

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**

### **Isabel Cardigos**

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

classical epics and “puranas” (p. 70), “in folk epics the eldest brother is a villain and cruel, whereas the youngest brother is a hero. Similarly in folktales and oral epics, the younger sister-in-law, younger sister, younger daughter is neglected and at last she regains her valour” (p. 71). The “written discourse will represent the ‘ordered’ society only. Hence the creation of ‘disorder’ in folk tradition is only to counteract the forces which are dominant in society.” (p. 77)

Finally, a word must be said to clarify the title in chapter 10. The “festival of female infanticide” is a memory of such a festival until it was abolished in the mid 1850’s, and replaced by the sacrifice of a young ewe. The whole description of the seven day festival is very interesting, as it reflects the problems of a community and the creative way to solve those problems. I would be inclined to say this of the whole collection of studies in this book, as it combines the appraisal of an ethnologist with the deep inside knowledge of an insider of a very rich culture.

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***“God Created Slovenia Last”. Past and Contemporary Slovenian Folktales*** (Vilenica 99 /Literary Folklore), selected, edited and introduction written by Marija Stanonik, translated by Sonja Kravanja and Rosemary Lincoln, introduction translated by Mia Dintinja, Ljubljana, Slovenian Writers Association, 1999, 228 pp.

### Isabel Cardigos

We have a confession to make. Author Marija Stanonik sent us this collection of Slovenian folktales just after it was published, in 1999. We would have gladly made a review of it should we have passed the middle of it while turning its pages, as if the first half was in Slovenian, the second half was in the purest English. All these years had to pass before we were told by the author that turning a few more pages would bring good results. And she was right! From p. 107 to the end the book is not only in English but it gives us the first English translation of Slovenian folktales, a treasure because it is the first time ever that we have access to them in the English reading world, but also because they are a joy to read.

This little book written both in Slovenian and in English is really the showcase of a much vaster reality. The 53 folktales published in it are a selection from *Glasovi*, an outstanding series of twenty four volumes of folk narratives, an enterprise conceived and coordinated by Dr. Stanonik herself.