

NAIKAR, BASAVARAJ S. *The Folk Theatre of North Karnataka*. Dharwad, India: Prasranga Karnataka University, 1996. v + 116 pages. Select bibliography, b/w illustrations. Paper US\$10.00.

The northern region of Karnataka State, India, includes the districts of Dharwad, Belgaum, Bijapur, Bellary, Raichur, Gulbarg, and Bidar. Naikar has compiled an intriguing and unique guide to the theater forms of this area, including when and where a visitor is most likely to encounter them.

He divides North Karnataka theater into two main categories: street plays and open-air (uncovered) stage plays. Street plays concentrate on improvisations and simple themes; open air plays present more elaborate plots. He divides street players into professionals (*veśāgara*) and amateurs (*pagaraṇa*) and open-air plays into “grand plays” (*doḍḍāta*),¹ “small plays” (*saṇṇāta*),² and “Krishna and the parijata flower” (*Śrī Kṛṣṇa Pārijāta*). With the exception of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Pārijāta*, all roles are played by males.

Within these divisions individual forms are distinguishable by their presentation structure, treatment of subject matter, dialogue, and their use of music, dance, masks, mime, costumes, and makeup. Some forms can be further differentiated by the community of people who perform them. For example, the presentational structure of *doḍḍāta* includes specific songs of praise to deities that must precede the presentation of the play. A unique character, Sārathi, must introduce major characters through ritual questioning. There is an offstage chorus to encourage actors and to provide background sounds for action taking place on stage, such as chariot movements during a battle.

The subject matters of the plays range from ancient religious and historical works to social issues, folk legends, and more recent devotional movements. Some theater forms have written texts that include dialogue; others have written texts but the dialogue is extemporaneous. In others, actors are inspired by the subject matter but create the story and dialogue as they perform. Actors speak both in prose and in poetic meter.

Music is an integral part of all the forms. Some performances include only South Indian (Karnatic) music or North Indian (Hindustani) music. Some have a unique blend of these two styles, such as singing in Karnatic style preceding dialogue for females and in Hindustani style preceding dialogue for males. In street plays traditional folk songs are incorporated. Accompanying instruments include drums (South Indian *maddulam* or *maddaḷam*, and *dappu* and North Indian *tablā* and *duggā*), wind instruments (*mukhavīṇe*, *sanādi*, and *sāj*), stringed instruments (*swarakāyi* and violins), small cymbals, and harmonium.

Dance, though an integral part of the presentation, is generally simple and inspired by traditional dances of the region. Costumes vary from the simplest apparel, made from whatever materials the performers can find, to elaborate wooden crowns and decorated flowing robes. The basic makeup color for most characters is light pink with the exception of Rama, Krishna, and Shiva, who wear blue. How good or bad a male character is can often be recognized by the size and style of his mustache. Some forms of both street and open-air plays use masks.

In the sections devoted to the different theater forms, the author discusses the history, development, and degeneration of particular theater forms, compares them with other Indian theater forms, and gives the insights and opinions he and others have about the current status of each theater form.

Naikar also provides legends and facts surrounding the plays and their authors, a synopsis of plays, and translations of songs and dialogues. In Naikar’s opinion, the two most popular plays are *Sangyā-Bālya* and *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Pārijāta*. *Sangyā-Bālya* (Sannata) is based on a real incident that occurred in North Karnataka around 1850. The play dramatizes a cuck-

olding through trickery and the resultant revenge.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Pārijāta depicts the discord between two of Krishna's wives caused by Krishna's giving the pārijāta flower to one wife and not to the other. The issue is resolved happily. According to Naikar, this play is in a category of its own because females play female roles and because an actress popularized it.

Naikar's book abounds with interesting information and tantalizes the reader's desire to know more. Unfortunately, the book contains typographical errors; it also deserves better printing on quality paper, and better photograph reproduction. These deficiencies, however, do not ultimately detract from the value of the unique information provided by Naikar.

NOTES

1. *Doḍḍāta*, which means grand or big play, is also known by several other names: a) *mūḍaḷapāya* (eastern style) to distinguish it from the western Karnataka coastal theater of *yakṣagāna*; b) *hire āṭa* which, also means grand play; and c) *bayalāṭa* (play performed outside).

2. *Sannata* (meaning little play) was previously called *dappināṭa* (meaning a play performed to the accompaniment of a drum called *dappu*).

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KURPERSHOEK, P. MARCEL, editor and translator. *Oral Poetry and Narratives from Central Arabia 2: The Story of a Desert Knight*. The Legend of Šlēwīḥ al-ʿAtāwi and Other ʿUtaybah Heroes. Studies in Arabic Literature, SAL, 017/2. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995. xiv + 512 pages. Map, plates, appendices of examples of scansion, variations of readings, and place names, glossary, bibliography. Cloth Fl. 190.00 or US\$108.75; ISBN 90-04-10102-0; ISSN 0169-9903.

This multifaceted work by the scholar-diplomat P. M. Kurpershoek (the second volume of a trilogy) is a collection of sixty-one field texts recorded during the 1980s, and a study of oral literature (verbal art). The primary data involved may or may not be judged as "folklore." The focus for most of the texts is the poems composed by and the narratives told about two ʿUtaybah tribe chieftains who acquired fame (and infamy) as "warriors" and raiders against other tribes. The stage for the legendary events is Najd; the medium of expression is tribal-dialectical Arabic (which is to be differentiated from social-class dialect). Although the time period is the recent past (1850s), the personae, values, and events—especially tribal raids—may be perceived as characteristic of that desert region during a period extending from the pre-Islamic era (*Jahiliyyah*) to the early twentieth century (when it became possible for a central government to counter the Bedouins' ability to place themselves beyond governmental reach). Elaborating on the thesis presented in volume one, Kurpershoek prefaces the present volume with a discussion of "the Poet and the Rāwi"—or the originator of a poem and the transmitter from memory of that poem (3). He reiterates the predominance of orality in Bedouin culture and examines the issues (but not the processes) involved in the "Transmission of Poetry" (10). Two social institutions central to what may be described as the poetic tradition are presented: "Tribal Raiding in the Past" and "Today's Majlis"—a social gathering where tribal news and events are reported and commented on in the course of