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Front cover:

"The story of the Dragon island (*jaẓīrat al-tinnīn*)", miniature from '*Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt* by Zakarīyā' b. Muḥammad b. Mahmūd al-Qazwīnī (ca. 1203–1282), manuscript D 370 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, 988/1580, Baghdad school, fol. 64 a.

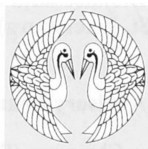
Back cover:

Plate 1. "The giant snake or dragon (*thu'bhān*)", miniature in the same manuscript, fol. 219 a.

Plate 2. "The cat with the wings of a bat, Island of Java (*jaẓīrat al-zābih*) dweller", miniature in the same manuscript, fol. 60 a.

Plate 3. "The old Jew" (*al-shaykh al-yahūdī*)", miniature in the same manuscript, fol. 71 a.

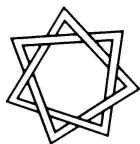
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BOOK REVIEWS

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, trickster, and amulet. Agnes 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 *Ünege-ü sang sudur orosibai*. The text representing “a sutra of folk religion”, as J. Coloo puts it, is given in English translation (by Alice Šárközi). 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 *ünege-ü sang* manuscript, making it accessible to specialists.

An article “An incense offering of the fox” (pp. 75—148) by Alice Šárközi (Budapest) and Aleksei Sazykin (St. Petersburg) is devoted to three other *ünege-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 *ünege-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 *ünege-ü sang* texts as a whole.

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

text" (pp. 149—178) examines the fox as this animal appears in ethnological material, in folk tales, and myths. She also considers the fox as an object of offerings. The author's profound study, based on rich Siberian and Central Asian materials, enables the author to make an interesting conclusion: originally, the fox and the hedgehog may have been equally revered by the peoples of Siberia. Of those two the fox, however, gradually became an embodiment of evil forces.

"The fox in Turkic proverbs" (pp. 179—186) by Claudia Römer (Vienna) starts with the author's preliminary observations concerning the types of proverbs and their significance as a suitable source for the study of the fox's role in Turkic folk culture. The proverbs show the fox a sly, flattering, and clever animal. In the proverbs, the fox is often compared to other animals, such as lions, dogs, and wolves. Each of twenty-four proverbs the author cites is supplied with commentaries and notes on the way the fox functions within the world of Turkic folk culture and outside it. The material collected by Claudia Römer shows how intricate the ways of the subject's migration were.

The contribution of Käthe Uray-Köhalmi (Budapest) — "Der Fuchs und seine Doppelgänger in der Folklore der tungusischen Völker" (pp. 187—196) — specifies the role of the fox in the folklore of the Tungus who believe the fox to be firstly a trickster. (In mythology the fox is, however, the shaman's wise assistant.) The author divides all fox-stories into three groups depending on who the victim of the fox's tricks is and gives a synopsis of some stories. The

author points out that sometimes in Tungus folklore other animals, for example, a sabre or birds like an owl, appear to be cleverer than the fox, and the latter is shown not the only animal capable to deceive. This detailed article will be helpful to all those engaged in the studies on Manchu folklore in general.

In his article "The fox in Sibe-Manchu culture" (pp. 197—203), Giovanni Sary (Venice) briefly considers the content and gives a transcription of two Sibe folk tales. The first bears the title *Sibe niyalma ainu dobe be juktembi?* ("Why do the Sibe offer sacrifices to the fox?"). The second is with no title. Both were borrowed by the author from a collection of Sibe folk tales published in eleven-volume edition entitled *Sibe uksurai irgen siden jube* ("Folk Tales of the Sibe People") in Sibe in Urumči between 1984 and 1992. The tales contain an explanation of "the position the fox occupied in the supernatural world of ancient Sibe society" (p. 199). They also explain why the fox is considered a bad omen by the Sibe. Being published in Sibe these tales would be hardly available for scholars but for this valuable contribution of Prof. Giovanni Sary. The article contains a transliteration of both folk tales (pp. 199—203).

To sum up, the volume under review is an important and valuable contribution to the comparative study of Central Asia folklore.

N. Yakhontova