
BOOK REVIEWS

Der Fuchs in Kultur, Religion und Folklore Zentral- und Ostasiens. Teil I. Herausgegeben von Hartmut Walravens. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2001, X, 203 pp.

There has always been a great interest in how different animals are represented in folk literature and folk beliefs. The fox is one of the widespread characters of folk tales all over the world. In an Introduction (pp. IV—X), Hartmut Walravens, the editor of the volume, goes so far as to use the word “foxlore” to show how rich materials on the fox are and how vast the field of research is. He says that the idea of such a study first visited him at the International Congress of Orientalists in 1997. The result is a two-volume edition (the second volume is now in print), which covers different regions and different approaches to the theme.

The book under review is a collection of articles written by nine authors who examine the role of the fox in Mongolian, Tuvian, Turkic and Manchurian cultures. The second volume is devoted to materials from East Asia. Being gathered under one cover, the articles present, in effect, a single multifaceted view of the fox, showing a lot of common and many special features of the treating of this character in different cultures.

The bibliography of the topic is given by Hartmut Walravens (Berlin) in his “Der Fuchs in Zentral- und Ostasien — und anderwärts. Eine Auswahlbibliographie” (pp. 1—17). The bibliography includes not only works on folklore, literature, art, etc., but also some writings on biology, fox-hunting and fox-breeding, as well as books for children.

“Marginalien zur Fuchsgestalt in der mongolischen Überlieferung” (pp. 17—34) by Walter Heissig (Rheinböllen) shows how three existing fox images appear in folk literature. The first is the image of a cunning creature that not only plays tricks on other animals and people but even on the chief deity Hormusta. The second is the image of a beautiful lady whom the fox can transform into. It is possible, but not proved yet, that this character undergone Chinese influence as early as the Tang period. The fact that the fox is an object of incense offering seems to prove that. The existence of such an offering may reflect the mode of life of the Mongols as hunters. In his article, the author presents a Tibetan text dealing with incense offerings to the fox. A facsimile of the text, which is probably a translation from Mongolian, is also given (pp. 23—34).

Agnes Birtalan's (Budapest) “A survey of the fox in Mongolian folklore and folk belief” (pp. 35—88) is partly based on fieldwork materials collected by the author during

her expedition to Western Mongolia. In an Appendix (pp. 52—88), the author provides a phonetic transcription of five original tales about the fox. The author states that in Mongolian folklore the fox appears to fulfill seven functions, mostly similar to those in world folklore. The fox may be an ill omen, tabooed animal, messenger of the underworld, astral phenomenon, transforming fox-fairy, tricker, and amulet. Ágnes Birtalan clarifies and illustrates each of these roles by valuable folklore material. The author points to the existence of two layers in fox-beliefs: the first layer (the original one) demonstrates the fox as an ill omen for hunters and travellers, and the second (of later origin) is linked with the fox's ability to transform.

The article entitled “Incense offering of the fox in Oirat script” (pp. 59—73) by J. Coloo (Ulan Bator) is a publication of an Oirat manuscript from the collection of the Linguistic Institute of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. After presenting some observations on the collection of Mongolian and Oirat manuscripts kept at the Institute, as well as their outstanding collectors and researchers, the author provides information about the manuscript. It bears the title *Ünegeñ-ü sang sudur orosibai*. The text representing “a sutra of folk religion”, as J. Coloo puts it, is given in English translation (by Alice Sárközi). A full transliteration of the text is also given (pp. 63—72). The author explains how this text was used during the purification ceremonies. This publication introduces into scholarly circulation one more *ünegeñ-ü sang* manuscript, making it accessible to specialists.

An article “An incense offering of the fox” (pp. 75—148) by Alice Sárközi (Budapest) and Aleksei Sazykin (St. Petersburg) is devoted to three other *ünegeñ-ü sang* manuscripts (two of them have not been known hitherto). The three manuscripts belong to the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences). The texts present new variants unknown hitherto. The publication includes a facsimile, transcription (by A. Sazykin) and a commented English translation of all the three manuscripts. A comparative Table of these texts is also given modelled after the table that was carried out earlier by Prof. Heissig for other texts of the *ünegeñ-ü sang* genre. The Table provided in the article is very helpful to the comparison of all the existing versions. The article also contains a facsimile of the texts. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this article is a valuable contribution to the study of the *ünegeñ-ü sang* texts as a whole.

Erica Taube (Leipzig) in her “Der Fuchs. Von der altai-twinischen Tradition zum zentralasiatisch-sibirischen Kon-