

contemporary scholarship on political indigeneity over the past decade in which she herself has been a key player. Additionally, a couple of Simpson's arguments would benefit from more explicit consideration of regional and contextual variations in refusal. Simpson successfully demonstrates Kahnawake's unique history and politics, though her conclusions and evidence often extend to members of other Mohawk communities and other Iroquois persons. As she critiques anthropologists for letting the Seneca, as "ideal traditionalists" (my phrasing), speak for all of Iroquoia, parts of the volume, taken out of context, risk privileging some Kahnawake:ronon as "ideal sovereigntists." While some Mohawks refuse a passport, and more or perhaps even most would do so if given the choice, the majority still do not. The penultimate chapter's pages on "feeling citizenship" (171–76) tease at but do not expand upon a consideration of the context in which people may refuse to refuse.

I have used the dissertation and articles which informed this book in my teaching for many years, and now assign *Mohawk Interruptus* to my students. It is an essential read for any study of settler colonialism, native/indigenous/first-nation studies, or the study of sovereignty, and also stands on its own as an important narrative of North America's ongoing colonial history.

——— Ian Kalman, McGill University and Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

## REFERENCES

- Alfred, Gerald R. 1995. *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2002. *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. 2002. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Said, Edward. 1994. *Orientalism* (25th anniversary ed.) New York: Vintage Books.
- Taylor, Charles, et al. 1994. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Narendra Subramanian, *Nation and Family: Personal Law, Cultural Pluralism, and Gendered Citizenship in India*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014, pp. 377 + xvii; ISBN 978-0-8047-8878-6.

doi:10.1017/S0010417515000511

Scholarship on law, family, and women's rights in South Asia has certainly progressed since 1993, when Tanika Sarkar, while anticipating reactions of "startled disbelief," cautiously proposed that debates about Hindu conjugality were

at the core of militant nationalist efforts to shape the Indian nation.<sup>1</sup> Sarkar was writing in the wake of J.D.M. Derrett's stupendous scholarship on Hindu law and its evolution, and alongside Parashar, Agarwal, and Agnes, the latter working on colonial and postcolonial Indian law as it affected women's conjugal and property rights. When Sarkar wrote her piece this legal scholarship on women's rights was already complemented by D. E. Smith's constitutionalist (and implicitly comparative) evaluation of India as a secular state, which pointed (among other things) to the notorious personal (status) laws of India. Personal laws are segmented family laws variably based on religious codes. They are inevitably gender-discriminatory and therefore arguably in conflict with the liberal principles of the Indian constitution. Since the late 1990s, a substantial body of historical scholarship has also told the story of those who negotiated such legal systems,<sup>2</sup> such that the story of Indian personal laws is now part of the complex and growing literature of law in empires.

In a certain sense, *Nation and Family* returns to that moment in the 1990s when the history of women's rights and of nation-state formation in India converged, and it moves in the explicitly comparative direction in order to understand how and why the personal laws of India have evolved in the postcolonial period after 1947. Subramanian argues that the history of the Indian personal laws can be explained with reference to a mutually interacting set of factors, the most important of which are the nature of "state-society relations" and "discourses of community," the latter including both the national and religious/other particular communities (see diagram and table on pp. 46–47). Subramanian has generated this explanatory framework based on a magnificent summary of family laws and their evolution across (what happens to be) the Islamic world from Morocco to Indonesia in the second half of the twentieth century (chapter 2). Reading this, I admired Subramanian's quiet rejection of both the area-specialist's tendency to explain fairly common trajectories in terms of the specificities of a particular area's history, but I also liked his eschewing of the ambitious political scientist's propensity for building evaluative models based on culturally specific ideal types.

Chapters 3 and 4 present the history of Hindu personal law from the 1940s until the present day. Chapter 3 focuses on the legislative developments of the 1950s when Hindu law was codified through statute in the wake of Indian independence. Chapter 4 continues the story of legal reform from the 1970s but also surveys relevant adjudication since the early twentieth century. Chapter 5 tells a similar, if shorter story about the two largest minority communities with personal laws of their own: Muslims and Christians. Chapters 4 and 5 together

<sup>1</sup> Tanika Sarkar, "Rhetoric against the Age of Consent: Resisting Colonial Reason and the Death of a Child Wife," *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, 3 (1993): 1869–78.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see "Forum: Maneuvering the Personal Law System in Colonial India," *Law and History Review* 28, 4 (2010): 1043–65.

represent the most original part of the book; the study of case law is excellent and illuminating, as are the (sadly brief) discussions regarding Muslim institutions and associations concerned with the study and development of classical Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and of the efforts to connect that tradition to modern Indian law. Chapter 6 summarizes these findings and offers certain recommendations regarding the political and policy approaches conducive to the reform of personal laws and the enhancement of women's rights.

I did not find this book easy to read. It abounds in long and complex lists (of factors, arguments, criticisms; e.g., 100–1) in which I kept losing myself. Key arguments are often hidden in extremely dense, dry, and inadequately signposted narrative text. On the other hand, the book demonstrates meticulous scholarship and is characterized by consistent rejection of careless generalizations and commonplaces. Subramanian's overall recommendation is for culturally sensitive legal reform, with the engagement rather than antagonizing of community leaders and religious specialists. Based on his study of the debates and politics underlying more than half a century of generally progressive, if slow and patchy legal change in India, he is optimistic about the possibility of this approach and clear about its necessity.

I need much more convincing about when and why reforms that purport to be in line with "traditions" are accepted as such across the social and political spectrum within religious communities as well as beyond. I would have liked to learn much more about the sociology of these potential reform bases, but based on the material that the book presents, Subramanian's recommendation looks both plausible and admirable to me.

———Nandini Chatterjee, University of Exeter