

University of California, Santa Barbara
Department of Religious Studies
Rel 206J: Seminar in Indic Religious Studies
Worship Without Devotion: History of South Asian Polytheism

Winter 2012
R 6:00 – 9:00

David White
HSSB 3041

Mythology is not history. Hindu mythology and the apologetic or propagandistic literature of established sects, religious orders, temples, pilgrimages sites, and interest groups are of limited use to the scholar who would attempt to piece together a history of South Asian polytheism. Far more reliable guides for historical development are to be found in Indian art, secular literature, epigraphy, and numismatics, as well as in colonial and post-colonial ethnographic literature. In this seminar, we will explore the history of the deities of Indian religions, who are often shared by Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, and Muslims alike. As will become apparent, the modern cults of many of the great gods of Hinduism bear little or no resemblance to their ancient or medieval cults, in which they more closely resembled local or regional deities of mountains, forests, and rivers (or the deified or demonized dead) that the people of village India (i.e. some three quarters of the population) continue to worship today. Moreover, the cults of these deities have specific (albeit multiple) regional origins, which must be factored into any accurate account of their histories. Emerging out of local and regional cults, their names, images, stories, and rituals were spread across South Asia through strategies specific to patronage, trade, feudal relations, conquest, caste identity, and the itinerant religious orders.

We will begin the course by reverse engineering the cult of Kṛṣṇa (and, to a lesser extent, that of Rama), and devote the remainder of the quarter excavating the cults of the major and minor deities of Indian polytheism, in which devotion, *bhakti*—the watchword of scriptural reinventions of Hinduism—is conspicuously absent from worship practice.

In the course of the quarter, we will also have the occasion to observe and reflect upon the specific methods and theories proper to the disciplines of hermeneutics, history, art history, archeology, ethnography, anthropology, epigraphy, ritual studies and folklore studies as they impact the study of South Asian religions.

Organization of the Seminar and Course Requirements:

Students must attend all class meetings. Meetings will be divided into two parts: 1) discussions of the readings (1.5 hours); and 2) a one-hour lecture by Professor White. Beginning April 14, seminar discussions will be led by students, who will pre-circulate, via email, questions and points for discussion based on the readings.

The writing assignment for the seminar will be a term paper of 25 pages in length that will trace the history of the cult of an Indian deity (e.g. Gaṇeśa) or group of deities (e.g. *kuldevīs*) from their origins to the present day, *without* recourse to Puranic or Mahatmya literature. Papers are due on March 22.

Term papers should include material from at least four of the following data sources:

1. ethnographies, colonial and post-colonial (state gazetteers; Tribes and Castes)
2. art historical journals, volumes (*Artibus Asiae*; Brill Studies in South Asian Culture)
3. non-scriptural mythological anthologies (*Kathasaritsagara*, *Tales of the Punjab*)
4. Sanskrit encyclopedias and compendia (*Amarakośa*, *Manasollāsa*, *Āraṅgadhara Paddhati*)
5. Hindu mythology from non-Puranic sources
6. Buddhist, Jain, Sikh or Islamic myth and legend
7. sources on epigraphy, numismatics
8. ethnographic writing on non-Hindu or "shared" cults of deities

Sources should include journal articles and books by both Indian and Western authors, in both Indic and Western languages.

Books for Purchase at UCSB Bookstore:

Robert DeCaroli, *Haunting the Buddha: Indian Popular Religions and the Formation of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Diane P. Mines, *Fierce Gods: Inequality, Ritual, and the Politics of Dignity in a South Indian Village* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

Isabelle Nabokov, *Religion Against the Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Book for Purchase available through Amazon.com:

Günther-Dietz Sontheimer, *Pastoral Deities in Western India* (Delhi: Oxford India, 1989).

Books on Reserve in Davidson Library

V. S. Agrawala, *Ancient Indian Folk Cults* (Benares: Prithivi Prakashan, 1970).

Madeleine Biardeau, *Stories About Posts: Vedic Variations around the Hindu Goddess* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Thomas B. Coburn, *Devi Māhātmya: The Crystallization of the Goddess Tradition* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988).

Alf Hiltebeitel, ed., *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees: Essays on the Guardians of Popular Hinduism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989).

Catherine Weinberger-Thomas, *Ashes of Immortality: Widow-Burning in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Chapters and Articles Available on Line through eRes: <http://eres.library.ucsb.edu> (password: delta)

Lawrence A. Babb, *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975).

C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).

- Richard Burghart, "The regional circumambulation of Janakpur seen in the light of Vaishnavite tradition (Nepal)," in Jean-Claude Galey, ed., *L'Espace du Temple: Espaces, itineraries, mediations (Puruṣārtha 8)* (Paris: Editions du EHESS, 1985).
- Sarah Caldwell, *Oh Terrifying Mother* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- John Cort, "Tantra in Jainism: the Cult of Ghaṅṅakar° Mahāvīr, the Great Hero Bell-Ears," in *Bulletin d'Études Indiennes* 15 (1997), pp. 115-33.
- Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
- Shingo Einoo, "The Autumn Goddess Festival: Described in the Puranas," in Masakazu Tanaka and Musashi Tachikawa, eds., *Living With Sakti: D+Gender, Sexuality and Religion in South Asia* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1999), pp. 33-69.
- Alan Entwistle, "Mḥṭmya Sources on the Pilgrimage Circuit of Mathurḡ," in *The History of Sacred Places in India as Reflected in Traditional Literature*, ed. Hans Bakker (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp. 5-32.
- Kathleen M. Erndl, *Victory to the Mother: The Hindu Goddess of Northwest India in Myth, Ritual and Symbol* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and Gaya Charan Tripathi et al., "The Formation of the Jagannṯtha Triad," in idem., *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978).
- Anne Feldhaus, *Water and Womenhood: Religious Meanings of Rivers in Maharashtra* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- Ann Grodzins Gold, *Fruitful Journeys: The Ways of Rajasthani Pilgrims* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (Norton: New York, 1989).
- Niels Gutschow, "The Aṅṅamṯṯkḡ and Navadurgḡ of Bhaktapur" in in Axel Michaels, Cornelia Vogelsanger, and Annette Wilke, eds, *Wild Goddesses in India and Nepal* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 191-215.
- Rajendra Chandra Hazra, *Studies in the Upapuranas*, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1963).
- Bruce Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian, 1983).
- Dominique-Sila Khan, *Conversion and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan* (Delhi: Manohar, 1997).
- Hermann Kulke, *Kings and Cults: State Formation and Legitimation in India and Southeast Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001).
- Gritli von Mitterwallner, "Evolution of the Linga," in Michael Meister, ed., *Discourses on /iva: Proceedings of a Symposium on the Nature of Religious Imagery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), pp. 12-31.
- A. K. Narain, "Ganesa, A Protohistory of the Idea," in Robert L. Brown, ed., *Ganesh, Studies of an Asian God* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1991).
- Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- Norbert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

William R. Pinch, *Peasants and Monks in British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

David F. Pocock, *Mind, Body, and Wealth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973).

William S. Sax, *God of Justice: Ritual Healing and Social Justice in the Central Himalayas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Günther-Dietz Sondheimer, "The Ramayana in Contemporary Folk Traditions of Maharashtra," in Monika Thiel-Horstmann, ed., *Ramayana and Ramayanas* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991).

Tony K. Stewart, "Encountering the Smallpox Goddess," in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *Religions of India in Practice* (Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 389-97.

Dominik Wujastyk, "Miscarriages of Justice: demonic vengeance in classical Indian medicine." In *Religion, Health and Suffering*. Edited by Roy Porter and John Hinnells. London: Kegan Paul International, 1999, pp. 1-20.

Articles Accessible On-line through UCSB Library electronic journals:

Stuart Blackburn, "Death and Deification: Folk Cults in Hinduism," *History of Religions* 24 (1985): 253-73.

Richard S. Cohen, "Naga, Yaksini, Buddha: Local Deities and Local Buddhism at Ajanta," *History of Religions* 37:4 (May 1998): 360-400.

André Couture and Charlotte Schmid "The *Hariva Īā*, the Goddess Ekṅna Īā, and the Iconography of the V, "i Triads." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121:2 (April-June 2001), pp. 173-92.

Leslie C. Orr, "Identity and Divinity: Boundary-Crossing Goddesses in Medieval South India," *JAAR* 73:1 (March 2005): 9-43.

A. Whitney Sanford, "Shifting the Center: Yak"as on the Margins of Contemporary Practice," *JAAR* 73:1 (March 2005): 89-110.

Chapter Accessible On-line through eScholarship.org (<http://www.escholarship.org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/editions/view?docId=ft8g5008h7&brand=ucpress>):

Cynthia Humes, "Vindhyavasini," in John Stratton Hawley and Donna M. Wulff, eds., *Devi: The Goddesses of India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 50-77.

Excerpts, Articles and Chapters available through e-mail from Professor White:

Kunal Chakrabarti, *Religious Process. The Purṅas and the Making of a Regional Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford India, 2001).

Ron Geaves, "Sikh Controversies concerning Punjabi pilgrimage sites used for healing and possession," in Fabrizio M. Ferrari, ed., *Health and Religious Rituals in South Asia* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 48-77.

Peter Gottschalk, "Dead Healers and Living Identities," in Liz Wilson, ed., *The Living and the Dead: Social Dimensions of Death in South Asian Religions* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2003), pp. 177-200.

Leonard Primiano, "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife," *Western Folklore* 54:1 (1995), pp. 37-56.

Harald Tambs-Lyche, *Profit, Power & Poetry: Traditional Society in Kathiawar, Western India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1994).

Anita Raina Thapan, *Understanding Ga'apati: Insight into the Dynamics of a Cult* (Delhi: Manohar, 1997).

Charlotte Vaudeville, *Myths, Saints and Legends in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford India, 1999).

David Gordon White, "At the Mandala's Dark Fringe: Possession and Protection in Tantric Bhairava Cults," in David Haberman and Laurie Patton, eds., *Notes from a Mandala: Essays in Honor of Wendy Doniger* (University of Delaware Press: 2009), pp. 200-15.

_____, "Bhairava," *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), vol. 1, pp. 485-90.

_____, "Digging Wells While Houses Burn?" *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 45:4 (December 2006), pp. 104-31.

_____, "Filthy Amulets: 'Superstition,' True 'Religion,' and Pure 'Science' in Hindu Demonology," English version of article in *Divins Remèdes: Médecine et Religion en Asie du Sud (Puru'rtha 27)* (Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS, 2008): 135-62.

_____, "The Goddess in the Tree: Reflections on Nim-Tree Shrines in Varanasi" *The Ananda-Vana of Indian Art: Dr. Anand Krishna Felicitation Volume*, Varanasi: Indica, 2005), pp. 575-86.

_____, "Yogic and Political Power Among the North Siddhas of North India," forthcoming in Peter Flügel and Gustaaf Hartmann, eds., *Asceticism and Power in Asia* (London: Curzon Press, 2012), pp. 1-22.

Schedule of Class Meetings

January 12 Introduction

Mines, *Fierce Gods*, pp. 1-19; 29-49; 56-58; 67-71; 125-37
Gould, *Wonderful Life*, pp. 23-52

January 18* Tools for Mapping South Asian Polytheism

Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, pp. 125-39; 335-38

Chakrabarti, *Religious Process*, pp. 44-80; 202-13

Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 62-74

DeCaroli, *Haunting*, pp. 1-30

Kulke, *Kings and Cults*, pp. 1-16

Mines, *Fierce Gods*, pp. 188-208

Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, pp. 30-47; 151-160

Primiano, "Vernacular Religion," pp. 37-56

White, "Digging Wells While Houses Burn?" pp. 104-31

January 26 Kṛ̥ṣṇa and Rama

Burghart, "Regional Circumambulation," pp. 121-147
 Couture and Schmid, " *Hariva Āa*," pp. 173-92
 Entwistle, "Mḥṭmya Sources," pp. 5-31
 Eschmann et al., "Formation of the Jagannath Triad," in *Cult of Jagannath*, pp. 169-196
 Kulke, *Kings and Cults*, pp. 17-32
 Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity*, pp. 50-79
 Sontheimer, "Ramayana," pp. 115-137
 Vaudeville, *Myths*, pp. 17-71

February 2 Yak'as

Agrawal, *Ancient*, pp. 165-99
 Cohen, "Naga, Yaksini, Buddha," pp. 360-400
 DeCaroli, *Haunting*, pp. 31-86
 Kapferer, *Celebration*, pp. 68-73; 158-72
 Mitterwallner, "Evolution," in Meister, ed., *Discourses*, pp. 12-31 (and plates 18-26)
 Sanford, "Shifting the Center," pp. 89-110
 Thapan, *Understanding Ganapati*, pp. 71-75; 97-106

February 9 Birś. Virś, Pirs, Ganas

Coccarri, "Bir Babas," in Hitebeitel, *Criminal Gods*, pp. 251-69
 Cort, "Tantra in Jainism," pp. 115-33
 Khan, *Conversions*, pp. 60-96
 Oberoi, *Construction*, pp. 139-65
 Sontheimer, *Pastoral Deities*, pp. 198-206
 Thapan, *Understanding Ganapati*, pp. 12-41; 54-70; 84-97; 111-175

February 16 The Demonized and Heroic Dead

Blackburn, "Death and Deification," pp. 253-73
 DeCaroli, *Haunting*, pp. 87-103; 173-87
 Gold, *Fruitful Journeys*, pp. 59-79
 Gottschalk, "Dead Healers," pp. 177-200
 Knipe, "Night of the Growing Dead," in Hitebeitel, *Criminal Gods*, pp. 123-56
 Nabokov, *Religion*, pp. 70-163
 Weinberger-Thomas, *Ashes of Immortality*, pp. 134-74

February 23 Goddess Families/Family Goddesses

- Chakrabarti, *Religious Process*, pp. 165-71; 196-201
 Einoo, "Autumn Goddess Festival," pp. 33-69, esp. pp. 49-54
 Nabokov, *Religion*, pp. 3-69
 Orr, "Identity and Divinity," pp. 9-43
 Pocock, *Mind, Body, and Wealth*, pp. 41-80
 Tambs-Lyche, *Power, Profit & Poetry*, pp. 20-29; 175-90; 197-99; 267-74
 Vaudeville, *Myths, Saints and Legends*, pp. 140-57
 Wujastyk, "Miscarriages of Justice," pp. 1-20

March 1 Mountain Gods and Goddesses

- Coburn, *Devi-Māhātmya*, pp. 275-89
 Erndl, *Victory*, pp. 37-60, 170-75
 Gutschow, "Aśvatara and Navadurga," pp. 191-215
 Humes, "Vindhyavasini," in Hawley and Wulff, *Devi*, pp. 49-76
 Narain, "Gaṇeśa, A Protohistory," pp. 19-48
 Sontheimer, *Pastoral Deities*, pp. 91-95; 185-90
 Vaudeville, *Myths*, pp. 72-92; 158-96
 White, "Yogic and Political Power"

March 8 Tree and Forest Deities

- Babb, *Divine Hierarchy*, pp. 128-40
 Biardeau, *Stories About Posts*, pp. 74-87; 258-306
 Caldwell, *Oh Terrifying Mother*, pp. 104-14
 Feldhaus, *Water and Womanhood*, pp. 96-117
 Hazra, *Studies in the Upapuranas*, pp. 1-20
 Sontheimer, *Pastoral Deities*, pp. 34-68; 190-95
 Stewart, "Encountering," pp. 389-97
 White, "The Goddess in the Tree," pp. 575-86

March 15 Bhairava

- Geaves, "Sikh Controversies," pp. 48-77
 Sax, *God of Justice*, pp. 25-50; 77-83
 Sontheimer, *Pastoral Deities*, pp. 19-33; 99; 151-64; 179-85; 195-98; 207-210
 Stietenron, "The /aiva Component," in *Cult of Jagannath*, pp. 119-23
 White, "Bhairava," pp. 485-90
 White, "Filthy Amulets," pp. 135-62
 White, "At the Mandala's Dark Fringe," pp. 1-15