

words, not all the games included in this volume are games in the real sense some are pastimes, recreations or non-games. This is never made clear to the reader.

The title of the book also tends to be misleading, for most if not the bulk of the collection comes from the Luzon area, specifically Cabanatuan, Neuva Ecija. The regional versions or variants are mentioned only in passing and that is made to account for the six regions supposedly covered by the collection. On this account, one could not call Lopez' opus the most exhaustive compilation ever assembled for the Philippines but certainly it is one of the major works on games deserving notice.

While it represents an advance over previous studies and compilations, it does suffer certain weaknesses. Perhaps these flaws and omissions are necessary since they provide a reason and impetus for other scholars to do further research. If this volume motivates such additional endeavor, then Lopez will have accomplished more with one publication than most authors achieve in a lifetime.

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THAILAND

MOTTIN, JEAN. *55 Chants d'amour Hmong Blanc (55 zaj kwv txhiaj hmoob dawb)* [55 love chants of the White Hmong]. Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1980. Paper, 173 pp., line drawings (White Hmong, with French introduction and translations).

At the 1984 meeting of the Association for Asian Studies and an allied meeting at the Smithsonian Institution held to examine the state of Southeast Asian Studies in the United States, several scholars, particularly in political science and art history, pointed to the need to get at a better understanding of Southeast Asia through its vernacular literature, even if only in translation. This volume on White Hmong love chants would fit such a humanistic approach that aims at providing a clearer idea of the ethos of one of the most important of Southeast Asia's and Southern China's—and now the U.S.'s—minorities, the Hmong. At the same time, Jean Mottin has made a truly significant contribution to the recording and study of the oral traditions of this part of the world. The work under review is but one of a half dozen works on the White Hmong published by the French priest. Both the quantity and quality of his work, which includes history and ethnography as well as linguistics and literature, indisputably earn him the position of dean of White Hmong scholars.

Jean Mottin worked in Burma from 1957–1966 and then in Thailand until 1980. He lived in the village of Khek Noy, in the province of Petchabun, 430 kilometers north of Bangkok. Most of the love chants were recorded there among White Hmong living in Tak, to the West, and also from Hmong originally from the border regions of Laos, to the East, or other points in Laos during the period 1972–1976. A certain number of the chants was recorded in the refugee camp at Ban Vinay in 1976, just after the change of governments in Laos in 1975.

The oral traditions of the White Hmong are comprised of the sacred and the secular. The former deal with serious rituals connected with marriages, funerals or shamanistic (curing) services, and are generally performed by males, the exception being some female shamans. The second type of verbal art is non-ritualistic and is used under a variety of circumstances, chiefly for courtship. The latter literary form

is called "Keu Tsia" (*kwv txhiaj*) or "Love Chant." By the age of ten, each young girl has acquired her own repertoire. For this and other reasons not mentioned by Mottin, females appear to achieve greater mastery and fame than males in this arena, which they must leave immediately after marriage, which usually takes place between the ages of 14–17. The transmission of the art of chanting from one generation to another is not dealt with at all, unfortunately. Do mothers teach their daughters, or is it the case that older girls teach younger girls?

Males play what appears to be the lesser role as the opposite partner in a verbal and aesthetics contest of the sexes, where courtship is the underlying social force.

There is an unexplained paradox here in that the females tend to dominate in the verbal jousting, yet exhibit forms of public shyness by covering their faces with a small cloth or facing a wall while singing, which makes it very difficult for an outsider to understand.

To underscore the male prerogative in Hmong society, men are not expected to give up the exercise of *kwv txhiaj* after marriage, although why they might want to continue indefinitely is not touched on in this book.

Mottin might have included some discussion of the role of married men in these courtship contests.

Mottin rightly chooses the term "love chant" rather than "love song" because, as in the older oral traditions of all of Southeast Asian tonal languages, melodic line is not a prominent feature of the art form. Melody is very simple and is composed of only five notes which are determined by the tones of the spoken language. (One might wish to compare this to the four note melodic line of Green Hmong studied by Amy Catlin, 1982: 7–8.) The tonal effect is one of "sing-song" poetry. Interestingly enough, each Hmong locality does have its own particular melodic variant, marked in the texts as the chanting motif of Xieng Khuang, Yo Tshous, Sam Neua, Mong Sua, and Hou Ya.

There are at least twelve sub-genres analyzed by Mottin, separated on the basis of content. The major form deals with the theme of love, quite often an impossible love, made so because of a passion so intense and clandestine it can never be realized in marriage. With few exceptions, the complete repertoire of these chants deals with the pain of love, death, departure, separation or abandonment and they almost invariably end with the lament, "How unhappy/unlucky I am!" The chants that deal exclusively with the subject of romantic love are the most numerous and prominent because of their social function, which is one of courtship ritual and contest. They are, according to Mottin, a pretext for young people to get together and to know each other, but not for the purpose of making love. They are, instead, an exercise in verbal virtuosity. Because the Hmong have been a society without a written literature in their own language until quite recently, their verbal arts and heritage have been rooted exclusively in oral transmission nurtured by rituals where the power and magic of the spoken word was a key instrument that could be possessed by anyone with the intelligence and memory capacity required to achieve a reputation as oral poet, or, in the case of the love chants, poetess. Mottin claims that it is quite easy to memorize a piece because the structure is so simple and the formulas (clichés) so numerous. New pieces, however, are attempted, and the elements of different genres are combined in the act of extemporaneous composition. It appears to be the case that a few individuals do rise above the rest of their community, largely because of the competitive nature of courtship rhyming, which is a pan-Southeast Asian phenomenon that deserves future comparative research. The Indo-Malay "pantun" and the verses of the Lao "mohlam" (Compton 1979) are but two other examples of courtship poetry in South-

east Asia that invite cross-cultural comparative study and even publication as an anthology, especially now that the results of this research have come out in this decade.

Because Mottin provides here and in his other published works very thick descriptions and contextualizations, we have, if we command the ability to read French, the opportunity to read a balanced account of Hmong behavior. Mottin takes pains to point out that, like much of the highly moralistic writing of an earlier generation of western writers on Southeast Asia, a certain Graham reported in his study on "The Customs of the Chuan Miao" that between 1921-1936, at least, the morals of the Hmong were very free, adultery frequent, and that "almost all of the love chants were stories of men with married women, or of women entering sexual relations with men to whom they were not married."

Mottin counters this by saying, "It is important to know that we do not have a single chant relating the joy of a husband or wife living with a (extra-marital) partner. If one speaks of a marriage which is destroyed by love, it appears that the Hmong share that opinion." Later he notes that, while some very beautiful and passionate love chants are still in the White Hmong repertoire and as such may bear witness to very ancient ideas or, more likely to romantic fantasies, "nowadays adultery of women is practically nonexistent."

The reader must wonder if Father Mottin has not gone to the other extreme of Graham. As both Catholic priest and anthropologist, it may be the case that this work on love chants is less complete than his other lengthier publications on the more serious religious rituals, where males are definitely in charge and he is, in a sense, among equals.

Each of the 55 chants is transcribed in the precise romanization devised by Barney and Smalley, which can be read only with reference to works on Hmong linguistics detailing the particulars of this modern orthography developed in the 1950's. Mottin provides a free translation of each of the 55 chants on a separate page facing the romanized text. The translation is usually preceded by introductory or explanatory notes of great interest and importance in understanding not only a particular chant but the whole Hmong society, hence their value is beyond mere literature. For those interested in the poetic structure and techniques involved in this genre, Mottin provides in his 14 pages of introduction a thorough analysis of the formulas (12 out of 17 lines in Chant 2, for example, are repeated in other chants), plant and animal symbols, and poetic insertions or embellishments. In his discussion of form, he deals with such points as introductory words, couplets, rhyme, rhythm, parallelism, inversions, contrasts, ellipsis, and expressions used as codas or endings such as "I am so unhappy/unlucky I could die!" Of the "love chant" genre, those pieces dealing with the theme of love are decidedly shorter. The classical form of the love poem has four couplets per stanza, and three to four stanzas for each chant. The chants that take up the theme of lamentation upon getting married (literally "in-lawed"), death, separation, etc., are less lyrical and more naturally narrative. They thus tend to be very detailed and much longer. Taken together, all of these chants are a rich record of what it means to be Hmong.

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INDONESIA

METCALF, PETER. *A Borneo Journey into Death. Berawan Eschatology from its Rituals* (Symbol and Culture). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982. Xxi+275 pp. Plates, maps, bibliography, index. Hardbound US \$23.00 ISBN 0-8122-7849-6

Borneo has been celebrated in ethnological literature for being the receptacle of peoples who are deeply concerned with death and the dead. The most notable of those are the Ngaju of southern Borneo with their impressively elaborate feast to be held at the end of the entire cycle of mortuary rituals. This feast, known as *tivah*, attracted the attention of the Westerners so enchantingly that, according to Miles (1965: 161), nearly one hundred descriptive accounts of it were published in the last century. Without doubt, the secondary treatment of the corpse essentially involved in the feast was the major focus of interest and of curiosity. Based upon and indeed stimulated by the accumulation of ethnographic data of Ngaju mortuary practices, Hertz (1907) propounded a theory of collective representation of death, now counted as a classic study especially since the appearance of its English translation in 1960.

Metcalf's book on Berawan mortuary rituals and eschatology presents a vivid description of a Borneo death scene and tries to set it in the scholarly framework inherited from Hertz. This is a praiseworthy enterprise, for, despite enthusiasm of anthropologists for Hertzian theory, there have been surprisingly few comprehensive empirical studies of what people act and think in the face of death. The present reviewer, himself having done field research on death practices among the Iban in Borneo (Uchibori, 1978), receives great stimulation from this book especially for comparative concerns.

The present-day Berawan live in longhouse communities along two branch rivers of the Baram River in northern Sarawak. Two communities have been converted to Christianity; one follows a revivalist cult called Bungan; and only one community preserves their traditional folk religion. Such a situation forces the researcher of old customs to rely on people's memory of the past for complementing what he observes among the contemporary members. The author's careful arrangement to distinguish what he heard from what he saw heightens the value of the book as an objectively written ethnography. Also, with regard to informants' exegeses, he often describes in detail the circumstances under which he gained information, sometimes with remarkable candour. This enables the reader to follow the author's experience during his research and, more importantly, to evaluate the exact status of a piece of information in the ethnographic reality which the book purports to convey.

The Berawan practise a form of secondary treatment of the corpse, termed *nulang* (from *tulang*: "bone"), though the majority of the dead receive simpler treatment which Metcalf calls the "abridged" funeral. This brings the Berawan case directly into link with the classic Nagju exemplar and with Hertzian analysis. In fact, at almost every critical point in the course of analysis of rituals, the author draws on Hertz's formulation about the nature of the temporal sequences inherent in this form