

out the prevalent notion that 'non-Aryan' practices are somehow being documented here. It is largely explained by Falk's observation that it is all bound up with a form of ritual dicing aimed not at selecting a winner, but at pre-selecting a loser (viz., the morally endangered butcher of the sacrificial victim). His masterly exegesis of the texts relating to Agnyādheya and Rājasūya sacrifices show that we are in the realms of panic measures undertaken at the time of winter solstice to ensure the pacification of Rudra and the ascendancy of Indra and the Maruts.

Misprints are rather numerous. At p. 53, a reference to Horsch seems erroneous: 411–416 is presumably meant; and at p. 193, end, we appear to have been deprived of some lines of text.

J. C. WRIGHT

GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN: *Pūjā: a study in smārta ritual*. (Publications of the de Nobili Research Library, Vol. xv.) 253 pp., 28 plates. Vienna: Institute for Indology, University of Vienna, 1988.

This book is a very full study of the theory and practice of Hindu *pūjā*, built essentially around a core which is an annotated and translated text of the *ṣoḍaśopacāra* section of the *Rgvedīyabrahmakarmasamuccaya* (RVBKS), a handbook of ritual much used by Maharashtra Brahmins of the Sakala school and which has been frequently reprinted and augmented from the nineteenth century until the most recent 1979 edition. A general introduction (pp. 29–100) discusses the term *pūjā*, the historical sources available for earlier forms of *pūjā*, the authorization and justification thereof, the mantras used, the list of possible errors that might be committed by the *pūjārī* together with their allotted penances and ending up with 'Modern Trends' which, as one would expect, largely involve shortening, simplification and the extension of the authority to perform *pūjā* to a circle wider than that of male *dvijas*.

The RVBKS text follows with translation and copious notes, references to parallel texts and comparable practices (pp. 101–182). A third chapter on occasional (*naimittika*) *pūjā* starts with a useful list of the main festivals and occasions for *vrata* which are celebrated with *naimittika pūjā* in Maharashtra, especially Poona, followed by details of the constituent parts of a *mūrtipūjā*: that is *prāṇapratisthā*, the infusion of life into a *mūrti*; *āṅgapūjā*, the worship of individual parts of a *mūrti*: *patrapūjā*, the casting of flowers and leaves; *kathā*, the reciting or reading of the appropriate traditional story that accompanies a *pūjā*, especially when a vow or *vrata* is involved; then *brāhmaṇapūjā* and finally *visarjana*, the dismissal of the *utsavamūrti* such as is performed so spectacularly at the conclusion of the Gaṇeśā festival in the cities of Maharashtra. This section ends with three specific *pūjās*, all of them very popular these days: *Satyanārāyaṇa*, *Rṣipañcamī* and *Anantacaturdaśī*. These are particularly valuable as descriptions of modern, one might

say trendy *pūjās*, which have only tenuous connections with earlier Hindu rites and which have scarcely been treated to scholarly examination before. Dr. Bühnemann has benefited throughout from a lengthy residence in Poona from 1982 to 1985 in which she obviously attended many of these ceremonies and received much co-operation and explanation from her learned brahman informants. The illustrations at the end of *pūjāsāhitya*, of position and gesture, are presumably from her own photographs and are an excellent record of contemporary practice at a time when much is changing and when, as she says (p. 100): 'many Hindus are not even aware of the existing difference between the traditional practices and the newly created forms'.

I find this record especially valuable in that it vicariously exorcises the familiar guilt feelings that one so often experiences when confronted with some familiar yet imperfectly comprehended Hindu ceremony. One asks oneself: 'Where are these particular mantras drawn from?', 'What is the rationale behind these offerings and the order in which they are made?' and a whole string of similar questions, but one rarely has the time or the patience to pursue them. This painstaking study provides the answers at least for the common practice in Maharashtra in the late twentieth century.

One final complaint: the paperback lost its cover after ten minutes' handling and the whole book was breaking up into its component parts long before I had finished reading it.

I. M. P. RAESIDE

I. JULIA LESLIE: *The perfect wife: the orthodox Hindu woman according to the Strīdharmapaddhati of Tryambakayajan*. (Oxford University South Asian Studies Series.) xiv, 375 pp., 8 plates. Delhi etc.: Oxford University Press, 1989. Rs. 225.

Dr. I. Julia Leslie has held a number of posts, including that of Visiting Lecturer and Research Associate in the Women's Studies in Religion Program in the History of Religion, at Harvard Divinity School. Her previous work has been connected with the religious role of women in ancient India.

The title of the text *Strīdharmapaddhati* is translated by Leslie as 'Guide to the religious status and duties of women'. The author, Tryambakayajan, a pandit in the court of Thanjavur (Tanjore) in the eighteenth century, is possibly to be identified with the author of the *dharmākūta* (commentary on the Rāmāyaṇa) (p. 12). The *Strīdharmapaddhati* was written in the Maratha court which was Hindu in the time of the Muslim dominance of India and was a minority in the Tamil-speaking population. As Leslie points out in the introduction, this text is little known (p. 3) and its importance lies in the fact that it is the only extant work of its kind, there being no other major works on the subject. In Sanskrit religious law (*dharmasāstra*) there are sections on *strīdharmā*, but there is no other text exclusively on this subject. It is not known how the text was used although Leslie