
Review Article

The Yogīs' Latest Trick¹

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David Gordon White's wide-ranging scholarship on tantra, yoga and alchemy has inspired many students and scholars to undertake research in those fields. White worked as an assistant to Mircea Eliade and his doctorate from the University of Chicago was in History of Religions. His research methodology, true to this scholastic heritage, is not as deeply rooted in textual criticism as that of the current vanguard of scholars working on tantra and yoga, whose philological studies rarely reference his work. The accessibility of his books and articles, however, together with his engaging writing style and the excitement that imbues his scholarship, mean that indologists specialising in other fields, and authors addressing non-scholarly audiences, frequently draw on his publications.² White's prominence in the study of yoga and tantra requires all scholars working on those subjects to address his work.

In the preface to his latest monograph, *Sinister Yogis*, White writes (pp. xi–xii) that the book is the third part of an unplanned trilogy. *The Alchemical Body* (1995) sought to show that *hathayoga* owes its origins to alchemy. *Kiss of the Yoginī* (2003) tried to find textual evidence for the “power substances” which White believes underlie both *hathayoga* and alchemy. This raised the question of “why the Tantras used the term ‘yogi’ for practitioners whose goals were supernatural powers, rather than liberation or salvation”. *Sinister Yogis* is White's answer to this question; it is an attempt to identify “the (unexpected) origins of yoga in South Asia”.

As suggested by the book's title, in *Sinister Yogis* White expounds the bold and provocative thesis that the primary referent of *yoga*³ in Indic discourse has not been the ‘quietist’, meditation-based “classical” yoga practices of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* and later *hathayogic* works, but more occult and extrovert techniques of effecting union by projecting the self outwards in order to overcome death, enter other bodies and effect various kinds of wizardry. This thesis was first advanced by White in a recent article⁴ and *Sinister Yogis* is an expansion of

¹This is a review article about *Sinister Yogis* by David Gordon White Chicago: Chicago University Press. 2009. ISBN: 978-0-226-89513-0. I am grateful to Alexis Sanderson, Harunaga Isaacson, Shaman Hatley, Dominic Goodall, Mark Singleton, Jason Birch, Patton Burchett, Matthew Clark, Alex Watson, James Fitzgerald and Andrew Nicholson for their comments on earlier drafts.

²As examples of the former, see Pinch 2006:200–210, Doniger 2009: ch. 15 or Alter 2011: ch. 5; for the latter see e.g. Dalrymple 2009: ch. 9.

³A note about terminology is necessary here. When I write of “yoga”, it is in the general English dictionary sense of a spiritual discipline; its italicised form, “*yoga*”, indicates that I am referring to a specific usage in an Indic language; “yogi” is a practitioner of yoga; “*yogī/yoginī*”, like “*yoga*”, refers to a specific usage in an Indic language; “Yogī” or “Jogī” refer to the religious orders or castes which go by those names. Thus on page 64 it is not a typographical error when I mention a “yogi Yogī”.

⁴White 2009.

that article. Parts of chapters two and four are taken directly from it; the rest of the book fleshes out his argument and, in its first and last chapters, contextualises it with, respectively, fictional stories of yogis in Indic works and reports by travellers in India from the medieval period onwards.

The subject matter of each of the book's six chapters is as follows. Chapter One, "Tales of Sinister Yogis", sets the scene with stories of fiendish black magicians found in texts dating from the seventh to twentieth centuries CE and asks at its end "If these be yogis, then what is yoga?". In Chapter Two, "Ceci n'est pas un Yogi", White highlights usages of the word *yoga* in the *Bṛāhmaṇas*, *Upaniṣads* and *Mahābhārata* that are far removed from its best known understanding as a meditation-based soteriology, focusing in particular on the vedic chariot warrior's journey to the sun "hitched to his [chariot] rig" (*yogayukta*). In Chapter Three, "Embodied Ascent, Meditation and Yogic Suicide", White traces descriptions of soteriological ascent, both embodied and visualised, through early *Upaniṣads*, the *Maitrāyaṇīyopaniṣad*, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and Śaiva scriptures, before examining yogic suicide (*utkrānti*) in tantric works. Chapter Four, "The Science of Entering Another Body", examines both the mechanics of *parakāyapraveśa*, drawing on theories of perception based on rays of light, and specific instances of it in the *Maitrāyaṇīyopaniṣad* and *Mahābhārata*. Chapter Five, "Yogi Gods", explores how gods came to be portrayed as yogis and yogis understood as gods, relying extensively on the *Mokṣadharmaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* as well as Buddhist works, the *Bhāgavadgītā* and various *Purāṇas*. Chapter Six, "Mughal, Modern and Postmodern Yogis", begins with a comprehensive survey of references to yogis and other ascetics in foreign travellers' accounts, then turns to yogis as alchemists, soldiers and traders, before looking at interactions between yogis and the British, which, White suggests, precipitated the downfall of the traditional yogi, whose practice has been replaced by the reinvented meditation- and *āsana*-based yoga of today.

In a relatively short book, White thus covers a wide array of material, ranging in time and space from the Mohenjo-Daro seal identified as Śiva by Sir John Marshall to present-day yogis in America. Throughout White argues his thesis like the most insistent of *pūrvapakṣins*. There is, perhaps, a need to inform those interested in yoga that there is more to it than sitting (or stretching) quietly and waiting for liberation, and that its textual foundation goes beyond Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*. White, however, leaves no room for nuance, ignoring almost everything that argues against his position, in particular the elephant in his room—the huge body of Indic texts written over the last two thousand years which teach a meditation-based yoga. Where contradictions to his thesis are noted, they are dismissed with hubris. The verse cited in translation in the title of the article on which *Sinister Yogis* is based, "Never Have I Seen Such Yogis, Brother': Yogīs, Warriors and Sorcerers in Ancient and Medieval India", is attributed to Kabīr: the poet is railing against those soldiers and traders who call themselves *yogīs*. In the article, White declares that he "will argue against the implicit model of the yogin in this poetic verse", suggesting that the sixteenth-century poet who wrote the verse did not know what a *yogī* was but he does.⁵ In *Sinister Yogis*, in a note to explain the

⁵On the referents of the word *yogī* in this verse, see footnote 40.

Yogasūtra's *saṃnyama*,⁶ White says that, in his opinion, the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* taught in the *Yogasūtra* was not yoga, but "meditative practice".⁷

It is White's wish to give his book an overarching thesis, a grand unifying theory, that is at fault here, hindering reflective scholarship. This is a shame, because there are some interesting observations to be found in *Sinister Yogis*. See, for example, the argument in Chapter Two that the archetypal yogic posture *padmāsana* was originally emblematic of sovereignty; or the idea presented in Chapter Three of the soteriological journey to the world of *brahman* being relocated to the body; or the way that the theory of perception being caused by rays of light emitted from the perceiver is used to explain the mechanics of *parakāyapraveśa* in Chapter Four; or, in the same chapter, the idea, developed from the work of Johannes Bronkhorst, that meditational yoga originated in Greater Magadha; or the assertion in Chapter Five that to talk of "microcosm" in the context of yogic meditation is inappropriate — the yogi is to see himself as the universe itself. Chapter Six contains a useful survey of travellers' descriptions of yogis and fakirs which builds on and complements those of Pinch (2006) and Singleton (2009). And the book has an admirable methodological aim, espoused in the preface (p. xii): to investigate the history of yoga through the history of yogis. Despite this promise, however, there is little focus on the yogi other than in the first and last chapters and even in these narrative and historical accounts the yogi is rarely contextualised. White does not address the question of who actually practised yoga however that yoga might be understood.

The overriding problem with White's thesis that yoga, or at least yogis, were "sinister" is caused by his conflating the practice of yoga with the *siddhis* it produces. The *Yogasūtra* itself lists various supernatural powers which the yogi can attain through his yoga practice. They are numerous and include the ability to enter another body (*parakāyapraveśa*), which is the subject of White's fourth chapter. As noted above, White's explanation of the mechanics of this *siddhi* are novel and interesting, but such niceties are not mentioned in yoga texts, wherein certain *siddhis* are simply said to result from certain practices. Thus, in the *Yogasūtra*'s *vibhūtipāda*, *parakāyapraveśa* is said to result from loosening the causes of bondage and understanding the workings of the mind;⁸ in the *Śivasamhitā* it is one of various *siddhis* achieved through *prāṇāyāma* when practised in the second stage (*ghaṭāvasthā*) of yoga.⁹ So *parakāyapraveśa* is not yoga practice itself; it is one of its results.¹⁰ This conflation of yoga with its *siddhis* is evident from the first chapter of the book, a survey of literary evidence of yogis getting up to no good. The yogis described have achieved magical powers as a result of their practice of yoga and other techniques, which they then put to evil ends. The powers are not the practice.

In the Pātañjala and *haṭha* yoga traditions (which coalesced in texts composed from the sixteenth century onwards, such as Śivānanda Sarasvatī's *Yogacintāmaṇi*), *siddhis* have been

⁶Note 215 on pp. 288–289.

⁷Cf. the dismissal in n. 140 (p. 277) of Alexis Sanderson's understanding of the word *yoga* in Śaiva sources as referring to techniques of meditation.

⁸*Yogasūtra* 3.38: *bandhakāraṇaśaithilyāt pracārasaṃvedanāc ca cittasya paraśarīrāveśaḥ ||*

⁹*Śivasamhitā* 3.58–63.

¹⁰An exception to this is found in the instructions on how to practise *parakāyapraveśa* in Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* (5.264–273), in which the yogi is to insert his breath into inanimate objects of increasing size. This technique, which develops similar practices known as *vedhas* taught in earlier Śākta works, suggests a greater rôle for the breath in *parakāyapraveśa* than it is given in White's analysis.

said to be impediments to the ultimate aim of yoga, liberation, since the composition of the *Yogasūtra* in the fourth or fifth centuries CE.¹¹ In the tantric traditions, on the other hand, *siddhis* are the main aim of the initiate. Various means of attaining them are taught, but the most common is mantra-repetition. When the *haṭha* variety of yoga practices started to be codified in Sanskrit texts in the eleventh or twelfth centuries, it was soon appropriated by Kaula tantric traditions that brought their *bubhukṣu* emphasis on *siddhis* with them. Before long, however, these traditions were sidelined, and *haṭhayoga* was again predominantly for the *mumukṣu*.¹² In many tantric texts a distinction is made between the *sādhaka*, who has undertaken the third highest of the four tantric *dīkṣās* and practises mantra-repetition for *siddhis*, and the *yogin*, whose practice is separate from this system, and for whom liberation is usually the main aim. In texts of the *haṭhayogic* corpus this distinction is reproduced and the word *sādhaka* is rarely used to refer to the practitioner of *haṭhayogic* techniques; in the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* it is used once, disparagingly, to refer to the practitioner of mantra-repetition.¹³ In *Sinister Yogis*, White makes no reference to this distinction and reproduces the conflation of the *sādhaka* and the *yogin* found in some Śākta works, such as the *Brahmayāmala*,¹⁴ thereby compounding his conflation of *siddhis* and yoga.¹⁵

Changes in the referents of the words *yoga* and *yogin* (and the latter's vernacular derivatives) lie at the heart of a methodological problem which afflicts *Sinister Yogis*: it is often unclear whether White is exploring the history of the word *yoga* or of yoga itself. He says (pp. 42–43) that there was a “pure” yoga called *yoga* which can be discovered from texts as old as the *Brāhmaṇas* and that anything not called *yoga* at the time of their composition had nothing to do with yoga, however yoga might now be understood. Thus *yoga* as the yoking of a warrior's chariot in the *Brāhmaṇas* is the original yoga, but the posture assumed by the figure in seal 420 from Mohenjo-Daro has nothing to do with yoga because, according to White, in yoga's earliest textual formulations *āsana* was not among its *aṅgas*.¹⁶ Similarly, because early Buddhists did not call any of their practices *yoga*, those practices were not yogic (p. 55). Meanwhile, when the word *yoga* is used in *Āyurveda* to denote the interaction between people and their environment, it is, White suggests (p. 136), associated with his “pure” yoga;

¹¹ *Yogasūtra* 3.37: *te samādhāv upasargā vyutthāne siddhayaḥ* ||

¹² See Mallinson 2011a.

¹³ In the fourfold classification of yoga first taught in the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra*, *mantrayoga* is the lowest variety, suitable for the lowest category of aspirant, he of puny intellect: *alpabuddhir imaṃ yogaṃ sevate sādhakādhamah | mantrayogo hy ayaṃ prokto yogānām adhamas tathā* (14). Amongst other works of the early *haṭha* corpus, only the strongly Śākta *Śivasamhitā*, whose yoga includes repetition of the Śrīvidyā *mantrarāja*, repeatedly refers to the practitioner of *haṭhayoga* as a *sādhaka*.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Professor Shaman Hatley for drawing my attention to the conflation of *sādhaka* and *yogin* in the *Brahmayāmala* (personal communication 7th December 2010).

¹⁵ See especially p.195 and below.

¹⁶ This assertion is predicated upon White's claim that the earliest systematisation of the limbs of yoga can be found in the *Maitrāyaṇīyopaniṣad*, his dating of which does not stand up to scrutiny: see below. The earliest extant division of yoga into *aṅgas* is found in the *Yogasūtra*, in which *āsana* is the third *aṅga*. Whether or not the Mohenjo-Daro seal has anything to do with yoga is, I would argue, a moot point because it is so far removed in time from our earliest evidence of yoga and we know so little of its context. But White's logic for dismissing it as not being yogic is flawed. A parallel can be drawn with the mentions of ascetics standing on their heads (or at least hanging upside-down) in the *Mahābhārata* (see e.g. 1.26.2, 3.185.5, 12.126.18, 13.3.9, 13.7.11). This practice is nowhere therein explicitly associated with yoga, but more than a thousand years later the headstand became an iconic yogic *āsana*. It seems to me to be plausible to suggest that some of the yogic features of the practice were already present at the time of the *Mahābhārata* before it was taught in later yoga texts.

the same is said of the astrological understanding of *yoga* as a conjunction of heavenly bodies (p. 191). Elsewhere, practices which were not called *yoga* but fit with White's understanding of what constituted *yoga* are apparently yogic, such as the cosmic displays of the Buddha described in Chapter Five. Meanwhile, as noted above with reference to the yogis scorned in the verse attributed to Kabīr and the *yoga* of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, people and practices that were called *yogīs* and *yoga* were apparently nothing of the sort; others called *Yogī* (or *Jogī*), whether snake-charmers or *bhajan*-singing Nāth householders, are *yogis*.

White only occasionally admits to the changing referents of the word *yoga* (but not to its multivalence),¹⁷ preferring to imply that there was a constant substrate underpinning its various manifestations and that this substrate had as its bedrock the chariot-yoking of the warrior of the *Brāhmaṇas*. White translates the latter's *yoga* as "rig"; when *yogayukta*, he is "hitched to his rig". But White persists in applying this interpretation when it has become inappropriate. Thus *evaṃ hy āha | ṣaḍbhir māsaḥ tu yuktasya nityamuktasya dehinaḥ | anantaḥ paramo guhyaḥ samyag yogaḥ pravartate* in *Maitrāyaṇīyopaniṣad* 6.28 is translated as "It has been said of the embodied [individual] who has constantly [remained] "hitched up" for six months [and] who is [thereby] released, [that] his eternal, transcendent, mysterious properly aligned rig rolls forward". Leaving aside the other mistranslations, *yukta* and *yoga* would clearly make better sense here as either "having practised *yoga*" and "*yoga*" or "having meditated" and "meditation".

A common, and old, meaning of the word *yoga* not remarked upon by White is "magic". It is hard to see how *yoga*^o in *yogacūṛṃamiśram auśadham* (*Mudrārākṣasa* 2.17) or *yogarocanā* (*Mṛchakaṭikā* 3.15) might have anything to do with soteriological *yoga*, either the chariot-yoking variety espoused by White or the more usual meditational sort. Similarly, *yogins* are sometimes better understood as "magicians" or "wizards" rather than practitioners of *yoga* (cf. the *sādhaka/yogin* confusion outlined above).¹⁸

As well as varying the criteria for what constitutes *yoga* to suit his thesis, White cherry-picks his evidence to do the same, citing passages that support his argument while ignoring those in the very same texts that would argue against it. Thus, on page 196, he mentions a passage in the *Jayākhyasamhitā* in which *yogins* are described as evil beings. But no mention is

¹⁷On pp.108–109 White concedes that the word *yoga* went through a semantic shift in the first half of the first millennium CE, one of a series of blows apparently suffered by the "pure" *yoga* throughout its history (this one was administered by the *Bhagavadgītā*, Abhinavagupta and other Śaiva *jñānins* then did it down further, the British had a go during the Raj and Swami Vivekananda finished it off). Despite his elsewhere not allowing for the possibility of *yoga* having multiple meanings, on p. 41 White refers to the two usages of the root *yuj* noted in Pāṇini's *Dhātupāṭha*: *yoge*, i.e. "in [reference to] union" and *samādhau*, whose specific referent is unclear—it may not yet have acquired its yogic meaning. White's essentialist adherence to the idea of a "pure" *yoga* requires him to understand as orthogenetic subsequent developments in practice which he believes are in keeping with it, thereby forcing him to make some unlikely connections. On p. 140 we learn that the *yoga* of the chariot warrior branched into *utkrānti* and visionary ascent, and (*loc. cit.*) that "Śākāyana's sojourn in Brhadhratha-Marut's heart . . . becomes the model for the dynamic of 'co-penetration' (*samāveśa*) in tantric initiation . . .". That *yoga* did not acquire the meaning by which it is now best understood until the later classical *Upaniṣads*, despite some of its techniques being taught in earlier ones, was pointed out more than a hundred years ago by Hopkins (1901:334; see *ibid.*:338 on other meanings of *yoga* in the *Mahābhārata*).

¹⁸It is easier to distinguish between these two types of *yogin* in vernacular languages. *Yogī* can still have 'sinister' connotations in Hindi, but that role is better played by *jogī*, the latter also carrying with it associations of low social status. Once, in a typical tourist-shopkeeper interaction in Jodhpur, I facetiously responded to the usual questions by saying, in Hindi, that I was a *jogī*. The shopkeeper was most upset. When I tried to explain that I meant that I practised *yoga*, he told me that I was then a *yogī* and that I must never call myself a *jogī*.

made of the same text's 33rd *paṭala*, which teaches a six-limbed meditative yoga, by means of which the *yogin* may achieve *mukti*. Rastelli, in an article cited in n.140 on p. 295 of *Sinister Yogis*, writes (2000:357): "The *yogin* is, according to the [*Jayākhyaśaṅhitā*], an ambiguous figure. On the one hand, his refuge (*gati*) is God; he always thinks of God as being present in his heart; he stays in a temple practising *samādhi*; he does not even think of something that is harmful to others; and when he attains emancipation, he achieves unity and identity with God. On the other hand, *yogins* are described as cruel beings . . .".

Elsewhere (p.32), White cites a passage from the *Bhagavadajjukīya* in which by means of yoga (*yogena*) a yogi enters a young woman's corpse. But, again, his entering the corpse is not yoga, it is the result of yoga. In the same text (p. 45) yoga is said to happen as a result of *vijñāna*, *saṁyama* and *tapas*, and (p. 48) to be the root of knowledge, the essence of asceticism, abiding in goodness, the destruction of dualities and free from hatred and passion.¹⁹

In spite of *Sinister Yogis'* dependence on texts, there is much in it to frustrate the philologist. As is to be expected in a book of such broad scope, White relies on the work of several other scholars in his analyses of texts, notably James Fitzgerald, Angelika Malinar, Johannes Bronkhorst, Marion Rastelli, Somdev Vasudeva and Alexis Sanderson. There is little in the way of new textual research and, where drawn on directly, editions are used uncritically: no variant readings are noted nor manuscripts consulted. One of the few works about which White makes text-critical assertions is the *Maitryopaniṣad/Maitrāyaṇīyopaniṣad (MU)*, whose teachings on yoga, and in particular the early date that he assigns them, are pivotal to several of his arguments. White's dating of the parts of the text which teach yoga might surprise philologists. He says (p. 89) that they "belong to one of the latest strata of the text, which I would date, on the basis of its language and content, to about the third century of the common era". White does not identify what it is about its language and content which leads him to this conclusion but does add that he agrees with those scholars who consider parts of the text "to be late 'tantric' additions".²⁰ In a note to this remark (n. 24 p. 272), he identifies *MU* 6.19–22 as being among these later portions. On the next page he says that "*MU* 6.18 contains the earliest upanishadic account of 'six-limbed yoga'" and that "*MU* 6.21 contains the sole mention (in the classical Upanishads) of the *suṣumnā* as the subtle channel that leads to immortality". Both these assertions are made notwithstanding the fact that neither *ṣaḍāṅgayoga* nor the *suṣumnā* is mentioned in any other text until the seventh century.²¹ A similarly cavalier approach is applied to the dating of the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* and *Gorakhbāṇī*, both of which are said to be older than available evidence suggests. The *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* is assigned to the twelfth century through to the sixteenth century (p. 175) but there is no evidence for its existence prior to the late eighteenth century, when its

¹⁹ *Bhagavadajjukīya* p. 48:

jñānamūlaṁ tapasāraṁ sattvasthaṁ dvandvanāśanam |
muketaṁ dveṣāc ca rāgāc ca yoga ity abhidhīyate ||

²⁰ See for example Vasudeva 2004:375–376 n.18.

²¹ The *suṣumnā* is mentioned in the *Niśvāsātattvasaṅhitā's* *Uttarasūtra* (5.37), where it is paired with the *idā* channel and not located in the centre of the body as in later texts. The *Niśvāsa's* *nayasūtra* (7.42) mentions *ṣaḍāṅga yoga* in a context which suggests that the concept was already well established (Dominic Goodall, draft introduction to a critical edition of the *Niśvāsātattvasaṅhitā*). As noted above, on pp. 55–56 White had already implied that the *MU's* passage on *ṣaḍāṅgayoga* dates to the third century CE and adduced its omission of *āsana* from its six limbs to his argument for the lateness of *āsana's* inclusion among the limbs of yoga, further implying that the *MU's* *ṣaḍāṅgayoga* predates the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* of the c. 4th century CE *Yogasūtra* (which does include *āsana*).

oldest dated manuscript was written.²² The *Gorakhbānī*, to which recent scholarship ascribes a date of the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries,²³ is said to date “from no later than the fourteenth century” (p. 198).

White's interpretations of the contents of texts are often erroneous too. In his discussion of early formulations of *rājayoga*, which he rightly seeks to distance as far as possible from Swami Vivekananda's identification of *rājayoga* with Patañjali's *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, White suggests (p. 46) that the practice of *vajrolī mudrā*, in which the *yogin* (or *yoginī*) draws liquids up through the urethra, is part of *rājayoga*, adducing *Amanaska* 2.32,²⁴ the import of which is in fact that those who practise various esoteric techniques including *vajrolī mudrā* will not achieve physical perfection without *rājayoga*. One might dismiss this as a simple oversight, but White made the same mistake in his 2003 *Kiss of the Yoginī* (p. 81 and n. 85 thereon), citing a translation of *Amanaska* 2.32 which I had sent him and which he had misunderstood. I wrote to him in 2003 to point this out and he accepted my correction. In the meantime Jason Birch started work on a critical edition of the *Amanaska*.²⁵ In an email communication with White in 2006, after White had again suggested that *Amanaska* 2.32 states that *vajrolī mudrā* is a part of *rājayoga*, Birch also corrected him.²⁶ Ironically, White would not have had to look far within the corpus of early texts on *haṭhayoga* for an assertion that *vajrolī mudrā*, if not part of *rājayoga*, at least leads to it: this is said at *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* 160.²⁷

Page 171 of *Sinister Yogis* introduces a section entitled “Yogi Practice in *Mahābhārata* 12.289”. White says that “[a]ccording to its colophon, the title of this chapter is *Yogavidāḥ*, a compound that would normally translate as ‘An Understanding of Yoga’.” Surprised by this apparent mistranslation, I checked the Pune critical edition. In 25 of 26 witnesses the chapter is called *yogavidhīḥ*; one calls it *yogakathanam*. Nowhere in any manuscript colophon, nor in the chapter itself, is the compound *yogavidāḥ* to be found. Where it does occur in the *Mahābhārata*, it is as the nominative plural of *yoga-vid*, “knower of yoga”.²⁸

Doubts about the linguistic rigour of *Sinister Yogis* are raised from its outset. The *Note on Transliteration* (p. xvii) mentions a “Bhairāvanand Yogī”. The star of the preface is one “Bhandarināth” (surely “Bhaṇḍārīnāth”, as in Śiva's Hindi epithet “Bhole Bhaṇḍārī”).

²²On the date of this manuscript, see Gharote & Bedekar 2005, pp. 460–461.

²³See e.g. Offredi 1999, p. 270.

²⁴*Amanaska* 2.32 (as Jason Birch argues in his introduction to the critical edition of this text, its name is likely to have been *Amanaska* rather than the commonly found *Amanaskayoga*):

*ke cin mūtram pibanti svamalam atha tanoḥ ke cid ujjhanti lālām
ke cit koṣṭham praviṣṭā yuvatibhagapatadbindum ūrdhvaṃ nayanti |
ke cit khādanti dhātūm akhilatanuśīrāvāyusamcāradaśāḥ
naiteṣāṃ dehasiddhir vigatanijamanorājayogād ṛte syāt ||2.32||*

²⁵Birch has critically edited the *Amanaska* under the supervision of Professor Alexis Sanderson as part of a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Oxford University, which he successfully submitted for examination in May 2013.

²⁶Birch is cited (p. 264 n. 32) in *Sinister Yogis* in the context of the *Amanaska*'s *rājayoga* being “at variance with the teachings of the [*Yogasūtra*]”.

²⁷In most texts of the early *haṭhayoga* corpus, *rājayoga* is a synonym of *samādhi*, rather than a particular system of practices. For a detailed analysis of the meaning of *rājayoga*, see Birch 2013, pp. 65–69. In two Braj Bhasha works, the seventeenth-century *Sarvāṅgayogapradīpikā* of Sundardās (ch. 3) and the eighteenth-century *Jogpradīpakā* of Jayatārāma (v. 552), *vajrolī mudrā* is equated with *rājayoga*. One reason for this identification is that through *vajrolī mudrā* a king may achieve yoga without becoming a celibate ascetic. Cf. Divākara's commentary on *Bodhasāna* 14.1: . . . *rājayogo rājñāṃ nṛpāṇāṃ svasthāne sthītvāpi sādhyatūṃ śakyatvāt . . .*

²⁸I am grateful to Professor James Fitzgerald for providing me with this information.

Certain key words are consistently misspelt (both in *Sinister Yogis* and in White's 2009 article): *jīna* is found everywhere, including in the index, as *jīna*; *pāda* (as in a textual division of a tantric work or the *Yogasūtra*) as *pada*; *nikāya* as *nikaya*. The same is true of important Hindi terms: *akhādā* is everywhere *ākhāda*; Kumbh(a) Melā is Kumbhā Melā; and the long final *-ī* of sect names such as Rāmānandī, Udāsī and Daśanāmī is shortened. The English in the book contains a higher than average, but passable, number of typographic errors. The Sanskrit and Hindi citations, however, are full of them and other infelicities.²⁹ There is no consistency in the forms of the words or compounds cited: sometimes they are pre-sandhi, sometimes post-sandhi, sometimes stems. Text names are sometimes compounded, sometimes not, and there is no consistency in their abbreviated forms, which, since every name is abbreviated from its second instance onwards, can lead to confusion.³⁰

This linguistic sloppiness has little effect, however, on White's main thesis: an argument devoid of nuance does not hinge on the length of a vowel. One sometimes suspects that White himself is aware that his argument is one-sided. Rather than let the reader decide its merits for him- or herself, he coerces the reader to accept his opinion. A trivial but telling example of this is found on p. 213 when White cites a passage from the memoirs of John Fryer, a British doctor who travelled in India in the late seventeenth century. The passage describes a yogi showing off the haṭhayogic technique known as *nauli*, which White says "could only be *uḍḍīyāna bandha*", a related but quite different practice. One also detects a subtle coercion in the unexplained change in the name White gives members of the Gorakhnāthī ascetic order. In *The Alchemical Body* they were Nāth Siddhas; in *Sinister Yogis* they are Nāth Yogīs.³¹ White's not letting the reader make his or her own inferences is a corollary of his approach. One suspects, and one's suspicions are compounded by White's explanation of the origins of the second and third books of his trilogy, that he goes looking for particulars when undertaking his textual research, rather than reading broadly and making his own inferences. This scholarly pitfall is all the more likely to catch us out in the age of etexts, when in a few seconds we can find multiple references to any word we search for and seize on them out of context.

²⁹Chapter Four, for example, contains the following: p. 129 *utkrāmanta* for *utkrāmantam*, *parākranti* for *parākrānti*; p. 130 *puruṣa* is described as *kūṭasthā*; p. 282 n. 60 *ātmanātmānam* is said to be a compound; p. 141 Kauṣītaki for Kauṣītaki; p. 143 *praviṣṭhā* for *praviṣṭā*; p. 144 *nāna* for *nānā*; p. 149 *yogātmakenośanasā* is translated as "by the yogic self of Uśanas"; p. 153 *aṇima* for *aṇimā*; p. 154 *vyāptiva* for *vyāpīva*; p. 156 *indriya* for *indriya*; p. 157 *pratibhaṃ* for *prātibhaṃ*; *gulika* for *gulikā*; p. 158 *pratibhāt* for *prātibhāt*; *jāmbu-dvīpa* for *jambu-dvīpa*; (p. 158 *et passim*) *pada* for *pāda*; p. 160 *svabhāvīkam* for *svābhāvīkam*; p. 163 Spandakārikas for Spandakārikās; p. 164 (*et passim*) *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* for *Yogavāsiṣṭha*; p. 165 (Hindi) *dhāranā* for *dhāraṇā*.

³⁰Thus we find YS for "Yoga Sūtras" but PSū for "Pāśupata Sūtra" etc. Rām for *Rāmāyaṇa* is particularly infelicitous: see e.g. p. 65 "... in the Rām's account ...".

³¹White's use of the hybrid Hindi-Sanskrit name Nāth Siddha in his other works points to his being in the lineage of scholarship on the Nāth tradition started by V.V. Ramana Sastri in *The Cultural Heritage of India* (1937). Sastri's entry on "The doctrinal culture and tradition of the Siddhas" (Sastri 1956 in the bibliography below—the reference is to the second, enlarged edition) has influenced much subsequent scholarship on the broader Nāth and Siddha traditions, including that of Shashibhushan Dasgupta, Mircea Eliade and Kalyani Mallik, as well as White. Sastri based much of his entry on the Tamil Siddha tradition and this southern slant, together with the Bengali focus of Dasgupta and Mallik, has led to an undue emphasis being placed on notions such as the *siddhadēha*, alchemy (on which see note 32) and sinister characteristics in subsequent analyses of yoga. On this academic lineage and its rôle in mistaken understandings of the yogic body, see Ondračka 2007. As far as I am aware, Sastri coined the term Nāth(a) Siddha, which is not found in the writings of the Nāth order itself until the second half of the twentieth century.

The last chapter of *Sinister Yogis* is predicated on White's theory that an original *siddhi*-based yoga and its yogis declined progressively to the point where it has now almost disappeared, having been eclipsed by a sanitised, rational "*rājayoga*" propounded most famously by Vivekananda. White rightly associates these *siddhi*-oriented yogis with the order which from perhaps the early eighteenth century came to be known as the Nāths, but whose members, heirs to the Pāścimāmnāya *sādhaka* tradition that originated in the Deccan, were before then known simply as Yogīs.

That these "Nāth" Yogīs were the originators and foremost exponents of *haṭhayoga* is a given of all historical studies of yoga. But these Yogīs were in fact the willing and complicit beneficiaries of the semantic confusion which has caught out White and many other scholars. White rightly notes (p. 205) that reports of these Yogīs actually practising yoga are almost non-existent. This is because they did not practise much yoga (or at least the clearly visible methods of *haṭhayoga*). As the heirs to the Pāścimāmnāya *sādhaka* tradition they pursued *siddhis* through means such as tantric ritual, mantra-repetition, alchemy and visualisation-based *layayoga*. These Yogīs were yogis as magicians. Meanwhile ascetic orders which did practise the physical techniques of *haṭhayoga* but were quite separate from the Yogīs were flourishing from at least the early medieval period.³² This is evinced in texts such as the thirteenth-century *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* and the fifteenth-century *Śivasamhitā*. The *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* is the first text to teach a systematised *haṭhayoga* and call it as such. Its *haṭhayoga* involves the cultivation and preservation of *bindu*, semen. The yoga of one of the earliest texts of the Gorakṣa Yogī tradition, the thirteenth- to fourteenth-century *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*, is a visualisation-based Kuṇḍalinī yoga (which originated in the Pāścimāmnāya Kaula tradition) overlaid onto the *bindu*-oriented physical *haṭhayoga* of the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra*. Neither the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* nor a contemporaneous work on yoga also attributed to Gorakṣa, the *Gorakṣaśataka*,³³ calls its yoga *haṭha*.³⁴

Although, like most yoga texts, they teach that the yogi's sectarian affiliation or life-stage is of no importance, certain features of the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* and the *Śivasamhitā* show that they were affiliated to two ascetic traditions which in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries formally coalesced, with other lineages, to form the Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsī *saṃpradāya*, and from subgroups of which it is likely that the Rāmānandīs seceded, probably at some point

³²White's conflation of Pāścimāmnāya *sādhakas*, who came to be known as Yogīs and who included alchemists among their number, with practitioners of *haṭhayoga* is partly responsible (see also note 31) for the thesis of his 1996 monograph *The Alchemical Body*, namely that "if they were not one and the same people, [*haṭhayogins* and alchemists] were at least closely linked in their practice" (*ibid.*:10). The alchemical and *haṭhayogic* traditions do share some esoteric vocabulary, but this shared terminology is simply drawn from a pool accessed by adepts of a broad range of traditions, from the Kashmiri exegetes of Śaivism to the Sants. Many works on *haṭhayoga* show it to be quite distinct from alchemy. In the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* alchemy is said to be one of the obstacles to success in the practice of yoga (52). Elsewhere *haṭhayogic* practices are said (with tongue in cheek) to bestow the *siddhis* of alchemy: in the *Śivasamhitā* (3.61) and *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* (99) it is said that the yogi in the *ghaṭāvasthā* can turn objects into gold by smearing them with his faeces and urine. One might expect to find the closest links between *haṭhayogic* and alchemical practice in a Kaula work such as the *Khecārividyā*, but that text in fact trumps alchemical practice with the yogic technique of *aṅgamardana*, in which the body is subjected to techniques paralleled, in both name and manner, by those of alchemy (*Khecārividyā* 2.72–79, on which see Mallinson 2007, p. 220 n. 328).

³³On which see Mallinson 2011b.

³⁴The first text of the Gorakṣa tradition to teach a *haṭhayoga* called as such is the c. fourteenth-century *Yogabīja*. For more details on the development of early *haṭhayoga* see my "Śāktism and *Haṭhayoga*" paper, which is to be published in a volume on the Śākta Traditions by Routledge Curzon and a draft of which is available on my academia.edu page.

in the seventeenth century.³⁵ Members of both these ascetic orders, and their forerunners, have practised a liberation-oriented *haṭhayoga*, in contrast to the *siddhi*-oriented yoga of the Gorakhnāthīs, since at least the time of composition of the first *haṭhayoga* texts and probably for much longer. They have been almost completely ignored in scholarship on *haṭhayoga*, even though all the many Sanskrit texts on *haṭhayoga* and commentaries thereon composed or compiled since the fifteenth century have been written by scholars of these traditions. I do not know of a single Sanskrit text on *haṭhayoga* or commentary written by a member of the Gorakṣa Yogī tradition since the *Haṭhapradīpikā*.³⁶ The one doctrinal (as opposed to hagiographical or devotional) Sanskrit text composed by Nāths after the formalisation of their order, the c. eighteenth-century *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati*, does not teach *haṭhayoga*; on the contrary, in its more *avadhūta* moments it scorns it.³⁷ To this day the Nāth Yogīs' association with yoga is little more than in name: I have tried in vain to find any adepts of *haṭhayoga* among today's Nāths.³⁸ None of the important schools of *haṭhayoga* in India today has a Nāth guru; the majority are affiliated with the Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsīs.

The reasons for the Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsīs' and Rāmānandīs' being ignored in scholarship on yoga are many and various, and I will mention only one here, since it is germane to the subject in hand: the name "Yogī". While Daśanāmīs and Rāmānandīs will happily refer to themselves in conversation as *yogīs* and the word is used frequently in their liturgies, as a sect name it has long been the preserve of the Gorakhnāthīs. Its 'sinister' connotations and its use as a caste name by a variety of low-status groups including snake-charmers and Muslim devotional singers have led to its being eschewed as a title by even the Nāths themselves (as noted by White on p. 223), as well as by higher-status Yogī castes in Rajasthan who now also call themselves Nāths.³⁹ These undesirable connotations have long since led the Daśanāmīs and Rāmānandīs, whose members have in the main been drawn from higher-status social groups than those of the Nāth Yogīs, to distance themselves formally from

³⁵The *Śivasamhitā* is a product of a Śaiva sect in the Śrīvidyā tradition of the *maṭha* at Shringeri now said to have been established by Śaṅkara; the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* is the product of a Vaiṣṇava school of yogis. For more details on the affiliations of these texts see Mallinson forthcoming. Both these orders came together in the originally loose-knit Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsī order. Shringeri's Śaiva orientation came to dominate the order, but several traces of the original Vaiṣṇava orientation of many of its members can be seen in both historical sources and among the Daśanāmīs today. Thus, for example, many of the Girīs and Purīs (two of the Daśanāmīs' ten names) portrayed fighting each other in front of Akbar in a late sixteenth-century miniature painted to illustrate an *Akbar Nāma* manuscript now housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum (IS.2:61–1896 and IS.2:62–1896, viewable online at <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9626/painting-akbar-watches-abattlebetween/> and <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9627/painting-akbar-watches-abattlebetween/>) sport Vaiṣṇava *ūrdhwapuṇḍra* tilaks; the formula with which Daśanāmīs invariably greet one another, *om namo nārāyaṇa*, is a contraction of the *aṣṭākleśara* mantra *om namo nārāyaṇāya* used as a mantra and salutation by Śrīvaiṣṇavas and other Vaiṣṇava orders; three of the Daśanāmīs' four *pīṭhas*, Badrinath, Dwarka and Puri are archetypal Vaiṣṇava *dhāmanas* with no Śaiva connections. I suspect, but have no evidence to prove it, that Shringeri supplanted Rameshwaram, the fourth Vaiṣṇava *dhāman*, in the Daśanāmī scheme. For more on the development of the Daśanāmī and Rāmānandī *saṃpradāyas*, see Mallinson 2013.

³⁶Even the ascription of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* to the Nāths, or at least their forerunners, is uncertain. It may be representative of a broader *siddha* tradition. In its list of *siddhas* (1.8) it includes Allāma Prabhu, who in contemporary hagiography was an opponent of Gorakhnāth (*Śūnyasampādane* Vol. 5).

³⁷*Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* 6.79–91.

³⁸The Nāths have very recently started to capitalise on their *haṭhayogic* heritage, real or not: at the 2013 Allahabad Kumbh Melā daily displays of complex *āsanas* were, for the first time, carried out by Nāth Yogīs on a stage at the front of their camp. But I remain unable to find Nāth practitioners of the defining techniques of *haṭhayoga*, its *mudrās*.

³⁹Gold 1992:51.

the appellation Yogī (although members of those orders who have mastered *haṭhayoga* do regularly append the honorific title “Yogirāj” to their names).⁴⁰ But such semantic nuances are, understandably, not immediately apparent to scholars in search of practitioners of yoga, so Nāth Yogīs are usually their first port of call.

The *mumukṣu* yoga tradition of *haṭhayoga*, which is espoused by the Rāmānandīs and Daśanāmīs, has been the predominant variety of yoga practice for at least five hundred years and is the basis of much of the yoga practised in the West, but it is completely ignored or overlooked by White in *Sinister Yogis*. This is well illustrated by the legend he relates on page 242 (which is perhaps based on a historical incident from the sixteenth century) in which he sees the victory in a magical contest of the Rāmānandī Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī over the Yogī Tāranāth as that of a “nonyogi” *bhakta* over a yogi Yogī. Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī is remembered in the Vaiṣṇava tradition as a yogi par excellence. As his soubriquet “Payohārī” implies, he was said to live off milk, and in the *Bhaktamāl* of Nābhādās, which was composed in about 1600, he is described as a *mahāmuni* whose seed was turned upwards (*ūrdhretā* – the condition of the yogi who has mastered his *bindu*) and who was waited on by kings.⁴¹ In one of the *maṅgala* verses at the beginning of his Braj Bhāṣā manual of [*haṭha*]yoga, the *Jogpradīpakā*, which was composed in 1737 CE, the Rāmānandī Jayatarāma invokes “Payhārī”. Rāmānandīs today tell the story of Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī visiting Kullu with his troop of 400 celibate ascetics. The king asked if there was anything he could do for them and Kṛṣṇadās replied that he needed *lakḍī*, firewood, for his men. The king returned the next day with 400 *lakḍīs*, girls. Kṛṣṇadās, to preserve the girls' honour, made his troop marry them (thus founding the Vairāgī castes of the Kullu valley), but could not bring himself to do likewise and went into *samādhi* in a cave near Naggar, from which the locals are still waiting for him to emerge.

Payohārī Jī's yogic mastery was not exceptional in the Rāmānandī tradition. His disciple Kīlha and grand-disciple Dvārakādās are remembered as great yogis who conquered death (just as Gorakhnāth does in a variety of Nāth legends), with Kīlha being said in Nābhādās's *Bhaktamāl* to have used the power of his yoga practice to exit his body through the aperture of Brahmā at the top of the skull.⁴² Members of another *bhakta saṃpradāya*, the Dādūpanth, also combined the practice of yoga with a devotional attitude. The sixteenth-century *sant* Dādū and his troop of yogis are portrayed in the late eighteenth-century *Kaṛākhā* or “Battlesong” of Santdās Mārū Galtānī as defeating Yama, the god of death.⁴³ Dādū composed a text on bodily yoga, the *Kāyābelī*, and the seventeenth-century Dādūpanthī scholar-poet Sundardās wrote extensively on yoga in his *Sarvāṅgayogapradīpikā* and *Jñānasamudra*.

⁴⁰In the verse attributed to Kabīr used by White as the title of his 2009 article (see page 10), the poet is making a pun on two meanings of the word *yogī*: at the time of the verse's composition, *yogī* was a generic term for the members of various ascetic orders (the verse is directed specifically at Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsīs) for whom the practice of yoga, as implied by the verse, was not essential; at the same time, *yogī* preserved its older meaning of “a practitioner of yoga”.

⁴¹*Bhaktamāl* 38 (p.265).

⁴²*Chappay* 39 from Nābhas *Bhaktamāl*, which is discussed and translated by Burchett (2012, p. 91; see also *ibid.*, pp. 93–95). On Dvārakādās see *ibid.*, p.98. Another of Payohārī Jī's disciples, Agradās, is remembered as a *rasik bhakta*, but amongst his disciples were the ascetic yogis Bhagvān Jī and Puraṅ (*ibid.*, p.100).

⁴³Horstmann 1991.

In spite of these well-known *bhakta* yogis, *bhakti* and yoga are often thought to be incompatible,⁴⁴ which is perhaps why White assumes Payohārī Jī to have been a “nonyogi”. *Bhakta* yogis have in fact long been a common feature of the Vaiṣṇava devotional tradition as evinced by the ninth or tenth-century *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.⁴⁵

The final chapter of *Sinister Yogis* charts the supposed demise of the yogi (i.e. the Nāth Yogī). This is predicated upon a historiographical model not dissimilar to that employed in early analyses of Buddhism in which Gorakhnāth established a pan-Indian Yogī order that has been in slow decay ever since. But this is not borne out by our sources. The earliest references to an organised Yogī order date to the late sixteenth century.⁴⁶ Even after that time, notwithstanding occasional localised Nāth influence, there is little evidence of a truly unified pan-Indian Yogī order until the establishment of the Yogī Mahāsbhā at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁷ While many *nijī* or private Nāth establishments have, over the years, met their end—as is the nature of monasteries dependent on their residents’ charisma to attract patronage—others, especially the *pañcāyatī* establishments controlled by the Mahāsbhā, are flourishing. The impressive campus around the Gorakhnāth *mandir* at the Nāth headquarters in Gorakhpur is a fine example of a flourishing *nijī sthān*. Its current *mahant*, Yogī Ādityanāth, is the BJP MP for Gorakhpur, in the light of which White’s assertion that after independence “virtually all of South Asia’s yogis were reduced to beggar status” (p. 243) is questionable at best.

Before drawing attention to the demise of the yogis, White surveys descriptions of them in travellers’ accounts from the early fifteenth century onwards. On p. 200 he notes how Europeans used the terms yogī and fakir “indiscriminately”. Yet White does the same, conflating Muslim fakirs with Hindu yogis throughout Chapter Six and adducing reports of bizarre practices undertaken by holy men of any sort to support his argument that yogis were sinister. Thus he includes (pp. 211–212) Tavernier’s description of Muslim fakirs in their trademark patchwork cloaks and dragging chains, and (pp. 213–214) Fryer’s description of a “Fakier” (who is explicitly said to be “a holy man among the *Moors*”). This insistence

⁴⁴A conflict between yoga and *bhakti* is drawn attention to by Tulsīdās, but it is specifically the yoga of the Nāths that he is referring to: *Gorakh jagāyo jog, bhakti bhagāyo log*, “Gorakh awakened yoga and drove bhakti away from the people” (*Kavīāvalī Uttarakāṇḍa* 7.84; see Burchett 2012, p. 289). It may be that Tulsīdās was opposed to yoga in general, but the descriptions of yoga-practising *bhaktas* in the *Bhaktamālā* show that this was not the prevalent Vaiṣṇava attitude during his time. It was not until the early nineteenth century that Tulsīdās’s *Rāmaritmanās* became a key text for the Rāmānandīs (Paramasivan 2010, p. 12).

⁴⁵Burchett 2012, pp. 102–107. The Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsīs’ adoption of a Śaiva orientation and *advaita vedānta* have led to their practice of *bhakti* being overlooked, but they too have long practised both devotion and yoga (Mallinson, 2013).

⁴⁶The first mentions of an order of yogis divided into twelve *panths* are found in Sikh sources dating to the beginning of the seventeenth century. At *Guru Granth Sāhib* 34.3 *jogīs* are said to be divided into twelve (and the *saṃnyāsīs* into ten—“six [and] four”—this is also our earliest reference to the ten-fold division of the Saṃnyāsīs, from which they became known as Daśanāmī; see Clark 2006, p. 174). In the *Sidh Goṣṭh*, a dialogue between Nānak and some *siddhas* which is part of the *Guru Granth Sāhib*, the *siddhas* include Loharīpā, who is said to be of the lineage of Gorakh (*Sidh Goṣṭh* 7.4), and they are members of one of twelve schools of *yogīs* (*Sidh Goṣṭh* 9.2, 34.3). In a *vār* written by Bhāi Gurdās in 1604 it is said that *saṃnyāsīs* have ten names and the *jogīs* twelve *panths* (*Vārān Bhāi Gurdās* 8.13). The *Dabistān*, which was written in the first half of the seventeenth century, is our first source to list the twelve *panths* (Shea & Troyer 1843: Vol. 2, p. 130). It is also in the seventeenth century that a twelve-fold Yogī *panth* is first mentioned in Nepal: Unbescheid 1980, pp. 175–177, 197; Locke 1980, p. 436. On the history of the Nāth *saṃpradāya*, see Mallinson 2011c.

⁴⁷Bouillier 2008, pp. 25–26. On whether there existed a supreme authority ruling over the Nāths prior to the Yogī Mahāsbhā, Bouillier (*ibid.*, p. 50) writes “Je l’ignore”.

on highlighting the yogis' (and fakirs') exoticism, together with *Sinister Yogis'* thesis, which similarly highlights the bizarre but ignores the more exoteric facets of yoga and yogis, opens White to accusations of an Orientalist bias. But of course sinister yogis, black magicians using their *siddhis* for personal gain, make for better stories than benevolent yogis quietly meditating on the fringes of society or ministering to the needs of their devotees.⁴⁸

In the last pages of *Sinister Yogis* White muses upon the ability of yogis to take on others' identities, whether through *parakāyapraveśa* or deceit, and summarises two cases from the nineteenth century of princes reappearing as yogis some years after having died. The Yogīs' appropriation of *haṭhayoga* and adoption of the guise of *haṭhayogins* has, as noted above, happened for various reasons, in some of which the Yogīs have themselves been complicit. The *Yogisampradāyāviṣkṛti* (Yogī 1924), which assimilates a tradition of nine Nārāyaṇas headed by the divine *yogin* Dattātreyā with that of the nine Nāths and which is claimed in its preface and by others, including White (1996, p. 408 n. 183), to be a translation into Hindi of a Bengali translation of a Marathi work written in the thirteenth century by Jñāndev, is in fact a twentieth-century account of the Yogī order, drawing in places on older texts but written in the first person by one Candranāth Yogī. The Yogīs' appropriation of *haṭhayoga* began long ago: the c. 1450 CE *Haṭhapradīpikā* compilation includes twenty verses from the *Dattātreyayogāsāstra*, the first text to teach a system of *haṭhayoga* and call it as such, but credits Matsyendra, Gorakṣa and other *mahāsiddhas* with *haṭhayoga's* invention and makes no mention of Dattātreyā. The appropriation continues to this day. Recent editions of the *Yogabīja* and *Amanaska(yoga)* from the Gorakhpur Nāth *mandir* attribute both texts to Gorakṣanātha although there is nothing in the manuscripts of either to connect it with the Nāth tradition. White regularly repeats these attributions in his works.⁴⁹

The Nāth Yogīs' usurpation of the yogic tradition of the Daśanāmī Saṁnyāsīs is enshrined on the front of the dust jacket of *Sinister Yogis*, where we find a reproduction of a painting of an ascetic from the wall of a haveli in Mukundgarh, Rajasthan, dated to 1880 CE.⁵⁰ The picture is said in its caption to be of a Nāth Yogī. It is in fact almost certainly of a Daśanāmī Nāgā Saṁnyāsī. The *tilak*, the moustache with an absent or perhaps tied-back beard, the earrings through the earlobes and the sword are of a piece with contemporaneous images of Saṁnyāsīs of the Giri order.⁵¹ Particularly pertinent are the sword—contrary to received opinion, there are no records of Nāth Yogīs ever having been militarised in the manner of the Daśanāmī and Rāmānandī *nāgās*⁵²—and the earrings. By the beginning of the nineteenth

⁴⁸Cf. Bronkhorst 1998:76 in *The Two Sources of Indian Asceticism*: "Non-Vedic asceticism, as we have come to know it in the preceding pages, has quite different aims. It aims primarily at inaction, with the ultimate goal of liberation from the effects of one's actions. These are hardly ideals which easily give rise to stories, as do the aims of the Vedic ascetic."

⁴⁹On the *Amanaska*, see *Sinister Yogis* p.46 and p.264 n.31, White 1996, p. 141, White 2003, p. 81; on the *Yogabīja*, see White 1996, pp. 100, 141, 255.

⁵⁰The picture is also reproduced in the book itself, on page 221.

⁵¹See for example Pinch 2006, pp. 24,227,228.

⁵²Our only evidence of militarised Nāths, or more correctly of militarised Yogī forerunners of the Nāths, is from the sixteenth century, in Varthema's stories of the exploits of the "King of the Ioghe" and his troop of warriors who were active along India's western coast in the sixteenth century (Badger 1863, pp. 111–113, 273–274) and the references to armies of *joḡīs* in the *Padmāvati* (*Jogīkhaṇḍ*) and *Kanhāvat* (p. 342), although the latter two literary references are perhaps less reliable in terms of sectarian identification than Varthema's eyewitness account, in which certain features identify the ascetics as forerunners of the Nāths. After the sixteenth century and the confederation of the Yogīs into twelve *panths* there are no references to their being militarised. Unlike

century, as part of the consolidation of their order under the tutelage of Gorakhnāth, the Nāth Yogīs had begun to distinguish themselves from other ascetic orders by wearing their earrings through holes cut in the cartilages of their ears, not in the lobes (hence their somewhat pejorative appellation *kānphaṭā*). In misidentifying the Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsī in the painting thus, White has unwittingly brought about the latest instance of the Nāth Yogīs' *siddhi* of *parakāyapraveśa*. jim@khecari.com

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the Daśanāmīs and Rāmānandīs, the Nāths have never been organised into *akhārās* nor displayed military might in processions at Kumbh Melās. See also Mallinson, 2013 n. 46 and Mallinson 2011c, pp. 418–419.

⁵³This edition was read at All Souls College, Oxford in 2012 with Professor Alexis Sanderson, Dr Péter-Dániel Szántá, Dr Jason Birch and Dr Andrea Aciri, whom I thank for their many valuable comments and emendations.

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