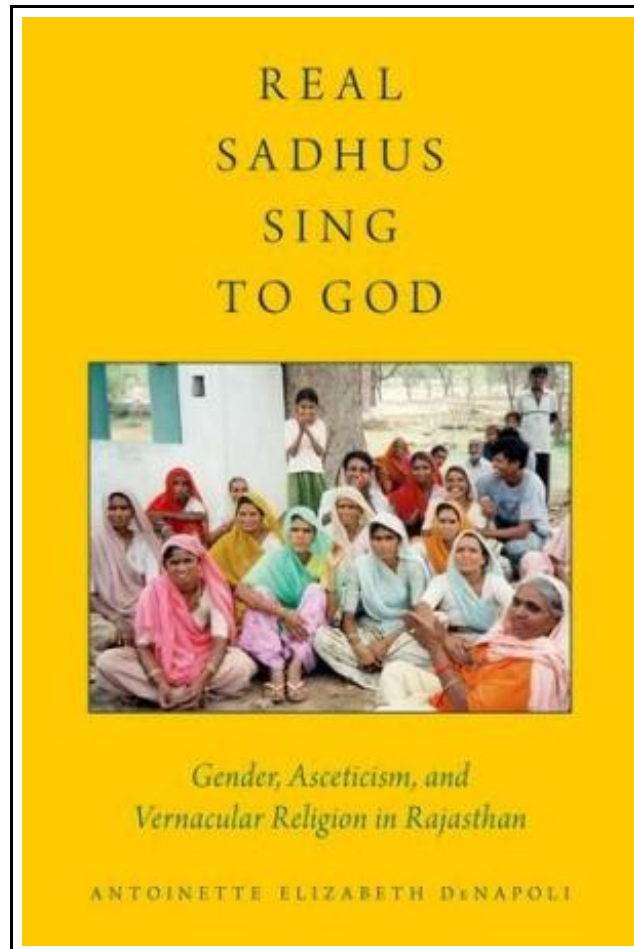


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REAL SADHUS SING TO GOD: GENDER, ASCETICISM, AND VERNACULAR RELIGION IN RAJASTHAN

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Oxford University Press. Hardback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW PRINT ON DEMAND., Real Sadhus Sing to God: Gender, Asceticism, and Vernacular Religion in Rajasthan, Antoinette Elizabeth DeNapoli, In this groundbreaking book, based on in-depth ethnographic research spanning ten years, Antoinette Elizabeth DeNapoli brings to light the little known, and often marginalized, lives of female Hindu ascetics (sadhus) in the North Indian state of Rajasthan. Her book offers a new perspective on the practice of asceticism in India today, exploring a phenomenon she terms vernacular asceticism. Examining the everyday religious worlds and practices of primarily "unlettered" female sadhus who come from a variety of castes, Real Sadhus Sing to God illustrates that the female sadhus whom DeNapoli knew experience asceticism in relational and celebratory ways and construct their lives as paths of singing to God. While the sadhus have combined ritual initiation with institutionalized and orthodox orders of asceticism, they also draw on the non-orthodox traditions of the medieval devotional poet-saints of North India to create a form of asceticism that synthesizes multiple and competing world views. DeNapoli suggests that in the vernacular asceticism of the sadhus, singing to God serves as the female way of being an ascetic. As women who have escaped the dominant societal expectations of marriage and housework, female sadhus are unusual because they devote themselves to a way of life traditionally reserved for men in Indian society. Female sadhus are simultaneously respected and distrusted for transgressing normative gender roles in order to dedicate themselves to a life of singing to the divine. Real Sadhus Sing to God is the first book-length study to explore the ways in which female sadhus perform and, thus, create gendered views of asceticism through their singing, storytelling, and sacred text practices, which DeNapoli characterizes as the sadhus' "rhetoric of renunciation." The...



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