

at the hands of Hindi. This unique version of the problematic relationship between language and nationalism, existing in different forms elsewhere, will interest a wide range of scholars.

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VARGHESE, E. *Applied Ethnobotany: A Case Study among the Kharias of Central India*. New Delhi: Deep Publications, 1996. Hardcover Rs. 400; US\$70.00.

Though ethnobotanical studies in India have been done for quite some time, it is only during the last three decades that these studies have come into their own. India has a rich ethnic heritage with more than 400 distinct tribal groups living in different regions of the country. These ethnic communities possess rich traditional knowledge of indigenous plants and how they can be used for various needs. Natural forests are an indispensable component in traditional agro-ecosystems. They are of special relevance to the mountain environment in the northeastern region of the country. This book is an ethnobotanical case study of a tribe in central India called "Kharias" that deals with various aspects of ethnobotany, ecobotany, pharmacology, and anthropology in a given environment. The study is concentrated on the areas inhabited by aboriginal rural people who are in a state of transition vis-à-vis a fast developing world. As a result, their age-old culture and traditions are quickly disappearing.

The main bulk of the text deals with 280 plant species. The first chapter discusses the origin, emergence, and the prospects of ethnobotany. The second chapter gives a description of the indigenous communities of tribes and their environments, and also gives some delightful insights into the various social aspects of tribal life. Chapter four deals with ethnobotanically important plants arranged in alphabetical order. Each entry consists of eight sub-headings giving detailed information about the particular plants with brief descriptions and their vernacular names. A significant feature that makes this book an important work is the application of a reliable quantification formula for verifying the effectiveness of a particular plant remedy. It is a comprehensive inventory of useful plants in central India inhabited by the Kharias. The readers of the book will be delighted to find that information on this little known area has been exhaustively documented and published. Given the rapid rate of acculturation among native peoples, it is possible that much of the information presented in this book will be lost in the next few decades. Similar studies on other ethnic groups need to be carried out in the country among the hundreds of well defined tribal groups that survive today.

This publication is of tremendous importance, particularly since such native knowledge is rapidly eroding with the diffusion of culture, liberalization of social strata, and agricultural and scientific advancement. This is one of the first books in the country which deals with the subject with so much details. It is highly recommended as a reference and as reading material for ethnobotanists, economic botanists, plant collectors, anthropologists, sociologists, and environmentalists. The reviewer believes that this will not only be a source of useful information but will also stimulate readers to appreciate more and more the plants that fulfill the diverse needs of mankind and sustain life on earth. It is felt that apart from its use as a reference or text in India and abroad, it will also generate further interest in the field of ethnobotany so

that similar studies are undertaken. These future studies may emphasize an approach more specifically focused on various groups before their traditional knowledge becomes extinct.

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IRAN

EHLERS, JÜRGEN. *Die Natur in der Bildersprache des Šāhnāme*. Beiträge zur Iranistik, Band 16. Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1995. xii + 282 pages. Photograph, bibliography, appendix, list of key terms. Cloth DM 84.—; ISBN 3-88226-831-X. (In German)

This book is a welcome addition to a series of European scholarly works on the imagery of Persian poetry (such as those of C.-H. DE FOUCHÉCOUR or A. SCHIMMEL, to name a few). To cover the vast length of FIRDAUSI's epic (52,707 pair verses in Mohl's edition), which contains the mytho-historical account spanning four millennia of Iranian history from the creation of the first man, Kayōmarth, up to the end of the history of the pre-Islamic Iran in the seventh century, Ehlers made good use of Fritz WOLFF's monumental glossary, a classical and indispensable instrument in any critical study on the *Šāhnāme* (1935). Indeed, Ehlers has dedicated his work to the memory of Fritz Wolff (1880–1943), an outstanding Jewish German Iranologist who was martyred in Auschwitz.

While Ehlers's work is not without predecessors concerning the depiction of nature in the *Šāhnāme*, his critical study is by far the most systematic and exhaustive on the topic to date. Starting with the Bibliography (xi–xii) and Introduction (1–5), the main body of the book consists of three large chapters, or parts (*Teil*).

Part A (7–111) "The world of the animals and parts of the human body" (*Tierwelt und menschliche Körperteile*) has been divided into seven (rather miscellaneous) sub-divisions: 1. Mammals; 2. Dragons, serpents, and crocodiles; 3. Birds; 4. Other animals; 5. Good and bad spirits, the Devil (*Teufel*) and Death; 6. Animal products (*Tierprodukte*); 7. Animal and human body parts. There is also section on "Other" (*Sonstiges*).

Part B (113–91) is about the plants (*Pflanzen*) and has been also divided into seven sub-divisions: 1. Flowers (*Blumen* and *Blüten*); 2. Plants and plant products; 3. Trees; 4. Tree parts, like leaves, fruits, seeds, roots, etc.; 5. Garden plants and cultured plants and their products; 6. Gardens and parks (*gartenähnliche Anlagen*). Paradise and spring (*Frühling*); 7. Other plants (*Gewächse*) and landscapes.

Part C (193–268) "The inanimate (*unbelebte*) nature" has four subdivisions: 1. The heaven and the celestial bodies; 2. Wind, air, clouds, and fire; 3. World, earth, and water; 4. Precious stones, minerals, and metals.

The closing chapter (*Schlusskapitel*; 269–78) is a modest effort to offer aesthetic observations on the analyzed data.

Ehlers's work is a valuable study on the phraseology and the imagery of the Persian epic that will benefit students of Iranian philology and other specialists as well as any interested reader of literary criticism, rhetorics, and style. But the line between the actual creatures in the individual stories and the symbolic use of their names in rhetoric figures of speech and various set phrases is not clearly drawn in the text. It is indeed typical of the language of Firdausi that some words, such as dragon (*aždahā*), or sometimes lion (*šīr*) are used figuratively, meaning simply a ferocious or rather monstrous animal. Even more often, the words