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 Mēlacērri 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.

Part 2, " Kurukṣetra," is especially helpful for delineating and then interpreting the many comparisons and contrasts between the regional and classical appreciations of Draupadī, especially as depicted in the key moments of the *Mahābhārata* (289, 317, 368). Such familiar tales as the " traditional dice game " take on entirely new dimensions and fuller meanings.

Because he has listened so well, because he has been exposed to so many living sources, because he is familiar with so many different night-long dramas enacted in so many different village festivals, Hiltebeitel and his work thus become an indispensable tool for those seeking really to understand the still dynamic and creative tension between the regional and classical traditions of India. *The Cult of Draupadī 1. Mythologies: from Gingee to Kurukṣetra* is unique; it offers a truly special window into the inner tensions and working dynamics of popular devotional Hinduism (*bhakti*). It is a work of true scholarship.

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NARAYAN, KIRIN. *Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989. xl+285 pages. Bibliography, photographs, notes, appendices, index. Paper, n.p.; ISBN 0–8122–1269–x.

At the 1984 meeting of the American Anthropological Association I had the pleasure of seeing and hearing Kirin Narayan enact the character of Swamiji (Swami Prakashananda Saraswati, who died in 1988) describing himself as a topsy-turvy (agarambagaram) sadhu. This book now describes Swamiji, sannyasi and storyteller extraordinary, as he held forth daily in his home in Nasik, Mahrashtra, to a varied assembly of disciples, Indian and Western. The central issue of the book is how narrative is used to convey religious teachings that are also of relevance to the flow and predicament of these people's lives.

The stories are Swamiji's, but the book that frames them is Kirin Narayan's story about these and other tales. Indeed, the structure of the book approximates a master (and masterful) narrative that tells of Kirin the Indian child who learned of Swamiji from her family, and Kirin the American anthropologist who learned through him. So, too, members of her family make their appearances amidst a variety of barbers, businessmen, gurus, hypnotherapists, and many others. Highly reflexive, the text is not egoistical, for the weaving together of stories that in turn become stories about stories, makes the compelling qualities of narrative the issue. Here, narrative is not made an excuse for this anthropologist telling a tale about herself for her own sake—a style prominent in many ethnographies influenced by post-modernist literary theory. Narayan writes with understatement, compassion, grace, and (perhaps a thanks-offering is due too to Swamiji?) a wonderful clarity of style that bears out the text as an extended, entrancing tale of how stories are told and listened to.

The black-and-white photograph (taken by Narayan) that frames Swamiji on the book's cover is emblematic of the text. Swamiji, his roundish face wreathed in a kindly smile, *rudraksh* beads round his neck, sits on matting, his crossed legs thrust out before him. The lower leg has a chthonic cast, massive and hairy, ending in a large sole (foregrounded by the camera) made for leaving deep, lasting imprints in the