

It is a pity too that the book was not better edited to eliminate its many errors of grammar and spelling. Nonetheless, we must be grateful for this useful addition (including bibliography and glossary) to the English-language literature on the Tai Yuan.

Anthony R. WALKER
The Ohio State University
Columbus

BANGLADESH

ZAMAN, NIAZ. *Princess Kalabati and Other Tales*. Illustrations by Shamarukh Mohiuddin. Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1994. 104 pages. 12 full-page color illustrations. Hardcover TK. 250; ISBN 984-05-1245-5.

Bengal folktales were already being collected and published long before Bengal was divided into Indian West Bengal and independent Bangladesh. The twelve folktales in this volume were selected by Niaz Zaman (associate professor of English at the University of Dhaka) from a larger unpublished collection of folktales in the possession of the Bangla Academy. ZAMAN earlier published a twelve-story collection under the title *Animal Tales of Bangladesh* (1985) — the present volume presents the same tales (with two replaced by new stories more suitable for children), with the express intention of teaching English-speaking children something about the land and culture of Bangladesh.

The language is a simple English, adapted to the Indian standard. It is doubtful, however, whether the book will convey to outsiders a correct picture of present-day Bangladesh. Whereas the great majority of Bangladeshis are now Muslim and in the grip of a strong Islamic fundamentalism, the tales in *Princess Kalabati* tell of Bengal as it was at the time of the medieval Hindu culture, in which Brahmans and Rajputs held power; in which spirits, demons, and fairies were believed to reside in caves, rivers, wells, and trees; and in which animals could speak and often showed more intelligence than human beings.

The author of the book admits that the primary criterion for the selection of the folktales was not their educational value, but their use of animals (or human beings in animal disguise) as the protagonists. If readers of this book expect — and this expectation has been raised by the author herself — that it is especially adapted for the information and enjoyment of children, they are in for a disappointment. The author simply retells her twelve stories, one after the other, as in her first volume. There is no information on or explanation of the folktales, nor any concluding chapter; all the reader is offered is a meager one-page introduction. The author does not even inform us why she selected these particular stories for publication, or who collected them. She does say, though, that not all are from Bangladesh: one is from Assam and another from the Hindu *Panchatantra*. (I can attest that at least one more is also from Assam: "Eri and Suhagi," published in a more complete version by J. BOROOAH [1955].)

But what the author has failed to do, the publisher has attempted to achieve: the margins of each page are attractively decorated with simple drawings of the flora, fauna, and rural life of Bangladesh, and twelve full-page pictures are presented in a style appealing to children.

This volume does not significantly differ from other folktale publications all over India. As far as folklore is concerned, Bangladesh is still a part of India, and of an India in which Hinduism is still the dominant culture and religion. Given the hold of Islam over the thoughts and beliefs of present-day Bangladeshis, it will not be long before all reminders of the old Bengal culture and folklore have faded away.

REFERENCES CITED

BOROOAH, J.

1955 *Folktales of Assam*. Gauhati.

ZAMAN, Niaz

1985 *Animal tales of Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Bangla Academy.

Stephen FUCHS

Institute of Indian Culture

Bombay, India

INDIA

BECK, BRENDA E. F., collector and translator. *Elder Brothers Story: An Oral Epic of Tamil*. Folklore of Tamilnadu Series No. 4. Shu Hikosaka and G. John Samuel, general editors. Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1992. Part 1/Part 2, xv + vii + 775 pages. Map, plates, bibliography. Paper Rs 300/US\$ 65.00 (Part 1), Rs 200/US\$ 40.00 (Part 2). (Available from: Publications Division, Institute of Asian Studies, 10th East Street, Thiruvanniyur, Madras 600041, India)

To say it from the start: the reviewer congratulates The Institute of Asian Studies for making available to the scholar and connoisseur of fine literature a very interesting body of Tamil vernacular literature, part of which is orally transmitted. The publication reviewed here is part of the series published by the Institute. Ten years ago Brenda BECK provided scholars with an introduction to the *Anṇanmār katai* (1982); this earlier publication (see review in *Asian Folklore Studies* 43, 159–61) described the story's oral performance and performers, examined the social and cultural contexts in which the work exists, introduced its multiple variants, and traced some of its overall literary qualities. Now we have the full text, with the Tamil original and Beck's English translation printed on facing pages. This format is to be warmly welcomed, for it is the only one that allows the scholar to pursue further investigations; thus the *Anṇanmār katai* can now be compared to other South Indian works of literature, to classic and vernacular literatures in the wider Indian context, and to literatures of other cultures.

Beck recorded the *Anṇanmār katai* twice: once during a live performance in front of its natural audience and once in "laboratory" conditions (that is, with the performer in front of a tape recorder). In the book under review the latter variant of the story is presented; the former variant, which is double the length of the published version, is deposited for public use in The Archive and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology, American Institute for Indian Studies (B-29, Defence Colony, New Delhi 110 024), where both tapes and transcription are available (there is as yet no translation) (iv). This reviewer hopes very much that the longer variant too will be made available in print. Detailed analysis and comparison of these two variants from the same performer would provide invaluable information about performance techniques, techniques of improvisation and of prosody, and many other features of Tamil oral literature. Such investigations are badly needed to advance the general theory of oral literature.

Obviously many and variegated tools are necessary to investigate a text like this. Ample annotations are necessary to explain to the outsider the details of the specific culture-society that carries the tradition. Some explanation of this type is provided in the footnotes, but scholars will wish for much more. Detailed commentary is necessary in the future, as are investigative tools, among them indications of formulas in English translation; concordances for the text; annotated indexes of the proper names; transcriptions of the instrumental accompaniment; and musical notations (without which the prosody cannot be fully worked out,