

Certes, les contes populaires sont les témoins d'un temps et d'une société révolus. Mais leur cheminement, leur polissage dans le bouche-à-oreille, en font aussi et d'abord un matériau précieux pour le futur. Le passage à l'écrit tient lieu de pont entre les anciens et les nouveaux conteurs qui ont besoin d'encrage pour ne pas se noyer dans une universalité abstraite. Les créateurs d'aujourd'hui, les nombreux artistes (et pas seulement ceux de la parole) qui ont choisi après 1968 d'aller vivre en Ariège une aventure alternative, trouveront dans ceux-là de quoi fonder un imaginaire nouveau, singulier et ouvert à la fois.

**Dawood Aulear, Lee Haring, *Indian Folktales from Mauritius*,
Chenai (India), National Folklore Support Centre, 2006, 116 pp.**

Isabel Cardigos*

An interesting collection of folktales, with detailed background information and dealt with very special care. We learn that the tales have been told by informants who were descendants of north-Indians from the state of Bihar, recruited in the 19th cent to the Mauritius for cheap labor. They still keep their original language, the Bhojpuri, and are now a community of 250.000 people, one-fifth of the Mauritius population. Dawood Aulear collected and translated the tales, which he also transliterated following a method learned in the 1980s from Karen Gallob, an American anthropologist whom he assisted in collecting jokes from the same community. Lee Haring was responsible for the edition of the book, its introduction and notes, and this was published in India by the National Folklore Support Centre.

A good proportion of the tales transcribed is also phonetically transliterated from the Bhojpuri. Its illustrator, Kalamkari C. Subramaniam, is a master craftsman who makes a marvelous job of drawing an exuberant kind of comic strip for each of the tales, black on white and therefore offering itself to be colored by a child. What makes this book so curious is that it allies a specialized precision in the treatment of the folktales –from the onset of their collecting to their careful transcription and transliteration, to the academic apparatus of its end-notes, including identification of tale types and motifs– to its pleasant appeal to the general public, including children. The book has the added attractiveness of associating different types of specialized craftsmen from three different continents, which sometimes results in delightful incongruence, such as that of the southern

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Indian illustrator depicting a lion –familiar to the Mauritius north Indian descendant– as a huge wormlike ghost.

The collector and informants –north Indian Bhojpuri speakers, now natives of the Mauritius–, two USA anthropologists; the illustrator – master craftsman from Andhra Pradesh in south eastern India– brought together a small marvel.

For orders, please contact the National Folklore Support Centre (info@indianfolklore.org).

Mahendra K. Mishra, *Visioning Folklore*, Bhubaneswar, Lark Books, 2002, 206 pp. ISBN 81-7375-089-0

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Mahendra Kumar Mishra is a well-known Indian folklorist who specialized on the language and culture of Western Orissa. The present book entails a description and interpretation of a number of rituals, epics, songs and traditions from the districts of Kalahandi near Western Orissa, in Central India, in their specificity as well as in the light of mainstream traditions (as in chapters 1, 2 , 5 and 6). It would seem that “many races of this land [Western Orissa], in order to keep their cultural identity alive, have associated themselves with the great epics of solar and lunar mythology i.e. the Ramayana and the Mahabharata [...] each and every race of this country has tried to identify with Indian mythology and dynasties” (p. 102).

The titles of each of the ten articles will give an overall feeling of the subjects and approaches envisioned in the present book: (1) Influence of the Ramayana Tradition on the Folklore of Central India; (2) A Hero of the Mahabharata in Folklore of Central India; (3) Drought in the Folklore of Kalahandi; (4) The Kind Tiger and the Truthful Cow: Folk Discourse in Oral and Written Literature; (5) Oral Epics in Kalahandi; (6) Folk Epics in Western Orissa; (7) Ethnic Identity and Oral Narratives: A case study on Kamar Tribe of Kalahandi adjoining Chhatishgarh; (8) Patalaganga: A Sacred Centre of Tribal Non-tribal Interaction; (9) Folk Songs of Kalahandi; (10) Toki Parab: A Festival of Female Infanticide in Kalahandi.

I will single out chapter 4, as it shows the reality of folktales and oral epics to be the symmetrical opposite of the world of myths and epics (“Purana” and “Itihasa”), this one mostly coincident with life reality. Just as an example, while in the “Indian joint family system, the eldest brother is entitled to enjoy the land and property in a bigger scale” and moreover “the younger brothers also don’t fight against the elders”, in accordance with