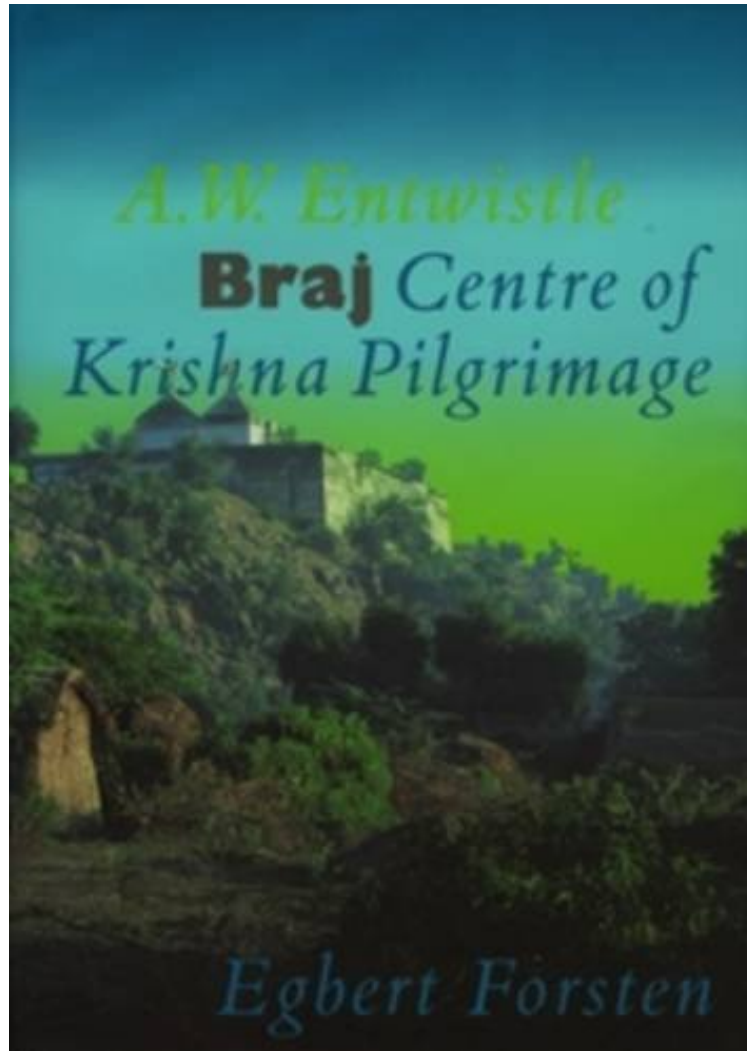


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## Braj, Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage (Groningen Oriental Studies)

*A W Entwistle*

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**A W Entwistle : Braj, Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage (Groningen Oriental Studies)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Braj, Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage (Groningen Oriental Studies):

This book presents a comprehensive study of the region where Krishna, one of the most popular gods of devotional Hinduism, is believed to have spent his early years as a cowherd boy. The area of Braj, lying between Delhi and Agra, is visited annually by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, who come to see the sacred sites associated with the romantic

legends of Krishna's youth. Many of them follow a pilgrimage circuit over 300 km in length that takes up to eight weeks to complete and includes such famous places as Mathura, Vrindaban, and Gokul. For many centuries the Krishna legends have been a source of inspiration for poets and devotees all over India. Since the turn of the 16th century Braj has been a focus of their attention; devotees who came to settle there related its topography to their conception of a transcendent realm in which Krishna is eternally engaged in his divine play with his consort, Radha. The local dialect served as the medium for most of the vernacular literature written in northern India up to the end of the last century. The opening chapters survey the development of the Krishna cult from the earliest times to the present day, with reference to the extensive literature in Sanskrit and modern Indian languages, as well as to the numerous studies that have been written about the relevant mythology, theology, archaeology and political history. Modern pilgrimage and associated beliefs and practices are described and related to what is known about Krishna worship in Braj prior to the 16th century. The various Sanskrit and later vernacular texts dealing with the sacred places are examined in detail in order to show how they evolved and are related to each other. On the basis of these sources the full itinerary of the sacred circuit is described, illustrated with plates and maps. As well as being a valuable handbook for anyone visiting Braj, this detailed study will be of use to all those who are interested in the Krishna cult and Hindu devotionalism.

About the Author Alan Entwistle (1949) studied at the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) and gained his PhD in Hindi in 1982. He taught at the Institute of Indian Studies, University of Groningen, from 1980-85 and was recently appointed as Assistant Professor in the Department of Asian Languages and Literature, University of Washington.