

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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1945 *Die Missetäterstämme. Ein Buch von Indiens ältestem Volk* [The criminal tribes: A book about India's most ancient people]. Mödling bei Wien: Missionsdruckerei St. Gabriel.

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

with the literary development of the Sanskrit version of this story attributed to Sage Vālmīki, but he also devotes two chapters to a summary of Southeast, Central, and East Asian versions as well.

Essentially, Brockington argues that the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* developed in five stages, which can be discerned through linguistic analysis of the text as constituted in the Baroda critical edition [Bhatt and Shah 1960–75]. Brockington devotes much of his attention to distinguishing between the material he attributes to the earliest stage and the material which he assigns to stage two. To do this he submits the syntax, morphology, and style of individual *sargas* to minute scrutiny. He concludes that the writing in stage one possesses “a basically simple and fluent style” (45), while the passages which diverge from this clear and direct style must fall into stage two. Concluding, as most other scholars have, that the first (Bālakāṇḍa) and last (Uttarakāṇḍa) books of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are later than the rest, Brockington assigns them to the third stage of development. He puts the material which the editors of the critical edition placed in footnotes or in Appendix I into his final two stages, assigning passages with good manuscript support to stage four and poor manuscript support to stage five.

Brockington puts forth this five-stage hypothesis in chapter two, a chapter which even he advises the non-Sanskritist to skip because of its highly technical nature. Not all readers will accept all of Brockington’s conclusions, but most will find his method of inquiry more objective than earlier works, which sought to distinguish the *Rāmāyaṇa*’s stages of literary development on the basis of subject matter or supposed relevance to the text [see Jacobi 1976]. In places, however, unproven value judgments about the logic of narrative development do slip into Brockington’s work as well. His assumption on page 47, for example, that realistic elements are early while “supernatural elements” come later needs more defence, as does the assumption that material which holds up the “continuous narrative flow” with “purely pedantic chronological details” (47) is later. Nor does he prove that simple writing is always necessarily from the earlier stages.

In Brockington’s middle chapters, he builds upon his five-stage developmental schema, using it as the basis for a stage-by-stage examination of the evolution of certain themes in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In these five chapters he focuses respectively upon economic and material culture, nature and geography, life at the court, social relations, and religion. His chapter on religion provides an excellent example of the striking patterns revealed by Brockington’s method. He begins chapter seven by establishing that both in the first and second stages of the epic’s evolution, the majority of references are to Vedic deities, showing that “the religious core of the text is decidedly more archaic than has been previously recognized” (194). Intriguingly, in the second and third stage, there are a large number of references to the god Brahmā, a deity of relatively minor importance in Vedic and Purāṇic texts. And by the fourth stage of development, Brockington demonstrates Rāma’s complete identification with Viṣṇu. Brockington’s method, thus, enables one to trace the evolution of Hinduism, as reflected in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

In keeping with Brockington’s interest in the epic’s evolution, he then devotes two chapters to a survey of its later adaptations. One entire chapter deals with Sanskrit versions. This chapter is far more comprehensive in scope than the discussion of Frank Whaling, who compares the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Adhātma Rāmāyaṇa*, and the Tulsidās *Rāmcaritmānas*. In Brockington’s survey he summarizes the story’s transformation in purāṇic literature, drama, and later sectarian works. Although such summaries remain brief, they do give the reader a sense of the story’s crucial role in Sanskrit literature. In Brockington’s next chapter, he conveniently summarizes

secondary literature on the *Rāmāyaṇas* in other Asian traditions, taking his reader through versions in languages as diverse as Prakrit, Tamil, Assamese, Kashmiri, Khotanese, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Malay and Laotian. The discussion, although necessarily superficial, provides the scholar of Asian literature with a broad context for the study of any one version of the Rāma story.

Brockington's particular interest in Rāma, which gives the book its title and surfaces in his final chapter, is the hero's "righteousness" (*dharma*). Brockington proclaims that the story's concern with righteousness accounts for its tremendous popularity over time and space. As he says, "Yet the connecting link and the reason for the story's popularity is still the ethical emphasis on the figure of 'righteous Rāma.' Throughout its evolution and not just in the original epic, the key to the story lies in dharma and in Rāma as an ideal of it" (327). Most scholars of the *Rāmāyaṇa* would probably argue that many other elements (such as the relative unity of the story, the attraction of the ideal of the longsuffering and chaste wife, the appeal of Hanumān) also contributed to the epic's popularity. Nonetheless, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is primarily about *dharma*—although often about conflicting *dharmas* (duty to one's father vs. responsibilities to the kingdom's subjects, duty to a friend vs. the dharma of a warrior).

Folklorists may wish that Brockington paid more attention to oral influences on the development of the text as well as to present-day recitations. He does mention the ways in which certain versions of the story incorporate folk elements (Sanskrit, p. 256; Malay, p. 295; Thai, p. 303), but only in passing and without analysis. Similarly, he employs the phrases "popular forms" (p. 275, n. 30), "popular mythology" (p. 283, n. 43), and "popular versions" (p. 296, n. 66) as explanations of variants, but these terms are used in vague and somewhat imprecise fashion. Folklorists interested in the performance dimension of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in present-day North India may want to consult Philip Lutgendorf's recent study of the text as it is recited, expounded, and enacted.

Brockington provides his reader with a painstaking analysis of one of India's two major epics. He concerns himself primarily with words and phrases—where they occur, what forms they take, what they mean, and how they change. Therefore, his book will be a useful reference work for scholars in a number of different disciplines.

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