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Burger, Maya / Cattoni, Nadia (Hg.): *Early Modern India.* Literatures and Images, Texts and Languages. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Library 2019. XXII, 333 S. m. Abb. 8°. € 46,90. ISBN 978-3-946742-45-6.

Although this volume might be read as the proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Early Modern Literatures in North India (ICEMLNI), the editors of this book, Maya Burger and Nadia Cattoni, have done much more than curate a fascinating series of papers. They have also pulled together a valuable contribution that will speak to multiple conversations in the fields of early modern South Asian studies, one that strongly resonates with current trends within the discipline. Beyond this, their choice of format, an Open Access book available for free download, has opened up these conversations to a public in ways that previous published proceedings were simply unable to do. Burger, Cattoni, and the late Allison Busch provide thoughtful introductions to the different sections of the book, which introduce new audiences to the landscape of early modern studies and the contours of recent debates and developments.

In the first section, „Literature and Visuality", Nadia Cattoni introduces three papers that consider intermedial approaches to Classical Hindi literature, outlining in a very useful essay the methodological and theoretical tools at the disposal of a literary scholar engaging with visual studies. John S. Hawley offers a reading of several verses by Sūrdās and considers how these were imagined and illustrated in early eighteenth-century Mewar ateliers. The core question in his essay revolves around how, on the one hand, the reader of the poem is taken on a gradual journey—through layers of imagery, laid out line by line—while, on the other, the viewer of the painting is presented with the full imaginary of the verse at first glance. Hawley traces this tension between delayed epiphany in reading, and immediacy in seeing, over several examples, which should inspire further reflection on historical ways of reading and imagining. As Cattoni reminds us, Hawley's emphasis on the creative, interpretative agency of the artist resonates with new work in art history, especially studies on Rajput courtly painting by Molly Emma Aitken and Dipti Khera, which have highlighted the innovative and hermeneutic approaches painters adopted in this period.[1]

This work complements the second essay by Heidi Pauwels, which builds upon her larger study of painted poetry under Nāgarīdās of Kishangarh. Pauwels demonstrates how literary texts and courtly paintings have entangled reception histories, as she explores how Nāgarīdās' poems speak to images of Radha and Krishna produced in court workshops. Different strategies emerge: collapsing the distinctions between royal and divine personalities, embedding the poetry into cultic displays, and the life of the court into a mythological imaginary. Pauwels gestures to how the strategies deployed by artists in Kishangarh were part of a larger aesthetic shared across Rajput courts: given Woodman Taylor's work on the role of courtly images in devotional practices and ritual worship,

[1] Aitken, Molly Emma: *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting*. New Haven: Yale University Press 2010; Khera, Dipti: *The Place of Many Moods.* Udaipur's Painted Lands and India's Eighteenth Century. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2020.

Pauwels' study invites further explorations of the social life of paintings and the performance of poetic visions in Rajput contexts.[2]

Raman Sinha offers an extensive survey of images and media representing Tulsīdās and explores how his changing iconography reflects shifts in his reception history, as his personality evolves between a literary giant and a devotional saint. In particular, Sinha considers a transitional period, beginning in the late nineteenth century, when the *Rāmcaritmānas* was elevated as a literary (rather than purely religious) text, and reoriented how artists portrayed Tulsīdās as a familiar kind of poet, sometimes as a Romantic figure, sometimes as a socially-conscious actor. This initial study prepares the groundwork for further research. For example, while Sinha's focus is on the depicted persona of the poet, we might interrogate how Tulsīdās is framed differently over time: in Sinha's samples, the poet is sometimes alone, sometimes surrounded by a mixed-gender courtly audience, and sometimes addressing sage-like disciples. Therefore, the social worlds implied in these paintings, which have been partially copied and reworked over time (as in Aitken's aforementioned work) invite yet further study.

Allison Busch's preface to the second section, „Persian Encounters", affirms the importance of multilingual and collaborative approaches to the early modern: in particular, the two essays on Persianate intellectuals in this collection engage with translation, philological practices, and the political undertones in scholarship that bring apparently peripheral scholars from the seventeenth century into the bigger picture. Arthur Dudney's chapter on how Mughal instructors taught Persian language and literature underlines the importance of local contexts. If Persian was circumscribed separately from other languages, what was the non-Persian vernacular? Dudney resists the temptation of reconstructing a large and unwieldy definition, offering instead a narrower and more specific sense of „the language variety spoken natively around Delhi by elites which was being to some degree literarized" (81). The advantages of these narrower yet flexible definitions are apparent from Dudney's discussion of how the philologists' judgements were informed by—in effect—forms of snobbery, distinguishing the court from the *qaṣbah*, and the imperial centre from the perceived peripheries. This socially-inflected linguistic landscape poses many questions for future inquiry: Dudney's authors appear to dismiss Gwalior-style language as parochial, which, given Gwalior's cultural prestige in other domains, gestures to the historical evolution of these geographies. These socially-anxious landscapes were widespread and long-lasting: across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Bengal, for example, intellectuals in both larger centres like Murshidabad and smaller towns like Pandua, were conscious of this courtly-parochial binary, appropriated styles of language that were associated with imperial Delhi's culture.[3] Dudney's local approach to reading these larger historical processes offers strategic inroads for further studies of multilingual South Asia.

Likewise, Marc Tiefenauer's essay demonstrates how analysing the strategies deployed in a translation project sheds light on moments of cultural diplomacy and intellectual encounter. Tiefenauer focuses on an embryology treatise, the *Garbha Upaniṣad*, which was rendered in Persian as part of Dārā Shukoh's anthology of the Upanishads, the

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[2] Taylor, Woodman: „Picture Practice: Painting Programs, Manuscript Production, and Liturgical Performances at the Kotah Royal Palace." In *Gods, Kings, and Tigers.* The Art of Kotah, ed. Stuart Cary Welch, 61-72. New York: Asia Society Galleries; and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Art Museums 1997.

[3] Hakala, Walter N.: *Negotiating Languages.* Urdu, Hindi, and the Definition of Moden South Asia. New York: Columbia University Press 2017; Williams, Richard David: „Songs Between Cities: Listening to Courtesans in Colonial North India." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27:4 (2017): 591-610.

Sirr-i Akbar (1656-7). This valuable essay speaks to other treatments of translation and correspondences in this period (c.f. Francesca Orsini and Tony K. Stewart), and while translation studies is the primary interest here, Tiefenauer also offers precious material for historicizing how the human body was conceptualized in the seventeenth century, and offers insights into the prince's team of translators.

Maya Burger introduces the third section, „Around Nāths and Sants", by considering how studies of mendicants, poets, ascetics, and *nirguṇa* bhakti traditions in this volume can inform larger themes in early modern studies, including histories of transmission, translation, and yoga. In many ways, Imre Bangha's contribution on transmission in the manuscript tradition of Kabīr's lyrics speaks to Linda Hess' work on Kabīr as sung poetry, and the interventions of musical performance on the formal and affective dimensions of these lyrics.[4] Bangha examines manuscripts for traces of these interventions and considers how scribes and singers impacted the textual shape of the Kabīr corpus. This work gestures to alternative modes of framing Kabir: while the poet-centric philologist might be tempted to think selectively in terms of manuscripts dedicated to Kabīr, we can also consider how his verses were extracted and performed in multi-authored textual arrangements, recited or musically tied to other lyricists with resonant themes. Singing could alter the form but also the content of a lyric, as singers adjusted the text to the context and interests of their listeners. In particular, homiletic glosses could result in hypermetrical fillers, and ambiguous references to a higher reality could be concretely named according to the confessional stance of the song's audience. Bangha indicates how manuscripts can reflect decisions related to performance, encompassing orality, explanation, memory, and singing, as well as scribal practice. „Circulation between receptive communities resulted in the continuous recontextualization of the poems" (166), and Bangha excavates how this process informed the manuscripts over several phases: from metrically correct poems (with fixed melodies and informed audiences) to a „musical phase", when the lyrics entered singers' repertoires, were adjusted for new contexts, and formally adjusted for raga-based musical settings, resulting in an enlarged and varied body of poems attributed to Kabīr even before they were recorded by scribes.

Remaining with Kabīr, Minyu Zhang and Galina Rousseva-Sokolova offer two innovative perspectives on his poems. Zhang examines how Kabīr's poems construct images around *rasa* and related words, especially in extended metaphors drawn from alchemy and alcohol production. As well as providing insightful material on mercury and liquor, this essay points out two refreshing inroads into the study of Kabīr: in terms of alchemical *rasaśāstra*, and the allied tradition of Kabīr as master alchemist; and through the archaeological layers of the poems' imagery, reaching back to a *vaiṣṇava* reworking of an older scheme of metaphors involving *rasa*, which, as Zhang demonstrates, can be critically traced across South, Inner, and East Asian sources. Rousseva-Sokolova's essay offers a thought-provoking inquiry into how feminine voice operates in Kabīr's poems and whether this varies in poems by Sant women. Noting a paradox between male authors' distrust of women and their adoption of female subject positions in their poems, she argues that cross-gender rhetoric allowed men to cultivate „a kind of sublimated femininity" (198) and adopt a gendered, emotional vocabulary to articulate their interiority. Was this iconic, feminine voice the preserve of men? From her preliminary readings of two female poets, Dayābāī and Sahajobāī, Rousseva-Sokolova suggests that they „share the commonplace mistrust of women and are inclined to speak

[4] Hess, Linda: *Bodies of Song.* Kabir oral traditions and performative worlds in North India. New York: Oxford University Press 2015.

from the first person even more rarely than their male colleagues." (202) By examining these poems from the perspective of gendered voice, this essay brings Sant poetry into conversation with other genres of lyrics in women's voices composed by men, and also highlights how there is further scope for work on women's own self-presentation within Sant culture.

Three further essays offer perspectives on how religious communities negotiated sectarian rivalries through competition, cooptation, and circumscription. Susanne Kempe-Weber examines the depiction of Nāths in the *Sabadavāṇī* of Jāmbhojī, the founder of the Biśnoī *sampradāya*. She argues the work criticises Nāthyogīs yet also incorporates yogic-tantric terminology and ultimately claims material from the *Gorakhabāṇī* as the original teaching of Jāmbhojī. The simultaneous critiquing and appropriation of Nāth culture indicates a hinterland of sectarian competition, whereby Jāmbhojī is raised up as the superior alternative to the Nāths. This kind of strategic inclusivity is also taken up by Monika Horstmann in her piece on Nāthyoga in the Dādūpanth. Here, in a text by Mohan Mevāṛau, Dādū is called the master of yoga, establishing his superiority in Sant and Nāth circles, focusing on *brahma*-gnosis as defined (sometimes) in contrast to magic and false yoga. Horstmann uses this particular characterisation of Dādū to reflect on the diversity and fluidity of Dādūpanthī attitudes. This flexibility allowed communities to adapt, asserting their relation to, and superiority over, other religious forms. This kind of „big tent" Sant religion, a broad conception of spiritual practice within which different orders and systems of practice might jostle, become allied, or compete, resonates with other studies of early modern Hinduism, and offers new insights into the spiritual ecology of the period.[5] Indeed, Daniel Gold's essay follows aspects of this through to the eighteenth century in his treatment of two Sant gurus, Rāmcaraṇ and Carandās. Gold considers how these „next generation" Sants located themselves in an evolving landscape, populated by middle-class devotees with different priorities. The two figures adopted alternative strategies, and while Rāmcaraṇ expounded a *nirguṇa* worldview, Carandās' followers were ultimately subsumed by a broader, *saguṇa* variety of bhakti. As with Horstmann's essay, Gold depicts a porous, often inclusive Sant community, that shared a metaphysical vocabulary—including yogic concepts inherited from the Nāths—yet could take these polyvalent terms in quite different directions.

Read together, the next two essays on „Jaina Authoritative Figures" demonstrate the internal variety of Jaina literature from the early modern period, and how Jaina authors can be productively read alongside vernacular poets from other religious communities. John E. Cort's piece explores how Jaina lyricists adopted the pervasive theme of celebrating the guru, especially in popular religious culture, as discernible over a number of *vinatī* poems from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Cort traces how, in the absence of a living tradition of naked ascetics, the muni was celebrated in verse as the ideal guru, marked by his nakedness in implicit comparison to the available—but apparently lacking—orange-robed *bhaṭṭaraka*. Cort also suggests how the long-established tradition of guru veneration in Jainism was coloured by wider trends in *bhakti*-style verse, especially the articulation of longing for the guru through the vocabulary of *viraha*. At the same time, Tillo Detige demonstrates how the *bhaṭṭaraka*s were also venerated and celebrated in vernacular songs of praise. Reading these lyrics against a larger context of literature by and about these renouncers, Detige challenges the prevailing perception in academic and popular arenas of *bhaṭṭaraka*s as inadequate

[5] Minkowski, Christopher: „Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern History" in *Religious Cultures in Early Modern India: New Perspectives*, ed. Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook. Special volume of *South Asian History and Culture* 2.2 (2011): 205-31.

substitutes for munis, and suggests that a spectrum of ascetic ranks offers a more accurate model for Jaina religious society in this period.

The final two essays demonstrate the value of working through different scales of analysis to interrogate assumptions within early modern literary studies. On the one hand, Hiroko Nagasaki offers a close reading and technical discussion of metre in the oeuvre of Tulsīdās, highlighting the poet's dexterity but also his versatility, encompassing syllabic metres derived from Sanskrit, moraic metres from Prakrit, Apabhramsa, and Hindi, as well as musical talas. Echoing Bangha's earlier essay, Nagasaki considers the performative possibilities of Tulsīdās' poetry, encompassing its recitative properties and musicality. On the one hand, this examination defamiliarizes the poet, by indicating the range and breadth of his poetic devices, but also gestures to a Hindi reception history, one in which readers and listeners imagined different poets learning prosodic forms from one another, gesturing to an early modern imagined community built around metrics.

Anne Murphy adopts a very different scale, zooming outwards to consider the longer history of Punjabi. Rather than tracing a teleological history of the language as we know it today, Murphy asks how multilingual literary culture operated within the territory of Punjab, echoing, in fact, recent approaches adopted in other regions.[6] This approach has the benefit of viewing literary history not only through internal, regional developments, but also via transregional flows and trends. Murphy argues that Punjabi was cultivated in response to the dominance of Brajbhasha, which had become established as the elite courtly vernacular across northern India, and to the rise of *vaiṣṇava* poetics as the centre of gravity for Braji poetry. Murphy paints a large yet nuanced picture of a literary interface, in which language forms bled into another. On the one hand, Braj and early Punjabi were often indistinguishable, yet could also be imagined and identified separately by their users, the singers, poets, scribes, and patrons. This is a rich essay which will raise challenges and opportunities for scholars working across regions and languages.

Reading all these papers together, this volume is a wide-ranging compendium that extends over several centuries of literary production, across and between multiple languages, and sheds light on a broad range of topics—from embryology to alchemy—while drawing upon multiple methodologies. The editors have done an excellent job of bringing this variety into a coherent whole, and this well-curated collection of papers has much to offer to future conversations within the expanding field of early modern South Asian literature.

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[6] E.g. D'Hubert, Thibaut: „Literary History of Bengal, 8th to 19th century." In the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. Ed. David Ludden. New York: Oxford University Press 2018.