



Shankar Narayana D. Poojary, trans. *Epic of the Warriors (Kōti Chennaya Pārdana)*. Damodar Kalmady, ed.

Chennai, India: National Folklore Support Center, 2007. xxii + 414 pages. Glossary, list of names and bibliography. US\$30.00. ISBN: 81-901481-8-4.

THIS publication brings to the public a new version of a Tulu *pāddana* (or *pārdana*). The Tulu ethnic group, speaking a Dravidian language and living in coastal south Karnataka, came late to fame for its sung sacred oral folk stories, the *pāddanas*. The Tuluvas and their oral art became well-known in the scholarly world through Honko's recording and publication of one exceptionally long *pāddana*, the Siri epic (HONKO et al. 1998, 265–66). The first recordings of the Kōti Chennaya *pāddana* were published by Temple in English translation in the nineteenth century as a prose retelling, but were not noticed (TEMPLE 1894–1897). Temple published three versions; a possible fourth version of the story published by Männer was not available to this reviewer and thus it is not clear to her whether or not one of the three versions published by Temple is a translation of Männer's version which is in Tulu (see page v of the reviewed book). The present publication is the fourth (or fifth?) version of the work, which joins the three (or four?) versions previously published.

Let us start our review with a very brief summary of this story. The story has a mythical cosmogonic prelude in which various divinities and a primeval egg are created (verse lines 1–982). The protagonists of the *pāddana* are twin brothers of low-

caste origins, sons of a low-caste father and a mother of preternatural origins. Her provenance from the primeval egg is described in the prelude (verse lines 983–1018). She is twice adopted: a childless Brahmin family finds in the sea the primeval egg from which a baby girl emerges; other versions have a different origin story, but the function is the same—namely to mark her as preternatural. According to Brahmanical rules, when a girl menstruates while still unmarried, she has to be exposed to wild animals in woods. This is done to the future mother of the twins. She is found, rescued, and adopted by a low caste man and marries into his family. Her twin sons learn martial arts and demonstrate some preternatural abilities in the later course of their activities. When they grow up, various socially higher people of other castes (of the local administration, artisans) insult them, prevent them from cultivating their lands, and so on. The brothers brutally kill their enemies and consequently have to flee from one province to the next. Finally, a local ruler accepts them as his paid combatants. He remunerates them with a plot of land to cultivate for their livelihood. Wild boars destroy their crops, upon which the brothers initiate a hunt in which the entire province participates. A single boar appears and is shot; it falls dead on the border with a neighboring province which is hostile to the brothers. This province claims the boar. In the melee over ownership of the boar, the older twin is ambushed and shot, which seems to be an illicit martial action. As the older brother is now dead, the younger twin commits suicide. The two turn into *bhutas* (spirits), promise to uphold justice among people and demand to be worshipped.

The published text is a composite version. It consists of several poems sung by six singers especially for the reviewed publication and of parts of one of the nineteenth-century text of the story, which is a prose retelling in Tulu (Männer, cited in TEMPLE 1894–1897). The editors do not explain how prose turned into verse in the present edition. The publication contains a transcription of the original Tulu that was published by Damodar Kalmody in Kannada script. On the facing page is a regular English translation. Both are given in numbered verse lines. An explanatory literal translation into English accompanies the text. The entire work is 4020 verse lines long.

The story forms the basis of a ritual of active worship; this ritual is the natural performance context for this story. In spite of the story's performance in a religious framework, it can be classed as belonging to the ethnoepic genre of martial epic.

In a natural performance, the story is the basis of a complex ritual with many actors, several of whom would impersonate the various characters playing in the work. This results in a kind of theatrical performance (see a nineteenth century description of a *bhuta* ritual by Männer cited in TEMPLE 1894–1897, 23: 5–11, and Honko's description of the Siri ritual (in HONKO 1998, 454–98). Lifted from this context, the story is easily represented on paper as a running text. This method is used in this publication of the Kōti Chennaya *pāddana*. Honko used a similar method in his recording and publication of the Siri story (HONKO 1998). Indeed, there are many Indian groups which maintain epic works with no real ritual context. As an example, let us take two martial epics of north India: the Hindi Alha-and-Udal story (WATERFIELD and GRIERSON 1923) and the Rajasthani Pābūji story (SMITH 1991). In both, the episodes are sung consecutively by a single singer or a lead singer with one or more subsidiary singers, to a passive audience.

The scholar and layman alike are now waiting for more information on the Kōti Chennaya *pāddana*. Formal data would include a larger glossary of Tulu words used in the translation, which may be local dialectical expressions. The list of six singers from whom parts of the text were recorded can be amended with more detail. We expect information as to who sung which part of the work. Where, when, and from whom did each learn the part of the work which they sang? How did this happen? Did the singer take part in the ritual? When, where, and how? A full description of the ritual is necessary: which song is sung at which action in the ritual and for what reason? The notation of the musical aspect is today considered necessary. More versions of the story need to be recorded, whether a sound recording or on film. These data and the three (or four?) versions published in the nineteenth century, both translated and in the original Tulu, will be a firm basis for an entire branch of scholarship: the “study of Kōti Chennaya,” much like the field of scholarship of the study of the *Mahābhārata* or of the *Iliad*.

The scholarly community is very grateful to Damodar Kalmady, the editor of the Tulu original and to Shankar Narayana D. Poojary, who translated the work into English, for recording, translating, and publishing the fourth (or fifth?) version of the Kōti Chennaya epic, and to the National Folklore Support Centre for bringing the work to wider scholarly attention, as well as to the public at large.

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