

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-dialectal 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

“conversation” (18). Since the *majlis* (which the author equates with the “European salon”) is a place for men, the materials, with few exceptions, are predominantly male-bound. Highlights of the public life-histories (but not the personal daily living routines) of the main characters are given, often in conjunction with events of significance for the poetic-reporting (i.e., the *munāsabah*, or occasion, in which a poem was “said”). To give a fuller context within which the central thesis may be perceived, Kurpershock includes compositions by poets of a stature that is somewhat lower than that of his key composers. Thus, poems by Sons of Šlĕwīḥ (92) and poetess *Ḍuwi`Atiyyah* (93) are also given as ingredients of a broader context.

These depictions of Bedouin sociocultural institutions lead to an extensive linguistic study and analysis of the texts. Under the title “Language and Prosody” (110–35), phonetic, morphological, syntactic and stylistic features of the poems are treated. Following the exhaustive “Introduction,” the original field texts, transcribed in transliterated tribal-dialectical Arabic, are given along with English translations on opposite pages (142–315). The texts are grouped into three clusters according to their source. Major pieces are assigned identifying extra-textual titles such as: “The Beginning of a Raid Commander’s Career” (142); “The Desert Knight” (158); “A Face Marked by the Sun”—a euphemism for “ugly”—(168); “The Death of Šlĕwīḥ” (216); and “A Lower-Class Bedouin”—an account of how a young girl through a food gift obliged the raid leader to protect her father, who was ill-equipped for war (232). A substantial portion of the work is assigned to a “Glossary” in which words that occurred in the texts are treated lexicographically (317, 324–468). The arrangement of the transliterated words follows the style of Arabic dictionaries of alphabetical listing by a word’s root (fā`ayn/lām), thus allowing for the advantage of keeping a word and all its derivatives together (yet requiring a level of competence in Arabic that might not be readily available to the non-Arabist). The volume concludes with appendices (469–508) in which examples of scansion and variant readings of the poems, place-names, and a map are provided.

Through the texts and accompanying contextual data, Kurpershock offers a wealth of ethnographic information on various aspects of contemporary Bedouin social life and culture. The data are especially useful in highlighting the passing away of desert nomadism, as evidenced by the fact that in the vast expanses of the Arabian interior, movable tents today are outnumbered by stationary houses (3).

Clearly Kurpershock sought accuracy in his translations; the English texts are lucid and make for enjoyable reading. Yet, there are instances in which the translated text seems not to fully coincide with the Arabic original. Some of the incongruities between Arabic concepts and their English language counterparts may be philosophical or subject to “diplomatic” interpretation: e.g., the act of overlooking ill-omen by Šlĕwīḥ as a “scornful rejection of superstitious beliefs and leaving the skeptics shamefaced and biting their nails in regret” (66); or viewing a raider (“warrior”) as chivalrous for rewarding a female victim by returning what he had just looted from her, because she flattered him (152–55). There are also less subjective incongruities that can be illustrated by two examples. First, expressing his personal sentiment on how things happened, the *rāwī* of the “Death of Šlĕwīḥ” stated: “*fa-hāda ḥaḡīḡat al-amr; al-ḥaḡīḡi murrāh*,” which is translated as “This is the truth of the matter, the truth and nothing but the truth” (220, 221). For the present reviewer, the Arabic seems to state: “*al-ḥaḡīḡi [i.e., al-ḥaḡīḡah] murrāh*” (rather than “*al-ḥaḡīḡi murrāh*”); thus, the translation should be “This is the truth; the truth is bitter” (or perhaps: “This is the truth: the bitter truth”); the latter translation would require that the Arabic be “*al-ḥaḡīḡi al-murrāh*”. The reference here is to the fact (“truth”) that the dreaded Šlĕwīḥ was slain in a cursory manner at the hands of an inexperienced young boy. Second, the statement “*ma yingīti rizḡ allāh illi nuwa bih*” is translated as “God grants a living to those he sees fit,” and as “God grants means of subsistence to those he sees fit” (150, §031 032). Considering the fact that the verb *yanqati`* (root:

*qī*, scale: *yanfa'il*) is not transitive, the Arabic seems to state: "God's boon (or, one's God[-sent] livelihood) does not cease for him who **intends** to act by Him (i.e., act by God)." The intention is on the part of man, not the part of God (see "Motif" below).

As is the case with most literary studies of Arabic folk culture, there is absence of specificity with reference to folkloristic terminology. From Kurpershoek's specifications, and the extensive bibliographic sources he cites, there can be no doubt that the narrative genre he is dealing with is the *sālifāh* and related categories of "conversational narratives"; these may include the historical legend, historical anecdote, or the "personal experience narrative memorate, pre-legend" (EL-SHAMY 1980, xlvi). Yet there is general ambiguity in designating the genre to which an account may be assigned; for example, on page 67 the terms "narrative," "tale," "story," "legend," and "myth" are applied to refer to the same materials. Similarly, with reference to the act of adopting a new branding iron, which Kurpershoek compares to the signet ring of the Western aristocracy (69), the term "legendary" is used, but the same act is also labeled "myth of origin which validates...status." Not every etiological account of how a practice or social institution originated is necessarily "mythological."

Kurpershoek's work is refreshingly free of "theoretical" prejudices. His research approach may be characterized as inductive, and his field method as that of "a participant observer." Still, the work offers invaluable insights and commentaries of technical relevance on the processes of collecting, documenting, and interpreting field materials (typically referred to in folklore scholarship as "research skills"). Theoretical conclusions are empirically deduced as a consequence of this objective approach. On collecting techniques, for example, differences between one informant's capabilities and another's in relation to the collector, audience, and recording equipment are graphically outlined (111, 112). Collecting by presenting potential informants with texts to which they would naturally react is described (50, 175). Students of fieldwork would benefit from observing how Kurpershoek explained to his Bedouin hosts where Western countries lie in terms of *sāddahs*, or "day's march of a loaded camel train" (49). On matters of function, Kurpershoek infers from actual situations the functions of poetry: to promote "honor," which is akin to "prestige" in Western society (5), self-esteem (80), and self-glorification (89); to keep alive the memories of past events and help to perpetuate the shared cultural heritage of the tribes (4); to provide a medium for "fervent prayers to God to send down his bounty and save the Bedouins from *ad-dahr*" (I:32). Another theoretical implication that might be inferred from Kurpershoek's data is how a listener has a part in ensuring the "correctness" of data offered by a narrator (99–100). The informant's statement given in this regard encapsulates Walter Anderson's postulate as to how folk narratives gain and maintain stability through the participation of the audience (EL-SHAMY 1976, 153–54).

From a folklorist's perspective, *Oral Poetry and Narratives from Central Arabia* would benefit by expanding its circle of comparisons to include folkloric data and traditions of other kinship and ethnic groups in the Arab world. It would also benefit from making use of devices that identify folk traditions, such as "motif" and (to a lesser extent) "tale-type." For example, the issues involved in the translation of "God willing we will rob them" (67), cited above, could have been perceived clearer in the broader context of motif N385.1, "Person has successive misfortunes while making plans because he forgot to say 'If God wills'" (THOMPSON 1955–58), and tale type 830C, "If God Wills..." (AARNE and THOMPSON 1961).

This work by Kurpershoek is an outstanding contribution to the study of Arabic and Islamic literatures and cultures. It is bound to play a key role in the study of Hijāzī, Bedouin desert culture. This is so not only because of the excellence and precision of its research approach, but also because of the fascination with which settled populations view Arab-Bedouin exotic ways and lifestyle, and the devotion that they have for Najd and Hijaz as "holy lands."

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## AMERICAS

REICHEL-DOLMATOFF, GERARDO. *Yuruparí: Studies of an Amazonian Foundation Myth*. Cambridge, Mass.: Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University, 1995. xxxviii + 300 pages. Photographs, summary, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$24.95; ISBN 0-945454-08-2

This book consists of four parts: a foreword by Lawrence E. Sullivan; an introduction that reflects on the author's research among the Tukanoan in the Vaupés territory in southeastern Colombia; and two chapters that present and analyze ethnographic data about the Yuruparí. The book is undoubtedly a product of indefatigable field research.

What makes a distinguished artisan distinguished are his established techniques for manufacturing products that will remain valuable over time. Such manufacturing techniques are normally supported by industrial secrets. As is commonly known, Edmund Leach once compared anthropology to art. An anthropologist's work bears a close parallel to that of an artisan. Leach also points out, in a different context, that because a first-rate monograph written by an anthropologist of the first order is normally published only as a finished product, the book by itself seldom reveals the secrets of the author's mastery with words.

We cannot, of course, ignore the recent influence of the anthropological critique in writing monographs, but it is unlikely that the privileged position of the ethnographer will quickly change even if his or her ethnographic data and descriptions are exposed to many persistent and critical checks. In view of this situation, *Yuruparí* is an exceptional book about the analysis of myths and methods for studying them. The book is written by a first-class anthropologist, the late Dr. Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, and demonstrates the author's "artisan-ship," from collecting oral traditions to translating and analyzing them.

As soon as we set foot in Reichel-Dolmatoff's atelier for myth analysis by reading this book, we are overwhelmed by the items in our master's toolbox; this includes Tukanoan dictionaries, countless recorded tapes, exceptional linguistic ability, and a profound knowledge of the fauna and flora of the Amazonian rain forest. The author summarized the foundations for his own studies as follows: