

Review: [untitled]
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Reviewed work(s): The Secret History of The Mongols, for The First Time Done Into English Out of The Original Tongue, and Provided With an Exegetical Commentary by Francis Woodman Cleaves
Source: *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2, (Dec., 1984), pp. 587-590
Published by: Harvard-Yenching Institute
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2719044
Accessed: 20/08/2008 09:34

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The Secret History of the Mongols, For the First Time Done into English out of the Original Tongue, and Provided with an Exegetical Commentary *by Francis Woodman Cleaves.* Volume 1 (Translation). Harvard-Yenching Institute. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982. Pp. lxv +277. $20.00.

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This work by Professor Francis Woodman Cleaves, who is famous for his many learned editions and his translations of Mongol-Chinese stone inscriptions and documents from the Yüan period, is the first English translation of one of the oldest literary documents of the Mongols. It therefore should be hailed and welcomed. But some reservations cannot be avoided. Let it be made clear, however, that these reservations do not apply to the scholarly standard of Professor Cleaves's work but to its incomplete presentation. Only the first volume has been published; the "Exegetical Commentary" announced in the subtitle and the continuation of the "Introduction," publication of which in a subsequent volume is promised on page lxv, are both as yet unseen. The lack of these important parts make a review of the work practically impossible at present: how can one evaluate the work without access to the translator's commentary on many criticial passages?

The *Secret History* is a record of the earliest Mongol history, covering the formation of the empire of Činggis Khan as the people of the thirteenth century witnessed it. Many parts still preserve passages of alliterating poetry. The language of the *Secret History* is antique, full of metaphorical expressions. The original wording of this old text has been preserved in a Chinese transcription only, the *Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih*, from which a number of scholars have attempted to reconstruct the original Mongol version. Their reconstructed readings can be checked in part against a Mongol chronicle of the seventeenth century, which has preserved the greater part of the *Secret History* (bLo·bzaṅ bsTaṅ·'jin, *Altan Tobči: A Brief History of the Mongols*, ed. Francis Woodman Cleaves, Scripta Mongolia 1 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952]). The intricate story of the preservation of the text, forming in itself nearly a secret history of the *Secret History*, covers the first sixty-five pages of the introduction in Professor Cleaves's volume.

It is clear that a work of such weight, and one which is half epic and half history in epic condensation, poses a number of difficult problems of philological, historical, and literary-historical, as well as of ethnological dimensions. This makes an exegetical commentary indispensable, as the author was well aware. The footnotes which accompany the translation cannot fulfill this task. There is no doubt about the quality of a translation by such a conscientious scholar as Professor Cleaves, who is known worldwide and admired for his precise knowledge of early Mongolian. On many questions he follows the profound advice of the celebrated Belgian Mongolist, the late A. Mostaert, who had himself devoted a series of articles to such problems (collected in A. Mostaert, *Sur quelques passages de l'Histoire secrète des Mongols*, [Cambridge: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1953; rpt. from *HJAS 13–15*]).

The importance of the *Secret History* and its proper translation for gaining some insight into the otherwise rather obscure period of the initial phase of the Mongol empire and into the Mongols' behaviour and thought cannot be stressed often enought. The epic and condensed style of the *Secret History* lives into recent times in the epic poetry of the Mongols, as can be shown by some passages in Cleaves's translation:

In §254, the phrase *Körisütei etügen körbejü büle*, being part of a poetic passage, has been translated by E. Haenisch (*Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen* [Leipzig, 1941], page 131) as "Die Erde mit ihrer Rinde hat sich gewendet," while the Russian scholar S. A. Kozin (*Sokrovennoe skazanie* [Moskva-Leningrad, 1941], page 185) translated the passage as: "the whole surface of the earth trembled" (see A. Mostaert, *Sur quelques passages*, page 189). The exact meaning of the verb *körbe* is "to tumble from one side to another, to somersault." Cleaves (page 191) "The earth with crust/Was turning backward and forward" therefore is the most satisfactory. This phrase has lived on in a rather recent specimen of the orally transmitted Mongol epic *Altan yalayuu küü*, noted down in 1958 in the Ordos. Here is appears as *körösütü delekei körbübe* "the crusty world tumbled from one side to the other."

In §97 and 211, the term *bulugan nelke* is translated by Cleaves (pp. 33, 153) in agreement with E. Haenisch ("Windeltuch aus Zobelfell," pp. 23, 102) as "swaddling clothes of sable," This

passage testifies that this was the high age of using fur for swaddling small children. In popular poetry this appears as the motif of placing newborns in furs and fleeces—for example, in recent epics of the Torghot, Khalkha and Bargha-Mongols. These examples must suffice here.

The translation by Cleaves of the alliterating passages in the *Secret History* into alliterative English is notable for it emphasizes the fact that this work was primarily a collection of songs. There is, however, no doubt that the translation as a whole would have gained in clarity and lucidity if rendered in contemporary English instead of the artificially old English employed for the entire translation. Professor Cleaves has here fallen prey to an antiquated mode of thought.

All this should not prevent us from acknowledging the importance of this book, unfortunately still incomplete. Professor Cleaves has, for reasons all his own, and not to be questioned by anyone, withheld publication of this long-awaited book for more than twenty years. During this period some translations in languages other than English have been published, of which the reconstruction of the Mongol text by Louis (Lajos) Ligeti (*Histoire Secrète des Mongols*, Monumenta Linguae Mongolicae Collecta 1 [Budapest, 1971]; *Histoire Secrète des Mongols, Texte en Écriture ouigure incorporé dans la chronique Altan tobči de Blo-bzaṅ bstaṅ- 'jin*, Monumenta Linguae Mongolicae Collecta 6 [Budapest, 1974]) and his Hungarian translation (*A Mongolok titkos története* [Budapest, 1962]) are important contributions to the final understanding of this text. That another English translation of the *Secret History* is in preparation in Australia by Professor Igor de Rachewiltz, has been known since the first installment was published in 1971 (*Papers on Far Eastern History* 4, Canberra, 1971). The number of papers by Western and Asian scholars and in particular by Mongol scholars has increased, many of them commenting on the meaning of certain words and passages of the *Secret History*. Yet volume one of the work by Professor Cleaves lacks a bibliography.

This book has been published too late, but it had to be published to document one phase of the scholarly occupation with one of the oldest documents of Mongolian literature. Within this development, not yet ended, the book by Professor Cleaves has its own

value which is not to be missed and for which he as well as his publishers are to be thanked. But to do Professor Cleaves full justice, the second volume with the commentary and the second part of the introduction should be published as soon as possible. It will permit a thorough discussion. We have stated enough reasons for looking forward to such publication within the next few years. A work like this cannot be left a torso—or, if the unpublished parts are no longer available, this has to be made known.

A Tale of Eleventh-Century Japan: Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari, Introduction and Translation *by Thomas H. Rohlich.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983. Pp. xi +247. $30.

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Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari is a Heian literary tale composed some time after the *Tale of Genji*, probably in the late eleventh century, perhaps—or perhaps not—by the author of the *Sarashina nikki*. The plot is the busy mixture of contrivance, sentiment, and titillation common, it seems, to Heian literary narrative of the second order; the special features here are the device of advancing the story through the death and reincarnation overseas of certain principal characters (an exceptionally literal-minded interpretation of Buddhist ideas about rebirth), the prominence of dreams (Rohlich believes that the manner in which they are "woven into the narrative [indicates] a sophistication of narrative technique that is often overlooked," page 41), and the sojourn of the hero in China in the first of the five extant chapters. The rebirths in *Hamamatsu* provided inspiration for Mishima Yukio's tetralogy; whether that is a recommendation depends on the reader. The Chinese passages are set in an imaginary place reminiscent in part of the enchanted forest of Arthurian romance, and in part like nothing so much as the Japan of other Heian fiction. The Chinese personages depicted are quite like their Japanese counterparts; they show their Chineseness by admiring the Japanese hero extravagantly and thinking how splendid must be the land from which he comes.