

Scholars of Vedic religion have long recognized the centrality of ritual categories to Indian thought. There have been few successful attempts, however, to bring the same systematic rigor of Vedic Scholarship to bear on later “Hindu” ritual. Excavating the deep history of a prominent ritual category in “classical” Hindu texts, Marko Geslani traces the emergence of a class of rituals known as *śānti*, or appeasement. This ritual, intended to counteract ominous omens, developed from the intersection of the fourth Veda—the oft-neglected Atharvaveda—and the emergent tradition of astral science (Jyotiśāstra) sometime in the early first millennium, CE. Its development would come to have far-reaching consequences on the ideal ritual life of the king in early-medieval Brahmanical society. The mantric transformations involved in the history of *śānti* led to the emergence of a politicized ritual culture that could encompass both traditional Vedic and newer Hindu performers and practices.

From astrological appeasement to gift-giving, coronation, and image worship, *Rites of the God-King* chronicles the multiple lives and afterlives of a single ritual mode, unveiling the always-inventive work of the priesthood to imagine and enrich royal power. Along the way, Geslani reveals the surprising role of astrologers in Hindu history, elaborates conceptions of sin and misfortune, and forges new connections between medieval texts

and modern practices. In a work that details ritual forms that were dispersed widely across Asia, he concludes with a reflection on the nature of orthopraxy, ritual change, and the problem of presence in the Hindu tradition.

MARKO GESLANI

is Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of South Carolina, Columbia.