

## BOOK REVIEWS

Rolf Husman - Mohan Krischke Ramaswamy (eds.): *Abstracts in German Anthropology* 1-2, Autumn 1980 [229 items] and Spring 1981 [224 items], Göttingen, Edition Herodot.

A group of research workers from the Department of Cultural Anthropology of the Göttingen University took up a task which cannot fail to be acknowledged by the academic community - creation of a new bibliographical periodical within the sphere of human sciences. The reason for this are put forward by Göttingen University specialists in the introduction to the first number of the series: "... Publications appearing in a language like German, which is internationally only in limited use in academic circles, are all too often not given the attention abroad that they deserve. As a consequence of this language barrier, non-German speaking anthropologists tend to neglect the publications of their German-speaking colleagues to a greater extent. This may lead to duplication of research or even to incorrect findings - which has indeed happened more than once... In the hope of rectifying this state of affairs, two anthropologists... devised the plan of establishing a new periodical journal containing English abstracts of all anthropological publications in German or from the German speaking area..." (p. 1).

Individual bibliographical entries are divided according to topics and within these arranged alphabetically according to authors. The bibliography focuses on articles and books on the "science of man" - as indicated by the principal topics:

1. General and multiregional studies (Cultural anthropology, Folklore, Geography, Rural studies, Social studies);
2. Archaeology;
3. Physical Anthropology;
4. Regional studies (African studies, American and Arctic studies, Asian studies, European studies, Oceanic studies);
5. Films.

The final part of the bibliography includes an authors' and subject index, the introduction lists the periodicals surveyed.

The birth of a new bibliographical periodical must be greeted warmly. Its existence will substantially facilitate intercon-

nections among the anthropologists in general. An especially valuable contribution is represented by the inclusion of ethnographic films, a most important - and sometimes rather neglected - source of informations; the authors have not restricted themselves to traditional "printed materials". Thus, the Abstracts in German Anthropology (AGA) represent one of the first specialized bibliographies to provide information on the news in ethnographic cinematography for the students of anthropology.

The creation of a new bibliography, however, is necessarily beset with most diverse problems and stumbling blocks - which is the case of "AGA" as well. If we may judge according to the first two numbers, the periodical represents a selected bibliography - it lists virtually no papers published in the German Democratic Republic (for the sake of an example, let us note "Abhandlungen und Berichte des Staatlichen Museums für Völkerkunde Dresden" or "Jahrbuch des Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig") and in other countries of (East-)Central and Eastern Europe (so far, the authors have covered no more than one periodical from Hungary and another one from Yugoslavia). Another question is whether at least some museum catalogues should not be included into this bibliography as well. Some of these (like those published by Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin or Museum für Völkerkunde Frankfurt am Main and the like) may be quite easily considered ethnographic monographs. Finally, one observes a certain measure of irregularity in the bibliography: in comparing the entries listed in the "Regional studies", a difference between the topics of the articles in the "European studies" and "African - Asian - American - Oceanic studies" sections strikes the eye. "European studies" list a greater proportion of papers on material culture while the other section is dominated by papers taking up social relations, present political and economic situation or general cultural problems. This, of course, is easily understood if one takes into account the difference between "Völkerkunde" (European studies) and "Völkerkunde" (African - American - Asian - Oceanic studies); nevertheless, this disproportionality could perhaps be amended by including papers on material culture of non-European countries.

J. Kandert

Okechukwu Njoku Ihekole: *Biom Folktales*. Jos 1980, ed. by Federal Department of Antiquities — National Museum, 81 pp., 9 illustr.

This collection of 38 fairy tales is a result of the author's three-year research among the Birom as an attempt to save the quickly disappearing Birom oral compositions which die out presently with their narrators or are mixed with compositions of neighbouring tribes (Rukuba, Miango, Irigwe) and with tales of workmen coming to the tin mines on Birom territory.

In the introduction, the author gives a brief outline of the political organization, religion, family life, and subsistence of the Birom; he mentions the theories on Birom origin as well. This is followed by „Short analysis of the content and function of Birom oral literature“ by Rev. Sr. Dr. Marie de Paul Neiers who divides the compositions into the so-called „ya“ stories (1. stories with a hare as principal character, sometimes immoral, 2. moralizing stories) and so-called „ha“ stories (expressing philosophical and religious ideas of the Birom).

The introduction is followed by folktale texts in English translation; among these, animal troubles prevail (21 in all). The individual composition types are intermixed, perhaps in order to make reading easier; the author of the accompanying ink drawings is Mr. Etim Bassey.

„Biom Folktales“ is a welcome addition to a scant group of papers on the tribes of Central Nigeria, representing an important source of evidence on folklore creativity of this region.

J. Kandert

Annemarie Schweeger-Hefel: *Masken und Mythen. Sozialstrukturen der Nyonyosi und Sikomse in Obervolta*. Wien 1980, Verlag A. Schendl, 480 pp., 170 photos, 92 figs. in text (illustration and graphs), 3 maps, 137 ink drawings as appendix.

Annemarie Schweeger-Hefel, long-time member of the staff of the Vienna Museum für Völkerkunde, specialized in the cultures of Upper Volta ethnic groups, has now submitted one of the final results of her fieldwork covering some two decades. In this way, she became thoroughly familiar with the culture and social organization of minor tribes overshadowed by the Mossi nation: Kurumba, Nyonyosi, and Sikomse. All this resulted in a brilliant monography in which the author masterfully solved the methodical problem often discus-

sed by ethnographers: assessing of importance of material culture elements for social organization and spiritual culture of the mentioned ethnic groups by means of analysis of their functions. The author succeeded in harmonizing the „tangible“ and „spiritual“ cultural phenomena in reconstruction and explanation of a unified sociocultural system. It may be said that this book represents a superb list of instructions how to handle and analyze material culture phenomena without being confined within the limits of material culture proper, as is rather common in papers of this kind. Of course, it is true that the phenomenon under investigation — the masks — offered ideal material for the successful solution of this problem to the author. The next thing to stress is that relevant folklore material and data on social organization proper have been employed and processed as well. In this way, the reader sees the masks as an important element of social organization, as a component of a unified cultural and social system of the tribes in question.

The book contains twelve chapters. First of these presents a formal analysis of the masks including their classification from the viewpoint of the users (village or family masks and the like). This chapter is followed by an analysis of orally communicated mythical history of the origin of particular mask types from the viewpoint of their importance, extension, etc. („Herkunft der Maske in der Mythe“). Chapters Three and Four („Die Maskenmotive“ and „Die Maske in der Oraltradition“) constitute a kind of an epilogue to the first part of the book and point to obvious connections between the mask types in use and their decoration and myths elucidating their origins at particular sites. The author notes the exclusive position of smiths as one of the principal groups of mask manufacturers — it is in the preceding paragraph of this book that she envisages closer cultural and historical interdependencies among the Nyonyosi, Sikomse, and the smiths' caste.

This extensive „introduction“ is followed by chapters presenting the Nyonyosi and Sikomse to the reader. First, the author takes up Nyonyosi social organization and culture and sums up the evidence on Nyonyosi history presently available („Nyonyosi“). Then she submits chapters on Nyonyosi-Sikomse interrelations (Chapter six) and Sikomse social organization, culture and history — all this under special consideration of groups of smiths.

„Die Masken der Sikomse“ (Chapter Eight) presents an analysis of the myths of origin of Sikomse masks; readers will find here besides paragraphs on mask manufacture informations concerning the proprietors and users of the masks. The results of analysis of all the data of masks of both ethnic groups are compared in the final part — the author shows convincingly that the Sikomse and Nyonyosi sacred masks („heilige Masken“) are derived from a common historical-semantic source which points to a former cultural identity of both ethnic groups. This possibility is enhanced by the myths of both ethnic groups. The author goes on to single out Sikomse animal masks as a distinctive group. Further proofs for the theory of former identity of the two ethnic groups and the smiths' group are offered in the two following chapters. This identity is suggested by parallels obtained by analysis of secret languages (Chapter Nine) and by similar or identical phenomena in social organization, religion, music and the like („Nochmals: Nyonyosi und Sikomse“).

In Chapter Eleven („Die Maskenbemalung der Nyonyosi“) the author returns to mask decoration, more precisely to the meaning of painted elements of decoration. She offers a detailed analysis of all the motifs employed (62 in all), providing a comparative table of seven similar motifs utilized by the Dogon and Bambara, in the final section. A few motifs seem to have a more general meaning, the explanation of cultural-historical roots of their spatial diffusion will require further research. Chapter Twelve („Der Stil“) provides a style context of Nyonyosi and Sikomse art for the masks, comparing them with wooden grave posts, stone figures and the like.

In conclusion, the author sums up all available evidence on the three groups in question (Nyonyosi, Sikomse, the smiths' caste) and suggests the former cultural identity which found its expression in the existence of the historical state of Lurum. These conclusions are buttressed by evidence obtained by recent research conducted in 1978—1980, when A. Schweeger-Hefel managed to visit the sacred centre in the Giou village and to interview the Nyonyosi high priest. She points out that in the past, this function included both religious and political powers — the present „sad-naba“ of Giou then being a successor of the rulers of the Lurum state.

This is a faultless book — excepting perhaps the hypothetical nature of the author's dating of events mentioned in the myths, requiring further proofs, in the excursus on the history of the „sad-naba“ of Giou. While the evidence offered in all the rest of the text is cross-checked and examined, here the author handles her data without any recourse to checking.

The book includes a catalogue and ink drawings of Nyonyosi-Sikomse masks, frequently classified as Mosi work, which are kept in world museum collections.

J. Kandert

Georges Baudot, *La vie quotidienne dans l'Amérique espagnole de Philippe II. XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Hachette, 1981, 302 pág., 3 mapas

Después del recién publicado voluminoso trabajo „Utopie et histoire au Mexique“ (1977), un intento de crear una digna contrapartida a las investigaciones arqueológicas de las civilizaciones precolombinas mexicanas, en base a los análisis de las crónicas españolas menos conocidas que provienen desde el punto de vista del tiempo aproximadamente en el primer tercio del siglo XVI, el famoso aztecólogo francés Georges Baudot vuelve a tratar nuevamente la historia de la América Latina del siglo XVI.

Su nuevo y hasta la fecha último trabajo parte de la „Utopie et histoire...“ y sobre todo de los materiales recopilados por el autor durante muchos años de las investigaciones. En siete capítulos se presenta una imágen plástica de la sociedad hispanoamericana del siglo XVI con todos sus problemas y en toda su complejidad.

Los primeros dos capítulos (Le voyage américain au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à L'espace américain des Espagnols) tratan sobre temas más generales. El primero se refiere sobre todo a los problemas de carácter sociológico (entre otros intenta analizar la masa general de los „inmigrantes“ a las colonias españolas, etc.) El segundo capítulo caracteriza las distintas „áreas“ (L'espace) con relación a su adquisición gradual por los españoles. Es decir, en primer lugar aparece el „área“ de las Antillas y de México, América central etc.

Desde el punto de vista del estudio de la vida de la nueva sociedad que se iba constituyendo bajo una situación compleja y

dolorosa después de la confrontación de dos mundos absolutamente distintos — el mundo feudal católico europeo y el mundo americano — que en sus formas más adelantadas, estaba en el período de transición de las comunidades primitivas hacia el sistema esclavista, son muy interesantes los capítulos III y VII.

El capítulo trata sobre la estructura social, caracterizando muy detalladamente a los distintos componentes de la misma, desde la población nativa del continente, los esclavos traídos del Africa y mulatos, hasta la población blanca, que se empezó a diferenciar pronto en los criollos y la gente de la metropoli (los peninsulares). Y finalmente, un capítulo muy interesante sobre la penetración de la iglesia católica y su estabilización gradual en esa parte del mundo.

Los demás capítulos, que no he tratado, tienen igualmente un nivel muy alto. En general podemos decir, que el trabajo de Baudot, a pesar de haberse publicado como un libro popularizante, trae toda una serie de nuevos impulsos sobre todo para el estudio de los desplazamientos y cambios en las estructuras de la sociedad colonial naciente en el continente latinoamericano en el período inmediatamente posterior a los grandes descubrimientos en el ultramar y la conquista de los imperios continentales.

O. Kašpar