

Finnish Folk Poetry--Epic, An Anthology in Finnish and English.

Edited and translated by Matti Kuusi, Keith Bosley, and Michael Branch. Publications of the Finnish Literature Society 329. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society; London: C. Hurst & Company; and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977. Pp. 607, introduction, bilingual texts, maps, illustrations, commentary, indexes, concordance, bibliography. \$32.50 cloth.

Reviewed by Greta E. Swenson

Translations of any sort are no easy matter, and translations of oral folk poetry present some particularly difficult problems. This team seems to be the perfect combination for overcoming those difficulties. Bosley and Branch, a scholar and a poet who are both native speakers of the target language and knowledgeable in the source language, have spent several years working on this compilation with Kuusi, a native speaker of Finnish. Together they have done an excellent job presenting examples of the folk poetry ("lyrical epic") which was the basis for Elias Lönnrot's literary creation of the **Kalevala** and Kaarle Krohn's early investigations in folklore. The presentation will please both English- and Finnish-speaking scholars, as well as a general readership.

The Preface and Introduction to this work supply information concerning the history of the Finnic people, covering their migrations and cultural neighbors. This background, along with a well-written history of the collection of this poetry in its cultural-historical context, explains the development of romantic national interest in oral tradition in the Finnic-speaking areas. With an understanding of this development, the conflicting views concerning Lönnrot's literary compilation are brought into focus against the lyrical epics upon which he based his work.

In addition to the history of collecting in Finnic-speaking areas, the folklore scholar is presented with an introduction to the folk poetry archives in Finland. This alone is welcome information. The various types of analyses which have been undertaken with this collection are described and explained in terms of the development of folklore scholarship in Finland.

The specific classification system which the editors chose to use in their present compilation is presented as an ex-

tension of the continuing studies of the material in Finland. Their system is based upon thematic and stylistic historical development. It is intended to illustrate strata of cultural layering and outside influences. Descriptions of the poets and singers, their instruments, and performance styles are provided to further illustrate these developments.

Couched in their chronological categories, the poems with their variants tell their own story. The editors wished to demonstrate the manner in which Finnish folk poetry survived by adapting to the successive waves of foreign influence, disintegrating to a point where "themes and motifs of the epic tradition survived as a vehicle for lyrical sentiments." Demonstrate it they did. For the reader less well-versed in Finnish oral tradition, a useful concordance showing the relationship between the oral tradition and Lönnrot's compilation is provided.

Each poem is supplied with a detailed commentary which covers two areas: the history, sometimes including performance information, and dissemination of the poem; and the interpretation of the particular text. In some cases, an analysis of the underlying poetic structure is included. Commentary on specified lines clarifies ethnographic and linguistic points which may not be understood by the reader. Texts are arranged with facing translation into English, a definite advantage for gaining some understanding of structure. This reviewer is not able to comment upon the accuracy of translation. The "lyrical poetry," is, however, certainly maintained in the English renditions.

Additional aids for understanding the compilation are source, collector, collection location, name, and motif indexes. Photographs illustrating life in the areas where the poetry was collected, a map of the locations, and a select bibliography listing basic works for both Finnish and English readers add yet more educational value to the compilation.

With the exception of one type-setting error on page 39, I can find nothing amiss with this work. The editors intended to present "authentic oral tradition," enabling the reader to appreciate the **Kalevala** as an outstanding literary compilation. Their outstanding compilation of the lyrical epics clearly enables the reader to appreciate and understand this process.

Providing "a representative selection of the distinctive themes and motifs of oral tradition in Finland, Karelia and Ingria" to scholars and students of folk poetry who do not read Finnish was another of the aims for this compilation. The need for such a translation has been great--as is the need for translations of other oral traditions. Kuusi, Bosley, and Branch have not only succeeded in this endeavor, they have provided us with a model for future translations of folklore which are needed both for comparative study and for an understanding of the discipline and its subject matter.