

epilogue, Yngvar's son Svein undertakes a repeat of the journey, has much the same adventures, marries Queen Silkisif, who builds a great minster "to the glory of God and all His saints, including Yngvar" (p.67). *Eymund's Saga* lacks any element either of the fantastic or missionary interest. It is a straightforward adventure story of a band of Norwegian mercenaries (with, of course, some reliable Icelanders among them) whose bravery and cunning ensure the victory of whichever side they support. Much effort goes into equipping its hero with suitably prestigious kin and there is some humour in the stinginess of the Russian king Jarisleif, in the repeated haggles about the mercenaries' pay and in the occasional good one-liner: "We'll treat you well, queen," replied Eymund, "but I don't think you'll be kissing the king for a while yet" (p.87).

In their thorough introduction Pálsson and Edwards discuss and assess the relevance of their two stories to events in Russian history and come to the conclusion that little more can be said than that they "show the persistent involvement of Scandinavian warrior-bands in the region of Georgia and the Caspian during the early to mid-eleventh century" (p.14). From the literary point of view, the two sagas are seen as romances, having a good deal more in common with folktales with their stereotyped characters and recurrent themes than with the subtleties of character and action to be found in the family sagas. But the introduction offers us much more than this: its aim is "to explore the intellectual background of the two sagas" (p.1). In five sections, headed respectively; 1. Icelandic Narrative and Centres of Learning, 2. The Narratives, 3. Characterisation and Literary Roles, 4. Scholars and Travellers, 5. Approaches to Russia, the authors take the opportunities offered by these texts with their mixture of the learned and popular traditions to range at large over the intellectual history of medieval Iceland. It is in every way a stimulating essay, too allusive perhaps for the very general reader, but rousing a strong desire in this reader to go at once to a library and follow up their leads with the help of the useful glossary of sagas and other Icelandic texts they provide.

As one has come to expect from these translators, the translations themselves are skilfully rendered into unstilted English that contains just enough phrases of the "Now, next to tell is that ..." type (p.70) to remind the reader of the narrative flavour of the Icelandic; for the most part, however, the style is modern and made agreeably snappy by judicious use of idiomatic phrases such as "rich pickings" (p.50), "you're making a big mistake" (p.79) or "a few tricks up their sleeves" (p.78). The book is nicely produced, well-bound and of neat appearance – as, indeed, it should be in view of the price for a relatively slim volume. Certain sections, however, though not the saga texts themselves, are riddled with typographical errors: *Heimskringla* appears as *Heimskringia* at least three times (pp.96-99), *Wessén* as *Wissen* (p.102), *Flateyjarbók* as *Fateyjarbók* (dustjacket) and these are just few among many. The acute accent on Icelandic *á*, in particular, migrates or vanishes as frequently as Yngvar himself; so much so that it appears from the title page that one of the translators is called Hermann Páilsson.

Peter Graves

Glenys Davies (ed): *Polytheistic Systems Cosmos* Vol 5. Edinburgh 1989. 245pp. Illus.

The editor writes in her introduction: "By looking at various non-monotheistic religious systems we gain an overview that enriches our understanding of polytheistic structures: I hope, therefore that readers of this volume will find its entire contents rewarding and eye-opening,

and will not just turn to papers they consider to be “their” area, ignoring the rest”.

With 14 papers on such diverse subjects as Vedic monotheism and religious life in Bali and Japan, covering a lot of what lies in between, the temptation to skip over anything “irrelevant” is strong. But it is rewarding to study all the papers. Though very different, they are all well written with an eye for the non-specialist. No doubt, the editor deserves part of the praise for this.

The first paper by Deirdre Green is an overview of the recent theoretical work on the basic problems with polytheism and serves as an excellent introduction. Karel Werner explores the Vedas to find signs of early monistic thoughts, whereas Gavin Flood points out how the many forms of Siva in monistic Saivism are understood in relation to the cosmic forces and the cosmogony. John L Gibson’s paper demonstrates that throughout the Old Testament the existence of other gods is assumed, so that no direct evolutionary line from poly- to monotheistic ideas can be claimed for Old Testament Judaism.

To these first papers, the problem of poly-versus monotheism is important because of the areas studied. In the rest of the book polytheism is taken for granted.

Gordon Howie is interested in the functions of the mythologies of Homer, Hesiod and Pindar in the classical age and he shows how the mythical situations were used as *exempla* in an almost Christian manner. L B van der Meer gives in his paper an excellent introduction to the difficult area of Etruscan religion and to the results of his struggles with the material. It would seem that any relationship between Etruscan gods is a result of influence from Greek or Roman myths. Glenys Lloyd-Morgan examines the rite of dedicating mirrors to goddesses in the Greco-Roman world.

The next three papers touch on the prehistory of Northern Europe. Hilda Davidson’s is the only one concerned with both Scandinavian and Celtic religion. She discusses the “little men”, fertility-beings who inhabit and protect certain localities according to the Icelandic sagas which refer to them as “beings”, “vætir”. She finds them to be creatures of the same kind as the hooded deities often found in threes in Celtic iconography. Based on a dedicative inscription they are known as the *genii cucullati*. Hilda Davidson argues that these beings survived in recent times as the independent-minded brownie and that the “garden gnome” is their iconographic descendant. It seems we must count these “beings” as one of the common features of Celtic and Germanic religion, and that the prevalent Danish view that the beings were survivals of ancestor-cult must be modified.

Emily Lyle and Alan Bruford work along the lines laid out by Georges Dumézil. Alan Bruford wishes to find out who the eponymous twins of Macha are and he dismisses the explanations offered in the texts by their untrustworthy compilers and editors. Instead he uses the structural evidence concerning Celtic ideas of Kingship. The results are very convincing. Emily Lyle shows how the enigmatic tale known as the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi can be seen as containing the framework for a complete Indo-European cosmogony.

Dumézil has provided the guidelines for a structural study of Indo-European religion, and using Mézilian methods Anthony Sheldon tries to reconstruct a Uto-Aztecan ideology. In his paper he compares the structure of historical Nahuatl religion with the modern Huichol with

interesting results. Elizabeth Barquedano discusses the Aztec Earth deities and their political importance while Caroline Karslake provides a very useful overview of the research on Otomi religion. Here she mentions briefly the way in which Christianity is adapted to a polytheistically oriented culture.

The last paper by Teigo Yoshida and Andrew Duff-Cooper is concerned with comparison of a Japanese and a Balinese village, but also with the theoretical problems of comparison.

Polytheistic Systems provides not only interesting papers on various subjects, but also a glimpse of most of the problems concerning studies on polytheism. It is a highly readable book.

Morten Lund Warmind

Willy A Kirkeby: *English-Norwegian Dictionary, Engelsk-norsk ordbok*, Norwegian University Press, 1989

Willy A Kirkeby has long been a supplier of dictionaries from English into Norwegian or vice versa, as well as dictionaries for specialised vocabulary. This time he has produced a compact dictionary of 800 pages, which is still relatively handy compared to the obvious competitor H Svenkerud's *Cappelens store ordbok* (1988), in size comparable to Einar Haugen's now classic *Norsk-engelsk ordbok*. But unlike Haugen, Kirkeby only gives the Norwegian equivalents of the vocabulary in Bokmål, not Nynorsk.

In the English version of the preface the term Bokmål is translated Standard Norwegian – a new and unexpectedly inaccurate translation from a lexicographer. It's a fact that there aren't any good English translations for Bokmål and Nynorsk (partly because the terms are meaningless also in Norwegian), but with two official standards of written Norwegian, neither can be said to be the (more) standard representative of the Norwegian.

The bilingual preface outlines some of the choices the author has had to make, e.g. that Americanisms are included to a great extent – a good choice I think, reflecting the influence that American English has had on British English as well as on Norwegian in the last decades.

You'd expect a book launched in 1989 to include many of the newly created words, and Kirkeby's dictionary is up to date – to a certain degree. You'll find *cashpoint*, *freak out*, *hot pants*, *hardware*, *PC*, *skateboard*, *teleprinter*, *Yuppie*. But a *mouse* is to Kirkeby still only the animal, not yet an application to a computer, and among the words you won't find are *(tele)fax*, *DJ* or *disc jockey*, *CD* or *compact disc*, *food processor*, *headhunt(er)*, *breakdance*. The reason may be that some of these words do not yet have a Norwegian equivalent, but in a lexicographic registry that fact ought to be listed.

When in need of translations for relatively new words, it seems that Kirkeby does not look to suggestions launched by Norsk språkråd. In the dictionary *tape* is in Norwegian only *limbånd* or *tape*, not *teip*. Sometimes he chooses his own translations for relative novelties in English, not always successfully. The computer meaning of the noun *prompt* is in the dictionary the same as *spørsmål* while Norsk språkråd suggests the translation *klarmelding* – doubtlessly a better suggestion.