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**Electronic version**

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/4716>

DOI: 10.4000/samaj.4716

ISSN: 1960-6060

**Publisher**

Association pour la recherche sur l'Asie du Sud (ARAS)

**Electronic reference**

Camille Buat, "Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp. *Neuer Buddhismus als gesellschaftlicher Entwurf, Zur Identitätskonstruktion der Dalits in Kanpur, Indien*", *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* [Online], Book Reviews, Online since 25 September 2018, connection on 02 October 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/samaj/4716> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.4716>

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# Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp. *Neuer Buddhismus als gesellschaftlicher Entwurf, Zur Identitätskonstruktion der Dalits in Kanpur, Indien*

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Bellwinkel-Schempp, Maren. 2011. *Neuer Buddhismus als gesellschaftlicher Entwurf, Zur Identitätskonstruktion der Dalits in Kanpur, Indien*. Uppsala: Edita Västra Aros. 268 pages.

- 1 *Neuer Buddhismus als gesellschaftlicher Entwurf* collects some of the English and German writings of the late social anthropologist Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp (1948–2011).<sup>1</sup> The articles included in this volume explore the historical process of community construction and identity formation among the Dalit (lower caste) communities of Kanpur, a large industrial town situated in the Northern Indian province of Uttar Pradesh. Taken together, these texts interweave three different threads. First, they present a history of the Dalit populations of Kanpur from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and skillfully ground the different processes of lower-caste assertion in their economic and political contexts. Secondly, the book carves out an intellectual and political history of Dalit religiosity, through a careful study of Bhakti and Buddhism, two religious currents which gained popularity among lower castes in Northern India throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century as egalitarian alternatives to Brahmanical Hinduism. Finally, the collection sketches out a history of the city of Kanpur from a lower-caste perspective, focusing on different modes of appropriation of the urban space. One of the articles of the collection, “Die Heldin als säkulares Modell religiöser Identifikation,” is of a different nature as it explores the life and family history of Lakshmi Swaminadhan, captain of the women’s regiment “Rani of Jhansi” in the Indian National

Army (INA) during the Second World War. This biographical reconstruction draws on the author's personal connections with this Kanpur-based family.<sup>2</sup>

- 2 Through the different articles of the collection, Bellwinkel-Schempp carefully explores the intertwined social, economic, religious and political dynamics underlying the self-affirmation of Kanpur's lower castes, a process she defines as a "social movement of underprivileged groups in their fight for recognition and to be different" (Bellwinkel-Schempp 2011:162). Most articles cover an extensive period, from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. This allows Bellwinkel-Schempp to foreground the shifts and changes in the trajectory of Dalit self-affirmation over a long-term economic and political history of the city. In the economic sphere, she shows how the lower castes participated in the development of Kanpur as a manufacturing center from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and how the growth of many lucrative and well-established trades and industries, especially throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, opened up avenues of social mobility. In the political field, the development of an organized lower-caste movement from the 1920s onwards culminated in the constitution of the Bahujan Samaj Party in 1984, and the accession of its leader, Mayawati, to the position of Chief Minister on different occasions in the 1990s and 2000s. The same period was marked by the ebb and flow of radical Hindu nationalist ideologies. Throughout the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the presence of the Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha was palpable in Kanpur. After a temporary lull during the first decades following independence, the city became a bastion of the Bharatiya Janata Party throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Various articles further sketch out a long-term history of the connection between Muslims and lower castes in Kanpur, as the city has had a long history of communal rioting, most spectacularly in 1931 and 1992.
- 3 The book draws on dense and diverse material, resulting from the author's long involvement in Kanpur, where she started research in the 1970s. This includes oral histories and personal documents, but also detailed descriptions of the architectural environment and its use. Temples and statues, procession routes and practices of naming and renaming public places constitute an archive of Kanpur's Dalit movement, just as the tracts and leaflets Bellwinkel-Schempp collected from former activists and their descendants. The author often reproduces pamphlets, speeches and letters, sometimes in their entirety, adding to the book's interest as a collection of primary sources. She skilfully alternates scales of analysis, looking at religious and political movements, communities and organizations, as well as individuals. Of particular interest are the multiple biographies sketched out throughout the book, from prominent Dalit leaders such as B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956) and Swami Achutanand (1879–1933), to an array of less famous thinkers and local figures: the dignitaries, businessmen and government employees who constituted the core of the Dalit movement in Kanpur throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Unity and fragmentation: the making of Dalits as a political community

- 4 The book's explicit focus is on the Dalits of Kanpur, an inclusive category that brings together a variety of castes and sub-castes belonging to the more marginal sections of society. Throughout her writings, Bellwinkel-Schempp unpacks an enduring contradiction in the history of this social group between processes of convergence—

working towards the constitution of a politically conscious group—and division—leading to its fragmentation into different castes and sub-castes.

- 5 Bellwinkel-Schempp highlights the multiple dynamics that contributed to the constitution of a single, organized and self-conscious group for the lower-caste communities of Kanpur. These include the revival and appropriation of various religious traditions as vehicles for a shared core of tropes and values, the elaboration of a common history as an oppressed group and the development of converging aspirations to remedy the community's marginalized status through education, economic success and political organization. Each article tackles one or more of these overlapping processes, and the various forms they took at different periods in time. Bellwinkel-Schempp especially recalls the efforts of local activists, regional leaders and national figures to create a sense of identity and community of purpose among the lower castes in Kanpur, and the different scales at which activists operated—from the neighborhood to the nation. One such attempt developed around the Adi Hindu concept elaborated by Swami Achutanand in the 1920s, as he claimed for the lower castes the status of original inhabitants of India. The term Dalit, on the other hand, is traced back to B. R. Ambedkar's 1948 pamphlet *The Untouchables*, where he describes Dalits, "broken people," as former Buddhists who became marginalized by the rise of Brahmanism. Bellwinkel-Schempp's preferred use of the term Dalit—which became a term of self-reference for politicized lower castes in Uttar Pradesh only in the 1980s—makes it clear that her focus is on the constitution of the lower castes as a political community. It may however create a misleading sense of continuity and homogeneity, which runs against the book's detailed analysis of the multiplicity of intellectual trends, organizations and figures making up the political universe of Kanpur's lower castes over time.
- 6 The history of Kanpur's Dalits is also one of division between a multitude of castes and sub-castes occupying different segments of the labor market, settled in caste-specific residential clusters, worshipping different Saints, gods and goddesses. The development of an overarching identity—as lower caste, Adi Hindu or Dalit—did not alter the rules of endogamy and commensality delineating the boundary between each caste. These communities, however, should not be seen as essentialized entities, for they are constantly re-constituted, at different scales, through a variety of processes. Bellwinkel-Schempp further shows that, for any caste or sub caste, the sense of belonging to a wider group (Adi Hindu or Dalits) should never be taken for granted, but rather develops as part of various contradictory discourses and processes of self-identification. So it was with the Khatik community, "oscillating between Dalit and Shudra identity, between secular and religious notions, between fundamentalist and progressive political orientations" (p. 185). Shudras, the lowest of the four *varnas*, while subservient to the elite of the twice-born castes, were located in a socially and ritually superior position to Dalits. Similarly, the Koris (weavers) claimed the status of Kshatriya (warrior) and wore the sacred thread, a marker of upper-caste status. Yet, both groups have been officially identified as Scheduled Castes (the administrative designation for the most marginalized sections of society) by the 1955 Backward Classes Commission.
- 7 The following sections will present the articles collected in this volume, arranged thematically around four broad notions: political organization, Dalit religiosity, economic and social mobility, and Dalit appropriation of urban space.

## Sketching a history of the Dalit movement, from the 1920s to the 2000s

- 8 The first article in the English section of the collection, "The Dalit Movement in Kanpur, Public Realm and Public Agenda," traces the genealogy of the Dalit movement in Kanpur, centered especially on the towering figures of Ambedkar and Swami Achutanand, as well as their followers among a small and vocal lower-caste elite in the city. Its German counterpart, "Zur kollektiven Identität der Dalits in Indien," explores similar themes.
- 9 The article begins by focusing on the Adi Hindu movement, founded in 1923 by Swami Achutanand (1879–1933). Echoing a variety of other Adi movements, which flourished throughout India from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, such as Adi Andhra and Adi Dravida in South India, or Adi Dharm in Punjab, it made claim to the status of original inhabitants of India—subsequently enslaved through the Aryan conquest—for the most marginalized sections of society. The article then offers a portrait gallery of some of the prominent local followers of Achutanand, wealthy and influential Dalits, government employees and successful entrepreneurs belonging to different sub-castes. Manufacturers and traders in leather and pig bristle or building contractors, this enterprising elite had seized upon the opportunities offered by the growth of Kanpur first as an army cantonment and later as a manufacturing center from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Bellwinkel-Schempp then moves on to describe the interaction between Swami Achutanand and B. R. Ambedkar, who was then becoming a national figurehead of the lower-caste movement in colonial India. She also reproduces a long pamphlet written by Jham Lal Aherwar (President of the "Adi Hindu Sabha" of Kanpur) to welcome the Simon Commission (1928). The pamphlet is a fascinating document, calling for Dalits to move ahead through the threefold method of "unity and organization," "learning and education" and "earning money" (pp. 112–14). Bellwinkel-Schempp further uses narratives collected among the descendants of the founders of the Adi Hindu movement to explore the collective recollection of this period, and of its leading figures, Swami Achutanand and Ambedkar.
- 10 The second part of the article sketches out a political history of Kanpur's lower castes throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It moves swiftly through the first three decades following independence to focus on the 1980s, a turning point in the history of Kanpur's Dalit, caught between the revival of an organized Dalit movement on the one hand, and the growing ideological influence and political prevalence of radical Hindu nationalism on the other. 1981 witnessed the failed endeavor to organize a mass defection of Dalits from Hinduism initiated by Rahulan Ambadwadekar, a young lawyer converted to Buddhism and founder of the U. P. branch of the Dalit Panthers. While the project was eventually banned, Bellwinkel-Schempp stresses its mobilizing effects over a younger generation of educated lower castes. She then moves on to the foundation of the Bahujan Samaj Party by Kanshi Ram in 1984, arguing that the concept of "Bahujan"—or majority—aimed at bringing together Shudras, Dalits, Tribals and others, "fell on fertile ground with Kanpur's Ambedkarites and nascent Buddhists" (p. 128). Contemplating the political growth of the BSP, Bellwinkel-Schempp reads the history of the Kanpur Dalit movement as one of discontinuity. The earlier form of lower-caste mobilization through the Adi Hindu movement has not "found entry into

the official Dalit pantheons as propagated by the BSP,” relegating it to a status of “subaltern Dalit knowledge, backed up by personal narratives of Swami Achutanand’s and Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar’s early followers” (p. 137).

- 11 The article then moves on to explore the Dalit’s entanglement with radical Hindu nationalism (Hindutva), which also reached a turning point in the 1980s in the wake of the Ramjanmbhoomi movement. Organizations belonging to the ideological fold of Hindutva, claiming India as the land of Hindus against so-called foreign religions such as Christianity, Judaism and, most vehemently, Islam, mobilized sections of the Hindu community by laying claim to the site of the Babri Masjid, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century mosque, as the birth place of the Hindu deity Ram. Simultaneously, the Bharatiya Janata Party rose in influence in Northern India, leading to its electoral victory in the 1991 elections in Uttar Pradesh. Bellwinkel-Schempp especially explores the receptivity of the Khatik caste to Hindutva, which she connects to a long history of antagonism with the city’s Muslim communities, rooted in the exacerbation of cultural and religious differences and economic rivalries.
- 12 The last section of the article looks at the history of Kanpur over the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, starting with the communal violence which followed the destruction of the Babri Masjid by a Hindu mob in 1992. This allows her to explore the local politics of Kanpur from the perspective of the Khatik community. She describes the constitution of a caste-based criminal network around the figure of Kala Baccha, a Khatik pig breeder and BJP municipal corporator, and the role played by this network in orchestrating the violence perpetrated during the 1992 riots. This story is further explored in another article, “Pigs and Power: Urban Space and Urban Decay.” Drawing attention to the proliferation of pigs in Kanpur from the 1990s onwards, Bellwinkel-Schempp interprets it not only as evidence of the expansion of pig rearing as a profitable activity for Kanpur but also as a sign of “a new Dalit assertiveness,” and a way for the community to lay claim to the city’s space through the presence of roaming swine. This development is set against a context of decline, especially since the 1980s, of two of the main profitable activities of the Khatiks in Kanpur: pork butchery and the manufacture and trade of pig bristle. This also allows Bellwinkel-Schempp to sketch out a history of urban governance and local politics, communal violence and corruption in the city over two decades. It is regrettable that, while highlighting the parasitic nature of public pig rearing, the article does not fully elucidate the economic rationale of this new industry. Moving on to the 2000s, Bellwinkel-Schempp considers that “the days of BJP’s entanglement with the Khatik seem to be over” (p. 135), which she illustrates by the non-participation of the Khatik in an episode of rioting in March 2001 and the rising influence of reformist Khatik businessmen and politicians.

## **Bhakti and Buddhism: an intellectual genealogy of Dalit political and religious thought in Kanpur**

- 13 Two articles, “Neuer Buddhismus als gesellschaftlicher Entwurf” and “Bhakti and Buddhism: Text, Context and Public Representation of Dalit Religiosity in Uttar Pradesh,” focus on Bhakti and Buddhism, two socio-religious movements, and their politicization in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. A third piece, “Die politische Mission von Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar,” focuses more specifically on Ambedkar’s intellectual and political trajectory, as a scholar and a Dalit leader. Recalling a “forgotten episode” in

Ambedkar's life, it also narrates the short-lived enrolment of Ambedkar as a student at the University of Bonn in 1922, with the likely aim to study Sanskrit. This, along with his sojourns at the University of Colombia (1913–1916) and at the London School of Economics (1920–1923), participated in the intellectual and academic education of Ambedkar, “the first Dalit to avail himself of a comprehensive Western education” (p. 66) at a time when the lower castes, traditionally denied access to knowledge, were granted limited access to educational institutions in India.

- 14 In many respects, “Neuer Buddhismus” and “Bhakti and Buddhism” constitute the core of the book. Through a detailed study of Dalit religiosity, they unpack different strands of socio-religious thought among lower caste thinkers and sketch out a history of the spiritual, cultural and political life of Kanpur's Dalits throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bhakti or Sant Dharm and Buddhism constitute two distinct spiritual traditions, which were variously appropriated by lower-caste movements throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as “radical alternatives to Hinduism in so far as they were perceived as Hinduism's egalitarian alternatives, particularly in respect of women, Shudras and Dalits” (p. 189).
- 15 Bellwinkel-Schempp traces the development of Bhakti in north India from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards as a multifarious tradition, organized around different mystical figures or Sants. These movements usually shared a rejection of Brahmanic orthodoxy, and an insistence on a mystical union with God, without intermediaries. This stress on inward religiosity, introspection and self-realization constituted the root of their egalitarian potential, and following Bhakti Sant was originally open to all (though practices differed widely and changed through time). By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Bhakti tradition was revived in Northern India, while in Kanpur it became both the religious expression of the “nouveaux riches” and an integral part of the formation process of Dalit consciousness and identity. Bellwinkel-Schempp sketches out the history of three movements, which are particularly strong in Kanpur throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Shiv Narayanis (popular among migrant workers from Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Western Bihar), the Kabir Panthis (the cult around weaver Sant Kabir Das was especially prevalent among upwardly mobile tanners and leather merchants) and, finally the cult of Sant Ravidas (a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Saint, Chamar by caste and cobbler by profession, broadly popular among Chamars, numerically dominant among Northern Indian Dalit communities). Their revival, as Bellwinkel-Schempp shows, constituted both a source and an expression of lower-caste egalitarian aspirations in the spiritual, social, economic and political domain. This was especially true of the Ravidas Dharm, as, from the 1920s onwards Swami Achutanand made Sant Ravidas the fountainhead of his Adi Hindu movement.
- 16 Buddhism, though it had originated in India, had disappeared from the sub-continent—so much so that its re-appropriation from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards amounted to a reformulation of the religion. Bellwinkel-Schempp explores Ambedkar's rejection of Hinduism at length, and his elaboration of Navayana Buddhism as a “social religion,” “meant to serve the enlightened modern man in his rational appropriation of the world” (p. 189), resulting in his conversion, along with more than 300,000 Dalits in 1956.<sup>3</sup> Most interesting, she retraces the genealogy of the lower-caste quest for an egalitarian alternative to Hinduism through the intellectual trajectories of three lesser-known Northern Indian thinkers, Bhadant Bodhanand Mahasthvir (1874–1952) of Lucknow, Ishwardatt Medharthi (1900–1971) of Kanpur and Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu

(1885–1974) of Lucknow. While studies on the Dalit movement tend to focus on popular regional leaders such as Swami Achutanand and on the towering figure of Ambedkar at the national level, these biographical sketches allow her to carve out a local intellectual history of the Dalit movement, highlighting its various and sometimes contradictory genealogies, and the debates and personal interactions that led to the constitution of an ideological corpus for the lower-caste movement.

- 17 In this skilful study of the history of Bhakti and Buddhism among Kanpur's lower castes, at the juncture between religious, intellectual and political realms, Bellwinkel-Schempp shows how various traditions, each with its own genealogy and spiritual content, are constantly transformed and appropriated. The strong spiritualism and mysticism of the Sant tradition, Ambedkar's concept of Navayana Buddhism as a rational religion, and historical narratives claiming the status as original inhabitants of India for lower castes, constitute three distinct strands of lower-caste thought, while also merging to form a common, diverse and at times discordant, Dalit consciousness.

## Occupation, social mobility and caste identity in an industrial town

- 18 Three articles explore the interaction between industrialization and urbanization on the one hand, and processes of community and identity-building among Kanpur's lower castes on the other. Looking at different castes employed in different fields—Chamars in the leather industry ("Industry and Identity: Identities under Urban Industrial Conditions"), Chamars and Koris in the textile industry ("Zur Kollektiven Identität der Dalits in Indien") and two sub-castes of Khatiks involved in the construction business, as well as piggery and pig bristle manufacture ("Zur kollektiven Identität der Dalits in Indien" and "Pigs and Power: Urban Space and Urban Decay"), Bellwinkel-Schempp explores the way caste and caste identity is constantly reconstituted, first in a context of urbanization and industrial growth from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and later on in the face of economic stagnation and a spate of factory shut downs, especially since the 1980s. She unpacks the changing connection between caste identity and occupation, the re-formulation of stigmatized identities in a context where ritually polluting occupations had become greatly profitable for a minority of successful lower-caste entrepreneurs, and the impact of economic and industrial decline on Kanpur's Dalit laboring populations.
- 19 The three articles explore the interaction between caste and the "modern" division of the labor market, by showing how caste distinctions were maintained, between caste Hindus and lower castes, among lower castes, and even between sub-castes. In the textile industry, caste clusters tended to form in different factories, and the lower castes were usually employed for more "polluting" tasks. The Khatiks of Kanpur, on the other hand, were divided between two sub-castes, one residing on Latouche Road and involved mostly in the butchery and bristle trade, while the other, in Colonelganj, had long been established as masons and building contractors. The articles explore the shifting relation between caste, occupation and pollution. The Chamars' foothold in leather work and the Khatiks' involvement in piggery and the manufacture of bristle constitute two cases where marginalized communities establish a hold over activities deemed polluting by caste Hindus. While this feeds on a deep-seated ritual hierarchy, for an emerging section of Dalit entrepreneurs, it also becomes the root of considerable

economic success. According to Bellwinkel-Schempp, this led to a change in the meaning and character of the polluting substance. Profitability transformed leather into “a commodity without ritual connotation,” and she considers the increasing number of upper-caste individuals entering the leather business to imply that work with leather has changed “from a ritually polluting to a remunerative, caste-neutral profession also followed by upper castes” (p. 161). The articles also follow the different groups’ trajectories through the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They describe how the closure of textile mills and large-scale leather factories, foreign competition in the bristle-manufacturing field and declining opportunities for pork butchery led Kanpur’s Dalit communities to try new fields of activity, usually facing fierce competition and insecure labor conditions. Bellwinkel-Schempp also highlights a process of internal differentiation, especially among the Chamars, many of whom have been able to invest in education and public-sector employment thanks to the reservation policies implemented since Independence. While they came to constitute a new middle class of government employees and officers, the more vulnerable portion of the Chamar community is employed in private leather factories where work is much more precarious than in the old large-scale factories, and mostly beyond the scope of labor laws.

## Dalit self-affirmation and the appropriation of urban space

- 20 Many articles in this collection touch upon the various processes through which Dalits have endeavored to lay claim to public space. A remarkable feature of Bellwinkel-Schempp’s work lies in her minute description of the architectural environment and its uses—of temples and graves, statues and procession routes. She describes the development of processions celebrating Sant Ravidas from the 1920s onwards as a “blend of political demonstration and temple ritual” leading the Dalits “out of the confines of their wards into the realm of civil society” (p. 195). She explores in detail various politics of display, through the building of temples, the erection of statues and the celebration of festivals. Ravidas Jayanti, and, later on, Buddh Jayanti and Ambedkar Jayanti developed as moments of religious celebration as well as political manifestations, participating in the reclaiming of public space by the lower castes. Bellwinkel-Schempp offers a very perceptive analysis of the iconography and statuography which developed around Ravidas, Buddha and Ambedkar. She shows the symbolic importance of the erection of an effigy of Ambedkar in Nana Rao Park in 1973—a place with a symbolic history of its own, as it was renamed following Independence after a hero of the 1857 mutiny: “Ambedkar was elated to nationalism, sacrifice and heroism like the other savarna (caste) national leaders. The Dalits had achieved on a symbolic level social recognition as citizens with a historic past” (p. 222). Bellwinkel-Schempp also understands the proliferation of pigs in Kanpur in this broader context of Dalits reclaiming of city. This form of self-affirmation, however, is described as essentially parasitic in nature, a dual characterization which reflects the ambivalent position of the author with regards to forms of lower-caste self-affirmation that are distinct from the politically progressive Dalit movement. The various articles of the collection tend to valorize the political, intellectual and religious trajectory of a progressive Dalit elite, while characterizing Khatik entanglement with Hindu

Nationalism as misguided and criminal. This creates the impression that, from Bellwinkel-Schempp's perspective, while different modes of lower-caste assertion can be historically important, only the Dalit movement may claim legitimacy.

## Concluding remarks

- 21 Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp's work constitutes a remarkable entry point into the intellectual, cultural, political and spiritual universe of Kanpur's Dalits throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is an invaluable contribution to both historical and anthropological studies of India's lower castes, as well as of the shifting economic, political and social landscape of an industrial town in Northern India. It further constitutes a remarkable source of information on a multiplicity of understudied aspects of the religiosity of Northern India's Dalit communities. Bellwinkel-Schempp's work stands at the intersection between micro-history and anthropology. Her astute description of the history of Kanpur's Dalit movement relies essentially on oral history, personal archives and the author's engagement with the city and its architectural environment over several decades. Not only does she detail her process of collecting material, and of building her narrative she also reproduces some of her sources in their entirety. Due to the circumstances of posthumous publication, some articles have remained in a somewhat rough state. The reader will have to make his or her way through the dense narrative and multiple strands of argument. Yet, the richness and diversity of the material and the chronological breadth of the study make this collection a far-reaching contribution to the study of the Dalits of Kanpur.
- 22 One might regret that the articles' overwhelming focus on the Dalit movement does not fully allow the author to explore the power of attraction that other ideologies held over Kanpur's lower castes. The entanglement of a section of the Dalits with Hindu nationalism, though explored—especially through the example of the Khatiks—is simply linked to a long-standing tradition of perceiving the Muslims as “the other,” and implicitly presented as an anomaly. The attraction of lower castes to other ideologies—most importantly, communism and class politics or the mainstream nationalism of the Congress Party—is barely mentioned, and never elucidated. Bellwinkel-Schempp's meticulous work on the intellectual and religious genealogies of the Dalit movement thus leaves the reader longing for a similar history of these other strands of lower-caste consciousness. A second limitation of the book lies in its almost exclusive focus on a Dalit elite of literate and relatively well-to-do entrepreneurs, businessmen, and government employees. Though it refers in passing to the more destitute sections of the lower castes, it does not always locate them firmly in its narrative of identity formation and political mobilization. The collection thus reads more as an intellectual and political history of the Dalit movement than a social history of Kanpur's Dalits. Surprisingly, however, the only authors Bellwinkel-Schempp explicitly engages with are Nandini Gooptu (2001) and Chitra Joshi (2003), who both worked on Kanpur's working classes and urban poor. A reduced engagement with an abundant literature on caste and Dalit history makes it harder to locate her argument within on-going debates on caste and political mobilization.
- 23 Nevertheless, this collection stands out as an invaluable intellectual history of the Dalit movement in Northern India and of its thinkers, from the most prominent to the most obscure. The various essays offer a detailed study of various political and religious

trends, including the Adi Hindu movement, Dalit Buddhism and various Bhakti traditions. It is a testimony to the thoroughness of Bellwinkel-Schempp's scholarship that hers is one of the only scholarly work to study that studies in some detail the Shiv Narayan tradition, a regionally important but generally overlooked sect. Her articles bear further witness to what local ethnography and micro-history can bring to Dalit studies. Her endeavor to explore the entanglement of spiritual, political, economic and social processes points to the need to connect these different fields, often separated by academic boundaries demarcating the fields of religious, caste and labor studies.

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## NOTES

1. See Bellwinkel-Schempp (N.d.): <http://www.maren-bellwinkel.de>.
2. Half of the eight articles of the collection are in German, and the other half in English. With the exception of the article dedicated to Lakshmi Swaminadhan, written in German only, there are considerable overlaps between the German and English articles. For the non-German speaking reader, the English half of the collection may easily be read on its own and shares many arguments and case studies which are developed in the German part of the book.
3. Chapter 1 "Neuer Buddhismus als gesellschaftlicher Entwurf" and Chapter 3 "Die politische Mission von Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar und die Universität Bonn" explore in greatest detail Ambedkar's trajectory, his conception of Hinduism and the caste system, his long-standing disagreement with Gandhi and his eventual turn to Buddhism. See also chapter 8 "Bhakti and Buddhism."

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