

strands of pre-Buddhist folk religion, of shamanism, and of later Buddhism (Lamaism). This procedure allows him to show how, for example, Lamaism has readapted earlier beliefs and cults to its own religious world.

The collection will no doubt be useful to students of Mongol and also Asian folk religion and folk literature. It provides further material and analyses to add to topics treated in earlier publications, such as his treatise on Mongol (folk) religion (HEISSIG 1970). Since all the essays are mechanically reproduced, no attempt has been made to eliminate typos. This is unfortunate, because in some cases they make understanding of the text difficult, especially for those not fluent in German.

REFERENCE CITED:

HEISSIG, Walther

- 1970 Die Religionen der Mongolei. In *Die Religionen Tibets und der Mongolei*, eds. Giuseppe Tucci, Walther Heissig. Stuttgart: W Kohlhammer Verlag.

Peter KNECHT

HEISSIG WALTHER. *Motiv und Wirklichkeit. Gesammelte Aufsätze.*

Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1993. xii + 253 pages. Tables, illustrations. Paper DM78.—; ISBN 3-447-03432-7. (In German and English)

For many years it has been the goal of Heissig's research not simply to isolate some of the core motifs in Mongol epic poetry and the tradition of Gesar Khan but also to throw light on their use by the bards, and to trace the history of their diffusion and variegated ways of contamination in Mongol oral literature. Some of his major works represent the accumulated fruit of this effort. With the present volume, however, we are given the opportunity to have a look, so to say, into his workshop. Heissig has repeatedly stressed the need for what he called "monographic research" concerning particular motifs and poetic formulas in order to be able to gauge their importance and appreciate their role in oral tradition and the ways of their distribution. The present collection brings together some of his own attempts at such research, e.g., his analysis of the significance of the thumb or of sworn brotherhood among heroes, to mention just a few examples.

Considering the twenty essays assembled in this volume, I think that its title can be read as expressing two somewhat different meanings. One is found in Heissig's definition of a motif as the "poetical presentation of generalized events" (1). Motifs are not pieces realistically describing real events. They are poetic and formulaic means of expression, but they have their roots in *Wirklichkeit*, i.e., in "real facts of rather ancient times" (1). If, for example, the thumb of a hero is the place where his soul is located, this may be seen, according to Heissig, as reflecting the fact that thumbs were indispensable for archers to hold the bow as well as to set the arrow. To have or not to have a thumb was a matter of life and death for the hero. Or when the hero in his fight with a (female) monster (*mangus*) does not stop with killing the monster but also cuts up its belly to extract and annihilate its still unborn fetus, this may reflect such real events as the elimination of whole enemy populations, as happened, for example, in the times of Chinghis Khan. This approach allows Heissig to penetrate to the roots of poetic creativity in real life, but it also seems to have certain limitations. When Heissig discusses parallels between the image of *Hexen* (witches) in Europe and that of demonic females in Mongol stories, he says that the image of the latter may have been influenced by shamanism. As support for this view he argues that, for one thing, the demon

obstructs the shaman's (i.e., the hero's) journey to the otherworld. At the same time he says that the staff the female demon carries may be associated with the shaman staff that becomes the shaman's mount for the journey to the otherworld. Here, I think, one would like to know how the very same character, the female demon, can be both the obstacle or enemy of the shaman and yet carry one of the shaman's essential symbols; this, it seems to me, would amount to being a demon and a shaman at the same time. Also, the shaman he mentions here is a female shaman. In fact, Heissig appears to mention only female shamans, but one wonders whether there were in fact only female shamans among the Mongols, and, if male shamans also existed, how much significance an interpretation like the one mentioned above would really carry.

Many of the essays address more literary questions, such as the formulation and transmission of motifs. This would be the title's other meaning, namely the *Wirklichkeit* of the motifs in the sense of their "real life." Heissig's familiarity with a vast amount of epics and stories allows him to trace the life and vicissitudes of certain motifs as well as the routes of their transmission by particular singers, or their non-Mongol origins and later characteristically Mongol transformations. As Heissig admits himself, however, although it may be possible to point to parallels with motifs even in Europe, it is still too early to give a convincing explanation for such parallels.

The essays were written for various occasions over a period of fifteen years (1977–1992). Some of the findings they present may therefore have been superseded by later publications. But it must be said that Heissig generally bases his pronouncements on the material available to him at the time, even if some of his suggestions may not be readily accepted. Even so, his interpretations open vistas that a purely literary and culture-immanent interpretation would not be able to offer. In this sense the volume offers a good deal of stimulation.

All essays are simply reproduced in their original form and appear to be loosely organized according to topics discussed. No cross references are added; this makes reading somewhat awkward, because for related studies the reader is referred to the original place of publication even when the essay in question is in fact included in the same volume. Since the purpose of assembling these studies in one volume was to make them easy to access, the inclusion of cross references would have made this useful and interesting volume more user-friendly.

Peter KNECITT

HUMPHREY, CAROLINE and URGUNGE ONON. *Shamans and Elders: Experience, Knowledge, and Power among the Daur Mongols*. Oxford Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. xiv + 396 pages. Maps, photographs, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$80.00; ISBN 0-19-827941-8. Paper US\$24.95; ISBN 0-19-828068-8.

This book is about the shamanism of the Daur, a Mongol people of northeast China, who some scholars believe are descendants of the Qidan (Khitan), who established the Liao kingdom in what is now northeast China around the tenth century. Humphrey's basic source materials are oral recollections of Urgunge Onon, a Daur intellectual now living in England who left his homeland in the late 1940s under the wing of Owen Lattimore. Urgunge's recollections are discussed within a careful web of texts drawn from written and oral source materials on the Altaic-speaking peoples of northern Asia. Employing theoretical tools from anthropology, cultural studies, and literary criticism, the author engages the material on many levels: as an anthropologist collaborating with an informant who is both a challenging