

Brandon's exhaustive research on wartime kabuki is the book's major contribution. Based on his impressive research in plays, reviews, theater journals, newspapers, and other rare sources, Brandon does a thorough job of dispelling two misconceptions about kabuki: that in the 1930s and early 1940s it was already "a dusty museum of classic drama" (p. xiii), and that the greatest threat to kabuki came from SCAP censors. He tells a convincing story that, in contrast to its ossified image, kabuki survived adverse circumstances through lively adaptation, the most radical of all being the creation of the myth of kabuki as "classic" theater.

Christianity in India: from Beginnings to the Present.

By Robert Eric Frykenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. xxi + 524.

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According to official statistics, Christians comprise roughly 2.2 per cent of the total Indian population. But, as Frykenberg suggests, many Christians maintain a dual identity for their own social and economic purposes, including their own self-defense. Thus the actual figure, as one researcher suggests, could be as large as 7.3 per cent (p. 464). And the number of conversions has risen, especially since the European missionaries left India. Today missionaries are estimated to number between 40,000 and 100,000. These missionaries are "all native-born Indians" (p. 168), active in their efforts to spread Christianity. Unsurprisingly, these efforts have encountered severe and sometimes violent opposition from the Hindu nationalists. Given the circumstances, this well-researched and insightful book, authored by a highly regarded historian, is all the more important.

The volume is hefty, comprised of fifteen chapters that address most of the key topics of Christianity in India for a period of nearly two thousand years. Topics treated include the Thomas Tradition; the Portuguese and Catholicism; the Evangelical (Protestant) Christians; characteristics of the British Raj; and movements that occurred among *āvarna* and *adivāsi* people. Within this variety are woven four major themes: 1) the indigenesness of Christianity in India; 2) dual identity of Christians; 3) the British Raj as a "Hindu Raj"; and 4) the role of primal religion.

Of these four, undoubtedly the most recurrent is the indigenous nature of Christianity in India. Frykenberg argues that, contrary to the widely held stereotype (as well as the assertions of the Hindutva forces), Christianity is not alien to India nor was it an imposition by foreigners or colonialism. Since Christianity has no single sacred language nor one sacred blood or earth, the Christian faith, he argues, transcends ethnic, national, and cultural barriers. What European missionaries brought to India was stimulus and infrastructure. For the spread of Christianity, indigenous individuals and groups were crucial. They were committed, devoted volunteers who brought the Christian message to their own castes or cultural communities through the medium of their own "mother tongues" (p. 262). Moreover, a large number of people became Christians without prior direct missionary contacts. Frykenberg argues that "[T]hroughout missionary history in India, no single mass movement was ever initiated by a foreign missionary" (p. 262). Christians in India are thus "profoundly Indian" (p. 168).

The volume's second major recurrent theme is the dual identity of Christians in India. Frykenberg contends that all Christians in India "tended never to shed their distinctive identities based on 'birth' or *jāti*" (p. 263). Although he does not argue for Indian exceptionalism within the global context, he does observe that "each and every Christian community has tended to possess a deep and strong sense of its own ethnic identity", and that this kind of consciousness may "have been magnified in India" (p. 458). He also suggests that caste was not only a matter of birth, but also of culture. In any case,

there was no abstract “Christian”; rather, “each Christian and each community of Christians was knowable only in concrete and specific terms” (p. 377).

Frykenberg’s third theme is the nature of the British Raj as a “Hindu Raj”. The East India Company, as the author explains, first became a village lord, then a *zamindar*, and, eventually, a regional ruler (p. 193). Although the Company unified the whole continent of India, it could not disregard the political importance of support from nobles and other elite. Accordingly, it had to keep contractual relationships with local lords and regional powers. The Raj also had to support local deities. In this way, it became a “Hindu Raj”, whereby “Christians could have little if any place within the growing ‘Hindu’ empire” (p. 269).

The fourth major theme is that of primal religion, the role that Frykenberg regards as crucial. As he suggests, primal religion is the basic, elemental impulse within human experience anterior to “any superimposed religious impulses or subsequent religious institutions”. He also describes it as “something universally present within all humankind” and “deeply embedded religious impulses” (p. 10). The role of primal religion becomes especially important, Frykenberg contends, when one investigates why and how Christianity was received by some communities and not by others. Referring to *adivāsis*, he suggests, “[P]rimal religion and Christian faith sometimes have possessed a special affinity” – therefore they were able to embrace Christ without incurring a loss to their cultural identity (p. 459).

Frykenberg also candidly details the topics he was not able to attend to in the context of this book. These descriptions, sometimes quite lengthy, are very useful. The topics he identifies are: Pentecostalism; indigenous missionary movements; Hindutva oppositions to Christianity; secularism in India; and “churchless” Christians.

The book engenders many questions. First, Frykenberg’s analysis of the British Raj is problematic. Though it certainly is true that the East India Company had “Hindu” or “Indian” characteristics, the Raj appears to have changed its policy considerably over the years, especially from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. It also must be recalled that the Raj was neither recognized by a large number of Indians as “Hindu”, nor did it have the firm legitimacy enjoyed by previous Hindu or Muslim rulers. It was under these circumstances that the Hindutva forces developed. More attention should be given to the attitudes of non-Christians as well as to the changing nature of the Raj.

The concept of primal religion certainly presents a fertile area for exploration. As Frykenberg suggests, the question why some caste or tribal communities were receptive to Christianity while others were not is difficult to answer. One may have to clarify in detail the characteristics of the primal religion of each *jāti* or community as well as the exact nature of the affinity that each had with Christianity.

The book also reminds this reviewer of the question of how socio-economic changes relate to conversion. Frykenberg suggests that the conversion of *āvāna* and *adivāsi* communities to Christianity threatened social structures and longstanding economic relationships (pp. 272–73). He also hints that a radical increase in literacy among low-caste converts “provided them with means to escape from agrarian bondage”, and that places of service or leadership within the congregation were provided for them (pp. 273–74). But, with a few exceptions such as the Naders in south India, it remains mostly unclear how communities after conversion challenged socio-economic and political structures, and whether their attempts succeeded.

Finally, Frykenberg’s argument definitely is a very effective counter-argument against not only Hindu nationalists but also more moderate thinkers including M. K. Gandhi. Gandhi strongly opposed missionary work intended to convert the lower castes, contending that conversion to another religion was religious apostasy and a rebuff to Hindu society. We should acknowledge that this kind of thinking in Indian society has considerable strength. For a large number of people in India, religion is clearly one of the crucial factors constructing cultural as well as national identity. Their perception of a threat to their identity could develop into something serious and cause enormous problems. For this reason, a great deal more academic effort in this field is needed.

Frykenberg's book is truly a great contribution to the exploration of the complicated nature of religion and society in India. But, as any good book does, this one also points towards the future, specifically, the vast amount of research regarding conversions and Christianity in India that remains to be done.

The Gei of Geisha: Music, Identity and Meaning.

By Kelly M. Foreman. SOAS Musicology Series. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. Pp. xiv + 158.

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In this well-crafted book, Kelly M. Foreman takes on the pervasive conception of Japanese geisha as exploited erotic entertainers, and argues that the center of their professional lives is their dedication to traditional Japanese performing arts. While acknowledging the importance of dance to many geisha, Foreman focuses on those who concentrate on music, especially the playing of the shamisen. The book is the most significant contribution to literature on geisha since the publication of Liza Dalby's *Geisha* in 1983.

Foreman begins by attacking the stereotypes of geisha presented in popular media – notably the geisha as sexual plaything, and the geisha as passive and exploited. Arthur Golden's novel *Memoirs of a Geisha* comes in for its share of criticism, as does the idealization of geisha as a “lost feminine ideal” of submissiveness. Foreman argues that this depiction serves Western interests by contrasting the allegedly independent and powerful Western woman with the pathetic Asian one, symbolized by the geisha. Thus the geisha stereotype becomes an Orientalist product, an interpretation with which I am not entirely comfortable – surely Japanese themselves have promoted this stereotype, and one need look no further than Kawabata Yasunari's *Snow Country*. Be that as it may, however, it seems ironic that the geisha, shown by Foreman to have an iron-willed dedication to their art, appear in fictional depictions as helpless and pathetic.

Foreman's second chapter turns to the musical repertoire and training of the geisha. In the Preface the author suggests that those who are not musicologists or musicians might want to skim over this chapter; but I found myself wanting to know more about the genres than I could learn from the printed page. An included CD or an associated website, with examples of each genre, would have been a big help (the author could still create the latter!). The chapter concludes with a discussion of the training that geisha receive from professional teachers outside the geisha world. Foreman states that geisha spend from four to six hours a day in arts training, added to performing time in festivals and recitals. It is this busy schedule, Foreman suggests, that discourages geisha from marriage. The picture presented in this chapter is of women totally dedicated to their art.

Foreman then discusses geisha performances; they are of two types, large public stage productions and *ozashiki* お座敷 or private performances given in teahouses. She opens the chapter with a survey of the history of female performance, from early shamans to women's kabuki, and the eventual enclosure of female entertainment in the Edo-period pleasure quarters. Continuing into the Meiji period, when women were again permitted to perform in public venues, Foreman examines the inception of large stage performances in Tokyo and Kyoto. Organized by geographically-based geisha communities called *hanamachi* 花街, these performances enable geisha to present their arts of music and dance to the public, and serve as an important device for preserving Japan's traditional performing arts. Rather than earning money from these performances, however, the geisha are actually required to finance them – often going into debt, Foreman notes, to perpetuate an important cultural legacy. To support these activities, geisha turn to *ozashiki*, where geisha perform both for and with customers. At both *ozashiki* and stage performances, geisha are required to demonstrate their virtuosity in a