

high politics in Bangladesh. It is well organized yet densely written and while D'Costa does take time to explain some of the history in a helpful manner (for example, why the crimes committed during the Liberation war were not effectively followed up immediately) it may prove a heavy read for those not familiar with the many areas of study addressed.

This is an important book: the recovery of women's silenced accounts and the analysis of their marginalization through an analysis of gender relations and through the politics of nation building, offer important contributions to our fuller understanding. But the potential for transnational women's agitation for war crimes accountability and justice are, I fear, hampered by the failure of the pain and trauma of Bangladesh's women to capture the global imagination. The time lapse does not offer sufficient explanation here, as can be seen in the capture of international attention by the relentless efforts of a diminishing cohort of elderly women from Korea, and elsewhere, to seek accountability from those who sexually enslaved them in the Second World War. But here lies the central problem of D'Costa's case: we know that feminists across the world are able and willing to rally to the cause of accountability and justice for women yet women's activism in Bangladesh has not yet been sufficiently organized or effective to capture such energies. The spark and persistence that seeks international agitation must surely come from the land of the crime.

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RETHINKING RELIGION IN INDIA: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism. *Routledge South Asian Religion Series, 4. Edited by Esther Bloch, Marianne Keppens and Rajaram Hegde.* London and New York: Routledge, 2011. xv, 192 pp. US\$42.95, paper. ISBN 978-0-415-50002-9.

This book is the product of a conference in 2008 at which members of the Research Centre *Vergelijkende Cultuurwetenschap* of Ghent University played a leading role. Keppens and Bloch wrote the introduction, de Roover and Claerhout wrote one chapter, and Balagangadhara, the Centre's director, wrote another. The other chapters are by scholars based elsewhere, several of them leading authorities on Hinduism. Many edited volumes are uneven in content and quality, but they are rarely as uneven as *Rethinking Religion in India*, in which some chapters fall below the standard expected in books from academic publishers.

The book's purpose is to include "some of the most important voices in the debate on the construction of Hinduism" and to "provide the reader with the required historical data, arguments and conceptual tools to come to a well-grounded position on its central questions" (2). This purpose is partly achieved inasmuch as chapters by Lorenzen, Oddie, Zavos and King clearly

set out their arguments about the “colonial construction of Hinduism,” although almost everything they say, as far as I can see, has already been said by them or others many times before. There is certainly a difference in emphasis, if not plain disagreement, between the four authors. For Lorenzen, for instance, the concept of Hinduism is not “an artificial concept invented by European orientalists” and we can seriously and fruitfully compare the Hindu religion with other world religions; for King, on the other hand, “Hinduism” is a colonial and modern construct, and its use in the study of pre-colonial Indian civilizational history is anachronistic and often highly misleading. But both authors, like Oddie and Zavos, set out their arguments cogently and the reader can compare them to reach his or her own conclusion about the extent and significance of Hinduism’s “construction” as a distinct “religion” in the colonial and post-colonial eras. For students new to the topic, these four chapters (and possibly the introduction) should be enlightening, and this book might find a place on reading lists for introductory courses on Hinduism and India.

Patton’s chapter on women and Sanskrit in Maharashtra, which is based on empirical research, is an interesting discussion of how Sanskrit has come to be associated with women and the home, while men opt for careers in science and technology. This chapter, however, is an abridged reprint of a previous publication and has next to nothing in common with the rest of the volume.

The rest of the book engages in polemics about the definition of religion, which is seen as fatally flawed by its Christian ancestry so that it cannot be applied to Hinduism or other “Indic” religions. Fitzgerald’s chapter is at least coherently written, but Sugirtharajah’s is not, de Roover and Claerhout’s is simplistic, and Balagangadhara’s prolix theorizing mixes politically tendentious assertions that Hinduism is a religion of India whereas Islam is not, with spurious arguments that there neither is nor was “religion” in India, because the very concept is a Western, Christian import and therefore cannot have any valid cross-cultural meaning. But all competent scholars in social science, history or religious studies have known for a long time that, first, modern scholarship on religion primarily developed within a Judaeo-Christian milieu, whose far-reaching consequences must be and have been critically examined; secondly, all our significant concepts come encumbered with social and cultural connotations that have to be recognized and deconstructed; and, thirdly, exact analytical definitions like those in the natural sciences cannot be formulated for “religion” (or politics, economics, god, government, market, etc., etc.), because only polythetic definitions relying on “family resemblances” among significant characteristics can be employed cross-culturally.

As it would be tedious to itemize all my criticisms of these polemical authors, let me cite just one illustration of what has gone wrong. De Roover and Claerhout argue that Indians who learned English accepted

that “worship” translates as “*puja*” without understanding the former term’s Christian connotations (though whether they refer to Catholic mass, Methodist prayer and preaching, or something else is unclear, since like other authors in this book they overlook Christianity’s enormous diversity). Hence when Indians talk about worship, there is misunderstanding and distortion, and to understand what has occurred we need to examine the difference between Indians’ use of such words and European-Christian understandings of them, so as to “reveal how the two groups were talking about completely different things” (176). In practice, though, when a competent researcher into Hinduism—Indian or foreign, Hindu or non-Hindu—observes *puja* rituals and talks to Hindus about them, examines relevant archival evidence or reads texts pertaining to *puja*, the principal object of the research is to “understand the native’s point of view,” to coin a famous anthropological phrase. Hence every attempt is made to grasp the meaning of what the Hindu actors do or did and say or said—whether expressed in English, an Indian language, a mixture of both, or any other language—so that the two parties are precisely not talking about different things. Moreover, a large scholarly literature on *puja*, and Hinduism more generally, overwhelmingly demonstrates both that these efforts to understand have paid off (though never of course perfectly), and that neither the researchers nor their Hindu interlocutors, past or present, are victims of the misunderstandings presumed by de Roover and Claerhout’s naïve reasoning, let alone Balagangadhara’s sophistries. Hinduism’s colonial construction is an important subject for research, but to suppose that it has misled everyone along a false trail laid by Christian notions of “religion” is nonsense, as anyone who reads a few good books about Hinduism, instead of indulging in outdated logic chopping, can easily find out.

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NO MAN’S LAND: Globalization, Territory, and Clandestine Groups in Southeast Asia. By *Justin V. Hastings*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010. xii, 256 pp. (Tables, figures, maps.) US\$22.95, paper. ISBN 978-0-8014-7679-2.

Justin V. Hastings’ *No Man’s Land* examines the capacity of Clandestine Transnational Organizations (CTOs) as they evolved in Southeast Asia after the end of the Cold War. From Hastings’ perspective, CTOs range in ideology and ambition from regional terror groups like Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) to more territorially focused separatist insurgencies like Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) and even to regional and international smuggling and pirate gangs. Hastings attempts to show how the broad range of CTOs covered in