

as the masks are worshiped, and it includes the performance of applying make-up in front of the audience. Furthermore, the god addresses members of the audience directly through the actor. At the same time, as in Rāmalīlā, the audience addresses the god in the person of the actor. This latter phenomenon may well be one of the main distinctions between ritual and theater, or at least classical Sanskrit theater, which is based on the clear distinction between fiction and reality. As I will show elsewhere the function of the play within the play in Bhavabhūti's *Uttarāmacarita* discussed by Jaspart-Pansu is precisely the fictionalization of this distinction.

Tarabout (269–99) deals with the function of comic scenes within ritual, which have been taken to imply skepticism with regard to the powers of the gods addressed in the ritual or of the ritual itself. By discussing several examples of such scenes, Tarabout shows that something else may be the matter. For instance, clowns performing an imitation of *pūjā* simultaneously with the actual *pūjā*, while underlining the unperturbedness of the *pūjāri*, averts the evil eye of the spectators. In another example, the *bhūta* ridiculed in the comic scene in the end becomes the ideal performer of the rite; he symbolizes the devotee who despite poor instructions is able to complete the sacrifice.

Tarabout distinguishes various presentations of god: a figure in a comic scene; a passive icon to be worshiped (Rāmlīlā); a living image in a *tableaux vivante* (Cāttaṅ festival); and god addressing the audience through a medium. Tarabout sees in these situations different degrees of incarnation that would each have its own specific function in the ritual, the basic distinction being between the harmless passive/living image, on the one hand, and the uncontrollable, potentially harmful possessed person, on the other. This distinction is supported by stories collected by Tarabout about incidences in which the border between play-acting and real life was crossed, to which may be added the one of Sītā acting Sītā in Bhavabhūti's *Uttarāmacarita*.

With three exceptions, all contributions are in French. The articles are accompanied by brief English summaries. Nevertheless, some seem to have been addressed primarily to a French-speaking audience, if not by their topic then by a restricted use of publications available on the topic at hand in languages other than French. Leday's article on Kathakaḷi is a case in point; it makes attempt to match the given description with the one by Zarrilli in the American publication referred to above. Note in this connection, for instance, the *tōḷayam* dance mentioned by Leday on page 161, which is absent from Zarrilli's description. In Carrin's description of the *bhūta* cult, we hear of a kind of football match and a quarrel about a pot without any attempt to explain the meanings of the incidents or a reference to the literature where we may find the desired information. In the latter case, a simple reference to Heidrun Brückner's *Fürstliche Feste*, Wiesbaden 1995, pages 220 and 217ff respectively, might have done. Omissions such as these, in combination with some of the points mentioned above, place the book as a whole virtually outside the ongoing scholarly discussion.

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HASAN-ROKEM, GALIT and DAVID SHULMAN, Editors. *Untying the Knot: On Riddles and Other Enigmatic Modes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. x + 329 pages. Author and subject index. Paper £25.00; ISBN 0-19-510856-6. Cloth £65.00; ISBN 0-19-510186-3.

Among the many types of folklore, riddles have long been the object of scholarly attention and count among the earliest and most widespread manifestations of worded thought. The book

under review presents eighteen contributions on “riddles and other enigmatic modes” by authors from the USA, Israel, India, and Finland. Not all the contributors are folklorists; they hail from various disciplines of learning, viz.: folklore and anthropology, semiotics, comparative religion, history of religions, Indian and South Asian studies, Chinese and East Asian studies, Hebrew, Kannada and English poetry, theater arts, psychoanalysis, mathematics, etc. So this collection of essays offers a varied and fascinating view of the riddle from different perspectives. In editing these previously unpublished essays, Hasan-Rokem and Shulman divided them into five parts, according to contents and objects:

1. General and Theoretical. Four essays: “Introduction” by Galit Hasan-Rokem and David Shulman; “Riddles and Their Use” by Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj; “Traps of Transformation: Theoretical Convergences between Riddle and Ritual” by Don Handelman; “I’ll Give You Three Guesses’: The Dynamics of Genre in the Riddle Tale” by Richard Baumann.
2. Hebrew Riddles. Three essays: “Toward a Theory of the Literary Riddle” by Dan Pagis; “‘Spinning Threads of Sand’: Riddles as Images of Loss in the Midrash on Lamentations” by Galit Hasan-Rokem; “A King, a Queen, and the Riddle Between: Riddles and Interpretation in a Late Midrashic Text” by Dina Stein.
3. Enigmatic Modes in India. Five essays: “The Yakṣa’s Question” by David Shulman; “When Is a Riddle Not a Riddle? Some Comments on Riddling and Related Poetic Devices in Classical Sanskrit” by Richard Salomon; “Why an Allama Poem Is Not a Riddle: An Anthological Essay” by A. K. Ramanujan; “Texture and Authority: Telugu Riddles and Enigmas” by Velcheru Narayana Rao; “Enigmas of Sexual Masquerade in Hindu Myths and Tales” by Wendy Doniger.
4. Chinese Riddling. Two essays: “Riddle and Enigma in Chinese Civilization” by Andrew H. Plaks; “Riddles in ‘The Dream of the Red Chamber’” by Irene Eber.
5. Notes from the West. Four essays: “One Voice and Many Legs: Oedipus and the Riddle of the Sphinx” by Freddie Rokem; “Myth as Enigma: Cultural Hermeneutics in Late Antiquity” by Guy G. Stroumsa; “Squaring the Circle” by Ilan Amit; “Connecting through Riddles, or the Riddle of Connecting” by Shlomith Cohen.

An afterword by the editors, followed by author and subject indexes, conclude this remarkable and outstanding collection of essays on the subject of riddles and enigmas that, no doubt, will receive a warm welcome by all lovers of this unique folklore genre.

As I myself had been busy with collecting Tamil riddles from oral tradition during the past years, my special attention was drawn to Velcheru Narayana Rao’s contribution on Telugu riddles and enigmas, the particular merit of which lies in its offering a very comprehensive survey of Telugu riddling. On the Basis of my own collection of Tamil riddles, which incorporates more than 600 riddles and will be published along with translations and commentary in due course, I was struck when reading Narayana Rao’s highly informative essay by the fact that for nearly all the riddles etc. quoted by him, including those with overtly obscene meanings, there exist more or less direct counterparts in my Tamil riddle collection. This, however, is not to be thought odd, since Andhra Pradesh, the home of the Telugu riddles, is a neighbor of Tamilnadu. Nevertheless, the parallels between the Telugu and Tamil riddles and the identical thought behind them are striking and enthralling.

Let me conclude with a few Tamil riddles that show a correspondence to Telugu specimens quoted by Narayana Rao on pages 192 and 193:

aṭarnta kāmukkuḷ āyiram ku’ñcuḷ. atu eṇṇa? pen.

In a dense forest, there are a thousand young ones. What are they? Headlice.

aḱaṅṅra ḱāṭṭin naṭuvē oru pātai. atu enna? vaḱiṭu.

A path in the midst of a wide forest. What is it? The parting of the hair.

paṭṭuḱ ḱampaḷiyai virittu pōṭṭu

paḱḱattu viṭṭu peṅṅiḷaiyai iḷuttup pōṭṭu

atu ayyō ayyō enṅratu nāṅ āccu āccu enṅēṅ. atu enna? vaḷaiyal pōtuvatu.

After having spread a silken cloth, I pulled a girl of the neighboring house (by her hand). She exclaimed: "Alas! Alas!" I said: "It's done! It's done!" What is it? Fixing bangles on a girl's wrist.

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NEPAL

ANDRÁS HÖFER. *Tamang Ritual Texts II: Ethnographic Studies in the Oral Tradition and Folk-Religion of an Ethnic Minority in Nepal*. Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung, Bd. 66. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997. ISBN 3-515-03852-3.

This volume is the third in a series by Höfer devoted to the ritual texts and folk religion of the Western Tamang, the earlier volumes being *Tamang Ritual Texts I* (HÖFER 1981) and *A Recitation of the Tamang Shaman in Nepal* (HÖFER 1994), which I reviewed for *Asian Folklore Studies* some time ago (SAMUEL 1997).

Tamang Ritual Texts II has the substantial virtues and, on the whole, minor defects of its predecessors. It allows the reader detailed access to the fascinating and significant world of ideas and ritual practices found among the Western Tamang of Dhāding district. These people have borrowed and incorporated extensively from the Tibetan Buddhist high culture to the north and the Hindu high culture to the south and east, but also transformed and reshaped their borrowings to form part of a folk culture that has its own integrity. As in previous volumes, Höfer provides detailed description rather than sophisticated theory, but this has the advantage of allowing the reader relatively direct access to Höfer's field data. Some questions regarding the nature of Höfer's transcriptions and interpretations remain, and will be discussed at the end of the review.

The new volume has two parts. Part One contains four songs sung at the Dasaī ceremony. Dasaī is a version of the very widespread Hindu celebration of Dussehra or Durgā Pūjā, but it is also an important ceremony of the Nepalese state. Its political significance in Nepal centers on the blessing given to the king through a *ṭiḱā* mark applied by court Brahmins, and then transmitted by the king to his relatives and high officials. These pass it on throughout the entire administrative system, thus reconfirming each of the officials in his position.

Dasaī rituals have received considerable attention from scholars of Nepal (Höfer lists several studies in a footnote on page 2), and Höfer's description of the local version of Dasaī provides an important witness to the ritual mediation of state power in a highland village at some distance both physically and culturally from Kathmandu. Issues such as the identity of the local official (*mukḱhiyā*) who hands out the *ṭiḱā*, and the accommodations that this largely Buddhist-orientated society has to make to incorporate the sacrifice of buffalos to a Hindu goddess, are dealt with in some detail, and will be useful for scholars wishing to explore the