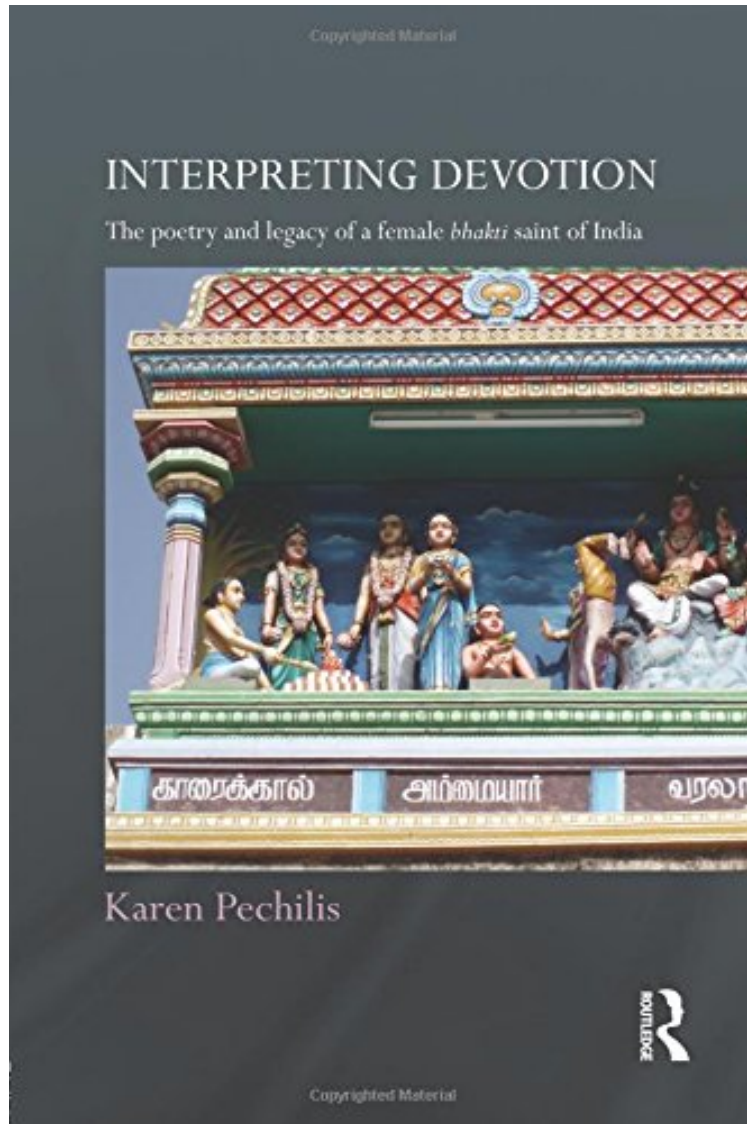


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## Interpreting Devotion: The Poetry and Legacy of a Female Bhakti Saint of India (Routledge Hindu Studies)

Karen Pechilis

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Vivid interpretation of earlier translated work in French/English. Nice book for mass audience, but academically not interesting. It's a shame that a well established publisher like Routledge published this without some background research. The translation of the verses is very rough popular interpretation of the earlier more scholarly published in French or English. To attract a wide audience yes, it's a nice book. If you are interested in a better translation without the vivid interpretation of Karen Pechilis, you need to stick to the earlier translations.

Devotion is a category of expression in many of the world's religious traditions. This book looks at issues involved in academically interpreting religious devotion, as well as exploring the interpretations of religious devotion made by a sixth century poet, a twelfth century biographer, and present-day festival publics. The book focuses on the female poet-saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar, whose poetry is devotional in nature. It discusses the biography written on the poet six centuries after her lifetime, and suggests ways of interpreting Karaikkal Ammaiyar's poetry without using the categories and events promoted by her biographer, in order to engage her own thoughts as they are communicated through the poetry attributed to her. In the same way that the biographer made the poet speak to his present day, the book looks at how festivals held today make both the poetry and the biography relevant to the present day. By discussing how poetry, story and festival provide distinctive yet overlapping interpretations of the saint, this book reveals the selections and priorities of interpreters in the making of a living tradition. It is an accessible contribution to students and scholars of religion, Indian history and women's studies.

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About the Author: Karen Pechilis is Professor of Religious Studies and NEH Distinguished Professor of Humanities at Drew University, USA. She is an experienced theorist of devotion and translator of Tamil Iva-bhakti hymns and their scholarly interpretation. Her previous books are *The Embodiment of Bhakti* (1999) and *The Graceful Guru: Hindu Female Gurus in India and the United States* (2004).