

REFERENCES CITED

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1955 *Folktales of Assam*. Gauhati.

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

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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,

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 *Aṅṅamār 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.

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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 *Aṅṅamār 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 *Ponmalakar 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