

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 Yogīs* (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

Nāth Yogis offer a perfect example of this double movement, this fundamental relationship between a tradition that emphasizes a personal approach to asceticism and spiritual quest, and a collective organization anchored to the monasteries which allows the sect to survive and adapt to the multiple social-historical changes they face” (p. 83). This tension plays itself out on a number of levels. Renouncers with no individual possessions, Nāths have often found themselves in the roles of landlords and feudal rulers (p. 203); and whereas celibacy is a requirement for being a Yogi, communities of married householders (*grhastha*), many claiming a Yogi identity “and even using Yogī or the vernacular form Jogī as a caste name” (p. 299), are found across north India and Nepal.

An overview of Nāth identity, part one surveys the terminology by which the order defines itself, the mytho-history of its founding gurus, its textual corpus, *haṭha yoga* legacy, worship traditions, and formal organization. While their founding guru Gorakhnāth is universally worshiped in Nāth monasteries, both anthropomorphically and in the abstract form of the mysterious *amṛtapātra* or *pātradevatā* (pp. 30–31, 132–33), the ubiquitous presence of Bhairava and various forms of the goddess, as well as the mythology of Gorakhnāth’s lascivious guru Matsyendranāth, all attest to the order’s tantric roots. After surveying Nāth ritual, including the distinctive—but perhaps not particularly ancient (p. 43)—initiation rite of ear splitting, Bouillier turns to matters of organization. Traditionally divided into twelve orders (*panths*), the Nāth organization (*sampradāya*) has, since 1906, been supervised by the Yogī Mahāsabhā (“Great Yogī Assembly”), which “has been constantly increasing [in power], up to the present day when it successfully manages the entire sect” (p. 58). Bouillier’s insightful overview of the Mahāsabhā’s statutes, nomenclature, and organizational structure is followed by an important observation on those Nāth establishments that the Mahāsabhā does *not* control. These are the *niji maṭhs* (“personal monasteries”), which, identified with their charismatic founders and supported by local or regional patrons, are for the most part self-managed (pp. 65–66). However, visitors to these monasteries will often find them empty (p. 123), for, as the book’s title indicates, monasteries and the monastic life are but one aspect of Nāth self-identity, an aspect generally subordinated to the venerable tradition of wandering asceticism. In the case of the Nāths, the *jamāt*, a “constituted group of itinerant ascetics,” is organized and formal, consisting of a core of about a hundred Yogis who continuously travel together under the direction of two leaders (*mahants*) (pp. 73–78). Bouillier’s detailed account of *jamāt* organization, itineraries, and traditions is most revealing, reflecting a marriage of the old (the portable *dhūnī* fireplace, industrial consumption of cannabis, the wild playing of drums, horns, and whistles) and the new (walking has been replaced by travel in jeeps, trucks, and land cruisers) (pp. 74–76).

In part two, on the order’s “collective” (*pañcāyatī*) monasteries, we find ourselves on Bouillier’s “home turf,” at Kadri in the coastal town of Mangalore (Karnataka) and Caughera in the Dang Valley of Nepal. In these, the richest and most compelling chapters in the monograph, she draws upon local *māhātmya* literature, regional and trans-national *purāṇa-itihāsa*, iconographical and epigraphical data, land grant documents, traveler’s accounts, and colonial and post-colonial ethnography to present an extensive overview of the history of the Kadri monastery and the adjoining Mañjunāth temple, which passed through Buddhist and Śaiva (including Nāth) hands, before falling under the control of its present Vaiṣṇava Mādhava Brahman custodians.

A recurring theme throughout the book, the deep historical links between the Nāths and royal power is reflected in the order’s relationship to the goddess as the divine embodiment of royal sovereignty; the symbolic importance of the *gaddī*, the Nāth *mahants*’ cushion cum throne; the hagiographies of its founders as renouncer princes and royal power-brokers; and, most significantly, the order’s rituals of “royal consecration.” This is highlighted at Kadri, which, in spite of its geographical isolation from the Nāths’ north Indian and Nepalese power bases, retains an outsized importance for the order, which, as Bouillier surmises, is grounded in a not so distant past history, when Kadri was “ruled” by a *yogī-rājā*. The glories of that past, recaptured once every twelve years at the time of the Nasik *kumbh melā* in “the pilgrimage and coronation of the *raja* . . . enact a symbolic process of the territorial reconquest of their lost supremacy” (p. 116). A mobile gathering (*jhunḍī*) of over two thousand Yogis subject to a rigorous itinerary and massive logistical challenges, and punctuated by remarkably democratic election of the new Kadri *rājā* and an elaborate installation and coronation ceremony, this six-month-long pilgrimage encapsulates the Nāth Mahāsabhā’s strategy for the modernization of tradition. In a most intriguing albeit questionable aside, Bouillier likens this ritual process to what Jan Heesterman termed the “pre-

classical” situation of Vedic royal consecration, which was broken into two parts by a “symbolic war expedition” (pp. 140, 162).

In counterpoint to the Kadri monastery’s elevation of its *mahant* to royal status, Nepal’s Caughera monastery exemplifies another leitmotif of Nāth mytho-history: the elevation by a Nāth Yogī of an untested prince to the royal throne, and the subsequent royal land grants that founded and have since maintained the *math*. Bouillier’s detailed account of the monastery’s history, organization, and daily ritual program is colored throughout by its legendary founder’s dual identity. Ratannāth, also identified as Ratan Pīr, Hājji Ratan—and, most recently, as Kanipā—is a figure who embodies the Nāths’ intertwined identities as Siddhas and Sufis, Hindus and Muslims. Here, as Bouillier notes, the Sufi title of *pīr*, attributed to the monastic heads of every *pañcāyatī* monastery, is considered by the Caughera Yogīs to be specific to their place (p. 192). Nāth ties to Sufi Islam are also evidenced in the *dargah*-style appearance of the *samādhi mandir* of Amritnāth, the Fatehpur monastery’s founding guru (pp. 252–53), and the celebration of the death anniversaries (comparable to the Muslim *‘urs*) of a number of monastic founders.

The book’s part three, devoted to personal monasteries (*niji maths*), is the least compelling portion of the book, comprising an overview of what Bouillier typologizes as “charismatic” (Fatehpur) and “political” (Gorakhpur) monasteries, with the Asthal Bohar monastery standing as a synthesis of the two types. The great bulk of these chapters being devoted to the foundation, history, and current patronage and management styles of Fatehpur and Asthal Bohar, the reader is left to wonder why the Gorakhpur monastery—whose current *mahant*, Yogi Ādityanāth, is also the highly controversial right-wing Chief Minister of the state of Uttar Pradesh—receives such scant attention. A more serious shortcoming of this otherwise wonderfully rich and insightful book lies in Bouillier’s seemingly interchangeable references to the Nāths as a “religious order” and a “sect.” This reader would have appreciated more clarity on her understanding and usage of these terms.

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Male and Female in the Epic of Gilgamesh: Encounters, Literary History, and Interpretation. By TZVI ABUSCH. Winona Lake, Ind.: EISENBRAUNS, 2015. Pp. ix + 236. \$39.50 (paper).

The Epic of Gilgamesh as represented by tablets from the “libraries” of first-millennium BCE Mesopotamia is the best known and most accessible to modern readers of all the literature of the ancient Near East, save that of the Hebrew Bible. As a result, it is often included in introductions to world literature, both in print and in the classroom. Similarly, it has frequently caught the attention of literary scholars and translators, even of some ignorant of the ancient Akkadian language in which it was composed.

Indeed, scholarship on the Epic has tended to cluster at two poles—on the one hand, the reconstruction of the basic text from its numerous fragmentary preserved exemplars and attention to technical philological problems of lexicon, grammar, and poetic practice, and on the other, as the author of this volume states, close reading that endeavors “to understand the meaning of the text on its own terms” (p. 1), paying attention “primarily to personal and psychological levels of the narration” (p. 2).

Over thirty years, Tzvi Abusch has written nine essays (one with the collaboration of Indologist Emily West) that combine his philological acumen with a literary-critical approach to the matter of Gilgamesh. The book under review collects these pieces, now minimally edited for internal consistency and provided with a short introduction. Read together, these contributions set forth a grand scheme of the development of the tales featuring the Mesopotamian hero from the third through the first millennium BCE, as evidenced most clearly in chapter 6, “The Development and Meaning of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*: An Interpretive Essay.”

Abusch’s conclusion in short: “Gilgamesh seeks immortality as a human being, and in all three versions of the text, he learns that this is impossible. In the Old Babylonian version, Gilgamesh finds a meaningful context within the bosom of the family . . . and accepts the role of builder-king. In the