

more accessible to Western audiences. The greater accessibility results from the presentation of all articles in the text in German (the bulk of them) or English, rather than — as in the past — those languages plus Russian and Mongol. Hopefully this practice will continue in future volumes, and in other publications as well. The contributions being made by scholars from Mongolia in many fields are still relatively unknown.

The broadened scope of the articles in this volume is shown by the twenty-seven separate listings. Of these, fifteen deal solely with Mongol epics, two are concerned with the traditions of Turkic peoples (the Tuvian and Kirgiz), three have to do with the Tibetan *Gesariada*, two with the Tungus-Manchu tradition, and four with comparative topics crossing all the Altaic areas. While a few of these contributions are ground-breaking and of great interest to folklorists and Altaicists alike, most repeat previous themes.

Perhaps the most useful piece in the volume is that of S. G. Kljastornyj on epic subjects in the Old Turkic runic inscriptions. Virtually all the references in this article are to Russian publications, indicating the emphasis that Russian scholars have placed on this genre, a stress dismayingly absent elsewhere, where many folklore texts are still analyzed in linguistic or historical terms. This article provides one more stepping stone in the process of tracing the long evolution of the epic tradition in Central Eurasia.

Most of the rest of the presentations deal with individual topics within oral or written folklore traditions, such as the palace, the fox as abettor, the serpent theme, types of monsters (like the *Mangus* in Mongol epics), and spirits, gods, and demons. All of these are valuable expansions on previous work. Others are weaker, however, and of questionable value in the context of discussion of epic and folkloric themes; Hans-Peter Vietze, for example, suggests new questions to be resolved, but his five-page article on the use of the computer to analyze the *Secret History of the Mongols* is more properly suited to a linguistic setting. Another weakness has to do with the fact that several of the pieces are clearly only session papers of a few pages, such as that of Hamayon, while others, like that of Reichl on "Octavian" and "Kuntuymis," are substantive contributions of many pages. Boris Riftin has a very long (forty pages) and useful paper on the epic of dual combat among the Eastern Mongols. But I wonder if it was necessary to include the eleven pages of Cyrillic text, along with the German translation. This seems to me to underline a problem that exists in all these volumes: the tension between session papers and scholarly, annotated monographs that were certainly not presented in their entirety to a conference audience.

In all, this volume on the folk epics of Central Eurasia is a sound contribution to an admirable body of work, much of which has previously been unavailable to Western audiences. In addition, these studies often apply Western methodology to the epic materials in an organized and concentrated fashion.

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STUART, KEVIN, editor. *The Teller of Seventy Lies & Other Mongolian Folktales*. Illustrated by Danzan. Times Asian Library Series. Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong: Federal Publications, 1993. vi + 98 pages. Paper US\$5.50; ISBN 981-01-2237-3.

More than one thousand Mongolian fairy tales collected among the Mongolian ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China have been published within the last twenty years. Roughly one hundred of these have been translated into Western languages, adding to the available material for comparative research on oral folktales. For that reason the publication of this small booklet is welcome.

Kevin Stuart has had the benefit of working for some years as a teacher in Xining, Qinghai and of being in close contact with scholars in China's Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. Unfortunately, the thirty-two tales in this book, for which he gives credit to six Mongol researchers, are condensed to the utmost brevity, being more summaries than translations. The introduction, consisting of eighteen lines, states only that "these folktales provide rare insights into the culture and traditions of the ancient nomadic culture — folk heroes and tricksters, monsters and ghosts, humorous tales, and moral and practical instruction thinly disguised as fables." After reading the short collection of tales on ninety-eight small pages (of which eleven are illustrations) the question remains as to whether these presentations, lacking notes and commentaries, further our understanding of the tales. Does the book's highly generalized approach really make it unnecessary to explain certain selections? How will readers from Southeast Asia, for example, know that the "Origin of the Buryat Tribe" tale, with its description of the theft of the clothes of a bathing girl, is a version of the famous "Swan-maiden" story found all over Eurasia and Northern Europe, as so aptly explained by Arthur T. HATTO (1980, 267–97)? Furthermore, there are no remarks about origin of the tales; most of them are found in variants in many areas of Inner Mongolia, a fact pointed out by nearly all Mongolian editions of folktales because of the great variations that exist. Important international collections of fairy tales, like the *Märchen der Weltliteratur* in Germany or the *Skazki i mify narodov vostoka* in Russia add, for quite sound reasons, exhaustive commentaries on the tales, an approach followed in the recently published volume of Tuwinian tales by Erika Taube. The above-mentioned shortcomings impede this well-meant little book.

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1980 The Swan Maiden: A folktale of Eurasian origin? In *Essays on medieval German and other poetry*, 267–97. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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LAOS

YANG DAO, edited by JEANNE L. BLAKE. *Hmong at the Turning Point*. Minneapolis: Worldbridge Associates, 1993. xvi + 168 pages. Maps, figures, photographic plates, bibliography, index. Hard cover US\$29.99; ISBN 0-9632149-93.

Readers who feel more comfortable with English than with French will surely welcome this new English-language version of Dr. Yang's book *Les Hmong du Laos face au développement* (1975), and will want to thank editor Jeanne Blake for her contribution to this work. The book is an invaluable source of information on the Hmong, a mountain people of the Southeast Asia-Southwest China border regions. Moreover, all who are interested in the Hmong will want to read part 4, "Hmong in a Shattered Nation," newly written for this edition of the book; though it is doubtless too short (a mere fourteen pages) to cover a very complex era in the history of the Laotian Hmong, it nevertheless gives an interesting account by Yang of the story his people of from 1973 to 1990. I only regret that enthusiasm for translation has led to the removal of all the original French titles from the bibliography. The English translations (which, if required at all, ought to be in brackets after the original French titles) will scarcely