
Nāth Yogīs' Encounters with Islam

Véronique Bouillier



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/samaj/3878>

DOI: 10.4000/samaj.3878

ISSN: 1960-6060

Publisher

Association pour la recherche sur l'Asie du Sud (ARAS)

Electronic reference

Véronique Bouillier, « Nāth Yogīs' Encounters with Islam », *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* [Online], Free-Standing Articles, Online since 13 May 2015, connection on 30 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/samaj/3878> ; DOI : 10.4000/samaj.3878

This text was automatically generated on 30 April 2019.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

Nāth Yogīs' Encounters with Islam

Véronique Bouillier

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is a revised version of an article first published in French under the title: 'Dialogue entre les Nath yogis et l'islam', in Denis Hermann & Fabrizio Speziale (eds.), *Muslim Cultures in the Indo-Iranian World during the Early-Modern and Modern Periods* (2010), Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, *Institut Français de Recherche en Iran*, pp. 565-583.

- 1 Nāth Yogīs¹ are rarely mentioned in the Indian press. However, during the last days of September 2014, the Gorakhpur monastery (Uttar Pradesh) and its *mahants* made front page news. First, the *mahant* Avaidyanāth, known for his leadership in the *Rām janma bhūmi* movement, passed away; then a crowd of political leaders from the Hindu right attended the enthronement of his successor, Adityanāth. Adityanāth, the founder of the *Hindu Yuva Vahini*, a youth movement which was very active in the communal riots of 2007, is now facing a FIR (First Information Report). This procedure was initiated by the Election Commission, because of the hate speeches Adityanāth delivered during the September 2014 bypoll campaign, and which were aimed at Muslims and their so-called 'love-jihad' ('allegation that Muslim youths lure Hindu girls into relationships for conversion').² While links between the Nāth Yogīs and political decision-makers are not necessarily a new phenomenon,³ the Hindutva and anti-Muslim turn of the important monastery of Gorakhpur are not in line with Nāth tradition.
- 2 The Nāth Yogīs constitute an ascetic Śaiva sectarian movement (*sampradāya*), and they claim Gorakhnāth as their founder.⁴ Generally considered to have lived in the 12th century, Gorakhnāth is credited with many Sanskrit treatises on Haṭha Yoga, as well as vernacular aphorisms on doctrine and practices. Even though the Nāth sect was probably organised later on—building upon an institutional framework called *bārah panth*, the 'twelve panths' and its network of monasteries—the Nāth Yogīs had a substantial impact on the pre-modern socio-cultural world of Northern India and have remained active members of the community of Hindu ascetics.

- 3 On the opposite end of the spectrum with regard to the recent trend governing the Gorakhpur monastery, the aim of this article is to illustrate the close relationships between the Nāth tradition and Islam, and to show how the encounters between Nāth Yogī ascetics and Muslim figures (be they Sufis or conquerors), as well as between both traditions and belief systems, have had a deep impact on the Nāths themselves *and* on their position in the Indian religious landscape. Muslims were not always Others.
- 4 Many recent studies have documented encounters between Muslims (mainly Sufis) and Nāth Yogīs from the Muslim side. Since the ground-breaking work of Rizvi (1970) and Digby (1970, 2000)—who discovered and reported on the many narratives in which Sufis claim superiority, both spiritual and magical, over Yogīs—several in-depth studies have been devoted to the different modes of appropriation by Sufi communities of yogic texts and practices dealing with Haṭha Yoga. There has been a particularly pronounced interest in the techniques of breath control and practices related to *kuṇḍalinī*, or awakening of female energy within the body (and parallels between Muslim and yogic conceptions of the body have been investigated).⁵ My paper will consider the other side of the encounters between Nāths and Muslims, from the Nāth point of view. It will look for ‘the participation of Muslims in the Nāth Jogī tradition,’ as Carl Ernst put it in his seminal 2005 article (2005: 38), which will enable us to endorse Nile Green’s characterization (2007) of ‘Sufi Yoga’ and ‘Muslim Yogīs (figuring as a counterpoint to the Hindu Naqshbandīs described by Darhnhadt (2002)).
- 5 However modern historiography insists on questioning the idea of fixed ascriptive religious identities and takes an interest in the construction of religious categories, as well as in overlapping or shared identities.⁶ Various scholars have shown how our present vision of ‘Hinduism’ and ‘Islam’ is the result of a long and complex historical process. They have also suggested that the role played by charismatic individuals was essential to this process and that religious affiliation was less determinative than personal allegiance.
7
- 6 Nāth Yogīs contributed to this undermining of fixed categories; they blurred the borders in a dialogical process where they combined elements borrowed from both traditions. Their mixed references are made explicit in the description given in the Dabistān (around 1655), which considers Yogīs as able to integrate both groups: ‘When among Muslims, they are scrupulous about fasting and ritual prayer, but when with Hindus, they practice the religion of this group. None of the forbidden things are prohibited in their sect, whether they eat pork according to the custom of Hindus and Christians, or beef according to the religion of Muslims and others’ (translation provided in Ernst 2005: 40).
- 7 They even went so far as to claim in some of their sayings—as we shall see—that they were ‘neither Muslims nor Hindus, but Yogīs.’ An anecdote related by Badā’ūnī (towards the end of 16th century) makes a similar suggestion and shows how this specificity was inscribed in space: ‘His Majesty [Akbar] [had] built outside the town [of Agra] two places for feeding poor Hindus and Musulmans, one of them being called *Khairpura*, and the other *Dharmpurah*. [...] As an immense number of *Jogīs* also flocked to this establishment, a third place was built, which got the name of *Jogipurah*’ (quoted in Pinch 2006: 51).
- 8 This article will focus on two levels where this lack of concern for encompassing religious labels manifests: the doctrinal vernacular texts and the Nāth hagiographic tradition. In addition, some well-known verses of the Gorakhbānī will be presented, along with a translation of the main passages of a rather surprising text edited under the name of

'Mohammad Bodh' by contemporary Nāth authorities. This text, targeted at Muslim Yogīs, will be juxtaposed with legendary narratives familiar to a larger audience, and which present ambiguous encounters with Muslim characters.

The Textual Tradition: *Gorakhbānī* and *Mohammad Bodh*

- 9 The collection of vernacular poetry attributed to Gorakhnāth (dating perhaps from the 13th/14th century, although the oldest manuscript found dates from the 17th century⁸), and called *Gorakhbānī*, contains several verses alluding to the peculiar status of Nāth Yogīs as neither Hindu nor Muslim, but different and superior, closer to the ultimate truth than the two other creeds are vainly seeking. Take, for instance, these well-known passages:
 - *sabdi* 14: 'By birth [I am] a Hindu, in mature age a Yogī and by intellect a Muslim' (quoted in Lorenzen (2011: 21), who sees 'a clear recognition of three separate religious traditions' here);
 - *sabdi* 68: 'The Hindu meditates in the temple, the Muslim in the Mosque // The Yogī meditates on the supreme goal, where there is neither temple nor mosque' (Lorenzen 2011: 22);
 - *sabdi* 69: 'The Hindu calls on Rām, the Muslim on Khudā, the Yogī calls on the Invisible One, in whom there is neither Rām nor Khudā' (Barthwal 1994:25);
 - *sabdi* 4: 'Neither the Vedas nor the [Muslim] books, neither the *khānīs* nor the *bānīs*. All these appear as a cover [of the truth] // The [true] word is manifest in the mountain peak in the sky [i.e. the Brahmarandhra]. There one perceives knowledge of the Ineffable' (Lorenzen 2011: 23);
 - *sabdi* 6: 'Neither the Vedas nor the Shastras, neither the books, not the Koran, [the goal] is not read about in books. // Only the exceptional Yogī knows that goal. All others are absorbed in their daily tasks' (Lorenzen 2011: 23).
- 10 Other verses of the *Gorakhbānī* praise the glory of Mohammad and recognise the accuracy of his message, such as *sabdis* 9 to 11. *Sabdi* 9 alludes to the pure message of Mohammad, who revealed the proper way to love God, who never caused any violence as his weapons were the power of the divine words of love (Barthwal's commentary). *Sabdi* 10 elaborates further: 'By the sabad he killed, by the sabad he revived: / Such a pīr was Mohammad. / O qāzī, stop pretending / Such a power is not in your body /' (in Djurdjevic 2008: 92). *Sabdi* 11 mentions the *kalmā* as the eternal, immortal words of Mohammad.
- 11 According to Agrawal (2011), 20th century literary critics discovering the Hindi works of the Nāths, and especially the *Gorakhbānī*, were quite conscious of the religious position of the Nāth Yogīs. Agrawal quotes Ramchandra Shukla, claiming that 'Gorakhnāth's theistic pursuit (*sādhana*) had some attraction for the Muslims as well. He could clearly see that God-oriented Yoga can be proposed as a common *sadhana* for both Hindus and Muslims' (Agrawal 2011: 9). Barthwal is also quoted as operating an 'enthusiastic reconstruction of Gorakhnāth as 'an instrument of Hindu-Muslim unity' (Agrawal 2011: 12).
- 12 Lorenzen, drawing a comparison between Gorakhnāth's and Kabīr's writings and positions, stresses: 'In the *Gorakh-bānī*, Gorakh [...] claims the possibility of maintaining a composite religious identity' (Lorenzen 2011: 49). He states: 'It is clear that Gorakh and Kabīr rejected both Islam and Hinduism, as commonly practiced, and sought to construct a religious identity that allowed them to straddle both religious traditions—to somehow be both Hindu and Muslim and neither, all at the same time' (Lorenzen 2011: 20). The relationships between Gorakh and Kabīr have been extensively commented upon (Vaudeville 1974, Offredi 2002, Lorenzen; Thukral 2005, Lorenzen 2011).⁹ Their ambivalence (Pauwels 2010) manifests itself in the parallels drawn between some verses

of the *Gorakhbānī* and the *Kabīr-Granthāvalī*,¹⁰ or is expressed ironically in the way the *Granthāvalī* parallels the *śabdī* 69 of the *Gorakhbānī*, but includes the Yogīs in his rejection: 'The Jogi cries: 'Gorakh, Gorakh!' // The Hindu invokes the name of Rām, // The Musulmān cries: 'Khudā is One!' // But the Lord of Kabīr pervades all" (*Kabīr-Granthāvalī*, Pada 128, 7-8, quoted in Vaudeville 1974: 88).

The Mohammad Bodh

13 Resembling some verses of the *Gorakhbānī*, a short passage in a book published recently (2005) under the authority of the Yogī Mahāśabhā, deserves attention. This book, written in Hindi by Yogī Vilāsnāth, secretary to the Mahāśabhā in Haridwar, is entitled *Śrī Nāth Rahasya* ('the secrets of Śrī Nāth') and is a compendium of mantras to be recited during specific rituals.¹¹ A passage in the last section of the book is entitled *Mohammad Bodh*, 'Mohammad's wisdom.'¹²

14 This short passage (approximately fifty lines) is composed of verses which have to be recited during the month of Ramadan. The text gives the following precise indications on the context:

'Where you do your *sādhana* (practice, meditation), set out an image of Gorakhnāth, a statue or his footprints or a *kalaś* [pot] in the name of Śrī Nāth. During the month of Ramadan, every day, after having worshipped Śrī Nāth, recite the *Mohammad Bodh*. Seated, say the mantra appropriate to your posture, then the *Gorakṣa gayatrī*,¹³ then recite the *Mohammad Bodh* nine times. Then say the *guru mantra* one hundred and eight times.

Perform this ritual three times every day, at dawn, midday and sunset. At dawn, before sunrise and after reciting, make an offering of milk and *roṭ* (bread¹⁴), then eat it yourself. Then from sunrise to sunset, abstain from any food or drink. At midday, recite the *Bodh* nine times again and set out a fruit offering. At dusk, after sunset, recite again nine times then prepare a sweet *khicṛī* [mix of lentils and rice]. At night after the rising of the moon, eat the *khicṛī* and midday fruit. During the day, eating, smoking, and consuming alcohol is prohibited. One should eat only after seeing the moon. Behave this way for twenty-nine days. On the thirtieth, the day of Mithī Id [sweet Id or Id al-Fiṭr, the last day of the Ramadan], recite the *Bodh* only three times. Also this day, give food and clothes as *dakṣiṇā* (ritual offering) to a faqīr or a Śrī Nāth.¹⁵ Give to the poor and to all living beings.

This way, having said the *Mohammad Bodh* altogether seven hundred and eighty six times [the numerological equivalent of the *Basmala*, the formula 'In the Name of Allah'], you shall obtain what you desired' (Vilāsnāth Yogī 2005: 526-527, my translation from Hindi).

15 What, then, does the *Mohammad Bodh*, or 'Mohammad's Wisdom' say? For a Nāth audience, the title clearly alludes to the *Gorakh Bodh*, one of the most widely known texts attributed to Gorakhnāth. In the rendering of Yogī Vilāsnāth, the text is highly hybrid, elliptical, probably compiled recently from fragments of older sources. The text is in prose, but traces of former versification remain (inner rhymes, word inversions, alliterations and phonic repetitions). Yogī Vilāsnāth does not give his sources, however the 'Hindi' of the text appears to include many vernacular archaisms.¹⁶ Moreover, he adds a translation or commentary—in Hindi and between brackets—of the terms he considers specific to the Muslim tradition and which he leaves in Urdu or Arabo-Persian.¹⁷

16 Looking closely at the text, one realises that many verses appear quite similar to Kabīr's poems. The many remarks on Kabīr's language made by Charlotte Vaudeville (1959: 19-21) and Linda Hess (1983; 1987) are equally valuable for understanding the *Mohammad Bodh*.

Both insist on the peculiarities of Kabīr's 'archaic, unsystematic language forms and obscure expressions' (Hess 1987: 145). And Linda Hess's study of 'Kabīr's Rough Rhetoric' (the title of her 1987 article) applies perfectly to the *Mohammad Bodh*. She insists on 'the mastery of the vocative': Kabīr is primarily addressing his reader, he provokes him, questions him, 'he pounds away with questions, prods with riddles, stirs with challenges, shocks with insults, disorients with verbal feints' (Hess 1987: 148). 'Several typical patterns depend on repetition with variation' (Hess 1987: 153) ending with a sudden conclusion or 'a shooting question.'

17 The formal, stylistic similarity between the *Mohammad Bodh* and the *Bījak* is so pronounced that they include many parallel verses, a clear indication of a shared universe which situates the internal dimension of the spiritual quest and its unicity far from religious divisions.¹⁸

18 However let us note the paradoxical use of a Kabīrian *nirguṇ*-style text, which serves to obtain satisfaction of desires through ritual repetition ('Having said the *Mohammad Bodh* 786 times, you shall obtain what you desired').

19 The text begins with series of equivalences:

'Salutation [*ādes*]¹⁹ to the True Name, Salutation to the Guru. Om Guruji! Alhā *bismillā* (*devtā*).²⁰ Ram is Rahim. Om is Mohammad. The head is the mosque (*mandir*, temple), the skull is *madār* (*kom*, sect or community).²¹ The ear is the Qur'an (*śuddh granth*, the holy book). The eye is the prophet (*paigambar*).²² The nose is *kabar* (*samādhī*).²³ The mouth is Makkā (*siddh sthal*, a pure place). The hand is the Excellent.²⁴ The stomach is hell (Agni).²⁵ The foot is the Messenger.²⁶ The body is pure [*pāk* translated by *suddh*]. The benefactor is God [*Khudā*] (*devtā*). The understanding [*akal*, Arabic '*aql*'] is the *pīr* (*gurū*). The mind is the disciple (*celā*). The body is the martyr.²⁷ Anger is forbidden [*harām*] (*beiman yā pāp*, indignity or sin). Greediness is wrong [*galtī*].'

20 Following this series of equivalences, the text offers some general advice on good behaviour, with somewhat enigmatic allusions to local legends such as 'From the pot fell a fly. He took it out and ate the food offered by the *badśāh*.'

21 But the most interesting passages deal with religious categories or religious differences, i.e. with Muslims, Hindus and Nāths.

'Think on these two words. Who is a *kāfir*,²⁸ who is a corpse [*murdār*]? We are not *kāfir*, we are *fakīr* (*mahātmā*) who are seated on the lakeshore [*sarvar ke tīr*].²⁹ Stand in dread of committing theft, adultery, bad behaviour.

Worship the Awake One. People bring badness from the world. Why say *kāfir*? *Kāfir* is the one who commits abuses and does not fear Allāh. Do not accept money in the name of God. O Muslim, always keep in mind the vision of death [...]. Never stop reciting the holy *kalmā* (*śuddh prārthanā*, the pure prayer).³⁰ Do not condone evil. He who is Muslim turns away from Hell and goes to Paradise. Thanks to Bābā Ādam, Mohammad is born from the womb of mother Amīyā. From the pot fell a fly. He took it and ate the food of the *badśāh*. He was facing the *badśāh* of the sultanate. Bābā Ratan Hājī told the *kalmā* about the Excellent. *Vālaikam salām*, O brother, banish darkness from your heart. White is the dress of death. To die is to move towards God.³¹ In Mohammad recognise the mother, in the accomplished man [*siddhak*] recognise the *pīr*.

Where to put the feet, where the head? On this side the feet, on that side the head.³² Say Rām Khudāi.³³ [...] Doing *haq haq* (*allā ko pukārā-prārthanā karnā*, call to prayer to Allāh), the *mullā* (*niyamse namāz paḍhne vālā*, the one who teaches prayer according to the law) spoke; he made the call to prayer heard at the mosque. The thirtieth day of the fast, he shed blood.³⁴ Look, you will not even find a mustard seed. Gorakh says that God is inside every one. It is not through ablutions [*vazū*] that one becomes

pure; to call for prayer does not give one a good reputation.³⁵ The Hindu prays in a temple, the Muslim in a mosque;³⁶ the *fakīr* prays to the One, where it seems to be two, Bābā Ādam and Bibī Havā.³⁷ In Makkā or Madīne make offerings, give the first bread to a *fakīr*. If you don't give bread, the vessel will split, the griddle will break. The *fakīr* plays with the breath of his own mind.

Hit he who calls you Hindu! Muslim is also Nāth.³⁸ In the puppet made of the five elements [*panctattva kā pūtlī*], the Invisible One plays [...].

We are born neither Hindu nor Muslim.³⁹ Follow the six *darśana*, Rahmān.⁴⁰ We are intoxicated with God.⁴¹ He who has killed someone has to stay away. He who takes on the name of Allāh will be like the Prophet, by Allāh.

I have to repeat the *kalmā*. Without *kalmā* there is nothing. Look and search for what is inside the *kalmā*. Why do *namāz*? Without *namāz*, it is like standing. You keep fasting; why not search inside yourself? You went to Makkā; why not make your heart Makkā?⁴² If, with a pure heart, you make your home in the eye of the Immaculate Lord, then all around you will be Makkā. Whom shall we call black, white? Inside, outside, there is only one Lord [*maulā*] (*mālik*). [Whatever] the face or the appearance of the Lord, He takes all forms. The veil which concealed has been lifted. Look to whom you wish, the guru of the Hindus, the *pīr* of the Muslims. All are *fakīrs* of Bābā Ādam. Burn a Hindu stretched out, bury a Muslim stretched out. In between, prepare the seat of a Śrī Nāth.⁴³ If one of them stands up, kick him twice.⁴⁴ There are one hundred and eighty thousand sons of Brahmā and Mohammad took the name of Mṛtak Nāth (the Lord of death). Thus, the Mohammad Bodh ends. Sri Guru Gorakhnāth, seated at the river shore in Aṭak,⁴⁵ taught Mohammad. Hail to Śrī Nāthjī gurūjī. Ādeś' (Vilāsnāth Yogī 2005: 524-526, my translation from Hindi).

Muslim Yogīs

- 22 Who are these Muslim Yogīs who must pray in this way during Ramadan? The same book, *Śrī Nāth Rahasya*, gives the list of the twelve *panths* or branches which constitute the sect, then adds that some other groups have to be included, as well as 'some Muslim Yogīs [...] conjurer householder jogīs, practicing magic and tantra-mantra' (Vilāsnāth Yogī 2005: 535).
- 23 They are also quoted in gazetteers and censuses,⁴⁶ for instance in 'Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Provinces' (Rose 1919). In the section entitled 'Jogi,' the authors provide a sort of catalogue, which contains a lot of detail—but is quite confusing—on the various Nāth branches, their traditions and legends. Among the branches they mention are three main groups of Muslim Jogīs: 'The Bachhowalia is a group of Muhammedan Jogis. [...] They are chroniclers or panegyrist, and live on alms. [...] Originally Hindus, they adopted Islam and took to begging. [...] Another Muhammedan group is that of the Kal-pelias, as the disciples of Isma'il are sometimes called. [...] The Rawals, however, are the most important of the Muhammedan Jogi groups. Found mainly in the western districts, they wander far and wide. [...] Their name is said to be a corruption of the Persian *rawinda*, 'traveller,' 'wanderer'" (Rose 1919: 407-408). These references are repeated by Briggs, who adds 'the Jāfir Pīrs, well known in Punjab, Kanphatas, followers of Ranjha' to the list (Briggs 1973: 71).
- 24 Concerning Bengal, Dasgupta remarks how popular and common the Nāth songs or versified stories were, especially among the Muslims, a situation which gave rise to what he calls 'Muslim yogic literature' (Dasgupta 1973: 370).⁴⁷ He adds: 'In the United Provinces, the Yogī singers are generally called Bhartharīs or Bhartṛharīs. They sing the song of

Gopī-cānd. [...] They are by religion Mahomedans. They seem to be descendants of their Yogī forefathers and have inherited their Yogī songs as well' (1973: 369 n. 2).

- 25 Going beyond these recurring but imprecise references, Servan-Schreiber was the first scholar to conduct research on a group of Muslim Yogīs, the Bhartrhari Jogis of Uttar Pradesh.⁴⁸ They are musicians and singers, both householders and itinerant. They wear the garb of Yogīs (ochre clothes, fire-tongs, begging bag), except for the earrings which they don't wear, and go wandering according to a precise and regular spatio-temporal cycle, which takes them to Muslim shrines as well as Hindu temples. They sing the epics of the Nāth tradition, especially Gopicand and Bhatṛhari, and contribute to the maintenance of Nāth religiosity in their area. They sing their repertoire for Shaiva festivals and for the life-cycle rituals, often for funerals where they chant *nirgun* songs which stress the vanity of the world and praise renunciation. However, 'being Muslims, these Jogis obey the five commands of Islamic law, and follow the calendar of Muslim festivals' (Servan-Schreiber 1999: 29). Furthermore, as Muslim fakirs, 'caretakers of cemeteries or small shrines, they receive gifts consisting of money, bedding, clothes, all of which must be given at the end of mourning or for the festival of breaking of the fast' (Servan-Schreiber 1999: 31).

Legendary Encounters

- 26 The Mohammed Bodh is relevant for a small number of specific Yogīs, those who, as Muslims, embody the openness of the *sampradāy*, and its blurred boundaries. However, more familiar to the mainstream Nāth Yogīs are the many narratives which function as carriers of sectarian identity and allow for the transmission of shared values, which are embodied by heroic or saintly figures. Among them, some well-known heroes are characterised by a somewhat ambiguous relation to Islam.

The blessings of Yogīs

- 27 Yogīs are known for their efficient and dangerous curses, as exemplified in the episode in Ratannāth's hagiography where he turns all the emperor's soldiers into women (Bouillier 1998), or in Mastnāth's role 'in nothing less than the collapse of the mighty Mughal Empire, in his interactions with the person of Śāh Ālam II' (White 2001: 152).
- 28 The Yogīs' blessings are however as much sought after as their curses are dreaded. A few stories tell of such relationships between a Nāth Yogī thaumaturge and a Muslim worldly leader. And in such stories it appears that the protection or the boon granted by the Yogī is performed irrespectively of the current religious divide between 'Islam' and 'Hinduism.' Even the Muslim conquerors who have the worst reputations among the current proponents of oppressed Hinduism have benefited from blessings given by Nāth Yogīs.
- 29 This act of blessing has figured in the life-story of three Nāth heroes whose legends are distinct but related, which testifies probably to a common geographical and socio-historical background: the slow Islamisation of the North-West Indian world from the 10th century onwards. Besides their common territorial anchorage and their initiatory links, the three heroes, Gūgā, Ratan, and Buddhnāth, shared a similar position with respect to their links to a Muslim sovereign. All three secured the victory of a Muslim conqueror

with to their blessings. In the case of Gūgā, his encounter with Muhammad Ghuri was posthumous. The Afghan sultan passed close to Gogamedhi, where Gūgā's *samādhi* was located, but the place was in poor repair and Muhammad Ghuri promised the individual buried in the *samādhi* that he would build a sanctuary there if he was victorious. He kept his promise but gave the *samādhi* the Muslim shape it still has today.⁴⁹

- 30 The legend does not mention which enemy Muhammad Ghuri wanted to conquer. Was it Prithvi Rāj Chauhan in Bhatinda? In this case, Gūgā would have added to the blessing already given by Ratannāth. Local legends tell of the visit paid by the Ghuri to this most revered saint of Bhatinda in order to get the saint's blessing for the war he was waging against Prithvi Rāj, the last Hindu rājā of Delhi, who would finally be killed there in 1192. Even the narratives collected among the Nāth Yogīs (see Bouillier 1997) insist on the protection afforded by their saint Ratannāth to an individual who would become the first of the Muslim rulers. Another episode shows Ratan quenching the thirst of the whole army of the conqueror with the water contained in his begging bowl in order to show the greatness of yoga to the Muslim sovereign! In some versions of the legend, the anecdote is linked to Mahmud of Ghazni, without any afterthought for his reputation for iconoclasm.
- 31 The third case concerns a certain Buddhnāth, successor of Kāyānāth and in the spiritual lineage of Ratannāth. Here also, the story is about a key episode of the military history of the Muslim dynasties: the third battle of Panipat in 1761, between Ahmad Śāh Durrānī and the Maratha armies. The encounter between Buddhnāth and Ahmad Śāh was preceded by a meaningful episode: a group of Sayyids, who were accompanying Ahmad Śāh, wanted to take possession of the monastery founded by Kāyānāth. Buddhnāth was the *mahant* at the time, because the monastery was locally called *dargāh* and because its founder, Kāyānāth, was known also under the name Kāyamuddīn. The fight which followed between the Sayyids and the Yogīs attracted the attention of Ahmad Śāh, who asked God to arbitrate: 'Oh Allah! Who are the true devotees? Give me, God, the knowledge. To whom must I give the *dargāh*?' After a miracle performed by Buddhnāth, Ahmad Śāh decided in favour of the Yogīs and gave Buddhnāth the title of 'True Pīr' (*Satya Pīr*). He then asked him for his blessing and the favour of victory in his upcoming battle. Buddhnāth answered: 'This God who preserved the *dargāh*'s honour, your honour this God will preserve.' These words were understood as foretelling Ahmad Śāh's victory in the Panipat battle. Buddhnāth and the Kāyānāth's *dargāh* received generous grants from the conqueror.⁵⁰
- 32 These efficacious blessings given to Muslim conquerors by charismatic ascetics are, in my opinion, independent of any dimension of religious identity. The relationship between the Yogīs and the Muslim sovereigns or conquerors has no ideological backdrop. Rather, it is typical of the kinds of relationships the Yogīs had always maintained with political powers: relationships of exchange between spiritual and worldly protection, between supernatural powers and worldly material gifts; in short, a mutual legitimation. The Muslim rulers partake of the same universe and do not despise either the powers of the Yogīs or their favours. However, the somehow peculiar status of the aforementioned Yogīs may have facilitated their recognition.

Yogīs with a dual identity

- 33 For the purposes of this article, I will only briefly summarise the main characteristics of Ratannāth, which I have analysed in depth elsewhere (Bouillier 1997, Bouillier & Khan

2009), and which have been brilliantly described in the seminal article written by Horovitz (1914). Ratan is known under the double identity of Ratannāth and Hājji Ratan, both identities supported by an elaborate corpus of narratives. The Muslim accounts of Ratan's life make him both a contemporary of Prophet Mohammed and an agent of Mahmud Ghazni's victory (1192 CE), his extraordinary lifespan being a boon granted by the Prophet. His tomb in Bhatinda can be dated back to the early thirteenth century. The Nāth Yogī version of the narratives sees him as a Nepalese prince, directly initiated by Gorakhnāth, and founder of a Nāth monastery in Southern Nepal. However, both sets of narratives refer to each other, with a few Muslim versions alluding to Ratan's Nepalese royal background and the Nāth Yogīs glorifying his successes and his many devotees in Muslim countries.

- 34 According to the story told by the Yogīs, the same Ratannāth was responsible for the birth of Kāyānāth, having miraculously created him from the ashes covering his own body. Irritated by this showing off, Gorakhnāth is said to have banished Ratan into Muslim areas to convert the people there. Nothing much is known about Kāyānāth (Briggs 1938: 66), except in the dissident Yogī tradition called Har Śrī Nāth (Bouillier & Khan 2009), which locates Kāyānāth's 'birth' and subsequent settlement on the bank of the river Jhelum at Bhera, where he founded a monastery under the care of his lineage of disciples, which eventually came to include Buddhnāth. Stories circulate about his death, or rather his disappearance, since both Hindu and Muslim devotees lay claim to his remains, although only his clothes were found to bury. Muslims referred to his sanctuary as a *dargāh*, and called him Kāyamuddīn. And to seal his double identity, an inscription on the wall states: 'For Hindus a gurū, for Muslims a pīr... We are all fakīrs of Bābā Ādam.'
- 35 To take a geographically different example, let us mention Rājā Bākshar and his two shrines in Gwalior (Gold 2011). Known as *bagh savārkar* (hence Bākshar), the one who rides a tiger—as he is figured in the few paintings decorating the shrines—he is recognised both as a Sufi of Gulbargha and as a Nāth Yogī called Caitanyanāth who disguised his true identity out of fear of Aurangzeb. And the shrines bear testimony to this dual identity even in their names: various boards present texts and symbols that refer to the saint's duality.⁵¹ This juxtaposition of appellations and symbols shows how the worshippers, who are mostly Hindu, perceive and respect the dual nature of Rājā Bākshar, a fact also manifested in the inside arrangement of the shrines and the performance of the rituals.

Yogīs with shifting identity

- 36 The case of Gūgā, whose posthumous blessing I described earlier, is quite interesting because of the casual way religious identities are handled. Gūgā was a Rajput hero, a Chauhan warrior whose amorous life and victories on the battle field were in keeping with the standards of a true Ksatriya. However, his birth was brought about by a blessing of Gorakhnāth, whose disciple he then became. Gūgā was a renouncer-king, torn between two worlds: the warrior's life, its duties and pleasures, and the renunciatory quest for ultimate truth. The resolution of the dilemma happened in a strange way: he became a Muslim!
- 37 According to the story, after a bloody battle during which he was obliged to kill his own cousins, his mother cursed him and banished him from the palace and from his wife's bed. Forced to become a renouncer, he decided to die and invoked Gorakhnāth, asking 'the Earth to take him.' There are then different variants: Either the Earth refused, saying

she took in only Muslims and that Gūgā needed to be initiated 'into the creed of Islam' (Temple 1885: I, 208; Rose 1919: I, 179), or Gorakhnāth refused to give him the *samādhi gāyatrī*, the mantra of final absorption, because he had given him life (oral version given at the Gogamedhi shrine). In both cases, Gorakhnāth sent Gūgā to Ratan Baba to be initiated into the *kalimā* (the Muslim profession of faith), and thus to become Muslim and have the option of being buried.

- 38 In this narrative, the *kalimā* is presented as giving access to a death which is seen as the ultimate step in the yogic quest, as the words *samādhi gāyatrī* suggest, *samādhi* being the grave of the Yogī but also the final accomplishment of the yogic path. There would be more to say here regarding the initiation into Islam, which is not quite a conversion, the *kalimā* being more like an effective mantric formula. It is the Islamised Gūgā who is embodied in his Gogamedhi sanctuary.⁵²

Yogīs from a Muslim background

- 39 One of the most elaborate stories concerns Haṇḍī Bhaṛang (or Phaṛang). Published in *Yogvāṇī* (1998, my translation), the publication of the Gorakhpur *maṭh*, it explains:

'The Nāthsiddha Haṇḍī Bhaṛang was *bādsāh* of the Afghan country of Balkh-Bukhārā. While traveling, he reached India and the land of Tryambakeśvar. There he had the vision of the Nine Nāths. He took refuge in Gorakhnāth and asked to be liberated from the illusions of the world. 'I want to practise *yogsāadhanā*, initiate me.' Full of compassion, Gorakhnāth told him: 'you must first stay here twelve years and do *tapasyā*. Then you will be qualified to get *dikṣā*. Relinquish all worldly desires.' At the end of the twelve years, Gorakhnāth made him his disciple and gave him the name of Mṛtaknāth. He gave him the duty to take care of the meals. One day Haṇḍī Bhaṛang forgot to put salt in the *dāl* (lentil soup) and before bringing Kālbhairav's⁵³ meal, he tasted it. The god turned his head away. Admitting his fault, he asked for forgiveness. The Lord tied the cooking pot around his neck and sent him away. In such a guise he went to settle in a cave in Karnataka.'

- 40 Briggs gives fascinating accounts of the same legendary core. One revolves around Śakkarnāth and a low caste rāja:⁵⁴

'Śakkarnāth, disciple of Gorakhnāth, in his wanderings, came to a land ruled by a low-caste rāja, who seized him and ordered him to cause a rain of sugar, on pain of torture. Śakkarnāth performed the miracle and then buried the rāja alive. Twelve years later the Yogī returned and found the king a skeleton, but restored him to life and made him his disciple and cook. [...] One day [the rāja] took out some of the pulse he was cooking and tasted it. Bhairav chanced to appear that day in person and refused the food. The reason was discovered and the rāja was punished by having the pot (*haṇḍī*) hung about his neck' (Briggs 1973: 70).

- 41 This oppressive rājā is not presented here as a Muslim. But the Muslim reference is nevertheless present, since Briggs's narrative continues with the following mention:

'Sakkarnāth had no disciple, so, on his deathbed, he called a Musulman, Jāfir by name, made him his disciple, and advised him to take only uncircumcised Muslims into his following. The Yogīs are employed as Hindu cooks, and belong to the Santnāth sect. The order today recognises only Musalmāns and they do not eat with other Yogīs' (Briggs 1973: 71)

- 42 The ambiguity surrounding the religious identity of Hāṇḍī Varaṅg is cleared up in another version given by Briggs, where the name of the *bādsāh* is given as Aurangzeb!

- 43 This echoes the trend among Yogīs of enlisting the greatest Muslim figures, including Mohammad himself, as mentioned in the *Dabistān* ('on Jogis and their doctrines'): 'Their belief is that Mohammad (to whom be peace) was also a pupil and disciple of Gorakhnath, but, from fear of the Muselmans, they dare not declare it; they say that Baba Rin Haji, that is Gorakhnath, was the foster-father of the Prophet, who, having received the august mission, took the mode of Yog from the sublime road of true faith; and a great many of them agree with the Musulmans in fasting and in prayers and perform several acts according to the religion of that people' (Mubed 1993: 129).
- 44 This is also the conclusion of the *Mohammad Bodh*: 'Śrī Gurū Gorakhnāth, seated at the rivershore in Attock, taught Mohammad.'
- 45 The name of Mṛtaknāth (lord of death) given to such prestigious recruits as Mohammad or the *bādsāh* / Aurangzeb can perhaps be interpreted as an allusion to the practice of burial common to both Muslims and ascetic Yogīs. Nāth Yogīs, whose aim is to attain immortality, consider the grave as a place of continuous trance, as the word *samādhi* (referring both to a state of profound meditation and to the tomb) suggests. To be underground may be considered by the Yogīs as a metaphor for initiation leading to immortality: the *bādsāh* has to be 'cooked' underground (in Gold's version, cf. note 52) before he can be admitted among the Yogīs. Numerous stories present a hero such as Gūgā asking to be swallowed by the earth, or staying underground for twelve years or more, and the disjointed *Mohammad Bodh* text introduces the person of Mohammad/Mṛtaknāth just after the passage about funeral practices. Burial as rebirth gives Muslim heroes as well as Nāth Yogīs the power to vanquish death.

Conclusion

- 46 A text like the *Mohammad Bodh*, and the widespread popularity of figures such as Gūgā or Ratan, reveal the proximity and easy concordance between Nāths and Muslims. They shared common references and they could inhabit the same universe. We may even think that fluid boundaries with Islam were part of the religious identity of the Nāth Yogīs: firstly, their religious identity was not homogenous, and secondly, they were not seeking homogeneity, but rather deliberately cultivating their composite nature. Claiming to be above sectarian divisions—even superior to them in a sense—they were open-minded and inclusive.
- 47 Over the past few decades, there has been a growing distrust in India with regard to such fluidity and mixity. Nāth Yogīs are not immune to this trend: the Gūgā's story has been modified (cf. note 51); the writer of the *Śiva Gorakṣa*, who is the inheritor of the mixed tradition of the Har Śrī Nāth, now claims a *sanātan*⁵⁵ identity; the Muslim Jogīs have abandoned their song tradition and are no longer welcome at the Gorakhpur monastery; and of course the same Gorakhpur monastery has attempted to take the leadership of the *sampradāy* and enlist it in joining the ranks of Hindu fundamentalism. However, I do hope that the regrettable conclusion expressed by Shashank Chaturvedi—'The language of emancipation and liberation is alien to this world, of which these Jogis are vestiges' (2014: 165)—will remain limited. Nāth Yogīs do not easily submit to common directives or institutions. Each of their locales has its own tradition, and each Yogī his own opinions. The heroic figures of Nāth lore, with their fluid identity, are still the common ground on which the sense of belonging in the *sampradāy* rests, and even the publications of the

Gorakhpur *maṭh* continue to narrate the stories of Hanḍī Bhaṛang and Ratan. And both versions of the *Mohammad Bodh* (edited by Yogī Vilāsnāth (2005) and by Yogī Sawāī Nāth (n.d.) have been included in books published under the patronage of the leaders of the Yogī Mahāsabhā (the pan-Indian association of Nāth Yogīs).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agrawal, Purushottam (2011) 'The Naths in Hindi Literature', in David N. Lorenzen & Adrian Munoz (eds.), *Yogi Heroes and Poets: History and Legends of the Nāths*, New York: SUNY Press, pp. 3-18.
- Badā'ūnī, 'Abd al-Qādir (1986) *Muntaḥab al-tawārīḥ*, English translation: Muntakhabu-t-tawārīkh, W. H. Lowe, ed., Delhi: Renaissance, vol. 2.
- Bharthwal, Pitambardatta (ed.) (1994) *Gorakh bānī*, Prayag: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.
- Bhattacharya, France (2003-2004) 'Un texte du Bengale médiéval: le yoga du kalandar (Yoga-Kalandar). Yoga et soufisme, le confluent de deux fleuves', *BEFEO*, 90-91, pp. 69-99.
- Bouillier, Véronique (1998) *Ascètes et Rois: Un monastère de Kanphata Yogis au Nepal*, Paris: CNRS Éditions (Collection Ethnologie).
- Bouillier, Véronique (2004) 'Samādhi et dargāh: Hindouisme et islam dans la Shekhavati', in Véronique Bouillier & Catherine Servan-Schreiber (eds.), *De l'Arabie à l'Himalaya: Chemins croisés. En hommage à Marc Gaborieau*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose: pp. 251-272.
- Bouillier, Véronique (2008) *Itinérance et vie monastique: Les ascètes Nāth Yogīs en Inde contemporaine*, Paris: Éditions de la FMSH.
- Bouillier, Véronique (2011) 'Kānphaṭās', in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Brill's Encyclopaedia of Hinduism, vol. III: Society, Religious Specialists, Religious Traditions, and Philosophy*, Leyden: Brill, pp. 347-354.
- Bouillier, Véronique (2013) 'Religion Compass: A Survey of Current Researches on India's Nath Yogis', *Religion Compass*, 7(5): pp. 157-168, URL: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rec3.12041/abstract>.
- Bouillier, Véronique; Khan, Dominique-Sila (2009) 'Hajji Ratan or Baba Ratan's Multiple Identities', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 37, pp. 559-595.
- Briggs, George Weston (1973 [1938]) *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Cashin, David (1995) *The Ocean of Love: Middle Bengali Sufi Literature and the Fakirs of Bengal*, Stockholm: Association for Oriental Studies.
- Chaturvedi, Shashank (2014) *Religion, Culture and Power: A Study of Everyday Politics in Gorakhpur*, PhD Dissertation, Center for Political Studies, JNU, Delhi.
- Crooke, William (1975 [1896]) *The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces*, Delhi: Cosmo Publications.

- Dahnhardt, Thomas (2002) *Change and Continuity in Indian Sufism: A Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Branch in the Hindu Environment*, New Delhi: D.K. Printworld.
- Dasgupta, Shashibhusan (1976 [1946]) *Obscure Religious Cults*, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited.
- Datta, Nonica (1999) *Forming an Identity: A Social History of the Jats*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Digby, Simon (1970) 'Encounters with Jogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography', London, unpublished paper, SOAS Conference.
- Digby, Simon (2000) *Wonder-Tales of South Asia*, Jersey: Orient Monographs.
- Ernst, Carl W. (1996) 'Sufism and Yoga according to Muhammad Ghawt', *Sufi*, 29, pp. 9-13.
- Ernst, Carl W. (2003) 'The Islamization of Yoga in the *Amrtakunda* Translations', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 13(2), pp. 1-23.
- Ernst, Carl W. (2005) 'Situating Sufism and Yoga', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 15(1), pp. 15-43.
- Gaborieau, Marc (2002) 'Incomparables ou vrais jumeaux? Les renonçants dans l'hindouisme et dans l'islam', *Annales*, 57(1), pp. 71-92.
- Gatade, Subash (2004) 'Hindutvaisation of a Gorakhnath Mutt: The Yogi and the Fanatic', *South Asia Citizens Web*, 7 October, URL: www.sacw.net.
- Gilmartin, David; Lawrence, Bruce B. (eds.) (2000) *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, New Delhi: India Research Press.
- Gold, Daniel (1999) 'The Yogī Who Pissed from the Mountain', in Allan W. Entwistle, Carole Salomon, Heidi Pauwels & Michael C. Shapiro (eds.), *Studies in Early Modern Indo-Aryan Languages, Literature and Culture*, Delhi: Manohar, pp. 145-156.
- Gold, Daniel (2011) 'Different Drums in Gwalior: Maharashtrian Nath Heritages in a North Indian City', in David N. Lorenzen & Adrian Munoz (eds.), *Yogi Heroes and Poets: History and Legends of the Nāths*, New York: SUNY Press, pp. 51-62.
- Ghosh, Paramita (2010) 'The Hungry Artist', *Hindustan Times*, 4 April, URL: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/News/The-hungry-artistes/Article1-526809.aspx>
- Goswamy, B. N.; Greewal, J. S. (1967) *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar: Some Madad-i-Ma'ash and Other Documents*, Simla: Indian Institute for Advanced Studies.
- Gottschalk, Peter (2001) *Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple Identity in Narratives from Village India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Green, Nile (2008) 'Breathing in Inda, c. 1890', *Modern Asian Studies*, 42(2/3), pp. 283-315.
- Hatley, Shaman (2007) 'Mapping the Esoteric Body in the Islamic Yoga of Bengal', *History of Religions*, 46(4), pp. 351-368.
- Hess, Linda; Singh, Shukdeo (2002) *The Bijak of Kabir*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Horovitz, J. (1914) 'Baba Ratan, the Saint of Bhatinda', *Journal of the Panjab Historical Society*, II(2), pp. 97-117.
- Husain, Yusuf (1929) *L'Inde mystique au Moyen Age: Hindous et Musulmans*, Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve.
- Khan, Dominique-Sila (1997) *Conversions and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismaelis in Rajasthan*, Delhi: Manohar.

- Khan, Dominique-Sila (2004) *Crossing the Threshold: Understanding Religious Identities in South Asia*, London: I. B. Tauris Publishers.
- Lorenzen, David N. (2011) 'Religious Identity in Gorakhnath and Kabir: Hindus, Muslims, Yogis and Sants', in David N. Lorenzen & Adrian Munoz (eds.), *Yogi Heroes and Poets: History and Legends of the Nāths*, New York: SUNY Press, pp. 19-50.
- Lorenzen, David N.; Thukral, Uma (2005) 'Los Diálogos Religiosos entre Kabir y Gorakh', *Estudios de Asia y África*, 126, vol. XL(1), pp. 161-177.
- Mallinson, James (2011) 'Nāth Sampradāya' in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Brill's Encyclopaedia of Hinduism, Vol. III: Society, Religious Specialists, Religious Traditions, and Philosophy*, Leyden: Brill, pp. 409-428.
- Mubed, Zulfaqar (tr. D. Shea & A. Tryer) (1993) *Hinduism During the Mughal India of the 17th Century*, Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library. [1843]
- Offredi, Mariola (1991) *Lo yoga di Gorakh. Tre manoscritti inediti*, Milano: CESVIET.
- Offredi, Mariola (2002) 'Kabir and the Nāthpanth', in Monika Horstmann (ed.), *Images of Kabir*, New Delhi: Manohar, pp. 127-41.
- Pauwels, Heidi (2010) 'Who Are the Enemies of the bhaktas? Testimony about 'śāktas' and 'Others' from Kabir, the Rāmānandīs, Tulsīdās, and Harirām Vyās', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 130(4), pp. 1-32.
- Pinch, William R. (2006) *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rizvi, S. Athar Abbas (1970) 'Sufis and Nātha Yogis in Mediaeval Northern India (XII to XVI Centuries)', *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, 7(1/2), pp. 119-133.
- Rose, Horace Arthur; Ibbetson, Denzil; MacLagan, Edward Douglas (1919) *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*, Lahore: Government Printing.
- Sawāī Nāth 'Sāmān', Yogi (n.d.) *Nath Sampradaye aur Sukshamved*, Sirohi: Yogi Shamboo Nath Raval.
- Servan-Schreiber, Catherine (1999) *Chanteurs Itinérants en Inde du Nord*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Srivastava, Rajiv (2014) 'Yogi Adityanath : 'Love Jihad' Will Be a Bypoll Issue in UP', *The Times of India*, 29 August, URL: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Yogi-Adityanath-Love-jihad-will-be-a-bypoll-issue-in-UP/articleshow/41164779.cms>
- Stewart, Tony K. (2000) 'Alternate Structures of Authority: Satya Pīr on the Frontiers of Bengal', in David Gilmartin & Bruce B. Lawrence (eds.), *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, New Delhi: India Research Press, pp. 21-54.
- Stewart, Tony K. (2001) 'In Search of Equivalence: Conceiving the Muslim-Hindu Encounter Through Translation Theory', *History of Religions*, 40(3), pp. 260-87.
- Temple, Richard C. (1885) *The Legends of the Panjab*, London: Trübner & Co., 2 vol.
- Vaudeville, Charlotte (1959) *Kabir : Au cabaret de l'amour*, Paris: Gallimard (Collection Connaissance de l'Orient).
- Vaudeville, Charlotte (1974) *Kabir*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- Vaudeville, Charlotte (1982) *Kabir Vānī*, Pondicherry: Publications de l'Institut Français de Pondicherry.

Vaudeville, Charlotte (1987) 'The Shaiva-Vaishnava Synthesis in Maharashtrian Santism', in Karine Schomer & W. H. McLeod (eds.), *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, Delhi: Motilal Banasidass, pp. 215-228.

Vilāsnāth Yogī (2005) *Śrī Nāth Rahasya*, Haridvar: Ākhil Bhāratvarṣiya Avadhūt Bheṣ Bārah Panth Yogī Mahāsabhā.

Yogvānī (1998) 'Nāthsiddh Hanḍibhaṅg', 23(4-6), April-June, pp. 210-211.

NOTES

1. This paper was also presented at the 22nd European Conference on South Asian Studies (Lisbon University, 25-28 July 2012) in the panel entitled 'Yogis, Sufis, Devotees: Religious/Literary Encounters in Pre-modern and Modern South Asia,' organised by Heidi Pauwels. Many thanks to the participants and referees for their comments and suggestions.
2. See Srivastava (2014).
3. They have served as close advisers to rulers, especially in Rajasthan and Nepal, and a few of them have been involved in electoral politics since the 1920s.
4. On the Nāth Yogīs, see Bouillier (1998, 2008). For a synthetic overview, see Bouillier (2011) and Mallinson (2011); there is also a bibliographical survey in Bouillier (2013).
5. See Cashin (1995), Ernst (1996, 2003: 200), Bhattacharya (2003-2004), Green (2007), Hatley (2007). A particularly pronounced combining of the two is related by Thomas Dahnhardt concerning the Hindu branch of the Naqshbandī, where the first Hindu disciple, Ramacandra Saksena, made a broad use in his texts of 'a parallel terminology drawn from both traditions' (2002: 213), in what Dahnhardt calls 'a true spiritual synthesis' (2002: 262), 'a cross-cultural sādhanā' (2002: 330).
6. See for instance Gilmartin; Lawrence (eds.) (2000); Gottschalk (2001); Khan (1997, 2004). Many sacred figures of north India are endowed with a dual—or even more complex—identity. Among them is Satya Pīr, the Bengali saint also worshipped as Satya Nārāyan (see Stewart 2000).
7. As Gilmartin and Lawrence have said: 'Individual religious differences between Muslims and Hindus (as between other generic religious categories, like Saiva and Vaisnava, Sunni and Sh'ia) were framed by their operation within a pervasive structure of personalized religious authority. [...] This is not to say that marks of generic Hindu or Muslim identity were insignificant. But since religious virtue and spiritual power were embodied pre-eminently in holy individuals, religious identity was defined primarily in relation to individual teachers, masters, or Sufi exemplars' (2000: 18).
8. Cf. Lorenzen (2011: 20-21): 'The only decent scholarly edition of this literature is the collection edited by P.D. Barthwal in about 1942. Many more Gorakh *bānī* (sayings) exist in manuscripts [...]. The best estimate is that the earliest surviving Gorakh *bānī* probably date from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries or even later. It is also likely that they have been somewhat altered in the process of transmission from manuscript to manuscript.' The Gorakhpur monastery continues to publish editions of the *Gorakhbānī* that rely on Barthwal's collection (cf. the two volumes edited by Rām Lāl Srivāstava, published in 2025 and 2051 V.S.). See also the manuscript variants in Offredi (ed.) (1991, 2002).
9. Their legendary encounter leads to the dialogue entitled *Kabīr-Gorakh kī gosht* (Lorenzen; Thukral 2005). Near the joint Muslim and Kabīrpanthi *samādhis* of Kabīr in Maghar (Gorakhpur district), a small sacred enclosure is said to contain Kabīr's *dhūnī* where, according to the caretaker, the encounter between the two saints took place.
10. Whatever we might think regarding the difficult question of historical influence (Lorenzen 2011). As Heidi Pauwels has written: 'Although Gorakhnāth undoubtedly predated Kabīr, records

of *Gorakh-bānī* in Hindi are later than for Kabīr and may well already have incorporated *bhakti* elements. Thus it is tricky to determine who reacts to whom' (2010: 7).

11. Yogī Vilāsnāth, general secretary of the Pan-Indian Nath Yogi association, whose main office is based in Haridvar, devotes much of his time to research on Nath traditions and promotion of the *sampradāy*. He has published many books and pamphlets in Hindi and has recently developed a network of personal disciples in Russia.

12. A similar compendium of mantras and comments has been published in Sirohi by Yogī Sawāī Nāth'Sāmān' (undated, but including a preface by Avedyanāth that is dated 2004). It also includes a version of the *Mohammad Bodh* containing a few slightly different verses, but does not outline the circumstances calling for the *Bodh* to be recited.

13. The text of which is given in the same manual and which begins with the same three invocations as the *Mohammad Bodh*: *sat namo ādeś / guruji ko ādeś / om guruji*.

14. *Roṭ*, a thick bread cooked in the ascetic fire of the Yogīs (*dhūnī*), an offering specific to the Yogīs and most often dedicated to Bhairav.

15. *I.e.* a Yogī of the Nāth sect. We should note here the equivalency between the Nāth ascetics and the Muslims Fakīrs as recipients of *dakṣiṇā*, or ritual offerings.

16. Many thanks to all those who generously helped me to understand this complex text: particularly Dominique-Sila Khan and Harshvardan Singh Chauhan, Mushirul Hasan and Abdul Bismillah, Catherine Servan-Schreiber and Azhar Abbas.

17. In my English translation, the explanations and translations in Hindi given by Yogī Vilāsnāth in the text will figure in brackets. In square brackets I will (mostly) give the Urdu word as written in the main text, and my commentary when I find it useful.

18. There is also a text in the Kabīrpanthi literature which is known as *Granth Muhammad Bodh*, an imaginary dialogue between the Prophet and Kabīr. In a ground-breaking book published in French in 1929, Yusuf Husain included some excerpts from this text, which is quite different in style.

19. *ādeś*, order, instruction, is also the common term of greeting among the Nāths. In square brackets, the word given in the text and, if needed, my explanation.

20. The formula 'God in the name of God' (Allāh here written erroneously as Alhā) is explained by Vilāsnāth in the text itself in brackets as *devtā*, *i.e.* a god, (where we would rather have expected *īśvar*).

21. The meaning is uncertain: *madār* can mean axis but the translation by *kom*, from arabic *qaum*, community, could be an allusion to the tradition of Shah Madār and the Madārīs, well-known for their close relationship with the Nāths.

22. The word *nabī*, of Arabic origin, is explained by the word *paigambar*, of Persian origin; both are however used in Hindi.

23. The word *kabar*, from the Arabic *qabr*, is translated here by the word used to designate the tombs of Hindu ascetics.

24. *Hazrat*, excellency, majesty. A title given to the Prophet or to the Saints, here explained as *mān mānyatā dene vāle*, 'who gives value to honour.'

25. The Persian word *dozakh*, which already means both hell and stomach, is glossed by the name of the Hindu God of fire.

26. *rasūl*, in Arabic 'messenger' or 'prophet,' is explained as 'the primordial book,' establishing an equivalence between the message and the messenger?

27. *Šahīd*, a well-known Arabic term, is curiously explained here using a lesser-known Arabo-Persian term *qurbānī*, which designates the sacrificial victim.

28. *Kāfir*, the usual term for 'unbelievers,' *i.e.* non-Muslims, is glossed here as '*nīce karma karne vālā*,' 'the one who acts disgracefully,' a moral statement reinforced in the following verses and often found in reformist literature, for instance among Dadupanthis such as Garib Dās (1717-1778): 'Kāfir is one who gives no charity, / one who quarrels with the saints [...] // He who

sacrifices animals. / A kāfir is a worshipper of idols // A kāfir steals crops, kills the peacock, / and is addicted to tobacco and other intoxicants' (Datta 1999: 43). The play on words *kāfir/fakir* is also quite common.

29. An allusion to the ocean of life that the *fakir* intends to cross?

30. *kalimā* or *shahāda*, the Muslim profession of faith: *La-ilāha illā-llāh*. There is no other God than God.

31. *Marnā hak hai jānā*. *Haq*, the True One, one of the names of Allāh (al-Ḥaqq) but the gloss in brackets is *hissā*, part, portion, which is also one meaning of *haq* but seems out of context here. The sentence is unclear.

32. An allusion to the position of the body in the grave? In Muslim India, dead bodies are buried with the head to the north and the face turned to the west (towards Mecca).

33. This sentence and the next are often found in Kabīr. Cf. *Bijak*, *sabda* 10: 'one says Rām, if not Khudā' (Husain 1929: 58), as well as in the *Gorakhbānī* (*sabdi* 68/69, cf. *ante*).

34. Cf. Kabīr's *Bijak*, *sabda* 10: 'The Turk prays, fasts and says the *bismillah* loudly. How can he attain paradise, when he kills a chicken every evening?' (Husain 1929: 58). My translation relies on the word *khūn* (*tison roje khūn kare thā*), 'blood, killing.' However Yogī Sawāi Nāth's version has *khūb*, which perhaps allows for a joining of the two sentences: he has looked for the full thirty days and not even found a mustard seed (*rāi*), the mustard seed being an image of the infinitesimal (cf. Kabīr: 'He makes the mountain stay in the mustard seed,' Husain 1929: 89).

35. 'What is the use of performing ablutions and purifications, of washing your face? What is the use of prostrating oneself in the mosque? If you say your prayers with a sly (deceitful) heart, what is the use of making the pilgrimage to Ka'aba?' (Kabīr quoted in Vaudeville 1959: 73).

36. The same statement is found in the *Gorakh-bānī* and in the *Sant* tradition. See Nāmdev: 'The Hindus pray in temples, the Muslims in mosques. [Nāmdev] follows the Name, who has neither temple nor mosque' (in Husain 1929: 121).

37. This is an allusion to the Absolute, to its Unicity in which the opposition between male and female disappears, to form the union of Śiva and Śaktī as seen by the Nāth Yogīs.

38. A clear affirmation that being a Nāth encompasses and transcends both religious identities.

39. Here also, there are many examples in Kabīr, such as: 'There is neither Turk nor Hindu in the mother's blood and the father's seed,' *Bijāk*, *ramainī* 40 (Husain 1929: 59).

40. The Compassionate, one of Allah's titles. It is possible to read the sentence as 'We follow the six *darśana* and are compassionate.'

41. The Arabic *rabb* (the Lord, God) is explained as *pālne vālā khudā*, the God who protects.

42. It is the same in Kabīr: 'Why go on pilgrimage to Mecca? [...] it is in the heart that you must search' (*Bijak*, *sabda* 97 in Husain 1929: 60)

43. Here, the text stresses the specificity of Nāth funeral practices. They are buried in a sitting position, whereas Muslims are buried stretched out, and Hindus are cremated.

44. *uske do do kutke lagā dījiye*: I am not sure about the meaning of *kutke* which has been explained to me both as a kick and as a petting gesture ('pet them twice'); the idea is perhaps to go against the Hindu and the Muslim who might be opposed to the Nāth position.

45. Aṭak ('obstacle') or Attock is a natural ford on the Indus, the only place where one can cross the river. 'But for caste Hindus, who are not supposed to cross the Indus at all, Attock has traditionally symbolized this taboo' (many thanks for this precision given by the anonymous referee). Gorakhnath, located in Attock, is precisely at the border between Hindustan and Muslim lands; being symbolically in-between two worlds, he would be Mohammad's teacher.

46. The census data are difficult to apprehend because of a lack of precision in the listed categories. The 1901 census for instance distinguishes four groups described thusly: Faqir, Hindu (436,803) / Jogi, Hindu (659,891) / Jogi, Muhammadan (43,139) / Natha, Hindu (45,463). These data supposedly cover the whole of India. As for Briggs (1973: 5), he states that in 1891: 'of the Yogīs reported in the Panjab, 38,137 were Musalmāns' (which would imply a huge drop in

numbers between 1891 et 1901 for India as a whole; but it would be more prudent to interpret these numbers as meaning that the categories are irrelevant). For the North-Western Provinces, Crooke (1975: 63) gives the following 'distribution of the Jogis according to the Census of 1891': Aughar (4,317), Gorakhpanti (13,133), others (60,937), Muhammadans (17,593). However, even though we do not know precisely whom and in what way they classify, these data show how widespread the phenomenon of Muslim Yogīs was.

47. See also Cashin (1995), Bhattacharya (2003-2004), Hatley (2007).

48. However, Shashank Chaturvedi has just completed a PhD entitled *Religion, Culture and Power: A Study of Everyday Politics in Gorakhpur*, in which he describes the difficult situation of the community with regard to growing regional communalism (mss. pp.162-166). See also Ghosh (2010). Many thanks to Shashank Chaturvedi for giving me access to his PhD thesis.

49. According to one of the oral versions I collected in Gogamedhi (both in the *dargāh* and in the Nāth monastery close by). There were also various booklets and cassette tapes sold at the site, which present slightly different versions of Gūgā's story (see Bouillier (2004) for the evolution of this story after the version collected by Richard Temple in 1885).

50. The story of Buddhnāth figures in a pamphlet printed at the *gurudhām āśram* in Delhi and written by Pīr Premnāth with the title of *Śiva Gorakṣa* (1982); see Bouillier; Khan (2009).

51. An inscription across the street reads 'Śrī pīr sāheb rāje bākṣār mahārāj dargāh (mandir).' On the shrine itself we read: 'Śrī pīr sāheb rāje bākṣār mahārāj dargāh Gwalior,' and in smaller characters underneath and preceded by a swastika: 'satguru caitanyanāth rājā bākṣār mahārāj.' However, near a side window, we read: 'Śrī pīr sāheb rāje valī dargāh,' written on a green board adorned with the Islamic symbol of the star and the crescent moon.

52. However, the new booklets sold at the shrine now present a different version. Gūgā's becoming Muslim is no longer emphasised, and is instead mentioned only to be strongly denied in a communalising India. On the contrary, he is now presented as a true Hindu hero fighting cowardly Muslim enemies who hide behind a herd of cows, which of course Gūgā does not attack.

53. Bhairav is often the main deity worshipped in Nāth shrines. He has food prepared for him every morning, which may include a substitute for blood sacrifice. The duty imparted to Hanḍī Bhaṛang is thus an important one, especially as Bhairav is not very easy to deal with!

54. A Rajasthani version of the Hāṇḍī Varaṅg legend is given by Gold: the Nāth guru in this case is Gehlā Rāwal: 'The *bādshāh*, impressed by Gehlā's many miracles, asked to become his disciple. Gehlā agreed—with conditions. Since the *bādshāh* was a Muslim, he really had to become *pukka*, 'fully developed,' here taken in its more etymologically precise sense as 'thoroughly baked.' Gehlā put a little unbaked jug (*hāṇḍī*) around the *bādshāh*'s neck. 'When this is baked,' he said, 'you'll be my disciple; otherwise, you'll remain a Muslim.' The *bādshāh* was then buried in the earth, and twelve years later dug up; the jug had hardened and he was renamed Hāṇḍī Varaṅg Nāth' (Gold 1999: 153).

55. From *Sanātana dharma*: eternal *dharma*, the modern designation of what is defined as orthodox Hinduism, based on the Vedas. On the *Har Śrī Nāth* movement, see Bouillier & Khan (2009).

ABSTRACTS

Far from modern ideologies focusing on fixed ascriptive religious identities, the Shaivite ascetic sect of the Nāth Yogīs had a long tradition of close relationships with Islam. This article will focus on two levels where this lack of concern for encompassing religious labels manifests: the doctrinal vernacular texts and the Nāth hagiographic tradition. A surprising text edited under the name of 'Mohammad Bodh' by contemporary Nāth authorities will be presented. It is composed of short elliptical verses, which have to be recited during the month of Ramadan and are thus intended for Muslim Yogīs. However, more familiar to the mainstream Nāth Yogīs are the many narratives that function as carriers of sectarian identity. Several of them present heroes characterised by a somewhat ambiguous relation to Islam; they may be blessing Muslim rulers or be granted a dual identity (like Ratan Bābā and Raja Bākshar), a shifting identity (like Gūgā), or come from a Muslim background (Hanḍī Bharang). In conclusion, we may even think that fluid boundaries with Islam were part of the religious identity of the Nāth Yogīs.

INDEX

Keywords: ascetics, Shaiva, Nāth Yogīs, Hinduism, Islam

AUTHOR

VÉRONIQUE BOUILLIER

CNRS Emeritus Senior Fellow in anthropology at the Centre for South Asian Studies (CEIAS),
EHESS, Paris