

work contributed to the new discipline of “colonial studies,” which flourished at universities in Japan’s imperial territories. He also promoted an emperor-centered view of history through large-scale authoritative syntheses, document collections, and edited volumes spanning the age of the gods and recorded time. Supported by both the government and private sources, these projects reinforced the prestige and public role of their author and of the historical discipline in Japan on the verge of World War II.

In 1935, Kuroita celebrated his retirement at a gathering that mobilized no less than 1,716 donors including students, representatives of Buddhist temples, and even a few Koreans—an indication of his stature in and beyond the academic world. Only a year later he suffered a debilitating stroke that essentially ended his career at the age of sixty-two. Although it is impossible to know for sure how the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) would have impacted his scholarship, Yoshikawa speculates that he would likely have joined some of his most notorious fellow professors at Tōdai in actively championing Japanese aggression. As she notes pithily, “Perhaps Kuroita’s last gift to the field was the timing of his stroke” (p. 250). Without such foreknowledge, however, students and colleagues continued to revere him, continually visiting his sickbed and taking up his work in progress. Kuroita died ten years later in 1946.

The very nature of history-writing today requires scholars to sift through layers of previous attempts to address a particular topic, yet *Making History Matter* is the first monograph to analyze the profession as a whole in what emerges as its most seminal and misunderstood decade in Japan. Yoshikawa has written a nuanced book that should be read by anyone who regularly engages with Japanese scholarship or is interested in the comparative development of historiography.

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*Homo Ritualis: Hindu Ritual and Its Significance for Ritual Theory.* By AXEL MICHAELS. New York: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016. Pp. xix + 372. \$41.95 (paper).

Man the player, hierarchical man, man the killer, academic man—*Homo Ludens* (J. Huizinga, Haarlem: H. D. Tjeenk Willink, 1938), *Homo Hierarchicus* (L. Dumont, Paris: Gallimard, 1966), *Homo Necans* (W. Burkert, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972), *Homo Academicus* (P. Bourdieu, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1984)—to this ever-expanding genre of social scientific works that seek to reveal mankind’s singular and essential qualities, we may now add another: Axel Michaels’ *Homo Ritualis*, man the ritualist. Mining the vast body of ritual texts and practices associated with orthodox Hinduism, Michaels in this ambitious book makes two significant contributions: first, he offers an all-encompassing theory of the Hindu path of ritual, showing how the Sanskritic ritual culture of Brahman priests constitutes an influential and enduring paradigm of ritual in Indic religions; second—and more importantly—he brings this paradigm, along with its full suite of indigenous categories and arguments, into conversation with the academic field of ritual studies. This engaging work is the capstone of the many decades Michaels has spent reflecting on ritual and its implications, first as a philologist and ethnographer in the Kathmandu valley, and then as the leader of the Collaborative Research Center “Ritual Dynamics” at the University of Heidelberg, a multi-year initiative that has produced an impressive body of scholarship, much of it in the hybrid mode Michaels dubs “ethno-indology” (pp. 27–31).

Michaels’ central argument builds on the conventional wisdom—in this case, more or less correct—that, in Hindu India, “what you believe is less important than what you do” (p. 2). In other words, Hinduism is a domain where identity, status, and piety are negotiated chiefly in the ritual sphere. He also suggests, rightly, that the massive size of the Hindu ritual corpus and the long history of performing and thinking about rites offer a richness and depth rivaled by few other religions. Accordingly, Michaels posits “a Hindu *homo ritualis*,” in the sense of “a certain kind of action habitus” permeating Hindu life (p. 5). Drawing on the work of ritual theorist Roland Grimes (p. 32), he treats Hindu ritual as a special kind of action, a definition that felicitously overlaps with the importance of *karma*, the

'action' or 'work' of ritual in the Indic context (p. 8). Michaels argues that four primary components distinguish such ritual action from everyday activity and make up the basic structure of ritual performance: framing, formality, modality, and meaning. After an introduction that defines key terms, lays out the argument, and offers a useful overview of ritual studies in the modern academy, these four components serve to structure the four main parts of the book. As Michaels deals with each one in turn, he grapples with several guiding questions: "What could be a theory of Hindu ritual? What is special for Hindu rituals? And what does such a theory share with a general theory of ritual?" (p. 310). By the time we reach the conclusion—a concise and compelling summary of "the Hindu path of ritual" (*karmamārga*), along with its lessons for ritual theory—the value of Michaels' original perspective speaks for itself.

In each of the book's four parts, Michaels develops his argument with representative elements taken from the Hindu ritual repertoire, analyzing each one with reference to anthropology, Indology, and ritual studies. Thus, in "Framing" (part I), the 'solemn intention' (*saṃkalpa*) and the 'ritualized greeting' (*namaskāra*) yield insights into the differences between ritualistic and mundane activity, in that they serve as markers that announce and frame a special mode of action. In "Formality" (part II), Michaels elucidates the all-important category of ritual form by examining 'rules' (*vidhi*), 'handbooks' (*paddhati*), and 'atonements for ritual mishaps' (*prāyaścitta*). For Michaels, these ordering elements constitute the fundamental "grammar" of Hindu ritual, imparting a structure at once paradigmatic and endlessly flexible. The affective dimension of rites is not missing from this section: Michaels discerns a spirit of 'play' (*līlā*) that shapes other key forms, including ritualized music, dance, and emotion. Next comes "Modality" (part III), a richly detailed section where the category of 'domestic ritual' (*saṃskāra*)—characterized by a mode of action Michaels calls *individualitas*—permits in-depth analyses of various life-cycle rites. Moving on to an array of "public rituals," from temple festivals (*utsava*) to pilgrimages (*yātrā*), Michaels suggests that these collective rites are best understood as expressions of another facet of ritual activity, *societas*. Of particular interest is the subset of rituals in which Michaels discerns a current of *religio*, that is, a modality aiming at transcendence and spiritual elevation; these include some of the most celebrated institutions of Hindu ritual: Vedic sacrifice (*yajña*), fire sacrifice (*homa*), and daily worship (*pūjā*).

With "Meaning" (part IV), Michaels takes up the transformative side of ritual: the way that rituals transform those who participate in them, and so come to *mean* something. The domain of meaning has long been a focus of ritual studies; since the controversial "meaninglessness" theory of Frits Staal (*Rules Without Meaning: Ritual, Mantra, and the Human Sciences*, New York: Peter Lang, 1989), debates around meaning have acquired an even greater centrality. Staal's legacy permeates this book, not least because Michaels regards his pioneering fieldwork on Vedic traditions in modern India as ethno-indology *avant la lettre* (p. 29). Even more important, however, is another methodological affinity shared by the two scholars: like that of Michaels, Staal's ritual theory grows out of a rigorous engagement with the indigenous "science of ritual" in a Hindu context. In evaluating Staal's work and its critics, Michaels seems to endorse the more qualified position of Humphrey and Laidlaw (*The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), which separates ritual from intentionality and allows for a multiplicity of meanings depending on context. Michaels also moves the debate forward in interesting ways by juxtaposing recent studies of ritualized behavior in the cognitive sciences with the premodern Pūrvamīmāṃsā theory of ritual efficacy.

Michaels is admirably clear-eyed about the limitations of his approach. He acknowledges that his project leaves him open to charges of "essentialism," which he aims to counter by "historicizing and localizing rituals wherever possible" (p. 5); drawing on his decades of work on Hindu and Buddhist traditions in Nepal on page after page, he more than fulfills this pledge. Moreover, his openness to different streams of ritual theory helps him avoid constructing ritual as a monolithic concept. "There is no essence of ritual. There are only persons who, for various reasons, regard this or that as a ritual" (p. 13). A somewhat thornier self-critique emerges in his conclusion, where he acknowledges that his focus on the ritual culture of the Brahmans has shaped the contours of his arguments, most notably in the four components that give the book its structure. The challenges any scholar faces in dealing with more than

three thousand years of Hindu ritual traditions are immense; one has to make choices, as Michaels has done, in order to circumscribe the material in a coherent way. To his credit, even as he foregrounds Brahmanical doctrines and practices, Michaels recognizes the imprints of folk, vernacular, and popular elements throughout this book. That said, he might have mounted an even more robust defense of his bias in favor of elite culture-formation, especially insofar as it pushes him to treat the “Brahmanic-Sanskritic model” and “the Vedic sacrifice prototype” as stand-ins for Hindu ritual writ large (p. 312).

There is no doubt that we need more books in the vein of *Homo Ritualis*. An exemplary work by a leading scholar in the field, it is elegantly written, clearly structured, persuasively argued, and reflective of a sustained engagement with Hindu ritual in many different contexts. The true measure of its impact, however, will be the extent to which scholars who are not South Asianists confront its mass of unfamiliar terms and sources and incorporate Michaels’ ideas into their own syntheses; active engagement along these lines would further the project of moving ritual studies towards a *global* line of thought that embraces non-Western theories and methods. To that end, it is encouraging that *Homo Ritualis* is the latest publication from Oxford Ritual Studies, a cross-disciplinary series spanning many different approaches, regions, and time periods, and edited by Grimes, Ute Hüsken, and Barry Stephenson. It also helps that Michaels has included two dozen tables and charts, which make the dense structures of Hindu ritual more accessible, along with an appendix on the application of computational linguistics to the analysis of ritual texts, and a detailed glossary of key terms. The book also includes the customary list of references and an index.

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*Monastic Wanderers: Nāth Yogī Ascetics in Modern South Asia.* By VÉRONIQUE BOUILLIER. New Delhi: MANOHAR, 2017; London: ROUTLEDGE, 2018. Pp. 351. Rs. 1395, £105.00; eBook £35.99.

For the past eighty years, the sole comprehensive overview of the religious order variously known as the Nāth Yogis, the Nāth Siddhas, the Kānpḥaṭa Yogis, or simply the Nāths or the Yogis has been George Weston Briggs’s *Gorakhnāth and the Kānpḥaṭa Yogis* (original ed. 1938). A trove of data on the Nāths, Briggs’s monograph was a work of colonial ethnography, written in the style of the imperial gazetteers or the “Tribes and Castes of India” series, and containing chapters with titles like “Religion and Superstition.” For the past thirty years, Véronique Bouillier has been quietly assembling a body of scholarship that has reprised, updated, and in many respects supplanted Briggs’s pioneering work. Trained in the tradition of historical anthropology in which the French so excel, Bouillier’s earliest focus was on the centuries-long relationships the Nāths have maintained with royal power in Nepal. A series of seminal articles and chapters on their relationships to the royal houses of Gorkha and Dāng culminated in a 1997 monograph, *Ascètes et rois: Un monastère des Kanphata Yogis au Népal* (Paris: CNRS Editions). Following this, Bouillier shifted her focus to India, where a decade of fieldwork and archival research in Rajasthan, Karnataka, Haryana, the Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh issued in *Itinérance et vie monastique: Les ascètes Nāth Yogīs en Inde contemporaine* (Paris: Editions de la FMSH, 2008). Hers has been a participatory anthropology: she has taken part in Nāth processions and interacted closely with the Nāths in their monastic and householder settings, with the *upadeśī* initiation she received in Nepal giving her inside knowledge of a tantric rite directed to the goddess Yogmāyā-Bālasundarī (pp. 44–45). Because very few of her writings to date have appeared in English, Bouillier’s scholarship has been poorly known in the Anglophone world. The present work, a mature reflection on a tradition whose transformations she has observed and documented firsthand for over three decades, is a welcome remedy to that situation.

The book is well structured and its arguments clearly presented, albeit in a somewhat idiomatic form of English expression. Working from Dumont’s concept of “monastic community” as “an essential mediating term between the solitary ascetic individual and society” (p. 81), Bouillier suggests that “the