

The vegetable and mineral pigments used to give the figures their "classic" color have given way to garish oil paints thickly applied in imitation of movie posters. The versatility of arm movement of which certain figures were once capable is now limited because the figures are no longer so well made and the manipulators are no longer so skilled. Seltmann's extensive photographic catalogue of the figure types (gods, demons, figures, animals, etc.) both in static space and in performance gives clear imagery of this theatre's contours.

There is a brief section on the architecture of the *kuttumadam*, the small building adjunct to temples where the shadow theatre is performed, and on the musical ensemble that accompanies the dramas. The heart of the book is a schematic outline of a typical performance including all the ritual sequences and protocols which surround the actual manipulation of the puppets. The plays are usually performed between February and April ("the peacock season" between monsoons in Kerala) on the occasion of annual festivals in temples dedicated to the goddesses Bhagavati and Bhadrakali over periods ranging from seven to twenty-one days. Depending upon the length of the performance sequence one or all six books of the Rāmāyaṇa may be dramatized. The texts, set down in inherited prompt-books, are in a form of Tamil. Seltmann provides an English only scene summary (but not spoken text) of one sequence. The drama is, however, second to the larger ritual context. Seltmann's field experience and scholarly vision lead him to stress the ceremonial whole of the shadow theatre. He appends an important chapter on the relations between the shadow theatre and the Bhagavati cult, including a discussion of the myth that justifies the connection between cult and puppetry.

This book is a model of successful scholarship. It critically presents a mass of new information on a previously obscure subject, demonstrates the importance of the subject to a larger set of concerns (shadow theatre in India, in south Asia as a whole, the role of performance in Hindu worship, among others) all with a fine sense of proportion. Kerala shadow theatre is a unique shadow theatre because of its religious context. True to his lifelong scholarly purpose Seltmann leaves his material open to further interpretation. Students of Hindu and of Indian folk cosmology will find much here, as will specialists in the effects of broad culture change upon local arts. Most promising of all is the prospect of further field study opened by this seminal publication.

Richard M. Swiderski
Holliston, Massachusetts

SEN, SOUMEN, editor. *Folklore in North-East India*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1985. Xvi+233 pages. Hardcover Rs. 125/- (Distributed by Western Book Depot, Pan Bazar, Gauhati (Assam), India).

This volume begins with a commendable introduction treating various aspects of the study of folklore to the great benefit of the students and the investigators in the field. There are four articles dealing with folklore items of Arunāchal Pradesh. The first one is a critical study of the basic patterns in myth-making amongst the tribes of Arunāchal—wherein a sound attempt to correlate the tribal myths with those in the Vedic texts has been made. The second paper relates to folk stories associated with the origin and migration of the people of Tirap district of Arunāchal. This is followed by a study of folksongs of Arunāchal with summaries of some songs in English only. The fourth one is a study of the Kebang folktale of the Gallong, one of the tribes of

Arunāchal, which presents all about the origin of the village council, laws, and so forth.

Nagaland, the state *par excellence* of the Naga tribal communities, is very poorly represented by a single study. Of course there are some collections of Naga folklore in Hutton's and others' works dealing with the Naga tribes. Similarly, the state of Manipur is represented by one study of Thadou (a section of the Chins of Burma) folklore, from which the history of the origins, migrations, marriage, and death practices of this tribal people has been traced. For the state of Assam there are, however, twelve papers treating various aspects of folklore of the tribals and non-tribals. The first paper in the series relates to the study of some folktales as current amongst different sections of the people. The next one is a study of the oral epic songs of Assam, which were later on put to writing and wherefrom the Assamese literature has drawn great inspirations. The third one pertains to a partial study of folksongs of the tribal communities in the urbanized outskirts of the capital city of Gauhati. This study reveals intertribal relationships and the impact of urbanization. Another article deals with black and white magic and magical practices as prevalent in Hajo village of Kām̄rūp district. The paper treating folk songs/verses relating to the origins of ancestors as current amongst the Karbis is highly interesting. Most prudently, the author has presented the verses in both original and English translation. The paper on folk melody and music is quite interesting. The article on myths and rituals of the Dimasa-Kachāris (hill Kachāris) deals with certain ritual practices. The paper entitled 'Tiwa and Lalung—two names of a tribe and the folklore connected with them' studies folklore as it reveals changes in the nomenclature of the tribe. The article 'Pu son lan: 'Folk tradition of Tai Phakes' treats certain aspects of the socio-religious and ethical life of a Buddhist community of Upper Assam. An interesting paper entitled 'The Eunuch priesthood and Deity Daria' relates to a particular case study in Cachar district of Assam and Sylhet, wherein the female deity Daria riding on a tortoise is worshipped by the eunuch priest called Gurma. She is a deity of fertility *par excellence*, and her worship is accompanied by all sorts of obscene songs and dances. The article on marriage songs of the Bengali Hindus of the Cachar district attempts to study various kinds of songs sung before and during marriage ceremonies. These songs have been given in both original and English translation. It would have been more meaningful if a comparative study with the marriage songs of the primitive tribes was made for the purpose of pointing out as to what extent the Bengali marriage songs have been derived originally from tribal sources, since at present these songs contain predominantly Brahmanical elements. The study of folklore is no doubt a dependable source of historical reconstruction, and a short article entitled 'History and folklore in the context of Cachar valley' discusses the importance of the study of folklore for the reconstruction of the original homeland, migration and settlement of a given group of people. Sometimes the contents of such folklore are also corroborated by historical, archaeological and linguistic findings as well, and the absence of any historical bearings does not necessarily invalidate its historical import.

Three papers dealing with the folklore of Meghālaya have been embodied in the present volume—one treating the Khasi (a matriarchal people speaking an Austro-Asiatic language) folklore and two others relate to the feudal consolidation of the Jaintia kingdom and the origins of the Koches people. The first one discusses some common themes in Khasi oral literature and deals with its different aspects. The second one traces the legendary origin of the kingdom of Stnga from the Khāsī tribal chieftainship, and shows how the myths also accept the tribal base of the kingdom and its Brahmanization and feudal superstructure. The third article entitled 'The story about the origin

of the Koches and their migration to the Garo hills' is highly informative. It is very significant to note here that the Koches today form a major population in the Kochbihār region (named after the Koche people) of North Bengal wherein they appear to have migrated from north-east. In this connection a comparative study of this folklore with that of North Bengal is necessary for a proper treatment and analysis. The state of Mizoram is represented by a single study of Mizo folktales. The state of Tripura is peopled by about nineteen tribes and a large number of Bengali population. Of the tribal peoples, the Tipras (Tripuris) form the majority and even the former royal family belonged to this tribe. The Tripuri folktales along with their different motifs have been well treated in this in depth study by the author. In two separate papers, folklores of two important communities of Sikkim, the Bhutias and the Lepchas, have been partially studied. The first one discusses legends about the origin and migration of the Sikkim Bhutias and the second one treats Lepcha folklore refering particularly to the prevailing myths regarding deluge and love, devils and, creation of the world. Lastly, there are three general papers covering aspects of the folklore of the north-eastern region of India. The first article makes a socio-economic evaluation of folk-songs expressing sentiment, life and activities of the peasants. A historical assessment of the folklore of Northeast India has been made in the second paper and the last one deals with weaving as represented in folksongs with the observation that the weavers 'not only weave with yarn but their deep feelings and emotions are also woven in that texture.'

Truely, the volume does not project any wholesome image of the folklore of North-east India. This could not be helped since the book is simply a compilation of seminar papers, and the authors had the liberty of treating their subjects in whatever way they wanted to choose. It appears that no guidelines were provided. Regional characteristics of the folklore of North-east India, if any, have hardly been treated by anybody nor has any comparative or critical study of them been made. It is, however, clear that the folklore of the different states of north-east India is diverse in nature and character, and there is hardly any unity in it. Despite its failings, the volume is undoubtedly a commendable attempt to present at least some gleanings of the folklore of each state of North-east India, which would inspire investigators and students to delve more into the folklore of each state and thence of the whole region of north-east India, bringing forth its regional characteristics, if any.

S. R. Das
Indian Council of Historical Researches
New Delhi

ISLAM

KAPPERT, JAN. *Islamic Legends, Part I. Histories of the Heroes, Saints and Prophets of Islam.* Nisaba 15/1. Leiden E. J. Brill, 1985. Xi+311 pages. Introduction, illustrations. Paper Gld. 96,—, ISBN 90-04-07488-0. *Islamic Legends, Part II. Histories of the Heroes, Saints and Prophets of Islam.* Nisaba 15/2. Leiden E. J. Brill, 1985. Viii+170 pages. Bibliography. Paper Gld. 56,—, ISBN 90-05-07489-9.

The prolific and admirably versatile Jan Knappert, after many works concerning local traditions on the frontiers of Islam, here tries his hand at the compilation of an inter-Islamic hagiography. The material of his *Islamic legends* is admittedly gathered from