since musical tone is often used by the performer to mold the sense of the text he performs, be it in verse or in prose). Let us hope that the near future will bring us some of these desiderata in companion volumes to *Aṇṇanmār katai*. This task will keep a host of scholars busy.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of this publication for the investigation of Tamil literature, of Tamil oral and folk literary creativity, and of oral and folk literature in general, nor can we sufficiently express the pleasure it will bring to lovers of literature everywhere.

REFERENCE CITED

BECK, BRENDA E. F.
1982 *The three twins: The telling of a South Indian folk epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

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Note on language:
The author is to be congratulated for this beautifully produced bilingual text and for its idiomatic English translation. The printed Tamil text of the *Aṇṇanmār katai* presents a number of interesting linguistic problems, including dialect and genre-specific features, some familiar from other Tamil oral epics. In general, however, the published (dictated) text — especially the prose passages — reflects an unusually elevated style, morphologically consonant with high/formal Tamil prose. One wonders if this formalized language is not a secondary overlay on the recorded text recited in the longer version — or whether a process of standardization took place either during the "laboratory" dictation or during the process of editing the latter for publication (or at both stages). As it stands, the text is consistently pitched in a more elevated register than even, for example, the *Ponnalakar ennum kallalakar ammanai*, a published chapbook version of the *katai* (R. G. Paty Company, Madras, various printings), though there is no question that the Beck publication is by far the better, more complete text. Any "freezing" and transcription of oral performance inevitably transforms the text, often in far-reaching ways; in the present case these considerations highlight the need to produce a published version of the tapes in the Archive and Research Center for Ethnomusicology in Delhi, which embody the longer 1965 version as recited in its village context over nineteen nights.

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SMITH, MARY CARROLL. *The Warrior Code of India's Sacred Song*. Harvard Dissertations in Folklore and Oral Tradition. New York: Garland Publishing, 1992. vi + 159 pages. Appendix, bibliography. Hardcover US$37.00; ISBN 0–8240–2898–8.

In *The Warrior Code of India's Sacred Song* Mary Carroll Smith addresses a question that has long interested Indologists: What was the original epic story that formed the core of the *Mahābhārata*? Her search was based on an examination of the prosody of the *Mahābhārata*'s stanzas. She first isolated those stanzas that are composed in various kinds of *triṣṭubh* meter (older than the *śloka* meter used in most of the *Mahābhārata*), and discovered 4,500 stanzas — verses in Smith's parlance — equaling 18,000 lines. Of these, 2,000 stanzas (8,000 verses) were "irregular" (having verses with varying quantities of syllables) and similar to the

meter used in the *Ṛgveda*. Smith suggests that these irregular *triṣṭubh* stanzas may contain the basic continuous narrative of the *Mahābhārata* war, from the beginning of the conflict to its bitter end. Later editors have enlarged the epic in oral or in written form and embedded other stories or treatises, so that the main plot became the framework for a whole library. In her appendix (121–56) Smith gives a full list of the various *triṣṭubh* stanzas in all eighteen books of the *Mahābhārata*; in her work, however, she discusses the *triṣṭubh* stanzas of Books 1 to 9 only, with emphasis on the *Bhagavadgītā* (Book 6).

The reviewer is a folklorist, and neither an Indologists nor a Sanskritist; I deal with comparative and semiotic studies of the folktales and epics of various peoples and have some experience in the handling of Biblical texts. Yet from my experience in these fields I dare to opine that Smith has made an important breakthrough: she has opened a wider gate to more exact philological and literary studies of the *Mahābhārata* than we have hitherto had, a breakthrough that will enable scholars to truly master the *Mahābhārata* despite its gigantic size.

Unfortunately, *Mahābhārata* studies are still lacking in basic philological tools. There are, for instance, no English (or German, etc.) scholarly editions of the *Mahābhārata* with commentaries indicating verses and stanzas. Thus the comparatist is unable to verify Smith's argument by finding the *triṣṭubh* stanzas in the prose translation and comparing the core story with other epic stories. *Mahābhārata* scholarship remains encapsuled in its own province. It cannot avail itself of new theoretical developments in humanistic scholarship (both philological and semiotic), since no one can be an expert in two fields (in this case, Indology and the theory of literature). The most an Indologist can do is read one work out of a multitude from another field without knowing the entire context in which the work must be understood; misunderstandings are often the result. Conversely, the comparative philologists and semioticians have not been given the tools that would enable them to work on Indian materials (e.g., the aforementioned translations and commentaries).

Let me give just a small example of the comparatist's problems. Smith mentions that in a certain list of *Mahābhārata* incidents there are three items that do not appear later in the work; these are listed for stanzas 1.1.128, 1.1.29 and 1.1.136 (26). This is a curious fact, and like all curious facts of this sort it may provide important clues about the editor's (or editors') methods and intentions. But since there is no way in which a comparatist can find these stanzas in a continuous prose translation, it becomes impossible to investigate this fact by comparing the work of the *Mahābhārata* editor(s) to, say, the work of the roughly contemporaneous Biblical editor(s).

I have one small point of reservation. It seems debatable that there was an Indo-European epic literature — a lost Indo-European epic or epics — that was ancestral to the classical epics of India and Greece, as Ms. Smith claims time and again (e.g., page 106). Instead, typological similarities seem to be involved: ancient Near Eastern (Sumerian and Semitic) and modern Central Asian (Turkic and Mongolian) epics feature similar qualities. Would it not be time for Indology to join the mainstream of comparatist research?

There are, of course, many more issues raised by Smith in her excellent book. Of them, the reviewer has chosen to concentrate on those points that seem to her to be the author's most important contribution and to touch on the field of Indian classical literature as a whole.

In conclusion, Smith has opened many exciting possibilities for *Mahābhārata* research. Her results show what can be achieved by "dull" philological work. The reviewer hopes that her methods will find followers and that *Mahābhārata* scholarship will thereby become part of multicultural comparative study, to the great benefit of both fields.[1]

NOTE

1. The reviewer thanks David Shulman (Jerusalem) for drawing her attention to Mary Smith's work, and to Smith herself for making this book available to the reviewer.

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