

of others' actions, as a discipline of the soul, a daily testing, an expression of the values and sense of life, a way to perfection" (3). Notwithstanding their poverty, we thus see in this spirit the artisans' assertion of their essential humanness. Like *bahri alang*, the *akharas* or arenas for body-building and wrestling have also become lower-class activities and have begun to decline as a consequence of the cessation of élite participation and patronage.

In dealing with fairs and festivals and the world of music in Banaras, Kumar uncovers more or less the same attributes and developments. These are the ideas of appropriateness in time, the importance of the neighborhood, the insignificance of caste and religious divisions, the ideal of certain pleasures as ends in themselves and the progressive separation of upper and lower classes. Passing to the four major festivals of Banaras, she considers them from the structural, functional, and existential standpoints, and focussing attention on the Nakkatayya, the largest festival of Banaras, she registers the fact that they have not declined greatly, but demonstrate subtler transformations which indicate far-reaching changes in social structure and its corresponding ideologies. Penultimately, she considers celebrations of a communal, caste, and occupational character and concludes that the question of identity is far from being a simple one, as is to be expected in a complex urban environment rendered more complex by the incursions of modernization.

Although the notion of modernization does not figure in the pages of this book conspicuously—there are only three references to it in the index—and although Kumar at the very outset discounts her interest in "universal patterns" and "a predictable course of modernization," it would appear highly probable that the elite's declining participation and patronage in many of the patterns of behavior elaborated in this book can be ascribed to the impact of that phenomenon at first, second, or third removes. This is, of course, not to affirm, as it was affirmed by earlier theorists, that modernization must needs take a predictable course wherever its impact is felt. Wiser counsels have come to prevail, and today one perceives that the impact of modernization is much more complex than was believed earlier.

And it is because Kumar lends her allegiance to the notion that human situations are complex and that it is necessary to interpret them hermeneutically, that is in terms of symbols and meanings, without simultaneously disregarding material and other constraints that this book strongly commends itself for its sobriety, all-round vision and relevance. The artisans of Banaras, as depicted in this book, teach us many things. But the most important lesson that they offer us is that the human spirit is a force to reckon with at all times.

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CLINTON, JEROME W. Translator. *The Tragedy of Sohráb and Rostám from the Persian National Epic, the Shahname of Abol-Qasem Ferdowsi*. Publications on the Near East University of Washington Number 3. Seat-

tle: University of Washington Press, 1988. xxv+190 pages. Notes, glossary, bibliography. Cloth US\$25.00; ISBN 0-295-96577-0. Paper US\$12.50; ISBN 0-295-96582-7.

The episode of Rostam and Sohrab is one of the best known episodes of the *Shahname* of Ferdowsi (A.D. 970-1024), the monumental collection of mythical and historical traditions of ancient Iran. The so-called "tragedy of Sohrab" takes place during the legendary war between Iran and Turan in the earlier part of the *Shahname* and is closely related to the heroic cycle of Rostam, the greatest Iranian hero. Young Sohrab is the mighty son of the latter who was begotten in a short-lived love adventure with a Turanian princess and was raised in the land of Turan, without ever knowing his father.

The story is centered around a wide-spread folk-literary theme, the fatal combat between the father and the son who are unaware of each other's identity (Mot N731.2). Similar stories are also told about the heroes of various nations, such as Odysseus, Cuchulainn, Hildebrand, and Ilya Murometz. The episode of Rostam and Sohrab, however, is the most famous adaptation of the theme in world literature. Also, according to a contemporary Iranian writer, Reza Baraheni, the father-son conflict, of which the Rostam and Sohrab story is a mere, variant is not only a recurrent theme in the Iranian epic, but also, according to his psychohistorical reasoning, it is the very leitmotif of Iranian history, ancient and modern (BARAHENI 1977, 65-66).

Baraheni's remark may be an exaggeration, but the story of Sohrab has always enjoyed extraordinary popularity in and outside of Iran. It has been translated into several languages, and into English at least five times previously (contrary to the bombastic claim on the back cover of the present translation; "Now, at last, the dramatic and exotic world of the *Shahname* is revealed to the English reader"). The list of translations runs from J. Atkinson (1814) through W. T. Robertson (1829), Matthew Arnold (1853), and the Warner brothers (1906), to the more recent summarized prose translation of Reuben Levy (1967). According to the Warners, "It is the only tale in the whole *Shāhnāma* that is at all familiar to the English reader" (WARNER 1905-25, II, 118).

It is rather a continuing interest in the *Shahname*, and in the Sohrab episode in particular, which is attested to successfully by the present translation. It was prepared by the Persian literature specialist J. W. Clinton, who "sought to provide a version of the tale that sounds like modern English but which gives some sense of the formal tone of the original" (xxiv).

The language of Clinton's translation is indeed fresh and free from the pitfalls of the archaizing inflated style, so characteristic of the previous versions. The Persian metre *mutaqarib* has been rendered into blank verse and the original Persian text has been printed with scholarly precision on facing pages. Clinton draws upon the contemporary results of the *Shahname* studies, relies on the newest available critical text edition, the so-called Moscow edition (1960-1971), and on the whole prefers older manuscript readings. For this reason, his text is much briefer and consequently more dramatic than the former ones (it contains 1046 pair-verses, cf. the 1460 verses of the previously standard Tehran edition). The text is accompanied by an Introduction (xiii-xxv), which is a well-written overview of the Iranian national epic as a whole, but it is disappointingly short of information on the very topic of the Sohrab story itself, on its integrity within the epic, or on its comparative folk-literary aspects. For the latter, the students of Asian folklore must turn to the study of Potter, which in spite of its somewhat overstressed indebtedness to the anthropologist-folklorist school

of Lang and Hartland, still remains a most exhausting survey of the father-son combat theme in the written and oral literature of the world (POTTER 1902), or to an interesting brief study by the Parsi scholar Coyajee, who points out the corresponding features of the Sohrab story with a Chinese legend (COYAJEE 1936).

The Notes (180–184), and the small Glossary of Persian Words and Proper Names (185–188) and a brief Selected Bibliography (189–190) give much help to the general reader. In his translation Clinton shows a stronger than usual tendency toward embedding Persian words into his translation, like *shahryar* (king) *sepahdar*, *sepahbod* (“army chief,” “general”), *Piltan* (“elephant-bodied”; an epithet of Rustam), *Div Sepid* (the White Dev) and especially *pahjavan* (“knight,” “hero”; this latter is also thoroughly used in the English text for translating various Persian synonyms of “hero,” presumably for more local color). I find however the use of Persian words *Yazdan* and *Isad* (both meaning God in Persian, from the Old Iranian root *yaz-* “to worship”) in his English translation a little bit of “Orientalism.” His gloss of the above mentioned epic key term *pahjavan* as “‘hero’ transformed into ‘paladin’ in English” (187) is also misleading. It is, of course, quite appropriate to render the word *pahjavan* as the semantically corresponding archaic English term, “paladin,” as the Warners occasionally have done. However, the choice of the verb “transform” suggests etymological relation. My dictionaries unanimously give the origin of the word “paladin” as the Lat. *palatinus*, Italian *paladino*, French *paladin* i.e., “palace official” (from the Lat. *Palatium*), while the word *pahjavan* had originally meant “a Parthian,” then later “a cavalier.” Also, the translation of an epithet of Sohrab, *roushan-ravan*, as “of the eternal soul” (29, verse 147) is questionable; it would be more justified to translate it as “of bright soul,” perhaps “spirited.”

But these are details which should not overshadow appreciation for the new and lively *Shahname* translation. Let us hope that more similar efforts will be undertaken in future to introduce other, equally beautiful, but less familiar episodes of the great Persian epic to the contemporary readers.

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