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Review

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The authors have made a convincing case for their temporal classification of the paintings by using a combination of seriation techniques on the superimposed paintings, the dating of supposedly associated artifacts excavated in the shelters, and the dating of specific objects and features depicted in the paintings. The most questionable interpretation concerns the earliest period, which they call Mesolithic. It is mainly the association of chipped stone "microliths" in many of the shelters that accounts for the Mesolithic attribution for the paintings. The authors do appear to be well aware of the dating problem which arises when one tries to assign absolute dates to stone tool assemblages in India, and they use the highest date of 8000 B.C.E. with caution. The problem is that microlithic tools continue in use in India at least into the beginning of the present era and are in themselves unreliable for absolute dating. This does not detract from the immense interest and importance of this book. The relative sequence of the paintings has been carefully worked out, and it attests beautifully to the phenomenon of cultural and artistic persistence in India. This is a valuable book for art historians and archaeologists, especially ethnoarchaeologists. We must thank the Mary Storer Brooks Memorial Fund for this beautiful tribute to both Mrs. Brooks and the rich artistic heritage of tribal India.

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The Ganges in Myth and History. BY STEVEN G. DARIAN. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978. xvii, 219 pp. Illustrations, Bibliography, Index. \$9.95.

The Ganges in Myth and History attempts to draw a comprehensive picture of the cultural importance of the great river, using materials from the most varied sources and disciplines: art history, archaeology, comparative religion and mythology, cartography, Sanskrit and Bengali literature, and classical and medieval European texts. The main chapters deal with the mythical origins of the Ganges; the origins of its cult, which the author attributes to the Indus Valley civilization and the early Aryan culture; comparisons of the deified Ganges with goddesses of the Mediterranean and Near East; the role of the river in the development of the great north Indian empires; the Ganges in Hindu sculpture and temple architecture; its place in Bengali religion and literature; and finally, conceptions of the Ganges in premodern Europe.

It hardly seems possible to do justice to so broad a range of topics in a small book (in which, moreover, much of the space is taken up by illustrations); and in fact Dr. Darian's work sometimes reads more like a collection of data and impressions than a comprehensive study with a unified theme.

The nearest approximation to a central thesis would seem to be that the Ganges owes its position as a focal point of Hindu culture to a synthesis of concepts from the indigenous cultures of South Asia and the Vedic Aryan culture. This in itself implies the oversimplified view of Hinduism as a combination of Aryan and aboriginal—doubly oversimplified here in that the Indus Valley civilization is taken as representative of the aboriginal culture of South Asia.

The author holds that the cult of the Ganges derives mainly from the cultural heritage of the Indus Valley and only secondarily from that of the Aryans. He traces the origin of a supposed Indus Valley river cult to the "tree goddess" noticed on some Indus seals, which he identifies as the "antecedent of Ganga" (caption, fig. 17,

p. 43) on the grounds that “in later or better-documented cultures, we find an unmistakable relationship of water to the goddess and the tree” (p. 45). This cultural legacy, he asserts, was transplanted to Gujarat, where it was “absorbed by people of several traditions and eventually brought into contact with the Ganges Valley by groups following the Chambal Valley northeast toward the Yamuna and by others along the Narmada into southern Bihar” (p. 41). No historical basis is offered for such a cultural movement, nor does any Indus Valley material justify a claim for a river cult in that civilization.

Whereas the Indus Valley culture is assigned an unwarranted role in the genesis of the Ganges cult, the contribution of the Vedic Aryans is inadequately treated. While Darian maintains that the Ganges of Hinduism served the Aryans as a replacement for the holy Sarasvatī River of the *R̥g Veda*, he neglects compelling evidence of Vedic influence in the development of such river cults—notably the *Nadī-stuti* (“Hymn to the Rivers,” *R̥g Veda* x. 75), a fundamental source on the origins of the worship of rivers, including the Ganges, in Vedic religion.

The book is not free of factual errors. Thus, in support of his thesis that the deified Ganges derives from aboriginal tree goddesses, Darian mentions a *yakṣa* figure from Bharhut labelled *Gaṅgita*; but Lüders in his definitive edition of the Bharhut inscriptions has shown that this name is not connected with the river Gaṅgā (*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* II. 2, p. 76).

The translations from Sanskrit are sometimes faulty. *Sagaratanaya* in *Meghadūta* 50, for example, is rendered as “the sons of men” (p. 109), rather than “the sons of Sagara,” even though the story referred to by this phrase is recounted elsewhere in the book (pp. 17–19). *R̥g Veda* x. 97. 17, “The man whom we enter will suffer no evil while *he* lives” is translated as “No evil shall touch the man who [sic] while we live we pervade” (p. 52).

The Ganges in Myth and History may well prove to be of interest to scholars in a variety of fields, though more for the wide-ranging data it assembles than for its theories and conclusions. A good deal of previously unavailable or unassembled information is to be found in the final chapter, “The Image of Ganga in the West,” and to a lesser extent in the preceding one, “The Ganges in Bengal.” The originality of these final sections at least partially makes up for the deficiencies of the earlier chapters.

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Culture of a Sacred Town: A Sociological Study of Nathdwara. BY RAJENDRA JINDEL. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1976. xii, 233 pp. Glossary, Plates, Select Bibliography, Index. Rs. 45.00.

This book presents a comprehensive description of Nathdwara, an important Hindu pilgrimage town in the western Indian state of Rajasthan. It is one of the most detailed studies of a Hindu pilgrimage center ever published and makes important contributions to the sociological study of Hinduism, pilgrimages, and religious change and modernization. Jindel’s aim is “to deal with the cultural configuration arising out of the beliefs, rituals, and festivals related to Nathdwara Shrine,” to describe “the total way of life of the town” (pp. 3–4). The main shrine is the temple of Shri Nathji, the center of the Vaishnava Pushtimargiya or Vallabh sect. Unlike many Hindu holy towns, Nathdwara and its shrine are comparatively