color patterns, and other factors. In Tulu this careful matching of appropriate fighting pairs is known as pati malpuni. Before the cocks are set against each other, the supporters of each make a bet. Sometimes as much as Rs. 500,000 ($10,000) is offered as a bet. When the betting is over, the two cocks are held a foot above the ground facing each other in a procedure called derpuni (driving forth, setting forth). There are specialists in both the fields of pati malpuni and derpuni.

The next procedure is to tie the blades on the legs of each cock. The blades are about two inches long and slightly curved, with a point at one end and sharp edges. There are many varieties of traditional blades, depending on their shape and place of origin: āra bālu (native blade), badekāyi bālu (blade of the northern region), nāgaragiri (a place name), ecimullu (a kind of thorn), and arekokke (slightly curved). The thread used to fasten the blade to the cocks' legs is called dōre. After the blades are fastened, the two cocks face off in a procedure called oddāvunu (displaying, showing off). Next, they are released and allowed to fight. If a cock is injured in the field, its people offer it support to revive it. The defeated cock goes to the owner of the winning cock. If both cocks die, each party retains its own. Curry made from the flesh of a fighting cock is said to be tastier than that of ordinary chicken and is also said to impart strength to those who eat it.

In cockfighting held as part of a jātrā or bhūta ceremony, a certain ritual, called kōrigunta (c. 1650), is performed prior to the fight. Four or five days in advance of the contest, four thin poles of the pālemara (a tree that exudes a white sap that turns red over time; it has other ritual uses as well) are erected on the ground. Set apart for cockfighting, the poles are connected by lines drawn on the ground. The lines are also drawn on the inner area of the square, and the erected poles are also thus connected. One pole is fixed outside this betting ring. The chosen cocks are tied to two poles within the ring, freed after some time, and allowed to fight. These cocks have no blades fastened to their legs. After fighting for some time, the cocks are caught and brought to the bhūta shrine and later returned to their owner. This ritual, like others that take place during the bhūta ceremony, is performed in the presence of the leaders of the village.

People who take part in the sport of cockfighting closely follow a traditional kukkuat palācānga (cock almanac), which gives details about the birth, growth, adulthood, old age, death, and other aspects of the lives of cocks. It also prescribes which colors of cocks should fight each other, mentioning the probable color of the winning cock on a particular day of the week or in a particular week of the month. Cockfighting enthusiasts have much faith in this almanac.

People of all classes and communities in the village take part in the sport, a very popular pastime for the rural folk of Tuluñādu, and it is a matter of prestige to own a winning cock.

References

See also
Bhūta Kōla; Games and Contests; Jātrā/Yātrā

COLONIALISM AND FOLKLORE
Though the East India Company had been making political inroads in India since the eighteenth century, it was only in 1858 that British rule was formally inaugurated. A self-conscious imperial presence spurred the collection of folklore as a means to comprehend "the native mind" and thus to govern more efficiently. Field collections of performed folklore texts, beliefs, and customs were undertaken in various regional languages and among different religious and tribal groups. This trend displaced the Orientalist emphasis on studying ancient Hindu texts—in Sanskrit and accompanied by Brahmanical exegetes—as the key to Indian culture.

The study of folklore in India during the colonial period took place in dialogue with theoretical trends prevalent in England and in Europe generally: New field materials were evaluated in light of prevailing theories such as solar mythology, cultural evolution and survivals, and diffusion. Books and articles on Indian folklore were published both in India and in Britain. Many of the male folklorists working in India also took active part in the Folk-Lore Society in England. In India journal outlets for colonial folklorists included North Indian Notes and Queries (1891–1896), Panjab Notes and Queries (1883–1887), Indian Antiquary (1872–present), Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay (1886–present), Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (1905–1934), and Man in India (1921–present).

Folklorists of the colonial period fall into three groups: British administrators and female members of their families, missionaries (who were not always
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British), and British-educated Indians. While women were prominent in the study of Indian folklore in the last half of the nineteenth century, by the early twentieth century, as the discipline became more established, they became marginalized, derided as too popular and not sufficiently scholarly.

Mary Frere’s landmark Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends Current in Southern India appeared in 1868 and proceeded to go through several reprints. This book brought together the folktales of Frere’s nursemaid or ayah, a Lingayat convert to Christianity named Anna Liberata d’Souza. Frere was the daughter of the governor of Bombay. Her father, Sir Bartle Frere, supplemented the book with an introduction and notes. Indicating the attitude toward Indian folklore of the time, he wrote that it was important for “Government servants...missionaries, and others residing in the country” to undertake such collections to understand “the popular, non-Brahmanical superstitions of the lower orders” (p. xiii). A similar book by the daughter of another civil servant was Maive Stokes’s Indian Fairy Tales. First privately printed in 1879, it was reprinted in London the following year and received wide attention in both Britain and India. By the time Wide Awake Tales, collected by the wife of a magistrate, Flora Annie Steel, appeared in 1884, her coauthor, Richard Temple, had devised a comparative interpretive scheme for the study of Indian folktales, which he sets forth in the notes.

Richard Carnac Temple was a British civil servant in the Punjab, and a prolific folklorist. Among his many publications, the three-volume Legends of the Punjab (1884–1900) stands out for its groundbreaking emphasis on the performed text. Temple had trained scribes to record the poems of bards, and the book contains both transliterations and translations of the Punjabi language.

William Crooke, who served as district magistrate and collector of revenue in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, is another outstanding figure in the development of colonial Indian folklore. Like Temple, Crooke was a prolific writer. He is especially known for his painstakingly detailed book, An Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India, first published in 1894 and subsequently revised and widely reprinted. As editor of North Indian Notes and Queries (1891–1896), Crooke created a forum for people to send in observations and initiate discussion on cultural practices and folklore texts of various genres. Along with British civil servants, educated Indians contributed extensively to this journal.

British interest in Indian folklore thus also spread to Indians: nationalist folklore can be seen as a direct reaction to and outgrowth of colonial folklore. The same pattern holds for Sri Lanka, where the folklorist Hugh Nevill is especially worthy of note.

An anomalous figure who deserves mention is Verrier Elwin, an Anglican priest turned Gandhian “philanthropologist” who began working among tribal groups in central and northeast India during the colonial era. He remained in India, becoming an Indian citizen after the British withdrew in 1947. A thorough scholar, careful ethnographer, gifted translator, and animated writer, Elwin remains a leading figure in the sphere of tribal folklore. In his introduction to Folk-tales of Mahakashal (1944), Elwin also laid out the first comprehensive history of folklore study in India.

As Elwin pointed out, colonial administrators and missionaries were rarely faithful to folklore texts, tending to rewrite them in light of a Western audience, and to eliminate references considered off-color. “Native” folklorists, too, were guilty of doctoring materials so that they did not give a negative impression to Western readers. Collected materials also tended to be decontextualized, with little information provided on their role in actual people’s lives. A notion of “authentic” tradition guided what was perceived as legitimate folklore, so references to changing social customs were screened out. Despite these shortcomings in the vast stores of folklore collected during the colonial era, scholars today continue to draw on these materials for historical documentation and for the persisting vitality of the recorded texts.

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