

with dignity. This part of the book, by one of the finest scholars on African and Pan-African affairs, is nothing but astonishing.

Chapter four, on the claimed Western thoughts of liberalism, realism and farm subsidies, encompasses several summits that range from the Havana Charter, to the first global trade agreement of 2013, is finely analysed to scrutinize the reality, as against the perceived notion, of the Global South. The concluding chapter on the U.S./E.U. conflict of the 1990's and the role of the WTO in it, critically analyses a conflict that had an impact on the Global South. This conflict not only provoked nations beyond imagination but also reveals a hidden cost on the environment in Latin America. The author could have had a better conclusion to his summing up of thoughts about neo-colonialism through globalisation and how world politics needs to learn to treat countries with dignity rather than treating them as types of economy.

Overall, Agyemen's book epitomizes a new beginning in the field of power and powerlessness in the present world. The scholarship that the author has exhibited through this work should inspire new generations of scholars to work on highly controversial subjects of great importance, a practice that is becoming increasingly rarity these days. For sure, this work would go a long way in understanding a phenomenon that has invariably affected the lives of each and every one in the global South. The book is rare, daring and perfect in an academia that too often drifts towards choosing subjects of comfort.

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Cassie Adcock. *The Limits of Tolerance: Indian Secularism and the Politics of Religious Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 233 pp. \$35.00. ISBN: 9780199995448.

Writing the history of secularism in India is as fraught a task as writing the history of liberalism, the history of socialism, or the history of nationalism. Like these three other concepts, secularism implies both a set of ideas as well as practices that relate back, at some level, to the European origin point of these ideas. For their appearance in colonial India, historians have been offering a variety of interpretations that seek to both situate India in its own history but to come to terms with encounters with ideas that emerged elsewhere. Cassie Adcock's *The Limits of Tolerance: Indian Secularism and the Politics of Religious Freedom* is one of the latest contributions in the ongoing debates about the nature and history of secularism in India.

Through three parts of two chapters each, Adcock takes her readers on a critical history of secularism in India through the particular history of the Arya Samaj in the Punjab in the northwest of India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As a manifesto about the historiography of secularism and at the same time a history of the Arya Samaj, the book offers an intellectual history of the term religion in colonial India and the historical results of the emergence of this term in the specific context of the colonial Punjab.

She begins in her introduction with a brief analysis of the tendency for scholars to declare that Tolerance (used in Adcock's text with a capital T) functions as a discourse that played a

major role in the specifically Indian history of secularism that emerged in colonial India. Adcock presents the Tolerance perspective as one that interprets Hinduism as essentially tolerant of difference and, significantly, non-proselytizing, contrasted with proselytizing religions such as Christianity. Furthermore, this Tolerance is the bedrock of Indian secularism and, for Adcock, hides a number of assumptions about religion. The Tolerance perspective and the ideas it upholds, for Adcock, is shown through numerous laws passed in independent India that restrict the right to proselytize, keeping the assumption that proselytisation is not a part of Hinduism, and also that Hinduism is the religion of the majority of Indians. Adcock sets out her goal to deconstruct and then historically examine what lurks behind this Tolerance through a historical study of how the term religion emerged in nineteenth century India, its European inheritances, and the Indian uses to which the term religion has been marshaled.

Adcock approaches this topic by offering three inter-related historical discussions: the emergence of categories of religion in nineteenth century India, the historical rise of the Arya Samaj, a reformist organization based in the Punjab and their usage of *shuddhi*, or the reconversion or inclusion of individuals into the Hindu community, and a focus on the “ritual-politics” of non-elites’ relationship to *shuddhi*. Part I, *Religion and Translation in Colonial India*, offers her manifesto, that “only by abjuring religion as a descriptive category can we suspend established narratives of Indian secularism and foreground the politics of translation” (40). Here, she argues that rather than focus on the politics of representation, as has been the case in many studies of religion in colonial India, the more appropriate focus for a critical history of secularism would be the politics of translation, in which Indian actors had appropriated and recast various definitions of religion for their own purposes. In this section, readers learn about the procedure of *shuddhi*, sometimes defined as “reconversion”, often understood to be a technique that the Arya Samaj, a reformist organization based in the Punjab, used to increase the numbers of people counted as Hindu in colonial India. Rather than simply shore up numbers, this practice was actually appropriated in particular terms by many different individuals and groups across the caste and communitarian spectrum, including low-caste Hindus, Untouchables and Muslims. In her second part, *The Political History of Universal Religion in India*, Adcock offers a critical intellectual history of the term “religion” as it was used in colonial India, including strands such as universal religion, deemed by Orientalists, Deists, and other European protagonists to be religion based on revelations but not restricted to any one particular culture or place. Other sorts of religion would be “natural” (or anthropological and based not on the singular truth of any one tradition) and also national religions, restricted in place and time, and religions based on special revelations, such as Christianity, claimed by its promoters as the singular home of truth. Rather than simply state the superiority or Indianness of the Vedic religion, Arya Samaj promoters argued for the universal nature of their religion, and, through that definition, pushed for proselytisation within the terms of their universal religion.

In her final section, Adcock focuses on how the controversial practice of *shuddhi*, interpreted by some as proselytisation and therefore a target of opprobrium for those supporting the Tolerance perspective such as Gandhi, was understood by low-caste, Untouchable, and Muslim protagonists. Adcock charts how individuals like Dharm Pal, Sham Lal, Satya Deo, born Muslims who participated in *shuddhi*, and low-caste and Untouchables also saw *shuddhi* not in religious terms but as a path toward education, assertion of the right to access public wells, and jobs. In the meantime, during the turbulent 1920s and 30s, Gandhi, along with others had targeted and attacked *shuddhi* as an attack on non-Hindus, and directed attention (and by

extension much of the Indian National Congress also) toward inter-religious harmony as well as the upper castes doing penance for their sins. This move neglected the radical potential of *shuddhi*, and also cemented the idea (for Adcock, central to the Tolerance perspective) that all low-caste and Untouchable peoples were, by default, Hindu.

Adcock places a huge burden on the Tolerance with a capital T perspective, which is articulated by Gandhi in the 1920s and cited across time and space by Radhakrishnan and others, and allegedly stated in vague terms by the Brahmo Samaj, another reformist organization of the nineteenth century. Though certainly identifiable as a popular idea within India and reflected in the anxiety around proselytisation today, Adcock gives the perspective a great coherence and power, such that it “paved the way for political developments during the 1930s, when Gandhi and the Indian National Congress secured a constitutional arrangement that established a Hindu political majority, encompassing Untouchables despite the strong opposition of vocal Untouchable political leadership by Ambedkar and others, and fixing Muslims in a political minority, despite continuing objection from many Muslim leaders” (168). Such grand statements are not supported by any detailed or intensively researched conclusions. Rather, the identification of Tolerance with a capital T is more of a rhetorical device that moves her argument forward about the radical potential of the Arya Samaj’s controversial *shuddhi* program. When it is not dismissed as simply Hindu nationalism, and when terms like “religion” are held up to intellectual-historical scrutiny, *shuddhi* then holds potential to complicate received narratives of secularism. Though Tolerance with a capital T may not be the great monster that she has made it out to be, Adcock does identify an extraordinary and potentially field-changing aspect of the fraught history of Indian secularism: the perspectives of low-caste, Untouchable, Muslim, and other subaltern voices within the context of *shuddhi*. Such a topic holds the potential to historicize secularism in India in a manner that deepens the field’s historical understanding of religion as it emerged as a category, but also transforms the very meanings of secularism itself. Adcock’s contributions here are tentative, as her evidence in this regard is relatively light compared to the grand claims she offers, such as that non-elites took up *shuddhi* “as part of their efforts to transform, reorient, and refuse the ‘meticulous rituals of power’ that rendered them subordinate to Hindu and Muslim (or Sikh) elites” (47). Such claims, alongside her discussions of Muslim *shuddhi* beneficiaries, are suggestive but thinly argued.

Adcock does show in a manner—unprecedented in the field—how Arya Samaj members alongside other Indian protagonists used multiple strands of definitions of religion (from universal to national to natural) to push forth claims about their own activities in ways that scholars of colonial India must confront for any meaningful assessment of religion and secularism in India. Though her focus is on colonial India, an easy parallel that comes to mind for scholars of South Asian religions is the historic and complicated competitions that developed between Buddhist preachers and Christian missionaries in eighteenth and nineteenth century Sri Lanka. In colonial Sri Lanka as in India, the manners in which Sri Lankans and Europeans engaged in mutually constitutive relations of power in the realm of religion requires a full-scale investigation that transcends any simplistic reading of religion as a category inherited from Europe. Adcock goes to such lengths to claim that all appropriated European discourses of religion and to such detail into how these debates were complicated by the local realities that it is not clear how “European” these discourses of religion were in the Indic context. As studies of liberalism, socialism and nationalism have advanced beyond simplistic diffusionist models, perhaps the time has come to shed the labels and anxieties of thinking through a putative “European” origin to

debates that became transformed in India. Rather, scholars now may search for how such debates did not begin only with European intrusions into India, but form a part of a global intellectual history that includes, but is not fundamentally shaped by, the “European” component of this history. Adcock’s book represents a powerful step in that direction.

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Vinita Damodaran, Anna Winterbottom and Alan Lester, eds. *The East India Company and The Natural World*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 320 pp. ISBN: 9781137427267. \$105.00.

This volume contains eleven essays that explore the impact on the natural world of the global networks of transfer and exchange that the English East India Company created, fostered and extended. The work also shows the maturing of environmental history as a branch of academic study: its focus is more on understanding the East India Company as a medium for analysing various aspects of environmental history (that range from climate to the restructuring of landscapes) rather than painting a picture of a pristine golden age of untouched nature ravaged by the advent of globalising forces, which the majority of earlier works in this field concentrate on. The claim to the multi-disciplinary tenor of the essays made by Alan Lester in the introduction is maintained throughout the work (which covers topics such as “plant colonialism”, the history of famines in eighteenth century Bengal and the building of new biological and landscape connections between India and New Zealand during the nineteenth century). The volume brings together an interesting group of scholars making it an interesting read, so one gets to read about the prospects of “imperial careering” by officials such as Robert Wight and its relevance to the acquisition of global scientific knowledge in writings by a practicing plant taxonomist (i.e., H.J. Noltie) and, a few essays later, about the complexities and intricacies in the naming, classification and contextualisation of *Rafflesia* in botanical science by a historian (Timothy P. Barnard). All the contributors to this book have been, more or less, successful in employing a “networked approach” and have done a commendable job in gleaning out the multiple layers of interaction between the English East India Company and diverse components of the natural world including rivers, climate, the floral and faunal systems, humans, tribes and environmental disasters. The question of scale that the editors attempt to re-formulate, especially of the Indian Ocean as a scalar unit, remains more elusive. Further elaboration, either in the introduction or the afterword, on such questions and their problematics may have added more clarity.

In the first essay, Deepak Kumar engages with the botanical explorations of the English East Company and tries to problematise the growth of botany against the backdrop of imperialism. Some of the insights that he puts forth, such as the argument to not completely discard the core-periphery framework and the question as to who sets the terms and conditions for collaboration and cooperation in forging networks of knowledge, can not only take environmental history but also new imperial history in new directions. Any work that is truly multi-disciplinary is susceptible to the challenge of unevenness in terms of the scope and depth of the research involved and the present work is no exception.