

are the people who conceive themselves at a certain time as Kalang? what do *they* hold to be the salient features of Kalang identity?). Thus, ethnic units are not tight, stable groups over historical time. What is the impact of the large-scale transformations occurring in Java during the last 150 years on Kalang identity? How did the people who called themselves "Kalang" cope with Islamization? To be sure, some information to answer these questions is presented in Seltmann's book (especially in the first chapters). But his interpretive frame does not address in the first instance the shifting nature of ethnic identity, the ethnic self-awareness of the Kalang, or their response to large-scale process and the present situation (the latter aspect for lack of data). Thus, a study on the Kalang that combines historical analysis with modern anthropological fieldwork and these current theoretical questions is still on the agenda—if the descendants of former Kalang do still conceive of themselves as an ethnic unit and not just as a religious or occupational subgroup within mainstream Javanese culture (a model for research along these lines has been achieved for Tengger society, see HEFFNER 1985). However, as a reference work and a solid historical starting point and for its rich data on ritual and myth, Friedrich Seltmann's monograph will be invaluable for all future research on the Kalang and the history of Java.

## REFERENCES CITED:

CASIMIR, Michael J.

1987 In search of guilt: Legends on the origin of the peripatetic niche. In *The other nomads*, ed. A. Rao, pp. 373–390. Köln: Böhlau-Verlag.

HEFFNER, R. W.

1985 *Hindu Javanese: Tengger tradition and Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

RAO, Aparna, ed.

1987 *The other nomads*. Köln: Böhlau-Verlag.

Thomas SCHWEIZER  
University of Tübingen  
Tübingen, Germany

## INDIA

KAELBER, WALTER O. *Tapta-Marga: Asceticism and Initiation in Vedic India*.

Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989. x+204 pages. Diagrams, references, index. Cloth US\$44.50; ISBN 0-88706-813-8. Paper US\$14.95; ISBN 0-88706-814-6.

While following Eliade's observation that four basic and interdependent concepts, namely, *karma*, *māyā*, *nirvāṇa*, and *yoga*, serve to lead the researcher to the very core of Indian spirituality, the author begins with the suggestion that the investigation of five basic elements, namely, heat (*tapas*), initiation, sacrifice (*yajña*), knowledge (*vidyā*, *jñāna*), and homology (*nidāna*, *bandhu*), lead directly to what he calls the "center" of the Vedic religion. However, at the very outset he asserts that his primary concern is *tapas*—or more accurately, the Sanskrit root *tap* and its derivatives—a fact that will prove apparent even to the casual reader.

Accepting Knipe's description of the Veda as a "living unit," the author, too, prefers to regard the Veda as a "consistent and mutually reinforcing tradition" be-

cause of his belief that, despite the many diversities of the Vedic religion, the texts appear to ceaselessly seek a kind of continuity. Accordingly, he affirms his preference for a phenomenological or morphological approach by drawing upon earlier and later texts simultaneously and disregarding historical chronology, since, according to him, approaching the Vedic texts as a rigid succession of texts is sterile if not impossible. However, he also hastens to add that historical change and development are factors central to his enquiry, and the book viewed in its entirety certainly does reveal to the reader a certain degree of historical development.

The reader is then led on to a rather extensive and well-researched presentation of the Vedic concept of *tapas* in its myriad manifestations, as Rainfall and Fertility, Birth and Spiritual Rebirth (*upanayana*), Purification, Knowledge and Spiritual Rebirth, Ritual Action and Sacred Knowledge (*karma/jñāna*), and finally Knowledge and Liberation (wherein he makes an interesting distinction between a higher and lower form of *tapas* as exemplified in the principal Upanisads, a distinction based upon the practices implied and the goals attainable). Also worth noting are the author's frequent references to and remarks concerning other well-known Vedic and Indological scholars.

Speaking of Vedic initiation, the author delineates two fundamental forms of initiation symbolism, both of which he describes as either "easy" or "dramatic," namely, that involving the womb, embryo, and birth as symbols, and the other involving the image of a passage leading the initiate from a less desirable to a more desirable state, and thereafter he provides thought-provoking examples of the "dramatic" element. He concludes with the assertion that the Vedic path from the beginning to the end was a *tapta-mārga* ("heated passage"), the *tapas* being understood in its diverse ramifications as the heat of Agni and the sun, sexual heat, the heat of physical and mental pain, the heat of asceticism, and the heat of contemplation.

As well as providing valuable notes and an index, the book has been written in clear and concise English and will certainly prove to be a boon to Indological scholars.

Cyril VELIATH  
Sophia University  
Tokyo

McDANIEL, JUNE. *The Madness of the Saints: Ecstatic Religion in Bengal*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989. xi+335 pages. Tables, appendices, bibliography, index. Prices (outside of the US and Canada) Cloth £45.00 (UK and Eire), US\$51.75 (all other), ISBN 0-226-55722-7. Paper £13.50 (UK and Eire), US\$19.50 (all other), ISBN 0-226-55723-5.

Saints in Bengal have always been a continuing source of fascination to Western scholars because of their peculiarities. Although they belong to different religious cults, they often share a common lifestyle. Most often they are taken as madmen by outsiders because of their unusual behaviour and because of spiritual practices that are quite the reverse of normal religious activity. Many of these saints are religious mendicants or wandering village singers. They are called by different names, such as: *aul*, *baul*, *vaisnava*, and *sahajiya*. Although they are taken as mad, their madness has a special meaning for them when viewed in the context of their total behaviour.