Nepal and their cosmological context. Further, showing the similarities and differences between *dhāmī* and *jhāṅgarī*, both of whom rely on systematic spirit possession as a core part of their practices, he concludes that the *jhāṅgarī* is a shaman as originally defined by Shirokogoroff, while the *dhāmī* is a "medium." He also reveals that *jhāṅgarī* cannot be regarded as a simple derivative or a historic trace of "classical Asiatic shamanism."

In chapter 4 Maskarinec uncovers the gap between the text and a shaman's performances. He describes in detail one particular ceremony called "killing *siyo*," a ritual performed when a family or individual is persistently troubled by a *siyo*, a fragile and detachable part of one's life-force. Maskarinec thereby also shows that a performed text can diverge from the text as memorized by the shaman, and that the ways of performing a ritual contained in a text can be closely followed even when they are omitted from a particular ceremony. It is revealed that Nepali shamans endeavor to follow exactly a set of directions for creating order, even as they create the conditions for changing it (152).

Maskarinec further examines the private and secretive sides of their practice, analyzing various *mantar*s. Showing that shamanic *mantar*s are intelligible and sense-filled, he argues they fulfill the same purposes as the public texts: the reconstruction of orders in the present world. He suggests that *mantar*s function to force the everyday world to suit the world as expressed in language. Thus he shows that private texts are not essentially different from the publicly recited texts.

Finally, examining the shaman initiation and the death ceremonies for a shaman, where the same texts are used, Maskarinec shows the parallels and inversions between these two events. The relevant texts and the rituals contribute to the continuity of shamanic practices. He also contrasts informal accounts that shamans offer of their early experiences with the polished formulations of the texts, and demonstrates ways that these texts themselves transform shaman "selves." Thus he reveals that shaman texts create shamans.

In this way, Maskarinec succeeds in revealing what ritual speech and ritual action contribute to healing throughout the book. He finds that the ritual speech of the *jhāṅgarī* vitalizes and permeates the particular form of life as well as a shaman's "self." In the studies of shamanism so far the shaman's speech has been often considered unintelligible or meaningless, but through this study we can clearly learn how ritual language constructs a public universe. It is fully understood that language is not only the technical means by which we can inquire whether reality is intelligible, but also the surrounding vehicle in which we investigate the relations between thought, action, and reality.

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ASHTON-SIKORA, MARTHA BUSH, and ROBERT P. SIKORA. *Krishnattam*. New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1993. xiv + 185 pages. 15 color and 5 b/w plates, map, glossary, bibliography, index. N.p.

Krishnattam is a ritualistic theater form of Kerala, India. The textual basis for the drama form is the *Krishnagiti* [Songs of Krishna], composed in Sanskrit verse in 1652 by Manaveda, a member of the ruling family who in 1655 became Zamorin (as the ruler of the small kingdom of Calicut in northern Kerala was called). Legend has it that the *Krishnagiti* was composed under a particular tree in the Kutumbulam temple (home to another renowned theater form,

Kudiyattam). When the tree later died, Manaveda had a sculpture of Krishna carved from its wood. This very image, resembling the vision of Krishna that Manaveda had while composing his songs and providing the basis for the costume of Krishna in Krishnattam, is even now located at the Tale temple in Calicut.

In this slim book we can follow the history of this art form from its inception to the present, and with remarkable completeness and critical objectivity. More than that, we are invited to accompany the author through her own discovery of the form. Chapter 1 follows Ashton-Sikora's fifteen-year association with Krishnattam, from the excitement and enthusiasm of seeing her first performance in May 1970, through her several subsequent excursions to Kerala to see all of the eight plays in the Krishnattam repertoire, to 1985 when she accompanied the troupe on their U.S. tour during the Festival of India. And rarely does a book so completely inform us not only about the art form in question but also about the people and sources from which its history and stylistic modifications descend.

Chapters 2 through 5 present this history, culled mostly from oral reports elicited from elderly performers and previous managers, and from legends and documents gathered at the temples and homes of the royal family. From references we learn that the earliest documented Krishnattam performance was in 1694, at a military-cum-cultural tournament sponsored by the Zamorin in his small kingdom's centrally located town of Tirunavayi, where it competed with a variety of storytelling and theater forms, athletic competitions, and a trade fair. It is not clear, however, whether Krishnattam was staged and costumed then as it is today. In this area of Kerala a number of theater forms (including Ashtapadiyattam, Kalarippayattu, Kathakali, Kudiyattam, Pavakkuttu leather puppets, Cakyar Kuttu and Nannar Kuttu storytelling, and more) have coexisted over the centuries, sharing patrons and audiences and a repertoire of dance styles, costume styles, and acting techniques. Although each form strives to distinguish itself—primarily in terms of its textual base and particular details of costuming and staging—each also draws from the common pool of Kerala's art forms, providing all with a common aesthetic sensibility.

Traditionally, Krishnattam was performed only at temples, palaces, and the houses of elite families, and was sponsored entirely by the Zamorin of Calicut. Tied to the patronage of the Zamorin family, Krishnattam declined over the centuries as the family lost control of the territories, first to Muslim rulers, then to the British, and finally to the independent nation of India. In 1957, under Marxist government rule in Kerala, the Zamorin was forced to give up his patronage of the art and he disbanded the troupe. Responsibility for maintaining the art fell on the Krishna temple. The few remaining artists formed a school in order to recruit young performers. A. C. G. Raja, the troupe's director, arranged performances outside of Kerala for the first time in the history of the art. Raja took further steps to popularize the art within Kerala as well, including holding performances outside the temple and at new locations, broadening support for its seldom-performed episodes, and reviving lost aspects of its aesthetic tradition.

By the end of the 1970s the troupe's fortunes had completely turned around. Now performing over 200 performances annually within India, the troupe was asked in 1978 by the government of India to perform in France, Italy, Germany, the UK, Holland, and Switzerland. It has since been abroad several more times and has been telecast at home. The key to success was the ability of this once royal ritualistic drama to adapt to modern Indian society, economy, and culture. Starting with the change of audience, the changes to the art have affected all aspects, from costume and staging to roles and dance style. But, as Ashton-Sikora remarks, "in these times when many art forms are being popularized and commercialized to their detriment, Krishnattam...seems to be appealing to a wider audience without sacrificing its high standards" (54).

The author's interest in various aspects of this drama testify to her own involvement with, and love of, theater, and to her experienced appreciation of technique, dance steps, music, costuming, and all that goes into performance. She, as much as anyone involved in the history of Krishnattam, knows well the deep frustration of theater politics and the various forms of self-interested interference created by those who have not acquired an inner knowledge of the art. She covers it all as only an insider might—the training (chapter 6), the traditional performance from setup and preliminary rituals (chapter 7) through the main attraction (chapter 8) to the concluding rituals. She even includes, as a performer also might, the hard work that goes into a life devoted to an art and the hardships that it can bring, and has a full chapter entitled "The Future of Krishnattam: Artists' Opinions and Suggestions."

Ashton-Sikora writes in a fine, simple, unpretentious style, remarkable for its descriptive clarity. All of the chapters are enriched by her own academic training in theater as well as by her familiarity with Indian dance-drama traditions gained as a student of Yakshagana, another regional drama style found along the western coast to the north of Kerala, which shares many features with Krishnattam. Appendices (ten in all) provide synopses of the eight plays, some transcribed dialogue, historical and biographical notes on the prominent persons and places in Krishnattam history, and ethnographic notes on the traditional locations of the performance.

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BRÜCKNER, HEIDRUN, LOTHAR LUTZE, AND ADITYA MALIK, Editors. *Flags of Fame: Studies in South Asian Folk Culture*. South Asian Studies 27. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, 1993. xiii + 503 pages. Plates, general index, index of South Asian terms. Cloth DM/sFr 176.—; ISBN 3-515-06683-7.

Fame is what people compete for at the Chinakkattur Puram and other similar festivals in Kerala. "Fame is the only prize the participants may obtain," argues Tarabout (90). Participants in the Himalayan ball games described by Zoller strive for the ball, or "head," which serves as a metaphor for prestige. What the title of *Flags of Fame* implicitly signifies are thematically related oppositions of folk/text, king/ascetic, and fame/liberation, with a stress on the former. The papers by Tarabout and Zoller resonate with the image of *flags* of fame,[1] as do, to a lesser extent, Sontheimer and Malik's papers on god as king; Burghart's paper on the use of praise by genealogists; and Dasgupta's paper on subversive minority discourse. Nevertheless, the cultural image of *flags* suggested by the title is somewhat misleading in a double sense. First, it is only Tarabout and Zoller who explicitly deal with the theme of people striving for fame or *flag*. Second, and more importantly, understanding *flag* as a metaphor for fame misses the point: it hinders rather than helps efforts to develop theories on the folk representations and understandings of *flag* in South Asia. In South India, for example, *flag* is a fetish that embodies superhuman power (*shakti*). Hence when people strive for *flag* they strive for fame *and* power.

Flags of Fame is the product of several seminars and a conference held at Heidelberg University in 1988 and 1989 on the theme "South Asian Folklore: Regional Varieties, Modes of Transmission and Performance." Indeed, what characterizes this volume is its Heidelberg connections: eight out of the fifteen contributors have either studied or taught at Heidelberg