

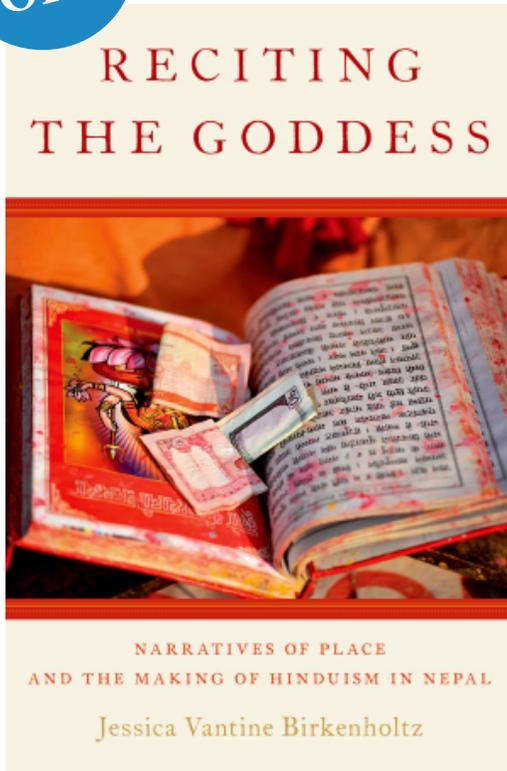
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By Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz

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R*eciting the Goddess* presents the first critical study of the *Svasthanivratākatha* (SVK), a sixteenth-century Hindu narrative textual tradition. The extensive SVK manuscript tradition offers a rare opportunity to observe the making of a specific, distinct Hindu religious tradition. Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz argues that the SVK serves as a lens through which we can observe the creation of modern ‘Hinduism’ in the Himalayas, as the text both mirrored and informed key moments in the self-conscious creation of Nepal as the “world’s only Hindu kingdom” in the late medieval and early modern period.

Birkenholtz mines the literary historiography that is contained within the SVK text itself, chronicling the text’s literary and narrative development as well as the development of the Svasthani goddess tradition. She outlines the process whereby the SVK gradually transformed into a Purana text and became a critical source for Nepali Hindu belief and identity. She also examines the elusive character of the goddess Svasthani, whose identity is tied to the pan-Hindu goddess tradition, and the representation of women in the SVK and the ways in which the text influenced local and regional debates on the ideal of Hindu womanhood. *Reciting the Goddess* presents Nepal’s celebrated SVK as a micro-level illustration of the powerful ways in which people, place, and literature intersect to produce new ideas and concepts of identity and place, even in a historically non-literate culture.

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Dr. Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz is Assistant Professor of Religion at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

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- The first detailed study of the Hindu goddess Svasthani, her mythology, and her iconographic transformations
- Provides a comprehensive history of the *Svasthanivratakatha* textual tradition and the first English translation of one of its oldest texts
- Offers a new perspective of the history of the Sanskrit, Newar, and Nepali languages and literary cultures in Nepal

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