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Debating the Dasam Granth (AAR Religions in Translation)

Robin Rinehart

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The Dasam Granth is a 1,428-page anthology of diverse compositions attributed to the tenth Guru of Sikhism, Guru Gobind Singh, and a topic of great controversy among Sikhs. The controversy stems from two major issues: a substantial portion of the Dasam Granth relates tales from Hindu mythology, suggesting a disconnect from normative Sikh theology; and a long composition entitled *Charitropakhian* tells several hundred rather graphic stories about illicit liaisons between men and women. Sikhs have debated whether the text deserves status as a "scripture" or should be read instead as "literature." Sikh scholars have also long debated whether Guru Gobind Singh in fact authored the entire Dasam Granth. Much of the secondary literature on the Dasam Granth focuses on this authorship issue, and despite an ever-growing body of articles, essays, and books (mainly in Punjabi), the debate has not moved forward. The available manuscript and other historical evidence do not provide conclusive answers regarding authorship. The debate has been so acrimonious at times that in 2000, Sikh leader Joginder Singh Vedanti issued a directive that Sikh scholars not comment on the Dasam Granth publicly at all pending a committee inquiry into the matter. *Debating the Dasam Granth* is the first English language, book-length critical study of this controversial Sikh text in many years. Based on research on the original text in the Brajbhasha and Punjabi languages, a critical reading of the secondary literature in Punjabi, Hindi, and English, and interviews with scholars and Sikh leaders in India, it offers a thorough introduction to the Dasam Granth, its history, debates about its authenticity, and an in-depth analysis of its most important compositions.

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