

lists of Corrigenda). Among minor inaccuracies I notice that under the heading "Achehnese—(b) the language," the Index refers to 'language,' but for reasons which have already been indicated, there is no heading 'language.'

This translation has been supplemented by a new introduction, written by the author, which brings the work up to date. Occasional additions have also been made in the text with the same object, and the translator has added some notes of his own, in most of which he compares Malay customs, etc., as they occur in the Malay Peninsula, with the Achehnese ones described in the text. I have not had an opportunity of comparing the translation with the original, but the English reads well, and it seems to have been carefully done. As the translator had qualified in the Dutch language, it may be presumed that he has accurately rendered his original. The work has a pathetic interest, for Mr. O'Sullivan died while it was in the press, and I cannot conclude this notice without expressing deep regret at the untimely death of one whose amiability endeared him to all that knew him, and whose strenuous character and love of good work for its own sake led him, among the pressing duties of his official position, to undertake and carry through, while life lasted, a task like the one which in its results now lies before me. English students of Malayán subjects will hold his name in grateful remembrance, and will cherish the hope that others may follow his good example.

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THE THIRTY-SEVEN NATS, A PHASE OF SPIRIT-WORSHIP PREVAILING IN BURMA. By Sir R. C. TEMPLE, Bart., C.I.E. Imp. 4to. (London: Griggs, 1906.)

A NATIVE ACCOUNT OF THE THIRTY-SEVEN NATS, BEING A TRANSLATION OF A RARE BURMESE MANUSCRIPT. By Sir R. C. TEMPLE. *Indian Antiquary*, vol. xxxv (1906), pp. 217 ff.

Sir Richard Temple's long studies in Burmese folk-religion have culminated in the first of the two works mentioned at

the head of this review. It is rare, indeed, that Oriental learning is presented to English readers in so becoming and so sumptuous a dress. It is She herself—there is no doubt of that—but the goddess whom we have hitherto discreetly, if somewhat dully worshipped, must surely have rubbed her eyes in astonishment at finding herself, for once, enshrined in an *édition de luxe*, seized upon by a real English Mem Sahib, and given the place of honour in a real English drawing-room. Taking these externals first, the book reflects infinite credit on Mr. Griggs, who has never done anything better in reproducing Indian art. It commences with nineteen pages of coloured illustrations of the thirty-seven Nats, and profusely scattered throughout the text there are over a hundred smaller reproductions of native illuminated pictures. There are, besides, full-page coloured illustrations and maps in other parts of the volume, while in black and white we have an appendix of eleven pages of drawings, and numerous smaller type-blocks from photographs of the author's unique collection of Burmese wood-carvings. The great value of all these pictures is that they are genuine reproductions of the native art of a quaintly artistic race. We have here the real thing, free from the personal equation of English copyists.

The literary portion of the book can be appreciated, but can hardly be criticized, for its writer knows more about the subject than anyone else in Europe; and here we must refer also to the second work mentioned at the head of this review, the article in the *Indian Antiquary*. It is a translation of a rare Burmese manuscript, written in 1805 A.D. for the then Heir Apparent of the Burmese throne, and giving a list of the thirty-seven Nats, together with the legends connected with each, and a description of the ceremonies performed at his festival. The contents were not available when the larger work was under preparation, and it must therefore be taken as a kind of supplement, the two together summarizing all the information at present available on the subject.

The main work falls naturally into two sections, the

first, chapters i-vii, dealing generally with the animistic beliefs of Burma, and the second, chapters viii-xiv, with the great Thirty-seven. Although the formal religion of the country is Buddhism, the Burman is at heart an animist—a worshipper of spirits or *Nats*, his professed faith being little more than a “thin veneer of philosophy laid over the main structure of animistic belief.” Every village, every house, every human being, every conspicuous object, and every article of utility has its guardian spirit. Some of these spirits are Buddhist,—angels and saints derived from the old Brahmanic cosmogony of India through Buddhism; others are nature-spirits derived from the ancient pre-Buddhist beliefs of the people; and others, again, are spirits or ghosts of the departed. The three sources are quite distinct in the popular mind, and no Burman ever mixes them up or confuses one class with another. Nevertheless, in the interesting chapters dealing with Brahmanic and Buddhist influence, Sir Richard Temple shows how the old animism has reacted on these, and how even legends such as that of the critical epoch in the life of the Buddha himself have been coloured by it.

The belief in the existence of Nats who are spirits of the departed is of course directly opposed to the professed Buddhism of the country, and yet it is as universal in Burma as in any other part of the world where animism is still the national religion. The spirits are almost always malevolent, and though a village may be proud of its own special Nat the pride has fear for its basis, the ceremonies performed in its honour being those of propitiation, not of adoration. Whether we investigate the customs of the Burmans proper or those of the wilder tribes, the result is the same. Everywhere the ruling thought is “only let the Nats be grateful, and leave their trembling worshippers in peace and quietness.” It even explains such customs as head-hunting and human sacrifice. Some tribes believe that a man’s ghost goes with his skull, so that the more skulls there are hung round a village the more jealous watch-dog shades there are, intolerant of other interlopers.

from the spirit-world. So, men were killed in former times to create Nats, who might protect a newly built place or who might keep inviolable the frontier between two rival states. In settled Burma so powerful are still the old beliefs that Buddhist abbots attend and celebrate animistic ceremonies, and many of the most noted seers and necromancers (purely animistic officials) are actually Buddhist monks.

We have seen that in Burma there are innumerable Nats or spirits, but there are thirty-seven who form the national hierarchy or, as Taw Sein Ko names them, the "Thirty-seven Rulers." These form the subject of the latter portion of the book under review, and they well illustrate the stage of religion to which the average Burman has arrived, for, with one exception (Thagyá Nat = Śakra = Indra, who has been borrowed from India), they are all ghosts of departed heroes or heroines, most of whom were alive between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, and some less than two hundred years ago. One, when alive, was well known to the early Portuguese settlers, and was often mentioned in their accounts.

Sir Richard Temple takes these historical personages, groups them according to their respective historical surroundings, gives a brief sketch of the somewhat complicated history of Burma so far as it relates to them, and then reproduces the legend of each Nat with an account of the ceremonies performed at his festival. These departed worthies were nearly all connected with royalty, and came to untimely ends. A good many of them are said to have led virtuous lives, but some of them could hardly be called reputable members of society even according to Burmese standards. For instance, there are two versions of the story of Min Kyawzwá Nat. According to one, he was the minister of the king of Pagan, who married a young lady, a spirit-seller (a seller of usquebaugh, not of ghosts) by profession. They lived happily for a time, but he "became addicted to his wife's liquor and spent all his sober moments in cock-fighting and letting off fireworks. He died and became a Nat. . . . The religious are left to choose which

version [of the legend] they please. The point is the drink, the cock-fighting, and the fireworks.”

Most of these Nats are worshipped, as has been explained, to prevent their becoming a nuisance. Take two very important ones, Mahágiri and Hnamàdawgyí, who were, when alive, brother and sister. The former was murdered, and the latter committed suicide in consequence. Their spirits (or Nats) took up their abode in a tree, from which they used to descend to kill and eat passers-by. The king had the tree uprooted and thrown into the Irrawaddy. It became stranded at Pagan, where the Nats continued their anthropophagical habits till the local ruler built them a temple and founded a festival in their honour. Since they have been properly housed and treated they have given up their promiscuous raids, and now only attack those who offend them.

Thagyá, the one Nat who is not of human origin, receives the greater part of a chapter to himself. As his name shows, he does not represent the *Sakka* of Pāli, but is a Burmese form of the Sanskrit *Śakra*, the cult being in consequence thrown back to the early times when the old debased Northern (Sanskritic) Buddhism was current in Burma, and before the present Southern (Pāli) form began to prevail. He is the head of all the Nats, and occupies a place by himself as the Lord of Life, the Recording Angel, and as the Supernatural Being most revered and most respected. His worship may be described as a form of Burmese animism engrafted on the Indian cosmogony.

Space will not allow me to go further into details regarding this book, notable both as a work of art and as a document relating to the spirit-beliefs of an important section of the human race. I have endeavoured to give a rapid review of its chief contents, and that must suffice. It only remains to record that Sir Richard Temple has most freely acknowledged the works of other writers, from whom he has drawn a part of the information which he has collected, while he has perhaps too modestly left his readers to infer the value of what is due to his own

researches, and to the clearness with which he has unravelled the tangled web of superstition overlying an official religion so materialistic as Buddhism.

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KATALOG DER ISLAMISCHEN, CHRISTLICH-ORIENTALISCHEN, JÜDISCHEN, UND SAMARITANISCHEN HANDSCHRIFTEN DER UNIVERSITÄTS-BIBLIOTHEK ZU LEIPZIG, VON K. VOLLERS. Mit einem Beitrag von J. LEIPOLDT. 8vo; pp. xi and 508. (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1906.)

The series of catalogues of MSS. published on behalf of the Leipzig University has been enriched by the magnificent volume mentioned above, and thanks are due to the learned compilers for the care and skill displayed in the fulfilment of their task. We were prepared to find a goodly collection of Oriental MSS. at a place which for many decades formed the centre of the Fleischer school, but the actual wealth of that collection will come as a surprise to many students who are out of personal touch with that renowned seat of learning. Of a total of 1120 (or rather 1128) volumes, not less than 914 are in Arabic, but the real number of Arab codices is much larger, as they include more than fifty compound volumes. The collection embraces every conceivable subject dear to the Arab mind. The variety is therefore great, and even includes such remote subjects as hunting and interpretation of dreams. The last-named subject (علم التعمير), which formed a subdivision of the medical science, enjoyed no small popularity, as may be seen from the list of works published by N. Bland in this Journal, vol. xvi, p. 153 sqq. It is interesting to note that the study, and probably also the practice, of this art spread to the non-Mohammedan population of Moslim lands. The Cairo Genizah at Cambridge numbers not less than nine different fragments of treatises on the *Ta'bir* in Hebrew characters, among which are to be found two copies of the