

in Kerala. It traces the aspects in which the above laws are followed, modified or disregarded. It is interesting to note that the Namputiris, who were once held in high esteem, had to inevitably yield themselves to social pressures and mingle with other castes. Rapid social changes have affected their life style, particularly in their dress, customs, ethics, hygiene, and marriage.

Another paper jointly authored by Neelambar Hatti and James Heimann presents a fair and unprejudiced account of village organization and the political, social, and cultural elements associated with it by examining the Yelandur Kaditās of the nineteenth century in Karnataka. It is said that a general decline in discipline, workmanship, and pride has crept into all walks of life in India. But the roots of this decline must be seen within the context of a general disruption of the moral universe within which society was functioning that was caused by either Western and native forces.

On the basis of the data collected among the Dalits in Gujarat, Shalini Randeria delineates in her paper how mortuary rituals and the memorial feasts produce a social order, and create a caste as a locally defined community held together by mutual exchange. The mortuary feast with its varied and colorful festive activities has its own bitter as well as salubrious effect. The mortuary feast may be viewed as a communal activity that indicates *inter alia* prestige and morale in the community. Under the guise of memorial feasts, the local community of kith and kin unites to celebrate the ties that bind it.

Emma Tarlo provides an article on "village dressing" in the South Delhi village of Hauz Khas. In modern contexts "village dressing" may seem appealing, but it is worth noting that national and international trends have contributed to its transformation.

Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi draws our attention to the cross-cultural and culturally specific aspects of a Tamil village with reference to the works of Rajanarayanan, who claimed that the ethnographic study of a people's literature may increase our knowledge of their culture by adding a touch of intimacy to the abstract anthropological reports hitherto in vogue. What is clearly shown here within the context of a Tamil village are the attitudes of the people toward land, tradition, animals and fellow beings, as well as the ignorance, skepticism, and pragmatism among the people.

The theme of Jan Philipsky's paper is the self-sacrifice and deification of village heroes such as Maturaiviran Mutuppattan who revolted against the social injustice prevalent during his time. Philipsky concludes that Tamil ballads of certain heroes serve as a clue for understanding the worldview of Tamil villagers.

In the concluding part of the book, Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi comments on all the themes discussed in Part I with reference to Tamil literary works. Her observation that Indians seem to compartmentalize contradictory ideas is relevant and valid. As stated in the conclusion, the anthropological glimpses into village life found in this volume will certainly add to our knowledge of Indian culture and literary works and will serve to inspire more research. The book opens fresh avenues to Indian anthropological studies.

Aru. RAMANATTIAN and N. PALANI  
Tamil University  
Thanjavur, India

HILTEBEITEL, ALF. *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics: Draupadi among Rajputs, Muslims, and Dalits*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999. xiv + 560 pages. Maps, tables, illustrations, bibliography,

index. Cloth US\$60.00/£47.95; ISBN 0-226-34050-3. Paper US\$29.00/£23.25; ISBN 0-226-34051-1.

*Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics* is part of what Hildebeitel had planned to be Volume Three of his multivolume Cult of Draupadi study. *The Cult of Draupadi Volume One—Mythologies: From Gingee to Kuruksetra*, published in 1988, contrasted modern interpretations of the Mahabharata with the Draupadi cult's folk interpretation of it. And *The Cult of Draupadi Volume Two—On Hindu Ritual and the Goddess*, published in 1991, was a study of the Draupadi cult's ritual practices and their connection to the Mahabharata. Hildebeitel reports that his original third volume has expanded to three distinct books: the third volume of the Cult of Draupadi study that will deal with changes in the Draupadi cult over the years; the current volume under review; and a study that is forthcoming entitled *Rethinking the Mahabharata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of Yudhishthira*, which continues the present volume's comparisons between regional folk epics and the classical epic tradition. This current volume under review presents a series of essays related thematically but they do not build upon one another to form a unified conclusion. Hildebeitel is a masterful researcher who has an eye for obscure details.

Familiarity with Hildebeitel's other works is a plus to understanding the quite detailed studies in this collection but is not absolutely necessary. The main argument in *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics* is that in order to understand the connections between the regional martial oral epics (such as the Hindi Alha Epic, the Rajastani Pabuji Epic, the Tamil Elder Brothers Story, and the Telegu Palnadu Epic) and the classical Indian epics (the Mahabharata and the Ramayana), it is necessary to understand the ways that Rajput culture and the Rajput Muslim cultures made use of the classical epics to explain and legitimize their social status. Although this study is not directly about the Sanskrit epics, it is valuable reading for those primarily interested in the classical epics since the connections between the Sanskrit epics and the regional martial oral epics provide valuable insights into the continuing cultural impact of the classical traditions. Hildebeitel examines both the influence of the south Indian goddess worship on northern Rajput culture and the influence of Rajput Muslim culture on the development of the heroic narratives in the south.

Hildebeitel is specifically interested in the regional martial epics, which he argues "are a distinctive genre within the larger class of India's oral epics" (6). These regional martial oral epics are "all formed in the same unsettled medieval period (twelfth to fifteenth centuries)" (6). In addition, they all share a number of characteristics with the Draupadi cult Mahabharata, including a regional focus, low status and marginalized local rulers, tension with landed dominant castes, and worship of a local earth goddess. Central characters in these regional tales are often reincarnations of major characters from the Sanskrit epics. One major difference is that the Draupadi cult oral epic ritually reenacts the Mahabharata as a whole on a grand scale while the regional martial oral epics take specific episodes and cast them in a tightly-confined regional cultural and geographical landscape. The regional variations are sometimes turned inside out, as Hildebeitel puts it, making it possible that "winners lose [and] losers win" (7). The plots often pit the local Rajput resistance leader against the exterior power structure ending with martyrdom for the hero.

Hildebeitel reviews previous scholarship regarding the regional martial epics and is quite critical of many of the conclusions of these studies regarding the connections between the regional martial epics and the Sanskrit epics. One of the things that he finds missing in most of these other studies is the recognition that the regional martial epics are generally connected to the classical Sanskrit epics via intermediate regional folk versions of the epics that often focus only on specific incidents rather than the epic narrative as a whole.

In addition to a close look at the development of the Hindi Alha Epic, the Rajastani Pabuji Epic, the Tamil Elder Brothers Story, and the Telegu Palnadu Epic, Hildebeitel also examines the Ballad of Raja Desing from the Gingee Fort region. In this interesting collection of essays, Hildebeitel includes an examination of the severed head motif as seen in the folk Mahabharatas around a character known as Barbarika, Aravan, or Kuttantavar in different regions.

Hugh M. FLICK, Jr.  
Yale University  
New Haven, CT

### *SRI LANKA*

YOUNG, F. R. and G. S. B. SENANAYAKA. *The Carpenter-Heretic: A Collection of Buddhist Stories about Christianity from 18th-Century Sri Lanka*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Karunaratne & Sons, Ltd., 1998. ix + 249 pages. Facsimile of text, indexes. Paper Rp500; US\$25.00. Hard cover Rp750; US\$35.00.

This book gives a translation and transliteration of a Sinhala manuscript incised on palm leaves in the eighteenth century (1762), which is presently preserved in the Nevill collection of Sinhala manuscripts at the India Office Library, London. Besides the translation and the transliteration, the book contains a very comprehensive introduction to the manuscript, which provides an analysis and a commentary that greatly helps the reader to correctly interpret the text.

Though subtitled "A Collection of Buddhist Stories on Christianity from 18th-Century Sri Lanka" what the collection contains are actually anti-Christian and antimissionary stories. There are seven stories in all. The story from which the book's title is taken is the last, namely, "The Carpenter-Heretic." To comprehend how Christianity is subjected to ridicule in them, a glance at that last story will suffice. The main character in it is the Son of the Carpenter, a resident of Portugal claiming to be the son of God. It must be remembered here that Portugal is the first European country to colonize Sri Lanka. It was Portugal that first spread Christianity in its Roman Catholic form.

After choosing disciples... the Son of the Carpenter went to Portugal and said, "I used to live in the heavenly world, but I was lent by my Father to save you. I am his Son, but since I was told that I could not save you if I remained in the form of a God, I assumed the form of a man." After uttering lies like this in every country, the Son of the Carpenter settled down in Portugal for good.

"We don't know what kind of food and drink are appropriate for gods like you," said the people of Portugal respectfully. "We know exactly what kind of food and exactly how much a god needs" replied the Son of the Carpenter. "Bring us some liquor, goats, sheep and cattle. If you bring the animals lifeless, you won't incur any sin."

Beginning to believe that the Son of the Carpenter and his disciples were really gods, the people of Portugal brought liquor, goats, sheep and cattle to them in the forest. The outcaste people of that country believed that the Son of the Carpenter and his disciples