart: W Kohlhammer Verlag.

Peter KNECHT

HEISSIG WALTHER. *Motiv und Wirklichkeit. Gesammelte Aufsätze*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1993. xii + 253 pages. Tables, illustrations. Paper DM78.—; ISBN 3-447-03432-7. (In German and English)

For many years it has been the goal of Heissig's research not simply to isolate some of the core motifs in Mongol epic poetry and the tradition of Gesar Khan but also to throw light on their use by the bards, and to trace the history of their diffusion and variegated ways of contamination in Mongol oral literature. Some of his major works represent the accumulated fruit of this effort. With the present volume, however, we are given the opportunity to have a look, so to say, into his workshop. Heissig has repeatedly stressed the need for what he called "monographic research" concerning particular motifs and poetic formulas in order to be able to gauge their importance and appreciate their role in oral tradition and the ways of their distribution. The present collection brings together some of his own attempts at such research, e.g., his analysis of the significance of the thumb or of sworn brotherhood among heroes, to mention just a few examples.

Considering the twenty essays assembled in this volume, I think that its title can be read as expressing two somewhat different meanings. One is found in Heissig's definition of a motif as the "poetical presentation of generalized events" (1). Motifs are not pieces realistically describing real events. They are poetic and formulaic means of expression, but they have their roots in *Wirklichkeit*, i.e., in "real facts of rather ancient times" (1). If, for example, the thumb of a hero is the place where his soul is located, this may be seen, according to Heissig, as reflecting the fact that thumbs were indispensable for archers to hold the bow as well as to set the arrow. To have or not to have a thumb was a matter of life and death for the hero. Or when the hero in his fight with a (female) monster (*mangus*) does not stop with killing the monster but also cuts up its belly to extract and annihilate its still unborn fetus, this may reflect such real events as the elimination of whole enemy populations, as happened, for example, in the times of Chinghis Khan. This approach allows Heissig to penetrate to the roots of poetic creativity in real life, but it also seems to have certain limitations. When Heissig discusses parallels between the image of *Hexen* (witches) in Europe and that of demonic females in Mongol stories, he says that the image of the latter may have been influenced by shamanism. As support for this view he argues that, for one thing, the demon