

into restless spirits; nor can cursed people or unpunished criminals find their peace. This subchapter also includes descriptions of more commonly known creatures, such as werewolves and vampires. However, by Slovenian religious beliefs, some of the deceased return to the world of the living with good intentions, for example, to redeem a promise or reconcile with an enemy. An interesting overview is given about the personifications of various troubles and dangers, such as death, epidemics (e.g. plague) or voracity.

The book ends with a glossary of supernatural beings, which provides a concise summary of their main characteristics. In conclusion I can say that the book features creatures that are known both in Estonian and other beliefs, as well as those typical of only Slovenian folklore. Therefore, it serves as a valuable source material for all researchers interested in supernatural beings; yet, due to its affable style, it could also be well received by a wider readership.

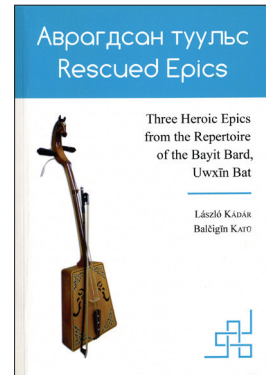
Reet Hiimäe

## RESCUED EPICS<sup>1</sup>

**Kádár, László & Katū, Balčigīn.** *Аврагдсан туульс. Rescued Epics. Three Heroic Epics from the Repertoire of the Bayit Bard Uwxīn Bat.* Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiado, 2012. 215 pp.

Mongolian epics as a folklore genre are well known in Europe especially thanks to a multi-volume edition *Mongolische Epen* initiated in 1975 by Nicholas Poppe. Dozens of texts, published in their full length or as short presentations of plots, mostly in German, opened the wonderful world of epics to Western scholars as well as to the readers interested in the phenomenon. It is obvious that much less can be said about English translations of Mongolian epics; and it is exactly the reason why we are going to briefly present a new book, jointly prepared by László Kádár and Balčigīn Katū under the editorship of Ágnes Birtalan and Zsolt Szilágyi.

The history of this volume goes back to 1962, when a young doctoral candidate László Kádár tape-recorded three epic stories from the storyteller Uwxīn Bat in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. It took 46 years for his tape-records to finally be digitalised and transcribed by the Mongolian folklorist Balčigīn Katū and, after being translated into Hungarian and later also into English, appear in a printed form. In his very vivid preface to the book the collector describes his work with the storyteller, and one can but admire both



his achievements and his unselfishness: while working with Uwxīn Bat, he recorded everything that he was able to pay for. According to Kádár, the fee he paid him amounted to his monthly stipend, which, Kádár adds, he would deem “a very modest remuneration for his extraordinary performance” (p. 11). Many of us, especially from the former Soviet countries, who used to work with storytellers, often did the same in order to safeguard as many examples of the epic tradition as possible, even if we did not have any stipend at all. The preface also contains a short but quite informative biography of Uwxīn Bat (1899–1972?) (pp. 12–13).

The book includes three epic stories from the rich repertoire of Uwxīn Bat: *Bum Erdene – One Hundred Thousand Treasures* (pp. 43–144, 4987 lines), *Dalain Šar Bodon – Giant Yellow Boar* (pp. 145–190, 2212 lines), and *Tüšet Mergen Xānā Kōwūn Kōlög Erdene – Son of Tüshet Khan, Valliant Treasure* (pp. 191–212, 1037 lines). They all belong to the Bayit epic tradition, even though *Bum Erdene* is also known among another Mongolian group called Dörböt (p. 15, 17). The story of *Bum Erdene* is already well known to epic researchers, whereas the second text appears here for the first time, and the third one recorded from another Mongolian storyteller in 1979 was published once in Mongolian (Katū 2001). All this makes the English edition especially valuable.

In order to better understand the context of Mongolian epics in general and some specific details of the published plots in particular, the book is supplied by a long introductory chapter written by Balčigin Katū, who is well known among folklorists due to many Mongolian epic texts published by him. In the chapter entitled ‘About Uwxīn Bat’s Epic Poems’ (pp. 15–42) Katū tells us in detail about all the variants of the three epics recorded in the 20th century (pp. 15–17), compares some nuances of eight variants (we would say, versions) of *Bum Erdene* epos (pp. 18–39), and finally shares with us his ideas about the structure of Mongolian epics (pp. 39–42). The way of comparison (too general) and the language (not so well corresponding with academic terminology<sup>2</sup>) do not give much satisfaction, but anyway, as it is said, it helps understand some details of these three epic stories.

Finally we can add that the English translation (at least, for a non-native speaker) is absolutely readable, for it reproduces the charm and beauty, and sometimes even the rhyme (alliteration) of Mongolian epics. The only problem we can see is the editors’ idea to consciously avoid including any remarks, notes or other explanations to any parts, loci communes, formulas, terms, or proper names of the published texts, which makes the readers’ task quite challenging. The readers are advised to consult in all difficult cases the really good and professional description of the Mongolian mythology published by one of the volume editors (Birtalan 2001). All of this would be just fine, if the suggested reading were published in English. But this is not the case, which significantly limits the audience of the reviewed book. At the same time the book includes a CD with the voice of Uwxīn Bat, which significantly compensates for the lack of sufficient academic comments. By adding the CD, the editors have partly broadened the audience, because it makes the book attractive for linguists, dialect researchers, and ethnomusicologists as well. Even lay readers would benefit from listening to the beautiful voice of the singer.

The book really deserves its name “rescued epics”. We would suggest reading it to all those researchers who are interested not only in Mongolian folklore but also in Asian cultures in general.

Dmitri Funk  
Moscow State University / Tomsk State University

Elena Nam  
Tomsk State University

## **Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> Written in the framework of the project “Man in a Changing World. Problems of Identity and Social Adaptation in History and at Present” (the RF Government grant No. 14.B25.31.0009).
- <sup>2</sup> E.g. “matriarchal society” (p. 29); “before the period of married couples, women were not fewer than men, even outnumbered them, but later the number of women fell back and the search for wives began”; “at some developmental stage of Mongolian society” (p. 38), to name but a few.

## **References**

- Birtalan Ágnes 2001. Die Mythologie der mongolischen Volksreligion. In: Egidius Schmalzriedt & Hans Wilhelm Haussig (eds.) *Wörterbuch der Mythologie: Die Alten Kulturvölker 34*. Stuttgart: Klett-Clotta Verlag, pp. 879–1097.
- Katū Balčigin 2001. *Bayad ardīn tūl*. [Bayit Folk Epics.] Ulānbātar.