

Kiss of the Yogini: "Tantric Sex" in its South Asian Contexts

By David Gordon White

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For those who wonder what relation actual Tantric practices bear to the "Tantric sex" currently being marketed so successfully in the West, David Gordon White has a simple answer: there is none. Sweeping away centuries of misunderstandings and misrepresentations, White returns to original texts, images, and ritual practices to reconstruct the history of South Asian Tantra from the medieval period to the present day.

Kiss of the Yogini focuses on what White identifies as the sole truly distinctive feature of South Asian Tantra: sexualized ritual practices, especially as expressed in the medieval Kaula rites. Such practices centered on the exchange of powerful, transformative sexual fluids between male practitioners and wild female bird and animal spirits known as Yoginis. It was only by "drinking" the sexual fluids of the Yoginis that men could enter the family of the supreme godhead and thereby obtain supernatural powers and transform themselves into gods. By focusing on sexual rituals, White resituates South Asian Tantra, in its precolonial form, at the center of religious, social, and political life, arguing that Tantra was the mainstream, and that in many ways it continues to influence contemporary Hinduism, even if reformist misunderstandings relegate it to a marginal position.

Kiss of the Yogini contains White's own translations from over a dozen Tantras that have never before been translated into any European language. It will prove to be the definitive work for persons seeking to understand Tantra and the crucial role it has played in South Asian history, society, culture, and religion.

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Editorial Review

Review
"Kiss of the Yogini is one of the few good, interesting books about Tantra, a passionately argued work that transforms scholarly understanding of its subject.... By reconstructing the medieval South Asian Kaula and Tantric traditions that involved sexual practices, David White hopes to restore the dignity and autonomy of the people who invented them and continue to practise them. This monumental scholarly work does precisely that." - Wendy Doniger, Times Literary Supplement"

From the Inside Flap

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About the Author

David Gordon White is a professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of *Myths of the Dog-Man* and *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India*, both published by the University of Chicago Press, and the editor of *Tantra in Practice*.

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