without any comment, non-Hindu literature? The essay of Jerome H. Bauer discusses
the figure of Krishna in Jaina cosmohistory, where he is considered an archetypal
Jaina layman on the one hand and an Illustrious Person—Śalākāpuruṣa (p. 151)—on
the other one. The Jaina Krishna stories called Harivaṁśa Purāṇas are found both in
the Śvetāmbara and Digambara canons. The author consults some of them to reflect
upon the problem of an ‘alternative tradition’, ‘countertradition’, or ‘parallel tradition’
of the Jaina Krishna (p. 165). The last chapter of the volume, by Valerie Ritter, deals
with the epic poem Priyapravās (The Sojourn of the Beloved) by Harihārāṇa, a Braj
Bhāṣa poet of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The poet remodels the carnal
relationship of Rādhā and Krishna into modern social phenomenon voiced in his
work.

The whole volume offers a considerable spectrum of various lesser-known forms
of Krishna bhakti presented from different research perspectives. It is an informative
addition to studies in broadly conceived Vaishnavism and religious traditions as
such.

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KATRIN FISCHER. Yakṣagāna. Eine Einführung in eine südindische
Theatertradition Mit Übersetzung und Text von „Abhimanyu Kāḷaga“, Drama und
Theater in Südasien 3, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004, pp. xi+202. ISSN

Yakṣagāna, a theatre tradition from the state of Karnataka in southern India, attracted
scholars’ attention relatively late, the first monographs being published by K.V. Karnath
(1975) and Martha Ashton Bush and Bruce Christie (1977). The volume presented
is a new contribution to studies concerning this particular theatre form and Indian
theatrical tradition as such. Katrin Fischer, a young German scholar, experienced the
world of the Yakṣagāna when she did her fieldwork in Karnataka as a researcher within
the theatre. Her book is published as a consecutive volume (3) of the series dedicated
to Drama and Theatre of South Asia and edited by Professor Heidrun Brueckner from
Wuerzburg University in Germany. The work is divided into two main parts. While
the first one is dedicated to a general picture of the phenomenon of the Yakṣagāna, the
second contains a study of a Yakṣagāna text (Abhimanyu Kāḷaga).

The concise introduction (pp. 3–5) is followed by Chapter II (pp. 5–54), presenting
numerous aspects of the theatre of Yakṣagāna. The author starts with a brief history of
the theatre, which can be traced back to the 15th century, though the first Yakṣagāna
text known to us, *Virāṭa Parva*, which was composed in 1564 (the language of this theatre is mainly Kannada, but some Sanskrit, Malayalam and Tulu can be also found). Then various constituents of the stage presentation (only men are allowed to perform) are discussed: musical elements (orchestra, musical notations, songs, melodious recitations, dances), acting (gestures, face expressions, stage movement), costume and make up (the term *Schminkmaske* is used), and the context and structure of the performance. Two Yakṣagāṇa characters catch our attention, Bhāgavata and Hanumanāyaka (pp. 31–4). In them we can recognise familiar and significant figures from Classical Sanskrit theatre, Sūtradhāra and Vidūṣaka. Other important facts concerning Yakṣagāṇa tradition are also mentioned: aesthetics, religious and non-religious ambiance, patronage, spectators, and present-day position. Fischer concludes the first part of her book with a discussion about the formal classification of the Yakṣagāṇa—folk or classical? She refers to the opinions of scholars who place this theatre form either in the folk or classical tradition (pp. 49–53). We remain without any unquestionable proposal or definite answer, however. It is undoubtedly a very complicated matter in the case of Yakṣagāṇa, as well as many other Indian theatre forms. Should we follow the suggestion Kapila Vatsyayan made in her book (*Traditional Indian Theatre: Multiple Streams*, 1980) to call such theatrical phenomena ‘traditional’ since they refer to both classical and folk traditions and are somehow ‘in between’? Yakṣagāṇa is definitely placed in between these two traditions with its own blend of various elements developed over the course of time.

The second part of Fischer’s book (pp. 54–157) is dedicated to the text *Abhimanyu Kāḷaga* (*The Battle of Abhimanyu*), which was written by Dēvidāsa in the 17th century and is performed by Yakṣagāṇa troupes. The texts used for presentation are called *prasaṅgas*. The author brings forward numerous issues regarding Yakṣagāṇa textual tradition and in particular the *prasaṅga* mentioned above. She gives a synopsis of the play/text, considers its metrical structure and poetic frame, and discusses its form and subject matter. After some methodological remarks in regard to the rendering process, a German translation of the *Abhimanyu Kāḷaga* is presented with numerous annotations (pp. 100–34). Then a transcription of the original text follows (pp. 135–57). Chapter VII contains some chosen stanzas from Dēvidāsa’s text and an earlier work by Kumāra Vyāsa, *Karnāṭa Bhārata Kathāmañjari*, (written in the 15th century) to contrast both poets and their compositions (pp. 159–79). The final chapter (VIII) provides a glossary of the most important terms of the Yakṣagāṇa tradition; finally a bibliography and three indices are included.

Katrin Fischer’s book is a very welcome addition to studies in Yakṣagāṇa theatre. Since it is dedicated to the visual tradition, at least a few illustrations or photos would
have been appreciated. That the author published the text of the play (its original and its translation into German) and provided an elaborated presentation is worth praising. A Western reader has a rare, if not the first and only, occasion to become acquainted with the Yakṣagāṇa textual tradition.

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