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BHURIYA, MAHIPAL. *Folk-Songs of the Bhils*. Indore / Madhya Pradesh: Mahipal Publications, 1979. Xiv+174 pages. 12 line-drawings, 1 photograph, glossary of Bhili terms. Hardcover Rs. 55/—; US\$5.00; £2.50.

The Bhils, who, according to the Census of India, 1971, number more than 5.25 million people, count among the most ancient tribes of the Indian subcontinent. Consisting of numerous independent endogamous subsections, they inhabit large areas of Gujarat and Rajasthan as well as the western parts of Madhya Pradesh and the northern parts of Maharashtra.

As extensive research has been conducted on the Bhils in the past, we are in possession of excellent monographs [Koppers and Jungblut 1976; Naik 1956; Hermanns 1964]. Apart from these exhaustive descriptive accounts which the interested reader may consult for detailed information, there is an already impressive and ever increasing number of anthropological publications, articles as well as books, on various aspects of the culture of this tribe, which account for the attraction the Bhils have exercised on scholars of the field. A considerable number of these publications include also specimens or small collections from their rich folklore heritage which embodies myths, epics, ballads, folk-tales, folk-songs, proverbs, riddles, etc. However, a fairly comprehensive collection of specimens of one of these folklore genres in English translation has hitherto not been attempted. It is very much to the credit of Mahipal Bhuriya who is a Bhil himself, that we are now provided with a rather representative compilation of Bhil folk-songs comprising 201 items in all. According to Mahipal Bhuriya, the songs were collected "mostly from the Jhabua District of Madhya Pradesh" (xii), the origin of the rest of the songs, however, not being indicated. Unfortunately, the compiler also fails to give particulars with regard to his informants and the circumstances of recording (viz., name, sex, age, village, time of recording, etc.)—data the mention of which would have increased the value of the book.

In preparing the English translation of the songs, Mahipal Bhuriya did not attempt to reproduce "the variegated 'beat' of the original [Bhili, a dialect of Gujarati] by the device of metric versification," but preferred "a free-flowing prose translation of the original Bhili text," thereby taking care "to preserve the direct simplicity and bucolic flavour of the original, as much as was feasible" (xii)—a useful endeavour which, as I see it, he has mastered.

The songs which are numbered consecutively from 1 to 201, are divided into the following fourteen sections, according to the various occasions on which they are sung, etc., viz., field-work songs (pages 1–8), grinding songs (pages 9–18), love songs (pages 19–28), marriage songs (pages 29–56), family songs (pages 57–72), birth songs (pages 73–80), Garba songs (pages 81–92), other dance songs (pages 93–114), religious songs (pages 115–126), rain songs (pages 127–132), war songs (pages 133–142), famine songs (pages 143–149), epic songs (pages 151–156), and songs of new awareness (pages 157–166). Thereby, each section is precluded by a brief, but very informative introduction.

Among the many songs which, from various points of view, left an impression on my mind, there is one (no. 133 on p. 99) that seems worth mentioning as it deals with a rather extraordinary tragic event that, for ever, reminds the Bhils of the cruelties of the British War: It sings of the rape of a young married woman by a group of British soldiers and so, unmistakably, proves that also the Bhils had to suffer from the soldiers' barbarism in war, a deplorable concomitant phenomenon of all wars. The song runs thus:

The army is going to attack us,
O, 'tis the British army!
But I shall not be defeated by them.
" *Vevai*, we have surrounded your house."
The *Vevai* hid himself in fright in his house.
The British soldier stopped his horse at *Vevai*'s door,
And forcibly dragged his wife outside.
Vevai removed his turban from his head,
And humbly pleaded for his wife:
" Friend! Please, leave my wife alone."
" No! I shall never give her back;
First call the leader of the village."
" Oh, please, release her! I shall give you money."
" No! That is too easy a solution."
So the soldier lay with his wife, full four nights,
And then gave her to the others.
And then returned her to her husband, saying:
" *Vevai*, here is your wife;
We do not want her any more.
We had our fill with her."

Apart from displaying the imagination and poetic power of their composers, the songs, as a whole, draw a vivid picture of the Bhils' way of life and give a thorough insight into their ways of thinking and feeling. They demonstrate that these so-called backward or primitive people "react in much the same manner to joyful and sorrowful events, achievements and frustrations, as we, highly civilised and sophisticated people, do," as Stephen Fuchs puts it in his preface to the book under review (ii).

Besides containing the just mentioned introductory preface by Stephen Fuchs (i–ii), which is followed by a detailed list of contents (iii–viii), and a brief general introduction by the author (ix–xii) along with acknowledgements (xiii–xiv), the nicely

got-up publication is furnished with a useful key to the pronunciation of Bhili terms (167), a valuable glossary of Bhili terms (168–173) and a (too brief) select bibliography (174).¹ It is furthermore enriched by fourteen fine whole-page line-drawings by Santosh Jadia which appear after the headings of each of the fourteen song sections, and a photograph showing a typical Bhil woman in full adornment (after p. xiv).

On the whole, Mahipal Bhuriya's book is an important first-hand contribution to our knowledge of Bhil folklore and will definitely be welcomed by scholars of various fields, viz., folklorists, anthropologists, sociologists, etc. And since Mahipal Bhuriya "is very anxious that the oral traditions of his people be saved from oblivion" (i), it is to be desired and hoped that he will continue in his endeavour to collect and write down and, thus, preserve the oral literature of the Bhils for future generations.

NOTE:

1. This bibliography lists only seven contributions to the subject of Bhil song literature to which might be added at least five more publications which present a more or less greater number of songs, as listed below.

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KOPPERS W. and JUNGBLUT L.

1976 *Bowmen of mid-India. A monography of the Bhils of Jhabua (M.P.) and adjoining territories.* 2 vols. Acta Ethnologica et Linguistica Nr. 33, Series Indica 6. Wien: Elisabeth Stiglmayr.

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BROCKINGTON, J. L. *Righteous Rāma. The Evolution of an Epic.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985. X+363 pages. Appendix, bibliography of frequently cited works, indices.

Storytellers have composed and recited the Rāmāyaṇa throughout Asia; during the process of its transmission from culture to culture, the epic has undergone many transformations. The Rāmāyaṇa focuses upon heroic Rāma, whose bravery and commitment to *dharma* enable him to defeat demons, rescue his abducted wife, and restore righteousness to the kingdom of Ayokhyā. Brockington's monograph deals primarily