Mobilizing Krishna's World
The Writings of Prince Savant Singh of Kishangarh

Heidi R. M. Pauwels

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Cover image: Radha Offering Flowers to Yogi Krishna, Kishangarh school, ca. 1750–60. Ink, color, and gold on paper (30.5 × 20.5 cm). National Museum, New Delhi, accession no. 63.1769. Courtesy National Museum (New Delhi)

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A tour de force. Heidi Pauwels brings into focus the histories and relationships of the sectarian communities that lived, thrived, and competed in eighteenth-century north India.

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Savant Singh (1694–1764), the Rajput prince of Kishangarh, is famous for commissioning beautiful works of miniature painting and composing Krishna bhakti poetry under the nom de plume Nagaridas. Behind the idyllic world of the poetry and paintings lies a tragic life story: while designated the crown prince by his father, he never managed to ascend the throne, losing it to his younger brother. In the political tumult of the mid-eighteenth century, it proved hard to forge the necessary military alliances to regain his kingdom.

While on the road, seeking support for his cause, Savant Singh continued composing poetry. This book studies three of his more lengthy works authored in this turbulent period: an autobiographical pilgrimage account,; a hagiographic anthology,; and a reworking of the story of Rama, .

While mobilizing soldiers, Savant Singh also mobilized myths, songs, and stories about saints to cope with his personal and political crisis. In , Nagaridas focuses on the comfort of the he finds in along the way, and in Braj where he settled down. His account of how major festivals were celebrated in Braj at the time provides historical depth to today’s calendar cycle of this center of Krishna pilgrimage. In Pod-pramukh-mala, and a reworking of the story of Rama, , he provides anecdotes that attest to the popularity of his favorite devotional songs, including those in Santkirti by Jayadeva, in Marathi by Narsimha, in Gujarati by

Heidi R. M. Pauwels

Original price: US $90.00
Special Indian price: 1050/-

ISBN 978 93 5287 127 8
www.orientblackswan.com