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*HAUSA FOLK-LORE AND CUSTOMS.*

*Hausa Folk-Lore, Customs, Proverbs, &c., Collected and Transliterated with English Translation and Notes.* By R. Sutherland Rattray. With a preface by R. R. Marett. Vol. i., pp. xxiv+327; vol. ii., pp. 315. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913.) Price, 2 vols., 30s. net.

THIS book is intended to serve two distinct objects: to serve as a chrestomathy of the Hausa language, and as a collection of the local folk-lore and custom. It contains a series of lithographed Hausa texts, with a transliteration in Roman characters and a literal English translation. The method employed is to reproduce the MSS. written by a learned Hausa Málam or scribe, who wrote down or translated from Arabic sources such information as was required, and this was subsequently translated into Hausa. By this process the primary intention of the work is satisfactorily attained. Mr. Rattray is obviously a competent scholar, and in the course of the work he has been able to correct or extend the work of previous writers on Hausa grammar and phonology.

These admirably printed volumes thus represent a substantial contribution to linguistics, but the attempt to collect folk-lore and custom is not quite so satisfactory. The learned native scribe, like the Indian Pundit or Moulvi, is not the best agent for exploring the peasant beliefs and usages. He is apt to regard popular tradition and custom as of little value when they do not happen to conform to his standard of orthodoxy, and to introduce into his material something which is of purely literary origin and does not smell of the soil. In this respect Major Tremearne, in his recently published "Hausa Superstition and Custom," seems to have followed a sounder method by recording in his own hand the tales and superstitions which he heard from the lips of privates in the Nigeria Regiment, peasants, women and children.

Mr. Rattray has arranged his material in five divisions: traditionary accounts of the origin of the Hausa nation and of their conversion to Islam; tales of heroes and heroines; animal tales; customs and arts; proverbs. Among the tales we find many familiar *motifs* and incidents—the cannibal giant with his "Fee-fo-fum"; Beauty and the Beast, and so on. The animal tales are decidedly the best in the collection, and well illustrate the naive cunning and wit which characterise the race. The formulæ introducing and closing the tales are interesting. They begin with "This is a story

about" so and so; "a tale, let it go, let it come," ending with "Off with the rat's head!" that is, "that is the end of him."

The accounts of custom are rather disappointing, because, unless the Málam is mistaken, Islam has crushed down most of the indigenous practices. Perhaps the most valuable chapters are those describing, from native sources, the *cire perdue* process of brass-casting, as it appears in the remarkable figures from Benin, and an account of the primitive method of tanning skins.

The book, as a whole, deserves hearty commendation. But in his next attempt to add to his stores of local folk-lore and usage Mr. Rattray might with advantage dispense with the services of his Málam and depend upon himself for the task of collection.

*INDIAN CHRONOGRAPHY.*

*Indian Chronography: An extension of the "Indian Calendar," with working examples.* By Robert Sewell. Pp. xii+187. (London: George Allen & Co., Ltd., 1912.) Price 31s. 6d. net.

HINDU chronology appears extremely complex at first glance, but this complexity is more apparent than real, being largely due to the fact that so many different systems of reckoning were used in different places and at different times. Each single system is comparatively simple, and—save for the neglect of the effects due to precession—fairly accurate. The standard work on the subject is the "Indian Calendar," by Messrs. Sewell and Dikshit (*NATURE*, vol. liv., No. 1393), to which the present volume forms a supplement.

We have here a condensed account of those systems of chronology usually met with in inscriptions and documents, which are more fully treated in the previous work. Some space is devoted to the tropical year in view of the fact that this unit is occasionally met with, while the method of reckoning by Jovian Samvatsaras is fully described.

The volume contains a very large number of carefully worked examples and numerous tables, numbered to run consecutively with those of the previous volume. These include tables for the conversion of the moment of Mēsha Samkrānti by the First Arya Siddhānta into the same moment of the Present Sūrya Siddhānta; tables of the sixty- and twelve-year cycles of Jupiter, &c. Table I. of the "Indian Calendar" is carried forward to A.D. 1950; while Tables W, Y, Z (now XXXIII., XXXIV., XXXV.) of the Additions and Corrections to the "Indian Calendar" reappear. In Table XXXIII., "For finding the