**Review: [Untitled]**

Reviewed Work(s):

*The Secret History of the Mongols. The Origin of Chingis Khan. (Expanded Edition)* by Francis Woodman Cleaves; Paul Kahn

G. Kara

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U.S. support for resistance activities. After being sent to the U.S. for further studies he astounded those who knew him by returning to the PRC in 1964. More Pangloss than Pollyanna, Tashi Tsering was clearly hoping for the best. But upon arriving in China he became an object of intense suspicion, and was allowed only a few months in 1966–67 for a short visit to Lhasa (where incredulous friends asked how he could have given up life in the U.S. to return). Then, in October 1967, he was arrested and held as a prisoner until 1973. The story of his painful and humiliating imprisonment, bluntly recounted, does grab the reader. For Tashi Tsering the real turning point, after his release, came with the beginnings of liberalization in China in the late 1970s. His fluency in English was a big plus in these changed circumstances and he was ultimately appointed to Tibet University. Among other things, Tashi Tsering was instrumental in laying the foundations for the teaching of English in Tibet. More importantly to him, he has provided the financing and the inspiration for the founding of rural schools in his home area. It is this work which now commands most of his attention.

The details of Tashi Tsering's personal life also make for interesting reading, particularly his relations with his wives and the circumstances of his marriages—not to mention the details of his earlier, youthful family life. What is curious is the near total absence of references to the nationalist activity in Tibet (especially in Lhasa) that has been part of the Tibetan landscape since the late 1980s, and which has markedly colored international perceptions of the state of affairs in Tibet. The only mention is in one sentence: "In addition, the political situation heated up as a series of violent riots occurred in Lhasa in 1987 and 1988" (p. 191). This in a book whose very title speaks of a struggle for modern Tibet! One could well argue that Tashi Tsering's continued residence in Lhasa naturally mandates extreme discretion in the discussion of such matters. But in granting such leeway one ought to at least recognize that the term "Pollyanna" can be applied all across the political spectrum.

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*The Secret History of the Mongols. The Origin of Chingis Khan. (Expanded Edition). An Adaptation of the* Yüan Ch'ao Pi Shih, *Based Primarily on the English Translation by Francis Woodman Cleaves*. By PAUL KAHN. Boston: Cheng and Tsui Company, 1998. xxiv, 201 pp. $19.95 (paper).

*The Secret History* (Mongqolun ni'uča tobča'an), the largest and most significant original Mongol work of the thirteenth century, is a historical narrative, a conglomerate of various epic and lyric genres written in prose and verse with passion and bias. The transmission of its Middle Mongolian text itself is an eventful story; the exact date of the work, its original title, form, and authorship are still debated. The genres embedded in the mainstream narrative of Chinggis Khan's ancestry and his and his heir Emperor Ögödei's deeds are genealogy, anecdotes, myths, epic fragments, dialogues, songs (eulogies, battle song, lament, etc.), malediction, vassals' oaths of loyalty, versified messages, proverbs, army regulations, catalogues of ranks and privileges bestowed, etc. This second, expanded, avatar of the *Secret History* by Paul Kahn benefited from recent information. As in the first edition (1984) here, too, the foundation is F. W. Cleaves's philological translation (ready in the 1950s but published in 1982) which were rendered in the English of the King James Bible. Paul

Kahn has transformed it into a rhythmic proseliterary narrative in American English. Instead of trying to reflect the line-initial and internal alliteration or stave rhyme of the verses embedded in the prose of the original, the adaptor has enhanced and extended the usage of the "thought rhythm" or semantic and structural parallelism of the versified parts wherever the text allows. (Though much more sophisticated than the forms of Mongolian versification, the Welsh type alliteration and internal rhyme of the *cynghanedd* could echo the verses of the *Secret History*.) In Louis Ligeti's Hungarian translation, a poet and translator, Géza Képes, rewrote the poetical passages in Hungarian alliterative form. Naturally this led to addition of some words to, and omission of some others from, Ligeti's faithful prose translation, but in general it helped to mirror the style of the original. Some parts of Temüjin's genealogy (that often reminds me of St. Matthew's first chapter) are abridged in this adaptation, but not the similarly long and dry catalogue of the generals.

In an eighteen-page introduction Kahn gives a brief account of the history of the *History*, the history of its translations, his method of adaptation, the summary of the contents (the Ming Chinese scholars divided the text into twelve or fifteen books; here the narrative is given in eight parts), the historical and geographical background, the social and cultural settings, the laconic recapitulation of Chinggis Khan's and his first successor's reigns. Four black-and-white photos of Mongol landscapes and two maps illustrate the text.

In addition to the main text which offers no details about Chinggis Khan's death and burial, the reader finds here a long and poetic passage with supernatural elements that retells the end of the Khan's life. It is translated from the Jewel Summary (*Erdeni-yin tobči*), the seventeenth-century Mongolian chronicle of the Ordos prince Sagang the Sage (pp. 182–90 with introduction on pp. 179–81).

The merit of Paul Kahn's literary adaptation lies in its service to the general reader. With almost no footnotes—of which a great many are indispensable for a philological interpretation—and with no brackets or italics marking the words added to make the translation smooth and fluid, Kahn has succeeded, however, in making this treasure of Mongol lore more accessible to the North American public.

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*The Camel's Load in Life and Death: Iconography and Ideology of Chinese Pottery Figures from Han to Tang and Their Relevance to Trade along the Silk Routes*. By ELFRIEDE REGINA KNAUER. Zürich: Akanthus Verlag für Archäologie, 1998.

The study of the Silk Road, once the domain of a handful of scholars working individually, is now emerging as a recognized field of study, one with a large international following and a secure place in the new world history. This is only proper since this complex web of transcontinental commercial and cultural exchange, subsumed under the term "Silk Road," constitutes one of the longest sustained episodes of cross-cultural communication in human history. Of the many recent publications in the field, Knauer's investigation of the Bactrian camel in Chinese art stands out by virtue of its findings and methodology.

She begins with an overview of camels, their domestication and use in long-distance trade, and the artistic response of the Chinese to their nomadic neighbors