

# JASON BIRCH

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# DID SUFIS STEAL ĀSANAS FROM YOGIS?

INTERTEXTUALITY IN MEDIEVAL  
SANSKRIT, PERSIAN  
AND HINDI YOGA AND  
SVARODAYA WORKS

In 1550 CE, Muḥammad Ġawṭ Gwāliyārī composed the *Baḥr al-Ḥayāt*, which was a new Persian version of the *Amṛtakunda*, a purported Sanskrit work on yoga that had also been translated into Arabic. Although the *Amṛtakunda* is mentioned in Arabic and Persian works, no references to a text by this name have been found in Sanskrit or vernacular materials, nor has it been reported in a manuscript catalogue.

This talk will present research on textual parallels between the *Baḥr al-Ḥayāt* and several Sanskrit and Hindi works on yoga, which indicate that the yogic practices rendered into Persian were originally taught in Svarodaya traditions (the art of pneumancy) and were later attributed to Mohan of Mewar, a disciple of Dādū, the founder of the Dādūpanth. The talk will argue that the *Amṛtakunda* was likely a work on Svarodaya and that Sufis had a genuine interest in practising yoga techniques within the framework of Svarodaya.

Jason Birch (DPhil, Oxon) is an historian of South Asian traditions of yoga and medicine. He is a research associate of SOAS University of London and the University of Alberta. His recent publications include *A Manual on the Practice of Haṭhayoga: An Edition and Translation of the Pune Manuscript of the Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati; Āsanas of the Yogacintāmaṇi: The Largest Premodern Compilation on Postural Practice, The Amaraugha and Amaraughaprabodha of Gorakṣanātha: The Genesis of Haṭha and Rājayoga*, a digital edition of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (with colleagues of the Light on Haṭha project) and *On the Plastic Surgery of the Ears and Nose: The Nepalese Version of the Suśrutasamhitā* (with colleagues of the Suśruta Project). From 2015 to 2023, he was a Senior Research Fellow of the Light on Haṭha Project and a Post-doctoral Research Fellow of the Haṭha Yoga Project. He is a founding member of the SOAS Centre of Yoga Studies and the peer-reviewed Journal of Yoga Studies.

Thursday,  
Dec 18, 2025,  
17:30

Seminar room 1,  
Institute of South Asian, Tibetan  
and Buddhist Studies,  
University Campus,  
Spitalgasse 2, Entrance 2.7  
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