

Studies. Scholars concerned with the theoretical issues of defining and categorizing oral epics, or with creating notational representations for them, will find the book useful. Historians of religion should read this book to expand their understanding of non-Brahmanical ritual specialists in India.

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FUCHS, STEPHEN. *The Korkus of the Vindhya Hills*. Tribal Studies of India Series T 124. New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1988. 443 pages. Maps, figures, tables, illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. Hardcover, Rs315; ISBN 81-210-0203-6.

The Korkus, numbering more than 200,000 members (according to the Census of India, 1961), are the westernmost of the Munda tribes of India. They inhabit mainly the central section of the forested Satpura ranges of Madhya Pradesh (about 2,000 to 5,000 feet above sea level), especially the area encompassing the Mahadeo Hills. Besides being skillful bamboo workers, manufacturing mats and baskets of various shapes, most of the Korkus are occupied with agricultural work, as farmers or field-labourers. In recent times, plough cultivation has largely been adopted, shifting cultivation being retained only in some remote areas.

Until recently, anthropologists who wished to inform themselves about the Korkus had to rely on a few (mostly out-dated) gazetteer or census accounts published 80 to 100 years ago, and some 15 papers dispersed in various journals. Thanks to Stephen Fuchs, a renowned scholar in the field of anthropology, we now have before us a monograph on the Korkus that offers a comprehensive and exhaustive description of the Korku way of life. Unlike so many other present-day studies in anthropology, which merely concentrate on one or two aspects singled out of a chosen culture, Fuchs provides a holistic view. The favorable fact that he had the opportunity to visit the Korkus "many times in the past" enabled him "to study all the aspects of their culture at leisure and record them in this monograph" (6). Although a holistic description of a culture harbors the disadvantage that one or other cultural aspect might not be dealt with to the specialist's satisfaction, its invaluable advantage and merit are more than obvious and need not be elaborated.

The monograph opens with an informative and detailed introduction (13-38), followed by four main sections. Part one covers a description of the material culture of the Korkus (Korku possessions, dress and ornaments, food and meals, agriculture, crops, husbandry, and other occupations), while part two deals with sociology (family and kinship, village communities, tribal organization), and part three with the life history of the individual (birth and childhood, marriage, death and funeral). Part four will be particularly welcomed by students of folklore: it is devoted to Korku religion, furnishing information on gods and spirits, feasts and mythology, magic beliefs and practices. The book is rounded off by a brief conclusion; a valuable appendix giving information on leading (Mowasi) Korku families; a useful general index; a comprehensive bibliography; a map showing the geographic distribution of Korkus and Nahals; seven line drawings of agricultural implements; and four tables and 21 photographs.

Here and there, unfortunately, the author was betrayed into remarks that, lacking the required objectivity and displaying a presumptuous, Eurocentric attitude, could

have been avoided; for instance, "The Korkus are no dullards though by no means intellectual geniuses" (383), or, "There are countless more omens believed in by the Korkus and Nahals and nobody can convince them that such beliefs are baseless" (412).

Such shortcomings, however, do not impair the value of Fuchs' comprehensive monograph, which, on the whole, represents a thoroughly researched and fully reliable account of the Korku culture. Students of the field of anthropology will warmly welcome and duly appreciate this publication, which has long been overdue.

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HILTEBEITEL, ALF. *The Cult of Draupadī, 1. Mythologies: From Gingee to Kurukṣetra*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988. xxvii+487 pages. Maps, plates, index, and bibliography. Paper US\$24.95; ISBN 0-226-34046-5. Cloth US\$74.95; ISBN 0-226-34045-7.

Today we wish to read not only the classical epics of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*: we seek also to understand precisely how such stories became intertwined and mixed with the tales that dynamize and impact still on village India. Professor Alf Hiltebeitel's extraordinary fieldwork and research give us an excellent "window into the Tamil world of South India." His study analyzes the rich mythology underlying the cult of the goddess Draupadī.

This first volume of a projected three-volume work focuses on the folk cult of Draupadī; the history of this cult is traced from its origins in an extremely remote area of Tamilnadu to its integration with, commingling with, and eventual translation into the classical tradition. Stressing this diffusion, this work is aptly divided into two sections: part 1, "From Gingee," and part 2, "To Kurukṣetra."

Hiltebeitel argues that "the Draupadī cult was probably consolidated during the fourteenth century . . . specifically in the Gingee area" (17) from which it diffused outward. One great strength of this research is the probing and exploring of numerous oral traditions dating back much earlier, perhaps to as far back as the Pallava cave temples, but certainly to the stories telling of the birth of the goddess in the vicinity of the Mēlacēri Temple in Old Gingee. The fieldwork and the retelling of the multiple birth stories of the goddess are simply stunning.

Here in part 1 is Hiltebeitel's detailed research especially to be admired; his careful listening to multiple storytellers and his scholarly ability to link his findings with previous scholarship such as that of Madeleine Biardeau and others often suggest new insights and realistic understandings of the *bhakti* tradition actually unfolding. Thus, despite a "bewildering labyrinth of variants" (76), a path or a direction gradually begins to emerge. As the number eighteen carries such special meaning for the whole of the *Mahābhārata*, so also does this same number eighteen appear determinative for village festivals and other tellings of the stories of the goddess. This is but one of the clues followed in the search for the genesis of Draupadī.

Similarly, by focusing on Draupadī's two bodyguards, Pōttu Rāja and Muttāl Rāvuttan, Hiltebeitel opens new appreciations of the role and symbols of these celebrated protectors. Suddenly their function becomes much more precise and much more interwoven with such historic events as Hindu-Islamic village encounters. Muttāl Rāvuttan's Islamic roots are uncovered.