

## MONGOLIA

HEISSIG, WALTHER, editor. *Fragen der mongolischen Heldendichtung. Teil III: Vorträge des 4. Epensymposiums des Sonderforschungsbereichs 12, Bonn 1983* [Problems in Mongol heroic poetry, part III. Papers of the 4th symposium on epics organized by the Special Research Project 12, Bonn 1983]. Asiatische Forschungen, Band 91. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1985. ix+643 pages, plates. Paper DM236.—; ISBN 3-447-0-2499-2, ISSN 0571-320X.

Epic poetry has been a part of the Mongol literary tradition since at least the time of the Mongol Conquest of the 13th century, when the first literary monuments first appeared. Archaic epic poetical forms which appear in such historical records as the *Secret History of the Mongols* suggests that the epic style pre-dated the written record, and clearly influenced it. In addition there are fragments of epic poetry in the cultural traditions of a number of the Altaic peoples, including the modern Mongols and the Turkic peoples of the Soviet Union.

Most of the epics of these peoples demonstrate certain consistencies in style, such as the use of alliterated meter, the presentations of the hero, plot devices, and other conventions. All these show a consistency of genre that is both hortatory and didactic. Given the commonality of features across the land mass of Asia, there is at work in this epic tradition a long process of development and diffusion. In spite of, there has not been a systematic approach to the field until the work undertaken by Walther Heissig and his colleagues.

This massive volume, the third in the series of epic symposia, is massive in size and in significance. It adds immeasurably to our knowledge of the epic tradition, as did the earlier volumes. The symposia bring together scholars from both east and west, and make available the work of scholars from the Mongolian Peoples Republic as well, a rarity in the western world. There are twenty-four presentations in this volume in English, Russian, German, and Mongol. Thirteen of the articles deal with general themes in epic poetry such as the horse, the role of the hero, betrayal and murder, and death. The remainder deal with two *sgag* traditions, those of the Gesar and the Jangar.

The first impression of the volume under review, is that the sheer size of the book, almost 650 pages, must present a great amount of material for the scholar with an interest in the field. A closer review lessens that impact to some extent. Almost 120 pages are simply translations of some of the articles, either from Russian into German, or from Mongol into English or German. In addition, another thirty pages are given over to the reproduction of a script Mongol version of the Jangar text with a three page introduction and summary of the text.

The reader must deal, therefore, with a variety of languages and scripts in order to benefit from the epic material presented. This problem seems to have troubled the editors and translators as well, as the first article in the volume demonstrates. By P. Xorloo, a Mongol, entitled, "Traditions and Peculiarities of Mongolian Heroic Epic," in the Table of Contents, the article is first presented in English, and then followed by the Mongol version. It gives us an interesting analysis of the presentation of the hero in traditional epic poetry and the process of change that image has undergone in modern Mongol literature under the impact of socialism. By comparing the English and Mongol translations the reader soon realizes that the English translation must be approached warily. The errors in the English text seem to be the editors'

rather than the translators'. For example; on page 2, line 12, the phrase "the 10 epics", is a translation of "yu shaxam tuuli" in the Mongol version, which must be an error in the Cyrillic text. The Mongol *xedeed*—many thousands becomes "a thousand" and so on. Because random errors occur in both versions the reader is left wondering which version is the more correct.

Other papers are clearly short summaries of on-going work or reprises of earlier papers, as in the case of the excellent article by Charles Bawden on "Vitality and Death in the Mongolian Epic." This paper is, in reality, a linguistic analysis of certain recurring terms in epic poetry, specifically, *sur*, *sulde*, *kei mori*, *sunesu*, and *tolge*.

Perhaps the most difficult, but most intriguing of all the articles in this volume, is that of Roberte Hamayon, entitled "The One in the Middle: The Unwelcome Third as a Brother, Irreplaceable Mediator as a Son." Hamayon alone among most scholars studying the epic tradition, has departed from the linguistic and philological approach that dominates this work and almost all other works in this field. Her work here, and in other works as well, attempts to systematize and conceptualize epic themes in a schematic form. Her work rationalizes thematic material across the entire genre, without being side-tracked into the minimalist philological quarrels that have traditionally bogged down the study of these epics.

This volume might also have benefitted from an attempt to place the epic material in the large context of current Mongol scholarship in the fields of archaeology, history, folklore, ethnicity, and epigraphy, all of which are available in such Mongol journals as *Studia Mongolica*, *Studia Historica*, and *Studia Arxeologica*. In the past quarter of a century Mongol scholars have made such important strides in all fields of study, that the western scholar who presents his views on Mongol topics without a grounding in modern Mongol contributions runs the risk of falling behind. Some of the contributions in the volume under review demonstrate that short-coming.

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#### PHILIPPINES

MARASINGAN, VICENTE. *A Banahaw Guru. Symbolic Deeds of Agapito Illustrisimo*. Quezon City Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1985. 190 pages. Color and black/white photographs. Paperback. ISBN 971-113-046-7.

*A Banahaw Guru* is the fruit of a theological seminar workshop concerning problems of inculturation in the Philippines. Among others it addresses questions like the relationship between official and popular religion. While the first part of the book follows an order given by points in B. Lonergan's theological method, the second contains a lengthy text in Tagalog with English translation. To some extent the first part can be considered a commentary on the second, if we do not forget that the author approaches the problem from a theological standpoint.

Notwithstanding its primarily theological intent, the book has considerable interest also for the folklorist. In order to study the relationship between official and popular religion it takes the Samahan ng Tatlong Persona Solo Dios, a religious movement founded by Agapito Illustrisimo on 27 August 1936, as a case study. The author, a catholic priest, relates in the first part his experiences in communicating with the group