

NOTICES OF BOOKS

Textes Oraux Ordos, by Antoine Mostaert, C.I.C.M., (*Monumenta Serica*, Monograph Series No. 1), Peking 1937, LXX, 768 pp., 4to.

On looking at the five works in seven large volumes, which A. Mostaert has produced during the years 1933-47, one is amazed at the great achievement of this savant, whose researches have been carried out at the same time as his missionary work.

The Ordos Texts handed down by oral tradition fill one large quarto volume. The introduction acquaints us with the home and history of the tribes concerned: the old Ho-t'ao land of the Hoangho loop, the region between the river loop west of Kuku Hoto (*kuei-hua*) as far south as the Wall, formerly belonging to the Tangut Empire Si-Hia, occupied in the fourteenth century by the Mongols, who called themselves Ordos, as the guardians of the eight white youtas, which were the depositories of the relics (weapons, etc.) of the world conqueror Chingiz Khan. There are seven banners of the Ordos, namely the Wang, Dalat, Junggar, Otok, Khanggin, Ušin, and Jasak. This is the so-called covenant of the Great Temple, *yeke joo yin cigulga*. The families of the actual "guardians" stand in a class of their own as "*darhat*", "tax-free". With the advance of Chinese colonisation the Ordos Mongolians were forced back from the river bank into the interior of the country. Their language, as the author explains, has remained remarkably homogenous, as they were segregated by the river. One may therefore expect to find many ancient elements in it. In the tribes who now live mixed with the Chinese (*hun-t'ung chu*), much linguistic property has, of course, been taken from the Chinese.

The collection of texts is preceded by a most remarkable compendium of the morphology of the dialect, which pays particular regard to the formation of the plural. These plural forms are very abundant and have many peculiarities of their own, which have been retained from the old language but which have disappeared in the classical language of Buddhism and from the official style such as the plural with *-n*, *gahan* from *gahai* "pig", or a double plural *yamatut* from *yamutan* "Yamen people". Cf. in the "Secret History" the plurals *Honghotan* and *Honghotat* and the accumulation: *kitai* "the Chinese", Pl. *kitan*, *kitat*, *kita-dut*. Then the plural with *-ucin*, *hurim-ucin* "participant in a festival", cf. in the "Secret History" *nuntu'ucin*, "Camp organiser", *gore'ulucin* "hunter". There are also several peculiarities in verbs, e.g., the dubitative (Conjunctivus metuendi) with *-ujai*, *-ujin* which has its equivalent in the "Secret History" in: *ko'un alja'ujai* "if the son only has no difficulties", § 174 and *haran baunemsiye'ujai* "if the people considered it true", § 169. Everywhere interesting comments are found, and there are few parts of this section which do not throw some light even on the more ancient literary language. A list of 170 suffixes ends this outline and is followed by 607 pages with the

collection of texts. This collection is of great linguistic value. Not only is it the best conceivable preparation for a stay in the Ordos Land and the best introduction for the practical use of the local tongue and the understanding of tribal customs. These texts in the vulgar tongue are also of the greatest significance for those who read the literature (of the language). The Mongolian written language in the sacred texts and in the official style is based on the translation from the Tibetan of the Canon, and is a language of convention in its vocabulary, grammar, syntax and idiom. So that in it we can expect to find little of indigenous character. In the secular chronicles and historical records, which for the most part have been preserved only in manuscript form and which are only gradually becoming available in print, the position is already a different one. These are nearer to the common speech and contain many idioms and peculiarities which have not been incorporated in the sacred and official language, and only become understandable by a knowledge of the dialects. This is true chiefly for the old pre-Buddhistic literature, of which we now possess the largest work in the "Secret History". It is to be expected that the Ordos texts will provide us with much important material for the understanding of this work, such as explanations and information which we look for in vain in dictionaries. First of all from the verses and sayings in Part II, but also from the legends and fables, which are, of course, partly based on ancient oral tradition.

The attached Ordos-French Glossary on pp. 605-765 contains more than 6500 words. With the help of this Glossary and the grammatical compendium one should apparently be able to work through the texts without great difficulty. But experience has shown that it is not so, but rather that anyone who has only read the classical literature and is unacquainted with dialectal research will find the task a very toilsome one. Apart from this, phonetically written texts are not easy to read for anyone who is accustomed to the clear, uniform, and conventional writing and transcription of the written language. Thus for a long time the need has been felt of an aid in the form of a translation of the material. This is offered to us in the second volume under the title

Folklore Ordos (Traduction des Textes Oraux) (Monumenta Serica, Monograph Series No. VI) Peking 1947, 605 pp.

In this volume it is made possible not only for the Mongolian philologist to work through all the abundant material in the previously mentioned work, but the student of folklore and popular tradition too is offered an abundance of material from a region which was hitherto practically inaccessible. Mongolia is in itself certainly not a terra incognita. It has been visited by many travellers and there are many valuable books—we need only think of the works by Prževalski—which describe for us the land and its people, the customs of the inhabitants and also give us here and there songs and popular traditions, partly also from translations from the Russian, as most of the works are Russian, and thus bring the matter nearer to us Western Europeans. We are always glad to consult the old classic works of Pallas and Bergmann which are still of value to-day, viz., "Collection of historical information about Mongolian populations" (1776-1802) and "Nomadic excursions among the Kalmuks". But the Ordos land has not been much touched by travellers, and, of course, anyone who is not acquainted with the local tongue does not see nearly as much nor

as accurately as a resident who is acquainted with the language. Precisely because of the rapidly progressing Sinisation of the region, this collection is of the greatest value. The book contains in Part I (Prose): Narratives, *i.e.*, the retelling of old Mongolian hero legends, fairy-tales and anecdotes, some of them also of Indian, Tibetan and Chinese origin, in all 66 items which are partly of considerable length.

Part II contains 168 songs, and, in addition, riddles, verses, jokes, blessings and curses, proverbs, etc. Whilst Part I in its narrative language provides reading matter for the student of dialects as well as the student of mythology, the real mine of information for the ethnologist is Part II, with its verses and magic incantations. It would be a useful task to divide this material up according to subject-matter. Likewise a general encyclopedic index of the texts would produce excellent fruits, the names of animals and plants, household and utensils, etc. would provide a further field of work for future students of this branch.

E. HAENISCH

(Translated from the German MS.) *The Editor*

Dictionnaire Ordos by Antoine Mostaert, C.I.C.M., (*Monumenta Serica*. Monograph Series No. V) Peking 1941-1944, 951 pp., 4to., 3 vols.

In Mongol studies lexicography had remained a long way behind. Since the dictionaries of Schmidt and Kovalevski, 1835 and 1844-49, half a century elapsed before the next one, the large and valuable Mongolian-Russian Lexicon by Golstunski, 1893-96. This is considered as the best one, but in practice it is hard to obtain, and being printed lithographically it is not easy to read, and the fact that it is written in Russian renders its use by Western Europeans difficult. Thus the old dictionaries with French or German attached to the Russian are still used to-day, and twenty years ago Kovaleski's three-volume work was reprinted photographically in Peking. As far as contents go the large and well printed Japanese dictionary which appeared a little later does not carry us much beyond Kovalevski's. We hear that in Russia, work has been going on for some time on the preparation of a new comprehensive dictionary which will at all events contain all the material in the individual Russian works and we hope also the Phagspa inscriptions, the old documents, the Secret History, the foreign, Arabic and Chinese glossaries and the *Hua-I ih-yü*, and last, but not least, the dialectal dictionaries. But if this too is only compiled in the Russian language, it too can only expect to be used by a restricted number of people outside Russia. Among the most important basic documents it will have to count the two dialectal dictionaries of Ramstedt, *Kalmükisch-Deutsch*, 1935, and the present work by Mostaert, *Ordos-French*, which we consider as the century's greatest publications in the field of Mongolian studies.

Mostaert's Dictionary belongs to the aforesaid works by the same author, *Textes Oraux Ordos* and *Folklore Ordos*. The dialect dealt with is that of the tribes of the covenant of the Great Temple, the Wang, Jungar, Dalat, Khangin, Otok, Üšin and Jasak in the Hoangho-Loop. With more than twenty thousand words the work offers uncommon linguistic wealth and goes far beyond the texts, as it rather contains everything that the author has collected and elaborated during a stay of many years in the

country and during further studies in Peking. The specialist in Mongolian dialects will prepare his own comparative lists and refer to Ramstedt's Kalmuk Dictionary and the dialectal dictionaries of the Southern and Eastern Mongolian dialects, in so far as they exist, and also to the classical written language and the more ancient monuments in Uigur, Chinese and Tibetan (Phagspa) script, in order to investigate, in space and time, the development of the words with respect of phonetics and meaning, *e.g.*: Man / written language *kümün* / Chin. / *gu'un* / Khalkha *hümüng*, *hüng* / Southern Mongolian (Rudnev) *hun* / Kalm. *kümn*, *kün* / Ordos *kün*; Son / written language: *köbegün* / Chin. ko'un / Khalkha *hüwüng*, *hü* / South. Mong. *hu* / Kalm. *köwün* / Ordos *k'ü*. (In this list a uniform writing has been used as the various phonetic systems are difficult to reproduce.) It should be noted that most of the words are provided with numerous examples of their use. The word *ed* "thing, property, merchandise, possession, chattels" has 11 examples, *kerek* "usefulness, official business, law suit, evil thing, lawlessness, blameworthy thing" has 12 applications, *k'i* "wind, air, gas, an indisposition, interval, empty space" has 24 examples. The abundance of these examples of usage gives particular value to the work. Reading through it one will again and again come across something which clears up vague points in previous readings of literature. A welcome feature is that at the end of each article the literary language form of the verbum simplex is given in brackets; because, like the texts, the dictionary is written phonetically. So that there is no great difficulty in reading up the examples: outside the sphere of dialectal studies it is an aid for those who study Mongolian only.

Volume II, the Register, contains four indexes. The first gives all the words in the written language and Old Mongolian which are shown in the dialect in the dictionary with reference to the place where they appear. In this list, from the known literary language one can find the form of the word in the dialect. From Part II, the French-Mongolian (Ordos) Index, one will find in the reference to place not only the corresponding Ordos word, but also the places in which the term is included under other catchwords. Part III is a list according to subject-matter, ethnographical and folklore. This contains more than one thousand catchwords, it is a very necessary complement to the volume of texts as it makes available much extra material for the student of folklore. From a catchword such as *khada* "present-cloth" or *mariage* he can read up the explanations in the dictionary and will find much information complementary to that given in the volume on Folklore about subjects for which he requires further information. Most important is also Part IV, the list of place names. Much more could, of course, be said about this work. In order really to do justice to its significance, is a task which only those who are sufficiently conversant with dialectal studies can undertake; and their number is very small. But a work such as this one is meant to increase their number, to promote this branch of study, to stimulate further investigation in such fields as the Southern and Eastern Mongolian dialects.

That is a task for the younger generation who are now equipped with the best and most reliable of aids. May they take an example from the achievement and method of the author!

E. HAENISCH

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