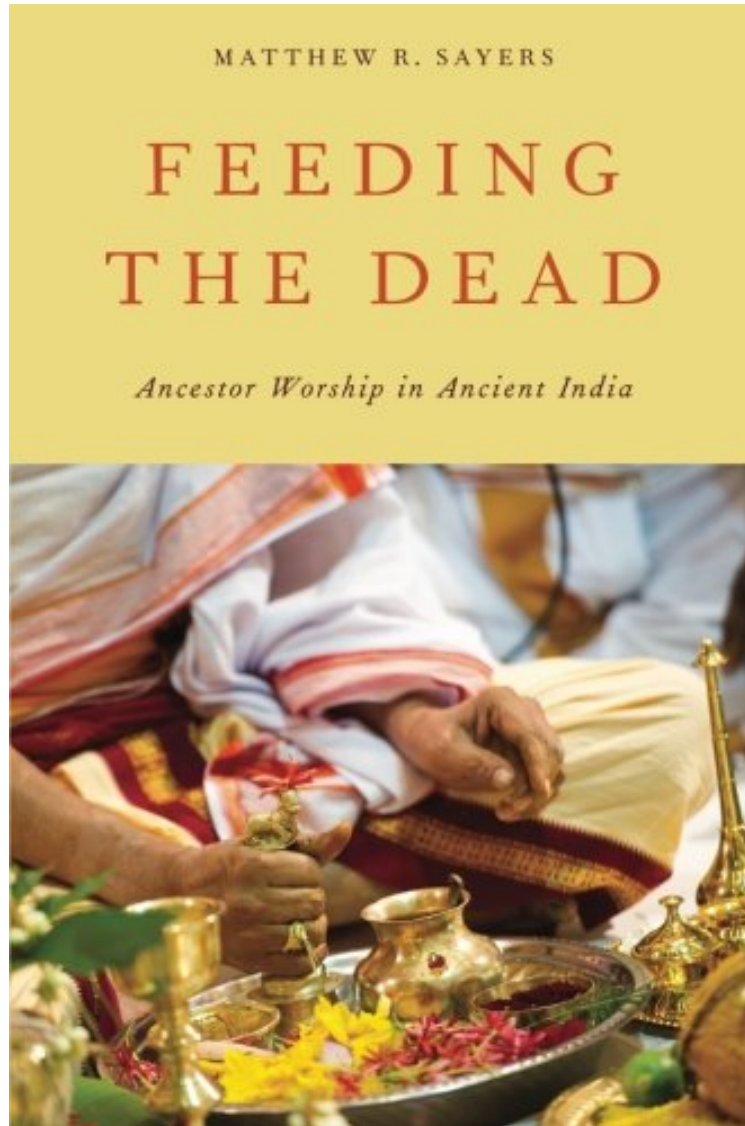


[PDF] Feeding the Dead: Ancestor Worship in Ancient India

Feeding the Dead: Ancestor Worship in Ancient India

Matthew R. Sayers

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Matthew R. Sayers : Feeding the Dead: Ancestor Worship in Ancient India before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Feeding the Dead: Ancestor Worship in Ancient India:

Feeding the Dead outlines the early history of ancestor worship in South Asia, from the earliest sources available, the Vedas, up to the descriptions found in the Dharmshastra tradition. Most prior works on ancestor worship have done

little to address the question of how shraddha, the paradigmatic ritual of ancestor worship up to the present day, came to be. Matthew R. Sayers argues that the development of shraddha is central to understanding the shift from Vedic to Classical Hindu modes of religious behavior. Central to this transition is the discursive construction of the role of the religious expert in mediating between the divine and the human actor. Both Hindu and Buddhist traditions draw upon popular religious practices to construct a new tradition. Sayers argues that the definition of a religious expert that informs religiosity in the Common Era is grounded in the redefinition of ancestral rites in the Grhyasutras. Beyond making more clear the much misunderstood history of ancestor worship in India, this book addresses the serious question about how and why religion in India changed so radically in the last half of the first millennium BCE. The redefinition of the role of religious expert is hugely significant for understanding that change. This book ties together the oldest ritual texts with the customs of ancestor worship that underlie and inform medieval and contemporary practice.

"This compact volume makes a notable contribution to our understanding of doctrinal and institutional shifts in India in the last centuries before the Common Era. Sayers is one of just a handful of recent scholars to call attention to the importance of the Vedic domestic ritual codes in the creation of what has come to be known as 'classical Hinduism.' He is to be congratulated for setting the complex ritual particulars within a clearly limned overview of the competing religious ideologies being 'marketed' by rival groups of professional 'religious experts.' He manages to do this without trivializing the ideas at stake, and without glibly reifying categories such as 'popular' and 'elite' or 'Brahmanical' and 'non-Brahmanical.'" - Timothy Lubin, Washington and Lee University "Sayers' history of ancestor worship makes a substantial contribution to the history of South Asian religions, demonstrating in great detail how a new paradigm emerged and how efforts to integrate this paradigm into ideologies and practices exerted a strong and lasting influence."-- Journal of the American Oriental Society "Sayers writes well, and the book is accessible at both undergraduate and graduate levels. His signal contribution is a clear recognition of stages in the gradual development of a complex system of ancestor worship within the overall pattern of funerary rites, both extended and domestic, in ancient Vedic India."--he Journal of Religion About the Author Matthew R. Sayers is Assistant Professor of Religion at Lebanon Valley College.