

## MONGOLIA

HEISSIG, WALTHER. *Oralität und Schriftlichkeit mongolischer Spielmannsdichtung*. Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge G317. Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992. 147 pages. Appendix of vernacular texts. Paper, n.p.; ISBN 3-531-07317-6; ISSN 0172-2093. (In German)

Stimulated by Lauri Honko's question concerning the genetic relationship between oral epics and written texts, Heissig sets out in this volume to analyze a number of stories (particularly *bensen üliġer* [*Heftgeschichten*]) collected from Mongol singers. These are stories based on and adapted from Chinese or Mongol novels (*Romane*), but transmitted orally in the sense that the blind singers had to have someone read the texts to them before they passed them on orally. This kind of cooperation is of special interest because, as Heissig shows, it forms the point where an older oral epic tradition meets with a more recent literary tradition to produce a prosimetric story where sections of prose are mixed with rhymed portions supported by musical accompaniment. The Mongol nobles, who often possessed the texts, and the audience, which was familiar with their content, would closely follow the singers' recitation checking its truthfulness to the original.

And yet, in spite of such control, the singers were able to display their creativity through the imaginative and idiosyncratic use of the rhymed sections. Heissig shows in great detail that singers not only use formulas taken from the earlier rhymed epics but also introduce certain descriptions (such as that of a duel between two generals) employed in a very similar if not identical manner by different performers. Heissig calls this the "collective use of formulas" (*kollektiver Formelgebrauch*). For the greater part of the volume he demonstrates, citing many examples, how the *bensen üliġer* clearly reflect the epic tradition yet are something different, that is, stories that take their content from early Tang history while employing fictitious heroes. Thus a new type of oral narrative has been created that differs from the epics while at the same time relying on them for formulaic elements and sometimes even for the structure of narrative sequences.

The analysis of the *bensen üliġer* and their recitation by four singers (in particular the blind Dawarinčin of eastern Mongolia) occupies the bulk of this volume, but Heissig also considers other sources. Some epics acquired literary form quite early, such as the *Jangyar* epic popular among western Mongolian groups like those in Sinkiang, and were utilized by singers. Literate singers (like the famous Pajai) have also recorded their own narratives. Most important among these other sources, however, was a written version of the Gesar epic printed in 1716 in Peking. This text introduced a significant change in the understanding of the epic hero's role. Gesar, sent from heaven, takes up the fight against *mangȳus*, chthonic monsters. This story line led, under the influence of lamaist elements, to a ritual use of the epic for the defeat and banishment of evil in its manifold manifestations. However, this usage did not mean a simple reliance on the written text — as Heissig illustrates with the example of the eastern Mongolian singer Sereng, even this epic has been transmitted orally from master to disciple.

Heissig's study makes it clear that the relationship between a written or printed text and its oral narrative form can take many shapes, and that the relation may be indirect or mediated by persons other than the singers. However, in the quote that opens the book Honko specifically asks for a "typology of forms" for such transmissions or influences, and it can be asked whether Heissig truly intended to address this issue. He says that, on the basis of recent research, he will comment on this relationship while at the same time responding to the call for a typology of *formulas* (*Formeln*; emphasis mine). In fact it becomes increasingly clear in the course of the argument that Heissig's interest lies more with the identification of certain types of formulaic forms of expression than with a typology of the forms of genetic interrelationship between written texts and oral narratives. It thus seems to this reviewer that

Honko's call remains unanswered. On the other hand, the study demonstrates that these interrelations can take many forms, with traditional formulaic elements interrelating with the singer's creativity.

That Heissig does not limit himself to dry analysis but backs his arguments with numerous examples makes this small volume interesting reading even for the nonspecialist. *Oralität und Schriftlichkeit* is another demonstration, if such should still be needed, of Heissig's impressive command of Mongolian narrative. The volume is thus deserving of a far closer proofreading than it received to eliminate the many disturbing errors that mar the text.

Peter KNECHT

HEISSIG, WALTHER. *Heldenmärchen versus Heldenepos? Strukturelle Fragen zur Entwicklung altaischer Heldenmärchen*. Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Band 85. Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991. 125 pages. Tables, bibliography, list of märchen and epics mentioned. Paper DM 42.—; ISBN 3-531-05103-2; ISSN 0171-1105. (In German)

Walther Heissig's aim in this volume is to give an argued answer to the question of whether märchen that are about heroes derive from heroic epics, or vice versa. He analyzes seven narratives collected among the western Mongols of Sinkiang, comparing their narrative structure and use of motifs with that of heroic epics. His material is particularly suitable for such an analysis since the seven narratives selected are not only acknowledged märchen but were in some cases narrated by people known to have sung heroic epics of similar content or parts of the Gesar-cycle. The material could thus be expected to reflect any existing similarities between epic poetry and märchen prose, and perhaps even establish a genetic relationship between the two forms (a distinct possibility, given the existence of a 1716 block print of the Gesar story in prose that suggests a change of heroic narratives from epic to märchen).

Heissig concludes that heroic märchen are an offspring of heroic epics, yet are not simply prose versions of those epics. The dependency of märchen on epics is revealed by the generally converging narrative structure and by the sequence of themes and episodes. Moreover, the märchen retain certain rhymed—and thus textually fixed—sequences from the epics within their prose text, and they appropriate a number of stereotype episodes with small (albeit significant) variations (the märchen tend to stress the mythical or magic features, or to relate them more explicitly to features of Mongol folklore). Yet the märchen does not simply adopt; it also transforms or reverses certain motifs and allows the association of ideas, so that the narrator can use and recombine ideas from a variety of sources. It is here that Heissig sees the narrator's personal inspiration at work.

The analysis of the märchen *Qan qarangγui* provides a chance to clarify its relation with the well-documented epic of the same title and so establish a general framework for the analysis of the following six märchen. Heissig traces the complex interdependencies of a great number of narratives, some of which show a strong local color and others of which tap sources of wide currency among Mongol groups. In general, the author retells the gist of the narratives or quotes certain formulaic sections to provide an idea of the narratives' characteristics. This should prove useful in helping the reader remain on course in the midst of an often quite complex argument that demands the retention of a large amount of detail.

Several of the points Heissig makes, though apparently corollary to his central arguments, are nevertheless important. He draws attention to the fact that the märchen introduce a significant change in the manner in which they treat the relation between the hero and his formidable enemy, the monster (*mangγus*). In the epics the hero kills the monster, while in the märchen the hero is killed and later revived by heavenly maidens. Heissig sees this as a