

in southern Borneo that humans are internally good (81); the belief in a twofold soul (of the deceased): a coarse one that needs our ministrations and a refined one that need not bother us (89-90); the ethos of knowing one's place, inculcated and preserved by a language with different degrees of politeness, and the social role of a religious language not understood by the people (238-244)—because a parallel to each of these could be found, I believe in the realm of Japanese religion.

All in all, a book whose appeal is not limited to the specialist in anthropology. Carefully edited, flawlessly printed, and beautifully presented, it can be recommended to all students of religion.

Jan Van Bragt
Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture
Nagoya, Japan

WESSING, ROBERT. *The Soul of Ambiguity: The Tiger in Southeast Asia*. Monograph Series on Southeast Asia, Special Report No. 24. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1986. Vi+148 pages. Glossary of foreign words, bibliography. Paper US\$ 19.50 (Distributed exclusively by Cellar Book Shop, 18090 Wyoming, Detroit, MI 48221, USA).

The tiger occupies a special role in the belief systems of Southeast Asian people. This little monograph treats of such beliefs and practices that deal with the tiger not just as an animal species in the natural world but as a magico-mystic being in the symbolic world of human beings. Though a few scattered references are made to materials from mainland Southeast Asia, most of the data in this book are taken from Sumatra, Java, and peninsular Malaysia. The author cites Heine-Geldern's remark "that someone really ought to pull all this Southeast Asian tiger lore together and analyze it." This remark prompts the author to gather together a large number of piecemeal stories about the tiger. They are taken partly from the author's own field experiences in West Java and Aceh but, for the other areas, they are based mostly on a large body of published sources of the past and the present.

A variety of piecemeal data from different places and periods are classified and arranged into a number of topics. First, the author shows imagined symbolic relations between tigers and men by citing lore about tigers' common ancestry with men, taboos on naming tigers, charms for keeping tigers away, and lore about men destined to be killed by tigers or about magical methods to catch and kill tigers. Secondly, he discusses the mystic transformation of men into tigers and vice versa. Since the tiger is seen as a very special animal in the natural world, this cluster of beliefs about man-tiger interchange has to do with special types of human beings, that is, kings and princes, ancestors, holy men, culture heroes, and shamans. Thirdly, the author refers to beliefs about "tiger villages" in relation to weretiger lore. According to such belief, there are some cases where tigers live in a village and change into a human shape upon going out, but in other cases the village is inhabited by men who turn into tigers when they leave. The book closes with a summary overview of soul beliefs, showing that man-tiger interrelations are mediated by the soul or the vital principle which takes many different shapes and so connects many different forms of life in this world.

Those who are interested in Southeast Asian tiger lore would certainly find in this book many useful references to the theme. The volume constitutes a handy start-

ing point from which a more intensive and systematic analysis of the theme should be made. This reviewer is quite impressed with the author's good command of written sources dealing with the theme and his effort to put together a great number of related materials into a readable book, but not so much with his analysis of and his theoretical insight into the theme.

Sekimoto Teruo
University of Tokyo
Tokyo, Japan

INDIA

BREGENHØJ, CARSTEN. *RgVeda as the Key to Folklore. An Imagery Experiment*. Dansk Folkemindesamling Studier nr. 16-17. København: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 1987. 79 pages. Bibliography. Paper Danish kroner 98,50 (approximately US\$15.00). ISBN 87-17-05813-9.

The underlying hypothesis of the two essays in this diminutive volume (79 pages) is that the "RgVeda is the origin of folk tradition" (10). Bregenhøj begins by lamenting the present state of folkloristics which according to him is marked by the "dictum that both ethnology and folklore deal with people, not with tools or texts." Fortunately, he is wrong in his assessment of the state of the discipline. In fact, the expansion of folkloristic methodologies beyond the analysis of the text to include the performative context for the presentation and transmission of all aspects of folklore and folklife have not been at the expense of the text. From this initial misconception, Bregenhøj heads off into some fairly wild speculations. At one point he states: "It is therefore my claim that *ordinary folktales* are not profane texts; that they were not created by the popular imagination and actually contain nothing that is fantastic, marvelous or magical; that they are in fact transformations of metaphorical, religious poetry" (24).

As the basis for this brief study, Bregenhøj uses three large textual corpora—the soma verses of the *RgVeda*, Finnish runno-metre poetry, and Scandinavian/German prose folklore and jungles. His dealing with the soma verses in the *RgVeda* is very simplistic. The soma imagery is not "the core of all this poetry" (21). No one is going to argue that the *RgVeda* contains a great deal of metaphorical imagery, however it is not "the Soma metaphors that are the most important for an understanding of this imagery" (22). There are some occasional insights in his analysis of this imagery (e.g. his discussion of "the milk of the barren cow" on page 40) but he is too intent upon making his tenuous connections to the Scandinavian/Germanic material to make his work interesting to Indic scholars or to provide any real contribution to folklore scholarship.

The connections he draws between the three corpora under study are generally weak and certainly do not in any way lead to the conclusion that the "content of the Vedic hymns is the origin of much European folklore" (59). For example, the connection he assumes between the ladybird image in Scandinavian folklore and the soma plant on the basis of color, shape, and potential spiritual metaphors is far-fetched. Another of his astonishing conclusions is "that 'The Juniper Tree,' AT 720, is actually a Soma text," (27).

Hugh M. Flick, Jr.
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA