

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.

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### 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).

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