

singing in alternation and accompanied by violin, two *rebana* drums and a knobbed gong), *keroncong* (Westernized popular songs of Indonesian origins, accompanied on violin, guitar, ukelele, banjo, cello and the like), *ghazal* (a syncretic popular music of Arabic origins), *dikir barat* (popular music originating in Thailand found in Kelantan towns and villages), and the Chinese orchestra known as *huayue tuan*. The chapter ends with a discussion of music in the Portuguese community in Malacca and Indian classical music found in Malaysia.

The last chapter commences with a glance at recent trends in both contemporary art music, including music written for piano, orchestra, and gamelan. The authors then quickly move to popular styles, which exhibit influence of both native traditions and popular genres from throughout the world. This is followed by an appendix of lengthy, full-score transcriptions of the *keroncong asli* "Sapu lidi," a *dikir barat* piece recorded in Kelantan in 1994, and "Tanah Air Ku" arranged for Chinese orchestra. A very useful bibliography/discography/videography and good index close this whirlwind tour of musical Malaysia.

Besides discussing musical genres that have rarely been mentioned in other sources, this book will serve as an excellent sourcebook or textbook for courses on the music of Southeast Asia. Experts on the subject will no doubt lament that their favorite genre has received less space than it deserves, but readers who seek to obtain a broad overview (and in many cases considerable depth as well) the balance and size of this volume is just about right. Too bad that a CD recording could not be included so that the transcriptions come to life for those who do not already have this music in their mind's ear.

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SYMONDS, PATRICIA V. *Calling in the Soul: Gender and the Cycle of Life in a Hmong Village*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004. xlix + 326 pages. Drawings, photographs, appendices of texts, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$45.00; ISBN 0-295-98326-4.

This book corrects the male bias of much previous anthropological writing on the Hmong by analysing "Hmong constructions of sexuality and gender" (xii) from the point of view of Hmong women themselves. There has really been nothing on Hmong women of any substance until now, apart from DONNELLY (1994), which was limited to a study of refugees, and RICE (2000), an attempt to apply basic medical anthropology to refugee perceptions. Patricia Symonds shows how women are vital to the cycle of "birth, death, and reincarnation" (3), which constitutes Hmong cosmology, through providing in their bodies "the vessels to which souls of the lineage can return and continue the cycle of life" (76). Given that ancestral souls are reborn in their original patrilineages, and that souls may change gender on their journey towards rebirth (21), it follows that women who have married into a lineage from other lineages become not only ancestral to that lineage after they produce sons, but may themselves become members of it through rebirth, while male members of the lineage may be reborn as women who must marry out of the lineage (21). Thus women find a voice through rebirth, while men fall silent in their reincarnation (35). Symonds compares this to the noisy rituals of men, from which women are generally excluded, and contrasts the complete silence in which women give birth (5–6) with their keening at death (159).

This seems a logical viewpoint, and it is clearly implicit in the views of the Hmong women themselves, with whom the author established a remarkable rapport. Women contribute to the lineage as "daughters, wives, mothers, daughters-in-law, and mothers-in-law, and, more

important, as sisters" (10), and the topic of women as "Mothers, Daughters, and Wives" forms Chapter 2, which contains a fine account of the wedding (66–70). The power of women is particularly demonstrated in the realms of "childbirth and ritual conceptions of the afterlife" (10), and is "located in the realm of reproduction" (76). Symonds brings this out clearly, through insisting on the close "relationship between death and birth" (xix) which, as she notes, has been much overlooked by previous ethnographers. "Through their bodies women connect the two worlds" of birth and death (161). She devotes the first chapter to a study of Cosmology, and the third chapter to the topic of Birth. In the latter, very good descriptions of births are given, while the comparison drawn between the ritual soul-calling for a newly born child and the ritual song of death which guides the reincarnating soul on its way is very accomplished (94). Death is the subject of the fourth chapter (before the conclusion, which reflects interestingly on status and power), where we have what is probably the best account yet in English of the main funeral chant and its allied ritual actions. Symonds is careful to specify exactly what status of funeral this is, and gives a sober and unsentimental account, including the entire ritual in Hmong in a useful Appendix.

The account of souls (21) is convincing, and should be compared with the esoteric description given by LEMOINE (1987, 111–14). It is clear to me that there is a considerable difference between popular and shamanic understandings and, as Symonds says here, a degree of discussion and disagreement among the Hmong themselves about such matters. "How on earth would I know?" said one puzzled informant to me when I questioned him on the exact details of the fate of souls in the afterlife.

This is excellent ethnography, it is clearly and beautifully written, and well put together. Besides this, it provides an example of ethical methodology which will be extremely useful for teaching purposes and for introductions to the techniques of modern anthropology. Symonds describes in the opening pages how she has followed an unusually direct trajectory in her research interests and career. Beginning from her work at a clinic for low-income patients in Providence, Rhode Island (ix), Symonds experienced at first hand the trauma of the encounter between traditional Hmong childbirth practices and the Western medical system—on page x she gives one of these cases of cultural misunderstanding which Anne FADIMAN (1997) has recently made so well known to a wide American public. It was this encounter which led directly to Symond's research in northern Thailand on Hmong birth practices in 1987 and 1988, on which this book is based. But that research also led on to a more applied involvement in a vital programme of research and education on HIV/AIDS among the Hmong in Thailand in the 1990s, which is the subject of the Epilogue to this book, "HIV/AIDS and the Hmong in Thailand." She hired two American Hmong research assistants to assist her in this work of teaching the Hmong in Thailand how to understand and prevent HIV infection, and in conclusion she emphasizes the importance of involving and paying attention to the "agency" of women in these programs (186). This is a fine example of practical understandings derived from research going back to the community from which research has been derived, and of the kind of contribution which anthropologists are only sometimes able to make back to the communities who have hosted them.

More than this, the methodology of research itself has been exceptionally rigorous. Symonds describes the efforts she made to avoid gossip about others, because of the strong moral taboos on gossip which exist in Hmong society (xli). Not many anthropologists would be so scrupulous, and it cannot have made her work any easier! Again, she explains in the Introduction how she gained a remarkable degree of empathy and unusual intimacy with her female informants, movingly described (xix–xxii). Part of this must certainly have been, as she says, because she was herself the mother of several sons and daughters, and a grandmother (xl), and again her skills at needlework (xlvi) must have helped immeasurably in talking to

Hmong women for whom needlework was an important part of their lives. But more than the personal status and history of the ethnographer was involved here; difficult personal and moral decisions were involved. She wore Hmong clothes (xli), she ate with the women after the men had eaten (xlv), she stitched up a woman's finger (29). And she tells us (xx) of a crucial incident during a funeral when the men invited her to come with her to see the burial, if she wanted "to learn the Hmong way," while the women called to her to stay with them, because Hmong women never went to the grave. She decided to stay, and from that time on a strong relationship of trust was established between her and the women. This cannot have been an easy decision, and she makes no attempt to describe the burial, since she had not seen it. It is on such decisions that ethical relationships of trust are built in anthropology, and the quality of this ethnography bears witness to the appropriateness of those decisions.

For Symonds, as indeed for the Hmong, culture forms an "interrelated whole" (xx), and she does justice to that vision of coherence through her accounts of the Hmong cosmology, the cycle of birth and death and women's roles in the lineage and in the cycle of reincarnation. Considering the "assymetry" of Hmong gender roles in everyday life (7–8 and elsewhere), Symonds' general argument is that these are compensated for through childbirth, through women's roles in maintaining and contributing to the lineage, and through the ritual importance of women in the afterlife as ancestresses and reincarnating souls. These are areas in which inferiority is not assumed. As she notes (38), the perception of assymetry may partly result from a Westernizer's point of view; I would strongly agree with this, since from the point of view of traditional Chinese gender relationships, for example, Hmong gender relationships might appear relatively symmetrical. The relations of "complementarity and opposition" between genders she stresses as an aspect of traditional cosmology (30) are more to the point, and she is to be commended for taking seriously COOPER's (1984) argument that inequality between the sexes resulted from the division of labor (7), which he associated with the introduction of opium as a cash crop. I had always wondered if, as Ruby WATSON (1985) showed for women in the Chinese lineage system, Hmong women might not subscribe to a view in which their marginal roles in formal lineage structure were not so important as the central roles they occupied in the family and the domestic group, while their connections with other women provided a network transcending and interpenetrating the patrilineal lineage. The namelessness of women described here (39–40) similarly resonates with Ruby WATSON's (1986) description of this among Cantonese women. And Symonds does make the point that not only do women become lineage ancestors after the birth of sons, which alters their position in the household much as it has been shown to do for inmarrying Chinese women (72–75), but they also maintain important relations with their natal lineages (169). Overall, however, Symonds shows us that Hmong women do not question the authority of the lineage, but emphasise more their importance to it through their activities in birth and rebirth. She also makes the point that large families are not just for labor purposes or status but also to assure heirs to the lineage and the status of their mothers, therefore, as lineage ancestresses (105), and of course also that daughters bring in brideprice through their marriages which can be used to bring in wives for their brothers, thus also assuring the continuity of the lineage (107).

The household map (xxiii) and other figures are very well done and (although Quincy should not be mentioned among other "scholars," page xxiv), the French and other scholarly literature is generally very well considered. The text is nicely interspersed with legends, and illustrated by well-chosen photographs. This is a serious and responsible work, which deserves a wide reading.

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## INDIA

KAUSHAL, Molly, ed. *Chanted Narratives: The Living 'Katha-Vachana' Tradition*.

New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts, 2001. vii + 290 pages. Tables, illustrations, plates. Hardcover Rs. 900; ISBN 81-246-0182-8. (Distributed by D. K. Printworld [P] Ltd. 'Sri Kunj', F-52, Bali Nagar, New Delhi – 110 015, India).

Mrs. Kaushal has to be congratulated for organizing the very interesting meeting on India's oral literature, "Katha Vachana aur Katha Vachak: Exploring India's Chanted Narratives" (held at IGNC in New Delhi, February 3–7, 1997, and sponsored by UNESCO). Her Introduction to the proceedings of the conference gives a welcome "bird's eye view" of the meeting's concerns.

The volume opens with B. Saraswati's philosophical treatise on orality. The other papers concern themselves primarily with various forms of orality in performance and the social context of ethnopoetic work. Although every contribution can not be evaluated in a short review, the reviewer will try to offer here a guide to the bewildering quantity of information contained in the papers.

In terms of cultural geography, narratives in Indo-Arian languages are discussed in chapters 4 (C. Servan-Schreiber—Transfer of chapbooks between Bhojpur and Nepal), 14 (A. Malik—Devnarayan, Rajasthan; see also BLACKBURN et al. 1989: 216–18), and 17 (S. M. Pandey—The Ahir epic Loriki and Chanaini; Hindi heartland; four published versions by Pandey are listed). Works and performances in Dravidian languages are discussed in chapters