

CENTRAL ASIA

LIMUSISHIDEN, JUGUI and KEVIN STUART, Editors. *Huzhu Mongghul Folklore: Texts and Translations*. Languages of the World/Text Library 03. Munich: Lincom Europa, 1998. 264 pages. Maps, photographs, tables, bibliography, index. Paper €85.40; ISBN 3-89586-256-8.

LIMUSISHIDEN, JUGUI and KEVIN STUART, Editors. *Huzhu Mongghul Texts: Chileb 1983-1996 Selections*. Vols 1 & 2. Languages of the World/Text Library 04. Two volumes. Munich: Lincom Europa, 2001. 783 pages. Line drawings, Chinese character and Tibetan list, bibliography. Paper €79.70 (Volume i); €79.69 (Volume ii); ISBN 3-89586-257-4 (for both volumes).

Huzhu Mongghul refers to the northernmost group of Mongolic speakers who settled in the northeastern part of Amdo Tibet (also known as Kokonor) during the thirteenth century. As part of Chinggis Khan's troops, these individuals, whose autonym was Chighaan Monghol (White Mongols) were garrisoned east of Kokonor on the Chinese frontier. Today, approximately 200,000 of their descendants live in three areas largely within China's Qinghai province 青海省: a northern area (Huzhu county 互助县 in Qinghai and the contiguous Tianshu county 天祝县 in Gansu province 甘肃省), a southeastern area (Minhe county 民和县) and a southwestern area (Tongren county 同仁县). These people, who call themselves Mongghul, Monguor, or Mangghuer are generally referred to in the West as Monguors and in China as the Tu nationality 土族.¹ The Monguors became sedentary farmers and intermarried with local Tibetans.

Extensive contact with Chinese and Tibetans resulted in folklore that is profoundly syncretic. The Monguors, who already had a rich Central Asian spiritual realm informed by animism and the use of trance mediums, adopted the local dominant variety of Tibetan Buddhism (the dGe lugs pa School, often known as Yellow Hat). Buddhism soon became the prestige religion for the Monguors, though pre-Buddhist spiritual practices (and to a lesser extent Chinese Daoist practices) continue to form an important part of daily and ceremonial ritual (including those involving the household, at weddings and funerals, to ensure personal and agricultural fertility, and to avoid crop-damaging weather). Since Tibetan Buddhism frames and guides daily life through the agricultural seasons, Monguor folklore has become steeped in its pantheon and rituals. The Northern Monguor Huzhu county has produced a disproportionately large number of monks and prominent religious figures, and is home to an important monastery, dGon lung (Ch. Ergulong).

The materials presented here are from Huzhu county and as such represent a sample of Northern Monguor (i.e., Mongghul, as it is locally pronounced). Though Northern Monguors are outnumbered by Han Chinese and Chinese-speaking Muslims (Hui 回) in all but a few townships in Huzhu, Northern Monguor still has the biggest Monguor population of the three Monguor areas, and is considered one of the more culturally "traditional" areas. This perception is no doubt due to the abundance of oral folklore and the maintenance of distinctive (albeit also syncretic) dress (see photos on pages 7 to 17 in the 1998 volume). Despite continuous contact with Tibetans and Chinese, in the northern area represented in these volumes, it is the Tibetan features which predominate.

These three books present edited rare monolingual source materials on Northern Monguor folklore and language, primarily from the Northern Monguor Danma township 丹麻乡. They contain a variety of Monguor texts written in a standardized Latin-based transcription system as well as brief introductions and text headings in English. In addition, the texts in the 1998 volume (hereafter *Folklore*) have been translated into English, and importantly, about one third of that volume's materials are new, collected by the first author.

The language presented in these volumes is unusual in that it is a normatized literary form of Northern Monguor. Otherwise, Monguor is a spoken language only: the Monguors have no official writing system and no schooling in their language. The first author of these volumes, Limusishiden, regularized the transcription of all the previously-published materials according to the unofficial orthography developed by the Monguor linguist Li Keyu 李克郁 in the 1980s, as exemplified in a dictionary (Li 1988) and a handful of textbooks (exhaustive references for the latter can be found in the excellent bibliography of *Huzhu Mongghul Texts: Chileb 1983–1986 Selections* [hereafter *Texts*], vol. II, 171–73). Rather than attempting to represent spontaneous spoken language, Limusishiden (together with Jugui for *Texts*) painstakingly normatized transcriptions in these volumes according to Li's *pinyin*-based (i.e., Chinese Latin script) writing system. Since Limusishiden based his

normalization additionally on his own spoken language, his transcriptions sometimes differ trivially from those of Li.²

Furthermore, the discourse structure of all selections in these volumes has been heavily edited so that the selections represent samples of written rather than oral literature. Indeed, features of orality (e.g., mnemonic redundancy, repair, genre-specific grammatical structures) are not prominent in these selections. This literary approach to oral folklore is consistent with Chinese research on minority groups since the founding of the People's Republic of China up to the present day. It has the advantage that it is easy to read, and the reader can quickly grasp the gist of the major themes presented. These collections should therefore be viewed linguistically as a regularized sample of one local variety of Northern Monguor; they should not be taken as representative of all of Northern Monguor, nor of the spoken language. The normativity of these volumes in no way constitutes a criticism: a literary presentation was the only option available to the editors, since the majority of the materials presented are reprinted from codified Monguor sources, some of which are further distanced from the spoken language via Chinese. A given sample of spoken Monguor thus underwent the following lengthy interpretation process (optional steps in parentheses): elicited oral performance > note taking in Chinese or Monguor > edited into a coherent Chinese or Monguor text (> translated into Monguor) > regularized into Danma Northern Monguor > translated into English.

The themes, genres, and motifs presented are admirably representative of Northern Monguor folklore. The major performance genres appear in all three volumes: wedding and funeral speeches and songs (*Folklore*, Chapters 2, 3, & 4.8), narratives (including origin legends, fantasy, historical, didactic, and trickster narratives (*Folklore*, Ch. 4), jokes and riddles (*Folklore*, Ch. 4, *Texts*, 60–61), a few festival and courtship songs (*Folklore*, Ch. 4.8), and proverbs (e.g., *Texts*, 50–56). Since *Texts* reproduces Chileb editions in the order they appeared, the above genres are scattered through the two volumes in no particular order. *Texts* additionally contains a new genre created entirely in the context of the journal itself: the essay.

Looking at the individual volumes in detail, it is readily apparent that the *Folklore* volume is much more accessible for non-Monguor speakers, as the texts are translated into English. The English rendering is rather stilted. This choice of a literal translation was no doubt made in order to remain faithful to the original. In general, these literal translations are well-rendered, though occasionally a more accurate word choice would render the Monguor more closely and simply.³ These minor issues, however, do not detract substantially from the translation.

The *Folklore* volume constitutes, with a few caveats, a useful introduction to the Northern Monguors and their folklore. It presents sketch maps of Huzhu county (which are extremely hard to interpret, and appear to be based on ANONYMOUS 1983), twenty-four black-and-white photographs of men and women in winter clothing, an introduction, and a bibliography. The introduction, in English, contains useful population statistics and Monguor speaker statistics; unfortunately, sources are missing. Then, the Latin-script writing system used in these three volumes is explained. (An additional chart comparing vocabulary and transliteration for Northern and Southeastern Monguor could have been omitted.) The introduction concludes with three comparative language samples presented without commentary; though these samples certainly add to the linguistic and folkloric body of materials presented in the book, without any analysis it is unclear why these were presented in the introduction and not in the main body of texts.

In *Folklore*, two thirds of the texts are reprinted from previously-published articles in a variety of scholarly journals; these include descriptions of and song and speech samples

from weddings, funerals, and festivals. The remaining twenty-six texts (half of the narratives and all of the jokes) were newly collected and retold by Limusishiden. Despite the different sources, the language variety of these selections is consistent throughout the volume, as Limusishiden's three language consultants and those of the other reprinted selections were all speakers of the main Northern Monguor variety.

The text is very lightly annotated with references to other works (some of which do not appear in the bibliography, e.g., pages 204, 215), dialect variants, and brief cultural notes. Besides being useful for researchers interested in life-cycle rituals, these texts are interesting for the integration of Tibetan and Chinese elements. Heavy contact with Chinese culture, for example, can be seen in the excerpts from the Chinese classic Buddhist pilgrimage *Journey to the West* 西游记 (150–51). References to the Jade Emperor 玉皇大帝 (160–61) and to burial rituals (127–43) show both Tibetan and Chinese elements.

These themes are echoed in the two-volume collection *Texts* under review which reproduces in a standardized orthography Monguor language articles from the publication *Chileb*. *Chileb* was named after the mountains (Ch. Qilianshan 邦连山) that divide Huzhu from Tianzhu county. As the editors explain in a helpful introduction, the quarterly journal, which was organized and based in the northern Huzhu county, solicited collected materials and compositions from Monguors literate in the orthography, who were paid by article length. The mimeographed articles, which were heretofore never formally published, were distributed to the authors and a few archival copies were stored in the Huzhu county seat as well as in Xining, the provincial capital.

The two volumes contain about forty percent collected narratives and songs, about forty percent folkloric and essay materials translated from Chinese, while the remaining twenty percent consist of essays (what the editors term *creations*). In addition, attractive sketches of Monguor farming implements and other aspects of material culture by Li Jinxue are scattered throughout the two volumes.

The material in *Texts*, which constitutes nearly the entire output of the journal *Chileb* over thirteen years, is understandably uneven. In addition to the aforementioned performance genres, *Chileb* appears to have been a particularly good venue for the creation of new festival songs such as the syncretic Tibeto-Monguor Tandirghimaa song form. The bulk of the volumes provides additional (if unannotated and untranslated) samples of all the major genres. About a quarter of the texts is only marginally useful as samples of normalized Northern Monguor. These include essays praising the Chinese Communist Party, and folkloric material from other peoples of the region rendered in Monguor (e.g., Uyghur, pages 340, 712; Hui, 700; Dongxiang, 741). Most of the latter, possibly with the exception of some of the Tibetan materials, no doubt came via Chinese print materials and are thus of dubious value for linguistic or folkloric research. Nonetheless, the editors were wise to simply regularize and reprint the entire contents of *Chileb*, since it provides a historical snapshot of two important aspects of Northern Monguor culture: first, which topics were perceived to be of archival and popular interest, and second, which topics were necessary and/or acceptable to the local Chinese governmental representatives during the thirteen-year period in which *Chileb* was published.

Presented in such a monolingual and minimally-annotated form, these latter materials would be a good source for intermediate and advanced learners of Monguor and for future Monguors wishing to recover their folklore; the *Folklore* volume would be of broader interest. Taken together, these constitute a unique collection of a Northern Monguor literary language and are the product of an enormous amount of work. The compilers and publisher have performed a great service in regularizing and publishing nearly unobtainable Monguor publications, in addition to having added some fresh folklore material.

NOTES

1. The different endonyms reflect the loss of final -l in some varieties of the Monguor language (i.e., Monggol > Mongguor), including in the Naringhor (Naringhol) area of Huzhu county in Northern Monguor, and in all of Southeastern (Minhe county) Monguor. Since most early work on the Monguor language focused on the Naringhor dialect, the entire group came to be known as Monguor. Within the Chinese administrative realm, most Monguors have today been assigned the official nationality ethnonym Tu, with two exceptions: some of the southwestern (Tongren) Monguors are officially Tibetan, and all of the southwestern Monguors who adopted Islam and moved to Dahejia in Gansu province in the late nineteenth century are officially Baongan (Bao'an 保安), a separate nationality.

2. These differences are exemplified by a useful chart in *Folklore*, page 28. These differences, based on Limusishiden's dominant Halqighul variety of Northern Monguor, concern the representation of vowel length and quality, together with epenthetic vowels. Note that this chart omits orthographic c (=IPA [ts^h]) as in the Chinese loan *ciden* "dictionary," and the chart should further be amended as follows: orthographic i and ch correspond to IPA [i] and [tʂ^h], respectively, and aspiration should be rendered with a superscript ^h, not an apostrophe.

3. For example, page 241: Substituting "What did [they] test?" for "What was the examination question?" for *Kolasani yanna?* would make for a more simple, elegant, and accurate translation.

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