

In working through Tremblay's arguments, the reader must contend with many errors and inconsistencies, often in the space of a single page, as when, for example, he identifies Manichaean calendars from 988, 989, and 1003 as dating to the reign of Kōl Bilgā Tānri at the top of page 85, and proceeds at the bottom of the page to give 1007 as the first year of the same ruler, or when he refers to a Uyghur embassy to the Chinese court in 805, with a footnote that fixes the date of the embassy in 807 (p. 111). He confusingly employs both the outdated IB and the current MIK catalogue designations for the holdings of the Museum für Indische Kunst in Berlin. He repeats old erroneous readings of Manichaean texts (e.g., *zhg* 'γ m'ny as "reincarnation", rather than simply "child" of Mani as an epithet of Bügü Khan, p. 112).

Tremblay is clearly much more at home in linguistic, social, and political history than in in-depth analysis of religion. His sporadic attempts to make substantive remarks about the content of Manichaeism are, therefore, often underdeveloped and poorly informed. He makes careless generalisations about Manichaeism (e.g., that the popularity of the religion among merchants could be explained by the Manichaean command to transience, which he takes to be general, rather than specific to the Elect, p. 114), many of which are simply contradictory (e.g., that Manichaeism is anti-aristocratic, and yet the religion of a tiny elite, p. 120). Loosely following Klimkeit's thesis on the consequences of Manichaean temporal success in the Uyghur realm, Tremblay asserts that the *Sermon on the Soul*, evidently popular in Serindia, is "irreconcilable" in its pantheistic view of the cosmos with Mani's original (supposedly anti-cosmic) gospel, ignoring his own awareness of Sundermann's conclusion that the *Sermon* probably was composed in Parthian within the first century of the religion, and therefore could not reflect any distinctively Serindian development of the faith (p. 127). Similarly, his identification of the Manichaeans as a "war party" at the Uyghur court (p. 113) ignores Manichaean pacifism, and he can cite no evidence that would suggest a lapse in this pacifism in the Serindian context. In the end, he characterises Turfan Manichaeism as "neither theological, nor logical, nor moral, but astrological" (p. 130), a conclusion unfathomable to anyone with even a cursory familiarity with the Turfan remains of Manichaean literature. Such glib remarks do nothing to advance Tremblay's subject and show a lack of care behind this portion of his book, at odds with the meticulousness of the rest of his work.

JASON BEDUHN

Northern Arizona University

ORAL POETRY AND NARRATIVES FROM CENTRAL ASIA. By P. MARCEL KURPERSHOEK. Vol. IV (A Saudi Tribal History – Honour and Faith in the Traditions of the Dawāsir). pp. xxx, 1001. Leiden, Brill, 2002.

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At just over a thousand pages, Marcel Kurpershoek's fourth volume in the series that he has been producing since 1994 on the contemporary oral poetry and tribal narratives of southern Najd, is a work of great scholarship on its own. The four volumes together total over 2,300 pages – a meticulously researched labour of love that stands comparison in size and scope with Landberg's study of the oral poetry and prose of the Hadramawt, but goes further than that pioneering work in the detail of the essays which it incorporates on the practice and function of a tribal oral culture in its regional context. All that remains to be published now is the combined index and consolidated glossary to all four volumes, and a compact disc of some of the original recordings. It would be impossible to do justice to a work of this size in the space available for a normal review, so I will restrict my remarks to what makes this volume different from the others in the series, and what particularly interested me in it.

The Wādi Dawāsir in southern Najd, where Kurpershoek gathered all of the material for the volume under review, is a provincial backwater within modern Saudi Arabia, and this choice of location for field-work seems to have caused a good deal of local surprise, even suspicion. Why should the Dawāsir have been given priority by a visiting *mustashriq*, when there were plenty of other much more accessible tribes, with, in Saudi eyes, oral traditions of at least equal, if not greater worth? As Kurpershoek explains in his introduction, it was precisely the remoteness of the area which was the attraction, since the old ways were better preserved there than in central and eastern Najd. Here, in the late 1980s when the author began his work, word of mouth was still the means *par excellence* through which the tribe expressed its identity and values. Through constant repetition in the formal yet congenial atmosphere of the *majlis*, the stories (*sawālif*) told by the old men, studded with exemplary poems (“the stone of the date whose flesh is the narrative framework” (p. 104)), continued to engrave on the consciousness of successor generations tribal legend and history, retailing the derring-do of long-dead ancestors, and re-affirming the customs and ethos of the tribe. In the Dawāsir’s expressive phrase, if the young are the *ṣulb jadd* ‘the marrow of their ancestors’, that is, a re-creation of the past in the present, constituting the same tribal body in a biological sense, the function of the *majlis* is to mould them into the same body politic as their ancestors, with the same values. The picture the *sawālif* paint is thus a local, concrete, vernacular and essentially timeless one – an “emotional and imaginative geography” (p. 14) for the tribe alternative to, and often, in its detail and emphases, at odds with the official Najdi history provided by the state. This is one reason, of course, why such oral tribal traditions are regarded with ambivalence in official circles.

Whereas Volumes I and III were studies of living poets, some of them on the margins of ‘respectable’ tribal society (e.g. the poet al-Dindān, who died in 1998), Volume IV, like Volume II, concentrates on what might be called ‘heritage’ tribal tradition gathered from a wide variety of transmitters, and reaching back to events as early as the late sixteenth century and the supposed forefather of the Dawāsir, Ibn Badrān. The texts and translations selected for inclusion (much less than the totality of the material gathered) are arranged in ten sections so as to bring out clearly distinct themes – tribal ecology, geography, pride, feuds and battles, famous historical incidents and legend – although a typical *sawālif* session in the *majlis* would be likely to mix many of these elements together unpredictably. Editing has also been necessary to make certain sections of the material manageable and comprehensible, especially one of most celebrated texts, *Muṣliḥah*, the ‘peace poem’, which the author recorded in five different versions.

Taken as a whole, the texts, only a few of which can be looked at here, are not only an invaluable store of information on tribal lore, history and manners, but, fascinatingly, show the remarkable degree of continuity in Arabian poetic diction. No one reading the poetry with which the texts are studded (some 1300 verses) can fail to be struck by a feature that Arberry, in another context, describing the language of pre-Islamic poetry of fourteen centuries ago, summed up as “pregnant brevity and epigrammatic terseness”.¹ Frequently, even with the help of Kurpershoek’s facing translation, one has to read and reread sections of some poems several times to make sense of them, since much is done by synecdoche, implication and local allusion. Structurally too, there is a parallel with the ancient poetry: the *nasīb*, the *raḥīl*, tribal *mufaḥkhara*, animal and nature descriptions (*wasf*), and gnomic utterances – all elements of the pre-Islamic ode – are the stock-in-trade of the Dōsiri poets also, though with appropriate modifications: the *nasīb* is normally, this being Wahhabi country, an invocation to God rather than to a paramour. For the dialectologist and language historian, there is also much to ponder. The poetic vocabulary harks back, often with startling directness, to the word-stock of the great Classical lexicons (Kurpershoek provides cross-references), most of which has disappeared from other

¹ A. J. Arberry. *The Seven Odes* (London, 1957), p. 250.

dialects of Arabic, and MSA. Add to all this the archaic syntactic features – ubiquitous *tanwīn* (even on proper nouns), *mabnī li l-majhūl* verb forms which occur productively and not just in a few fossilised phrases, particles like *ǧīd* (<CLA *qad*) and verbal noun forms which are noted as archaic even in Wright's Grammar – and one seems to be reading, in the words of these often illiterate old men, a language that is only a hop, skip and a jump from that of the *jāhīlī* poets.

As to topoi: apart from their constancy and fierceness in defence of their Unitarian faith (Kurpershoek met some very elderly members of the tribe who had been *ikhwān*, and a streak of xenophobia and anti-Christian fanaticism was still near the surface), one of the things the Dawāsīr have taken great pride in throughout their history is their self-sufficiency, and an 'ecological' strand is prominent in the warp and weft of many of the texts presented here. In the past, they never relied solely on camel-rearing or on palm-cultivation for survival, but practised both, with some sections of the tribe like the Wudā'īn in the west of the Wādī leading a sedentary life, and other sections in the east, like the Misār'a, leading a more nomadic one.² These twin pillars of the Dawāsīr's way of life gave rise to a form of debate poetry in which the advantages of each are vaunted by their emblematic protagonists, *al-bduwī* and *al-ḥaḍarī*, but in which the symbiosis of the two opposing life-styles becomes clear, with the camel serving as the symbol and pivot of both, as the mount and provider of sustenance (*darr* 'milk') on the one hand, and as the motive power (*sāni*) for the drawing up of water from the wells to irrigate the date groves and thereby produce fruit, on the other. A frequent image is of a palm-grove heavily laden with fruit but unprotected by fences, whose windfalls indigent passers-by are welcome to help themselves to. This image combines in one fell swoop three virtues that the Dawāsīr see in themselves: hard work (the fruit-laden trees), generosity to those less fortunate (the windfalls) and ferocity in self-defence (no need for fences).³

The *Muṣṭiḥah*, which forms the third section of the texts, is a kind of tribal anthem, composed in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century by al-Ġwēnmi, a Dōsiri who had fled the interminable internecine fighting of the time to find work in al-Hasa on the Gulf coast.⁴ The edited version of some 98 verses that the author presents opens with a section (the *ra'ab* 'camel journey' cf. the *raḥīl* of Classical poetry) in which the poet describes to the camel-riding bearer of his message the route he is to follow. This camel-riding messenger, a literal fact at the time of the poem's composition, is a trope still widely adhered to in Bedouin poetry today,⁵ though nowadays in Saudi Arabia often replaced by one riding in a four-wheel drive vehicle.⁶ This opening is followed by instructions on how the poet's message of reconciliation is to be delivered. The central sections of the poem are the Eight (or in some versions Ten) Tales (*ṭimān sawālif*) – supposedly real events again illustrating the generosity, unbending rectitude and fierceness of the Dawāsīr and known to all the listeners – followed by a passage of boasting (*mufākhara*) by the poet in favour of his particular tribal sub-section, and finally a collection of maxims reflecting the tribe's collected wisdom, and presented as 'lessons' (*miṭāyil*) to a friend. Tribal lore has it that this poem put an immediate stop to the fighting. It has served ever since

² This 'mixed' life-style is a feature of the Bedouin tribes of southern Arabia, and may be a systemic difference with those of the north where there is greater demarcation between nomads and sedentaries. All the tribes I have encountered in Oman that describe themselves as Bedouin have now, and apparently always have had, sedentary and nomadic sections, and others which pursue both ways of life. See C. Holes, "The Arabic dialects of south-eastern Arabia in a socio-historical perspective", *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik* 31 (1996), pp. 34–56.

³ These days, of course, much of the area has in fact gone over to wheat-growing.

⁴ Communities of Dawāsīr have continued to live on the Gulf coast until now. The village of Budayya' on the west coast of Bahrain, for example, formerly famous for its pearl-fishing, is an entirely Dawāsīr settlement. As in contemporary Saudi Arabia, the Bahraini Dawāsīr were famed for their recalcitrance and independence of spirit, being expelled from Bahrain in the 1920s by the British Political Agent of the time following several violent attacks on the Shi'a Baharna who lived in the vicinity. They were subsequently allowed to return to the island.

⁵ For example in the poetry of 'Unayz Abu Sālim al-Turbāni, the well-known recently deceased Bedouin poet of the Ḥuwayṭāt tribe of southern Sinai.

⁶ See Volume III, pp. 110–114.

as an iconic warning against the dangers of a house divided against itself. The nineteenth-century poet ʿIsa Ibn Ḥuṣn, perhaps the greatest bard of the Dawāsir, is represented by eight poems, spread over three sections of the text. Three of them are not found in any of the printed anthologies, and nor did Kurpershoek record them from any transmitter other than the one here, who died shortly after he was recorded. This illustrates well the precariousness of oral traditions, and implies that much must already have been lost.

The reader of this volume would be well advised to consult the earlier ones on matters of language and prosody, where they are dealt with in greater detail. Occasionally, I would have liked a bit more help with the linguistic difficulties which material such as this often presents, e.g. *yissi* (poem 7/3, p. 212) turns out to be a Dōsiri form of *yaṣgi* though one has to guess this from context and then check under the root *ṣgy* for confirmation; and on checking *ʿaṣīmat al-arya* (poem 8/15) ‘confusion reigned’ in the glossary there is no trace of the verb under *ʿṣm* – but it is there, though listed under *ʿsm*, its CLA cognate. In a case like this it is not clear whether there is a typographical error or whether *s* → *ṣ* in some phonetic contexts, as happens in a number of Arabian dialects (though there is no note of such a change in the section on language in this volume or in previous ones). The translations, especially of the poetry, are spirited and much more liberal (a positive feature) than in the first volumes in the series, although, again, this can occasionally lead to difficulties. I am still unable to relate the translation of part of line 7 of poem 1, ‘... as a wooden pulley turning above a well’ to the Arabic, *maḥḥāltin zayyan aṣ-ṣarrāf ṣannaʿha*, which seems to me to mean (using the glosses of *maḥḥāltin* and *ṣarrāf* which the author provides in the glossary with cross-references to this specific line) ‘like the wooden roller of a well which a money-changer has made to perfection’. This makes little sense in this context or any other, and there must surely be another dialectal meaning here of *ṣarrāf*, though I cannot think what it might be.

This is a superb piece of work which, like its predecessors, could be read with great profit by a wide range of readers: most obviously, literary historians of Arabic, but also Arabic dialectologists and language historians, students of Arabian history and anthropologists with an interest in orate cultures. The consolidated glossary will be eagerly awaited, as will the CD that will enable us to hear the voices of these poets and transmitters, many of whom, sadly, have already died.

CLIVE HOLES
University of Oxford

EARLY BUDDHISM: A NEW APPROACH. THE I OF THE BEHOLDER. By SUE HAMILTON. pp. xi, 233. Richmond, Curzon, 2000.

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This book puts forward an interpretation of the Pali texts which concentrates on the relation between the observing subject and the observed object. It is this relation, it is proposed, that the texts tell us about; they do not answer questions about the nature of the self, or about the existence of the world. Thus the *khandha* doctrine does not deny the self, since the *khandhas* do not represent the constituents of the subject, but only those of the cognitive apparatus; they are what makes us experiencing beings, but they do not constitute us as beings. “Selfhood is neither *the* question nor *in* question” (p. 129, cf p. 116). Similarly, to say that the enlightened person has ended the world does not mean that the world has ceased to exist, as if it had no objective reality. Rather, “world” (*loka*) is a metaphor, familiar even in English, for the sum of our experiences as we interpret them, and it is this interpretation of our experiences that ceases on enlightenment, having been replaced by a new understanding of the way things are. This is one example of the way the teachings constantly use metaphor, which has to be understood correctly. This is hardly a novel point, since it is insisted on by both Abhidhamma and