
Crucial to Hindu kingship is its symbiotic relationship with the religious power, both these powers supporting and legitimizing each other. Any change taking place on, or initiated by either side is therefore bound to have a major impact on the other. The relationship that the representatives of religion entertain with a royal court is expressed in ritual rank (manifest in the courtly and religious ritual), status, and the ensuing material gains, namely, the ‘gifts’ of the king.

Twice in its modern history, kings of the Kachavāhā state – here called Jaipur State by the term current since the British period – in the process of political and religious reforms incisively affected the religious power which left its imprint on the religious culture far beyond their state. One of them was Jaisingh II (r. 1700–1743), the other Rāmsingh II (minority rule 1835–1851; r. 1851–1880) to whom Clémentin-Ojha’s book is devoted. The landslide changes he brought about had their peak between 1863 and 1867 during the ‘tilak affair’, so called because the king’s intervention was epitomised by the Śaiva forehead marks and rosary being imposed on Vaishnavas. Rāmsingh was certainly inspired by his great ancestor, though not only in replacing by Shaivism the Vaishnavism favoured by Jaisingh.
did he differ from him, but also in the way he acted and was determined in his actions by the particular conditions of his period and circumstances of a personal kind.

At the heart of the book under review is therefore, on the one hand, the relationship between a Hindu king and the representatives of religion (tantamount to brahmins) as it was established and has been debated ever anew in the course of the history of Hindu thought, and, on the other, the actual, precisely analysed historical events and individual characters that shaped that relationship. Both, the broader concept and the actual historical situation are here explored to understand Hindu culture (and, for that matter, any culture) as a dynamic historical process.

Rāmsingh was, by his Kachavāhā dynastic pedigree, mythically related to God Rāma and heir to a complex religious tradition in which Vaishnavism, especially as favoured and remoulded by Jaisingh II, had a dominant position. He converted to Śaivism and within four years deposed the powerful Vaiṣṇavas from their dominant position. In view of his genealogical and ritual dependence on them, a daring enterprise.

In the beginning of her book, Clémentin-Ojha sets the stage of that drama by introducing us to its locale, to the royal court of Jaipur and to its protective deities, Vaiṣṇava among these Sitārām and Govinddev, as well as to the wider Vaiṣṇava field of power, notably as constituted in the zenana by the Nimbarka sampradāya. She goes on tracing the political and economic system of the state and the material benefits that religious functionaries enjoyed on the basis of these. Furtheron, she identifies the groups constituting the court, namely, the political and administrative elites (dominant among these, Rajputs and Jainas) and the array of the ‘gurus, sants, and mahants’, predominantly Vaiṣṇava in the first half of the 19th century and thus during the period of Rāmsingh’s minority when his widowed mother was the regent. When the young king succeeded to the throne in 1851, his state was almost bankrupt notwithstanding the richness of Vaiṣṇava functionaries, a desolate situation precipitated by his mother’s Jain agent in alliance with the woman manager of her royal household and property.

Since 1818, the Jaipur State had come under British paramountcy. The British had inserted themselves into the administration and saw to it that by an English education side by side with the traditional one there be inculcated their concepts of the state and modern ideas in the young future monarch. Rāmsingh’s education according to the Hindu model lay in the hands of a Śaiva, appointed by the British. He was a ‘modern brahmin’, that is, a traditional scholar familiar with European ideas; this man taught Rāmsingh English and formed him. Eventually, he