

California Press.

DIRKS, Nicholas B.

1996 Reading culture: Anthropology and textualization of India. In *Culture/contexture: Explorations in anthropology and literary studies*, E. Valentine Daniel and Jeffrey M. Peck, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press.

UCHIYAMADA Yasushi
Foundation for Advanced Studies on
International Development
Tokyo

SRINIVASAN, R. *Aiyandar's Domain: Political and Social Conditions and Attitudes in Tamil Folk Literature*. Bombay: Research Book Centre, 1993.
iii + 72 pages. References. Paper n.p.; ISBN 81-7287-000-0.

Aiyandar's Domain is an important addition in the storehouse of Indian folk literature, dealing with the social as well as philosophical aspects of a farmer's life. Its insights apply not only to Tamilnadu; the situations and circumstances are almost the same in the agrarian societies of Southeast Asia. The struggle faced by the simple folk in daily life is beautifully mirrored in this slim volume. A spirit of wonder and romance is hidden in Tamil folk songs, sayings, and stories. The amount of wisdom, knowledge, and information (ethnic, historical, economic, political, natural, meteorological, etc.) to be found in oral tradition is amazingly vast. For the nonliterate masses of the countryside these traditions provide education and entertainment.

Srinivasan gracefully presents here the eminent Tamil folklorist, the late S. M. Natesa Sastri, and his collection. Along with stories of kings and commoners there is a description of the political messages, wit, and wisdom of Tenali Raman, the court jester of South India. His stories show that the general public is endowed with an intelligence and native wit that acts as a cushion against the trials of a hard life. Rayar Appaji was a hero-minister in South India in ancient times who had the highest concern for the dharma and for protecting the interests of both the community and the king; his intelligence and kindness are depicted in many popular folktales. The author has classified folktales into *marga* and *desi* varieties. *Marga* stories are formalized, sanscritic, and centered on the royalty. The *desi* stories are less formal native traditions registering the protests of the commoners against kings and their court officials.

Like folktales, the Tamil folk songs are of two types. The shorter ones, called *mangu*, are brief and to the point and deal with everyday life. The longer ones, called *kummi* and *ammanai*, are composed around the themes of kings, chieftains, poligars, and local heroes. In addition, the lifestyle and mannerisms of the British are also popular subjects of political ballads. The physical power of the British, French, Dutch and others is not questioned, but their cruelty and manipulateness are well described.

According to Srinivasan, proverbs help us to better understand ourselves and our prevalent social and political attitudes. In Africa, China, and Persia proverbs are profusely used even in high-class speaking. The same was true of Tamilnadu in olden times.

Again the proverbs are divided into two types, broadly following the classification of stories into *marga* and *desi*. The author says that about forty percent of the proverbs are related to matters of social concern: attitude towards inequality, altruism, family relations, women, age, and hierarchy, as can be seen in such examples as "No sparrow can aspire to be an eagle" or "A lion cub can become porcine by associating with piglets." Such sayings teach us lessons drawn from the vegetable, animal, and natural world.

To demonstrate the universality of the themes, Marathi proverbs are also given in

appendix 1. Appendices 2, 3 and 4 are added to show the beauty of folktales through some illustrative examples. Unfortunately the author does not make it clear as to which sayings, songs, and stories were collected by himself. All seem to have been taken from already published material. Although the book has aroused considerable cultural interest in the life of the ordinary people of Tamilnadu (and the whole of India as well), better work in book binding would surely have made this extremely readable book more valuable to lovers of folklore.

Manju BHATNAGAR
Delhi

WILLIAMS, JOANNA. *The Two-Headed Deer: Illustrations of the Rāmāyaṇa in Orissa*. California Studies in the History of Art 34. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. xiii + 210 pages. 289 b/w illustrations, 12 color plates, maps, tables, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$65.00; ISBN 0-520-08065-3.

The Two-Headed Deer is a beautifully illustrated case study of the tradition of visually portraying the well-known epic tale of Rāma and Sītā in a relatively small geographical region of India. Although this cross-genre case study may be too narrowly focused to appeal to a general audience, scholars of art, literature, and oral-tradition narrative in India will find a great deal to interest them in this clear and concisely written scholarly work.

As a result of the popularity of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in general and of the Vaiṣṇava inclusion of Rāma as an avatar of Viṣṇu in particular, depictions of scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* can be found all over India and Southeast Asia. Temple carvings in stone and wood often include one or more scenes that emphasize Rāma's connection to Viṣṇu; Viṣṇu's ongoing fight against the demons of chaos, such as Ravana, who periodically ensnare the world; or the devotional acts of Rāma's brother Bharata and of his faithful servant Hanumān. Even outside of Vaiṣṇava circles the *Rāmāyaṇa* is a popular and well-known tale.

As an historian of art, Williams is particularly interested in the artists' reasons for producing their work and in the way that they produce it. Her descriptions of the differences in various artists' representations of scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* are among the strongest sections of this excellent study. She demonstrates clearly that the Orissan painters and illustrators were not simply reproducers of fixed pictorial representations but were creators of visual multiforms in a manner similar to the creation of narrative multiforms by oral traditional storytellers. She concludes that the structural frameworks of the pictorial multiforms of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are based on the traditional Indian aesthetic theory of *rāsa*. *Rāsas* are the emotions and moods that are evoked in an audience by a work of visual, dramatic, or narrative art.

Williams discusses a wide range of visual presentations and performances of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Orissa, including temple carvings, dance traditions, shadow theater, and dramatic Rāmlilā performances, but her main focus is on the sequential series of illustrations found on palm-leaf folios, in temple paintings, and on playing cards from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The principal illustrations that she discusses are seven illustrated versions of the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, four illustrated versions of the *Lāvanyavatī* painted by the same illustrator, the temple paintings of Rāma in the Jagannātha Temple in Puri and in the Virāñchi Nārāyaṇa Temple in Buguda, three sets of playing cards that are sequenced according to suit and numerical order, and various cloth paintings. Whenever possible Williams discusses the individual artists and the ways that their styles developed and changed over time.