
Locating gurbilās in the world of Braj literature: political, religious and literary encounters in early modern North India.

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Abstract (in French and English)

This paper seeks to locate gurbilās literature within the literary, religious, and political context of early modern North India. Gurbilās literature, which is a literary genre produced in memory of Guru Gobind Singh, was not only part of the Sikh and Punjabi world but also part of the wider world of Brajbhasha literature. There is a wide range of Brajbhasha literary traditions that share - with gurbilās literature - linguistic, aesthetic, thematic and stylistic features. One compelling avenue of comparison outside of the Sikh textual tradition of the gurbilās is the textual tradition of the Dadupanthis. Many scholars have highlighted encounters that occurred between Sikhs and Dadupanthis since as early as the 17th century. Their interactions not only exemplify the existence of active networks of cultural exchanges in early modern North India but also reflect the relational rather than binary nature of identity formation. This paper will explore the idea of encounter in two literary genres associated with these traditions: gurbilās and vīr gīt . It will examine instances of how notions of "self" and "others" are articulated and, it will interrogate what it means to produce "Sikh" and "Punjabi" literature in a world of shared idioms, symbols, and representations.

Keywords: gurbilās, vīr gīt, Brajbhasha, Sikh, Punjab, encounter, identity formation

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