

of anti-slavery positions, somewhat convincingly for the constitutionalists. Yet recent articles by Bahai historians on Babi–Bahai attitudes and their handling of slaves are far more (self-)critical and non-apologetic, while the idea that Sufi anti-nomianism inherently defied servitude or enslavement and furthermore distilled into a “Sufi doctrine” needs serious further probing. Some of the historical interpretations about the role and intention of successive state actors dealing with the suppression of the slave trade provide a basis for further debate.

The final chapter, on emancipation, re-states Reza Shah’s will for abolition and his achievement of “full emancipation”, arguing that emancipation in Iran was therefore based on international agreements, Islamic and state laws. At the same time “cultural tradition” as well as Islamic law pre-dated British pressure for legislation. The chapter provides a wealth of details on individual cases, the procedures and circumstances of the liberation of various groups and types of slaves in different parts of Iran.

Numerous partial interpretations throughout the book, in addition to concrete terminology, betray a nationalist as well as a palliating bent. With one or two exceptions, it replaces the term slave strictly with “enslaved people”. Although in Iran, too, slaves were bought, sold, and treated like chattels, the term is used only once. The concern about “indigenous Iranians” as a distinct category inevitably produces a nationalist prism. To explain (and vindicate) racial and social attitudes as well as conditions of enslavement in the Qajar period, the author devises the label of a “vulnerable state” and “vulnerable coast” (pp. 51, 31). This is not a viable analytical category in the theories of state and government in the fields of international relations, political science, history or even imperial and post-colonial studies; these disciplines have discussed concepts like weak (vs. strong) states, weak (in the sense of ineffective) military systems, rouge, failed, or aggressive states, despotic and dictatorial regimes, dependency theory, colonial structures and in Marxist theories semi-colonial structures to assess the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Iranian monarchies. But these models or approaches do not exculpate the Qajar state and society as does the notion of a “vulnerable state”.

Notwithstanding these issues, the book provides a wealth of information and case studies as well as plenty of material and arguments that will inspire further debate and research.

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SOUTH ASIA

SEBASTIAN R. PRANGE:

Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast.

(Cambridge Oceanic Histories.) xvi, 344 pp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. £90. ISBN 978 1 108 42438 7.

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The expansion of Islam in late medieval times is often associated with conquest, political dominance, missionary activity, or the combination thereof. This narrative gives a leading role in the process to sultans, military men, Ulama, and Sufis. The picture changes considerably when considering the world of maritime Asia, where the regularity of the monsoon winds enabled transoceanic movement, shaping communication, commerce, cultural exchange, and migration. *Monsoon Islam* offers an engaging look into the Muslim maritime communities on the Malabar Coast

between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. The primary vector in the creation of these communities, argues Prange, was not military men or scholars, but merchants. Their movement across the Indian Ocean, motivated by the desire for profit, was entangled with the flow of beliefs, practices, ideas, resulting in the haphazard spreading of Islam. This, he continues, was not the transplantation of a new religion; Islam itself was shaped in interaction with the locality, giving rise to unique forms of Islamic thought and practice. *Monsoon Islam*, then, tells the story of Muslim communities that were created by commerce and shaped by tensions between the global and the local in a predominantly Hindu environment.

The book is organized around four spaces that, Prange suggests, functioned as key to the development of Muslims societies on the Malabar Coast. Each space reflects some aspect of the engagement with the economic, religious, and political factors that shaped Monsoon Islam. First is the port, where long-distance trade was realized, providing the economic and institutional basis of Monsoon Islam. Within historical and geographical circumstances that favoured the rise of multiple commercial communities emerged a multi-polar maritime trade system. This trans-oceanic trade was enabled by trust and buttressed by institutions that relied on Islamic jurisprudence. Each Muslim community operated as an autonomous entity both within Hindu society and in relation to other Muslim communities in other port cities, with which it was competing. Not only foreign (*paradesi*) Muslims; localized Muslim communities (Mappila), too, began to develop. In this world in flux, Islam was negotiated, adapted, and experienced in various ways. Central to this development was the mosque, the second space, around which Muslim trading communities were organized, and where the Ulama were centred. Motivated by commercial interests and assisted by political influence, the maritime communities' need to address religious concerns involving trade and pious life outside *dār al-islām* cemented the high position of *paradesi* Ulama. Mosques served for worship, education, logistical help for merchants, and venues of intra-communal transactions. In the sixteenth century, mosques became symbols of struggle against the Portuguese, adding religious hues to the commercial competition. Portuguese aggression gave rise to new, highly vernacularized concepts of *jihād* and martyrdom. This struggle, combined with the Portuguese assault on *paradesi* Muslims, gave new significance to Mappila Ulama.

The book then turns to examine the third space, the palace, marking the political environment within which Monsoon Islam emerged. The chapter opens with conversion, its influence over religious practice and social conduct, and its impact on the vernacularization of Islam. Returning to the palace, Prange suggests that in the weak states of the Malabar Coast, merchants could promote their economic interests, however they did not demonstrate political aspirations. Hindu rulers, who relied on income from trade, promised to merchants safety and religious autonomy; merchants' engagement with the state remained limited to commercial issues. The process has not always been peaceful. Rulers had to navigate between Muslim merchants and the Hindu agrarian inland. The Portuguese, who targeted Muslim commercial interests, presented an even greater challenge. The encounter brought the decline of *paradesi* communities, whereas Mappila Muslims from various ports began to co-operate for the first time. It further drove Mappila militarization and encouraged the crystallization of a broader identity. Consequently, their profile changed from economic to a combination of trade, smuggling, piracy, and warfare, leading to a new autonomous stand vis-à-vis Hindu rulers. This diversification leads to the final chapter, which focuses on the sea as a canvas on which commercial, religious, and political networks were drawn. Prange argues that the backbone of trans-oceanic networks was trade in which Muslims served as a dominant link; even the

Portuguese were dependent on Muslims as trading partners and financiers. Interwoven with commercial networks were religious issues, formed by shared routes, ports, occupations, and service. The legal institutions of Monsoon Islam developed with the movement of scholars. This multi-directional circulation shaped a truly cosmopolitan community of scholars and Sufis. Political networks of patronage, funded by rulers overseas, came to cement economic interests, complementing commercial and religious networks.

Monsoon Islam presents an original and convincing account of the formation of Muslim trading communities along the Malabar Coast. Prange's nuanced analysis goes beyond oversimplified concepts of trading diaspora to offer a rich and sophisticated engagement with the world of the Indian Ocean by the side of the Hindu environment of south-west India. Aspects of the work could have been more polished: the framing of the discussion around four spaces feels at times artificial, as not all spaces are treated in the same way, notably the sea; several issues, for example conversion, do not fit easily into their designated space. Furthermore, the case of Malabar could have been tied more firmly to issues of migration and settlement elsewhere. Even a brief comparison with maritime communities along the Swahili Coast or with the migrant communities of the Deccan (self-styled *gharībān*, foreigners, a term parallel to *paradesī*) would have contributed to the broader fields of migration, trade, religious change, and politics in late medieval and early modern times. Nevertheless, *Monsoon Islam* is an engaging book that offers a substantial contribution to the growing literature on maritime circulation and migration around the Indian Ocean.

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MARC TIEFENAUER:

Les Enfers indiens: Histoire multiple d'un lieu commun.

(Handbook of Oriental Studies Section Two South Asia.) xxxv, 681 pp.

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Les Enfers indiens is an imposing work whose title plays on the double meaning of "common place": a place of sharing and something banal, where the author perhaps had in mind the definition of "common place" according to Montaigne: "passages extracted from various works and applicable to general subjects" (Montaigne, *Essais*, book 3, chapter 12, coll. of the Pléiade, 1185), as hell is a universal literary theme, and as the work comprises a large number of textual testimonies of the representation of the hells in a diversified literature, over a long period of time.

The author examines the description of hell in Avestan and Vedic literatures (pp. 41–87), ancient Buddhism (pp. 89–146), Jainism (pp. 147–72), and the Sanskrit epics (pp. 173–233), and gives a detailed analysis of the hell in the *Dharmasamhitā* of *Varāhapurāṇa*, as an example of infernal representation (pp. 235–371).

This study of hell relies on primary sources mostly translated by the author and always quoted, in footnotes, in the languages and scripts of origin (Sanskrit, Pali, Ardhamāgadhī, Buddhist Chinese, Braj, Avadhī, Sadhukkaṛī, Persian, and Hindi). The translations are rigorous, sometimes accompanied by the critical discussion