

collections, plus the colored plates in KATS's book, *Het Javaansche Tooneel*. He distinguishes four possible colors: red, white, gold, and black, putting aside other colors found on some figures as irrelevant. He succeeds in linking facial color to temperament in a few cases—red for the villainous Dasamuka, white for the virtuous Anoman—but he has much broader ambitions and immediately goes on to a wide-ranging discussion of character and classificatory systems. He discusses the arrangement in space of Javanese palaces (discounting considerable data that contradict his remarks about what direction Javanese houses face) to justify claims that in performance certain figures appear in certain directions. In a move that recalls anthropological treatises of a much earlier era, Mellema adduces data about American Indians, earlier Europeans, and Chinese, to support his claims for the importance of classificatory systems in Java. Finally, citing long passages from nineteenth-century German psychologists who categorized individuals by temperament, Mellema then relates these types to colors, thereby explaining the colors of puppets' faces. One suspects that Mellema himself sensed how tenuous the connection was between the theories he mentions—long-since outmoded by the time of his writing, in 1953—and the shadow puppets he discusses, since he makes only very summary reference to the latter in his final paragraphs.

As an example of one stream of Dutch scholarship, Mellema's ideas have a certain interest, but his approach exhibits the faults of the method—wild leaps across culture areas, convenient dismissal of contradictory material—with little of the synthetic power of a figure such as his predecessor in questions of Javanese traditions, W. H. Rassers. The value of the whole text is diminished by the very awkward translation and by the highly erratic, sometimes simply erroneous, transliteration of Javanese names and terms.

## REFERENCES CITED:

ANDERSON, BENEDICT

- 1965 *Mythology and the tolerance of the Javanese*. Modern Indonesia Project. Monograph Series. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, Dept of Asian Studies.

KATS, J.

- 1923 *Het Javaansche tooneel; I. Wajang Poerwa*. Weltevreden: Commissie voor de Volkslectuur.

Ward KEELER

Department of Anthropology  
University of Texas at Austin

## CENTRAL ASIA

BASILOV, V. N., editor. *Drevnie obryady, verovaniya i kul'ty narodov Srednej Azii. Istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki* [Ancient rituals, beliefs, and cults of Central Asian peoples. A historico-ethnographical survey]. Moskva: Nauka, 1986. 208 pages. (In Russian)

*Ancient Rituals, Beliefs, and Cults of Central Asian Peoples* is a collection of eight articles dedicated mainly to the farming societies of Soviet Central Asia. This area is generally accepted to be an Islamic world. But here the contributors touch on those festivals and rituals that are not part of Islam. They describe in detail their observations in the field and then try to dig down to the deeper roots of the festivals

and rituals that have been alive in various ways among the farmers up to the present or the recent past. These ancient indigenous traditions quite possibly have been intermingled with Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Christianity, and possibly because of such syncretism they managed to survive over a long time. The common basis for discussion in this volume is this syncretism, which has not been strongly influenced by Islam but has been functioning along with it. In other words, the authors uncover the "pre-Islamic" traditions and take them as being more "ancient."

It will be impossible to describe the eight articles in detail and so we list at least their authors and titles to give readers an impression of their range: N. P. Lobacheva, On the history of annual festivals of Central Asian farmers; O. A. Sukhareva, Flower festivals among the steppe Tadjiks (the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century); Dzh. Kh. Karmysheva, Agricultural festivals of the Kazakhs; I. Mukhiddinov, Rituals and habits linked with the cycle of agricultural work among the ethnic groups of the Pamirs; V. N. Basilov, Remnants of shamanism among the Turkmen-Gioklens; K. Taizhanov and Kh. Ismailov, Characteristics of pre-Islamic beliefs of the Uzbek-Karamurts; B. Kh. Karmysheva, Archaic symbolism in funeral mourning rituals of the Uzbeks in the Fergana; G. P. Vasil'eva, Magical functions of child ornaments among the Turkmens.

The first four articles deal with festivals and rituals as they punctuate different stages in agricultural work, such as cultivation, sowing, harvesting and threshing, as well as the clearing of irrigation channels. Throughout all these articles every argument focuses upon the calendar feasts and the original ancient concepts reflected in them. A good start to this first part is made by N. P. Lobacheva's article. She analyzes in detail the historical description by Al Biruni (10th to 11th century) of the annual festivals in pre-Sasanid, Sasanid, and Islamic periods, and those among his contemporary Sogdians and Khorezmians, who are the predecessors of the modern Tadjiks and Uzbeks. Al Biruni's description is rich in interesting bits of information, as a result of which we can easily imagine the atmosphere of the seasonal celebrations (the vividness, for instance, of the crowded bazaar opened at these festivals). From Al Biruni and Lobacheva's interpretive discussion we learn that *Nauruz* (New Year) was celebrated in spring around the vernal equinox as an agricultural ritual to pray for fertility during the following year. This celebration symbolizes the profound idea, common among farmers, of the death and revival of nature. Nature's revival, and consequently, the beginning of farmers' work, was also celebrated with a flower festival known as the "festival of red flowers." Sukhareva suggests that these "red flowers" might have been either tulips or poppies. She also points out that at these festivals youths and maidens enjoyed more freedom than they usually had, so it provided them with a chance to find a partner for life.

*Nauruz* has also been a big festival for the Kazakhs who engaged in mixed husbandry and cattle breeding. Introducing and analyzing material from ethnography and ritual songs, Karmysheva argues that the agriculture of the Kazakhs has roots in common with that of other farming groups of Central Asia. Mukhiddinov points out that some ethnic groups of the western Pamirs present another variation of indigenous ideology under Islam, i.e., "Ismailism." He then describes concepts original to them, and their cult of the heavenly constellations and the Sun that constitute the calendar by year and day. He also pays special attention to how the people of the Pamirs celebrate "Navruz," the New Year.

The remaining four articles take up various instances of religious syncretism. Basilov, who has been working intensively on shamanism in Central Asia, introduces

new information on the Gioklen shamans, the *porkhan*. He characterizes their shamanism as being of a "Turkic-type," although it has "Iranian-type" elements that are interwoven with ancient indigenous strands. The paper by Taizhanov and Ismailov deals with shamanism and the demonology of the Karamurts, an ethnic group of the Uzbeks. According to a legend, Karamurt had seven daughters (*etti momo*) who appeared to be the great-grandmothers of people in a village that once bore the name of Etti Momo. The two authors tell that these *momo* have been taken into the demonology to serve as spirits for priests, medicine men, midwives, and shamans of different categories. It is noteworthy also that shamans of the *bakshi* category likewise appeared as Islamic mendicants. Karmysheva describes with much ethnographic detail the funeral mourning ritual of the Uzbeks. Referring particularly to funerals of the aged and the serving of a ritual soup with seven internal organs from a ram, she tries to show that there was a widespread belief that the soul of the sacrificed ram accompanied the deceased to the other world (relics of which belief are found also among the Tadjiks and others, including the modern Zoroastrians of Iran). She thinks that the complicated funeral mourning ritual with the cult of the sheep derives from ancient agricultural rituals. Vasil'eva shows how children used to be guarded from every evil with ornaments that are still thought to retain their original magical function as charms or amulets. One thing such ornaments are thought to ward off is the effects of the evil eye, the fear of which is quite strong among the Turkmens.

The most distinctive characteristic of the farmers in the region is belief in "Dikanbaba," a guardian of agriculture who might be a god that dies and revives as nature does. This is one of the persistent themes throughout the book.

We can highly appreciate all the articles in this book, which is the second publication on the same theme, following upon the collection "Pre-Islamic Beliefs and Rituals in Central Asia" (Moscow, 1975). Each article enriches us with fundamental information about various strands of the religious life of Central Asians, reminding us of those polychrome carpets with numerous nuances, which require long hours of careful work. At the same time the articles are complementary in theme and contents, so that this rather small book is like a treasure trove of data about another Islamic world, one that is different from those of the Near East or South Asia. Moreover, for a Japanese reader the book is of particular interest because much in this volume reminds us of customs and beliefs we are familiar with. We wonder whether they are derived from the common spring of Buddhism. And I am sure that every reader would find in the descriptions something common to his or her own culture and would feel affinity with the Central Asians. Too bad we cannot pass through a time-tunnel to meet with them and discuss our findings!

Shinko OGIHARA  
Shonan Kokusai Women's Junior College  
Fujisawa, Kanagawa, Japan

#### TIBET

KASCHEWSKY, RUDOLF and PEMA TSERING, editors and translators. *Die Eroberung der Burg von Sum-Pa. Aus dem tibetischen Gesar Epos* [The capture of the fortress of Sum-Pa. From the Tibetan Gesar epic]. Asiatische Forschungen Band 94. Band I: Übersetzung und Indices, x+173 pages. Band II: Faksimiles, xiii+206 pages, including 184 facsimile plates. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987. Cloth DM168.— (the set), ISBN 3-447-02519-0; ISSN 0571-320X. (In German)