

Protestants in the nineteenth century through production of mass-market images meant to instruct children and (increasingly) inspire adults. The essay includes a reproduction of a portrait of Christ published by Currier and Ives around the time of the Civil War that is remarkable for its lack of accompanying text. Morgan provides evidence that, at a time when anti-Roman Catholic prejudice was running at an occasionally lethal high tide, Protestants were at least beginning to appreciate the devotional power of images in a way that Catholics had long understood. From Morgan, one moves on to an essay by Erika Doss (University of Colorado) on the use of Elvis Presley as spiritually meaningful icon. Her essay, which describes the many ways in which devotion to Elvis is manifested, is refreshingly nuanced and balanced when compared to many treatments of this often highly sensationalized subject. Yes, she writes, there are aspects of "Elvis culture"—home shrines and public rituals—that do suggest that its adherents are involved in religious practice. But Doss also finds that these Elvis devotees make up as decentralized a movement as one could imagine, individuals acting separately in response to their own personal requirements. There is no real church of Elvis, nor does one appear to be needed.

The book contains fourteen other essays. J. Shawn Landres (University of California, Santa Barbara), for example, discusses religious symbolism in public murals in Asian American neighborhoods in Los Angeles, while Michael Berkowitz (University of London) examines the effect that portrait photography had in helping shape a secular identity among American and British Jews in the early twentieth century. Any of these essays could be cited to illustrate the possibilities within the field. But two may be particularly worth mentioning, if only because of the size of the populations under study.

In "The Southern Baptist Controversy and the Press" Mark G. Borchert (Christopher Newport University) describes how fundamentalists within the Southern Baptist Convention succeeded in shaping the way that general news media reported on the fundamentalists' drive to take control of the convention (with more than fifteen million members, the nation's largest Protestant denomination), an effort that began in 1979. Typically, the fundamentalists viewed news reporters as hostile to their cause and sympathetic to the denomination's moderate wing. But when it came to reporting on the issues in the power struggle, Borchert argues, reporters borrowed heavily from the fundamentalists' language. That should not be surprising: The Baptist Right never lacked an ability to cast its struggle, with black-and-white clarity, as a battle over the authority of Scripture, in which the fundamentalists proclaimed their role as defenders of the Bible's literal truth. Moderates, by contrast, tended to rely on traditional Baptist locutions (i.e., references to "soul competency" and "the priesthood of the believer") that defied easy translation for general newspaper readers. Fundamentalists were wonderfully fluent in a language that news reporters could quote, a decided advantage in presenting their case to an essentially conservative Baptist public among the consumers of news.

In the aforementioned "Allah On-Line: The Practice of Global Islam in the Information Age," Lawrence describes the ways in which the bounds of Islam's "Straight Path" are tested by Muslim groups and individuals in cyberspace.

Lawrence discusses nearly two dozen Web sites established by political, cultural, and private groups—governments, student associations, Sufi orders, and various sectarians, as well as women and gay Muslims. He cautions that those who define Islam for the vast population of Web surfers do not necessarily represent the world's billion-plus Muslims but, rather, are voices from select communities (not least because they have the financial means and technological skill to mount a Web presence). But the list of sites he offers, along with a brief commentary on each, should be useful to anyone wishing to gain familiarity with the Islamic Web.

Given the range of subjects covered by these essays, it is difficult to imagine that Hoover and Clark's collection will not work to inspire and encourage further research. Offering as it does an inviting sense of the possibilities in the study of religion and media, the book should have considerable value to students of this field.

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Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India. By James W. Laine. Oxford University Press, 2003. 127 pages. \$35.00.

It is not possible to review this book without also considering the events that have surrounded its publication in India. By any reckoning, the response to James Laine's *Shivaji* has been extraordinary and startling. It has also been deeply alarming to those of us who study Indian history and religion in the United States and has to be even more so to scholars in India. This brief monograph tracing the biographical narratives of a seventeenth-century Maharashtrian warrior and ruler has been withdrawn from publication in India by Oxford University Press and banned by the state government of Maharashtra. A mob attacked and ransacked the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), one of the most prestigious Indological centers in the country, because Laine mentioned it in his acknowledgments, and scholars whom Laine thanked for their assistance have been assaulted. So heated were the emotions that Indian Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee got involved by criticizing the book ban and the assault on BORI, though more recently, with a national election campaign getting under way, Vajpayee warned that foreign authors "must not play with our national pride." The controversy continues as I write this, with a police commissioner in Pune, Maharashtra, summoning Laine to India for questioning.

So what is all this fuss about? Much of the controversy has swirled around one easily overlooked sentence on page 93 of *Shivaji*. I will return to this and discuss the events more fully, but first I want to describe the book itself.

James Laine's *Shivaji* concerns a warrior of the Maratha community who through adept military and diplomatic maneuvers was able to establish an autonomous Maratha kingdom centered in Maharashtra at a time of Mughal

overlordship in most of the subcontinent. The book locates this leader in the historical setting of the seventeenth century, as a parvenu "Hindu king" operating in the late medieval political milieu of "Islamic India," as the book's subtitle would have it. The subtitle, I am told, was not Laine's choice and misleads the reader somewhat as to the author's main intent. Laine's primary interest here is not so much with the history of Shivaji as such but, rather, with the histories of Shivaji, the stories later told about the warrior-king. As Laine puts it, he seeks "to examine critically the growth of his legend as it relates to narratives of Maharashtrian Hindu identity" (5).

The process of narrativizing Shivaji began in Shivaji's own lifetime, and Shivaji played an important role in setting his own legend in motion. Near the end of his life, after he had successfully organized an independent kingdom, Shivaji decided to have himself consecrated as ruler following the old (and by then largely abandoned) Indic rite of *rajyabhiseka*. As part of the consecratory preparations, he commissioned at least two poetic narratives of his life and deeds, one in Sanskrit and the other in Hindi. Laine gives extended attention to these two lengthy renderings, as they introduce many of the key episodes and themes that continue to characterize Shivaji's legend. In another publication Laine has translated the Sanskrit account *Sivabharata*, a fascinating epic, as *The Epic of Shivaji* (Orient Longman, 2001).

The tellings of the Shivaji legend do not end there, however. Laine shows that a second important phase in the narrative history of Shivaji occurred in the eighteenth century, when devotional hagiographies like that of Mahipati placed Shivaji in a relationship with two of the major Marathi devotional saints, Tukaram and Ramdas. Laine is rightly skeptical of the historicity of these accounts, but he shows how these apocryphal episodes have become inescapable parts of Shivaji's story and how they bring out new thematic possibilities in it. They also foreground a new way of presenting Hinduism. The conflation of Shivaji's political mission with the religious one of the saints, Laine argues, "is part of a general tendency to oppose a single universalistic Hinduism to a single monolithic Islam" (58). He goes on to consider British colonial period accounts, including Grant Duff's dismissive *History of the Mahrattas* (1826), where Shivaji appears as a plunderer and freebooter. More significant to Shivaji's protean identity are the subsequent efforts of Indian nationalist leaders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, like B. G. Tilak, who tried to institute an annual Shivaji festival, and M. G. Ranade, who recast Shivaji as a patriot and nationalist.

To bring the story fully up to date, one might consider the historical narratives of V. D. Savarkar, the main theorist of Hindutva, such as *Hindu Pad Padshahi* (1925), and the ways Shivaji has been employed in the propaganda and mobilizations of Hindu nationalist groups like the Vishva Hindu Parishad and the Shiv Sena. While Laine is clearly aware of these recent versions of the Shivaji legend, and perhaps was motivated by them to write his revisionist study, he wisely (in light of subsequent events) decided to steer clear of confronting them directly. He mentions Savarkar in passing but gives greater attention to other modern writers like Babasaheb Purandare, who continues to embellish and

standardize the legend of Shivaji "as the patriotic tale of a great man whose kingdom can be seen as a golden age" (88).

Shivaji is a succinct, cogent study that is admirably well organized and consistently insightful. Though brief, it makes a significant contribution to the study of Indian history and religious studies. In one of the first studies to trace the longitudinal developments in the biography of a major precolonial figure of India, Laine employs an innovative approach that could well be adapted to other figures. In addition, Laine makes valuable observations about the precolonial history of "Hinduism."

Laine's book is not a polemic, but neither is it politically innocent. He writes with a full awareness of the role Shivaji has played and continues to play in Maharashtrian and Hindu nationalist politics. Laine quotes a passage from Michel Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge* on the importance of disturbing the "tranquility" with which "pre-existing forms of continuity" may be accepted. He acknowledges that his study of the historical constructedness of Shivaji's biography is intended in part to counteract the essentialized, anachronistic, and downright incorrect presentations of the king as a zealous Hindu warrior fighting Muslim demons to create a Hindu Indian nation-state. He wishes to contribute, as he puts it, to "a richer understanding of this great man, and rescue his biography from the grasp of those who see India as a Hindu nation at war with its Muslim neighbors" (6). For this alone, Laine's book could be seen as a significant scholarly intervention in current Indian public discourse, a critique of Hindu nationalist claims in support of beleaguered secularists.

However, Laine's work resists easy political categorization. In looking at seventeenth-century works like the *Sivabharata* and eighteenth-century writings like those of Mahipati, Laine sees processes of Hindu and Muslim identity construction. He is careful to distinguish these identities from those postulated in contemporary India, but his study also leads him to criticize the widespread "modern secularist" position that would locate the construction of Hinduism as a preeminently colonial and postcolonial period project. The secularist position, intended to avoid the anachronistic projection of modern Hindu identities back into the indefinite past, may in Laine's view involve its own form of anachronism, by imputing "a kind of modern liberalism to the premodern subject, according to which religious affiliation is a rather insignificant and private affair" (102). Narratives of Shivaji from precolonial times, by contrast, point to the salience of Hindu and Muslim markers of identity in the public sphere dating back to Shivaji's own time. Laine's argument here is an important one and deserves broad discussion.

Whatever its considerable merits as a scholarly study tracing Shivaji's changing identity over several centuries, Laine's book has taken on a new identity in Indian public discourse in the months since its publication, as a point of controversy reflecting social and political agendas more than historiographical issues. It is worthwhile to trace the sequence of events that have surrounded the book, for those who have not followed the story as it has unfolded. (The following outline is reconstructed from numerous newspaper and magazine articles published in India, as well as several first-person accounts, all of which have been circulated

through the Internet over the past four months. I will not name names, but I would like to acknowledge the spirit of generosity and shared concern demonstrated by the community of Indian religionists.)

In November 2003, not long after Oxford University Press brought the book out in India, a group of historians led by Babasaheb Purandare made a request to the publisher to withdraw the book. Purandare is the author of a two-volume biography of Shivaji in Marathi, and Laine describes him as "the most influential purveyor of the Shivaji tradition over the past thirty years" (86). The historians' letter to Oxford charged that Laine had cast "baseless aspersions" on Shivaji, who "commands the love, respect and admiration of crores of people and is an inspiration to them." One of the historians specified what those aspersions were. "Laine's remark on Shivaji's parentage," he said, "is factually incorrect and there is not a shred of evidence to support it." From the start of the controversy, then, the central issue was not one of essentialism versus historical constructivism but, rather, the legitimacy of Shivaji's birth.

It is well accepted that Shivaji grew up largely apart from his father. Stories of Shivaji's upbringing regularly accord his mother Jijabhai the primary role in his moral education. In his final chapter Laine considers "cracks" in the narrative of Shivaji's life, where elements of Shivaji's legend may appear in tension with commonly held values. The fact that Shivaji seemed to have little to do with his father clashes with patriarchal values and has led to a variety of attempts to paper over any hints of familial discord embedded in the narrative. Laine goes on to mention one further way subsequent tellers of the Shivaji story deal with the tension: "The repressed awareness that Shivaji had an absentee father is also revealed by the fact that Maharashtrians tell jokes naughtily suggesting that his guardian Dadaji Kanddev was his biological father" (93). Since this is the precipitating text for all the events to follow, it is important to observe here that Laine reports the fact that naughty jokes are told, but in no way does he endorse them as factually correct. His characterization of this oral tradition as "naughty" and "jokes," in fact, indicates the author's dismissal of their historical veracity.

Upon receiving the historians' letter of protest, however, Oxford University Press did not bother to get into the fine points of textual interpretation. Instead, it withdrew the book immediately from publication in India on 22 November and issued an apology to the offended historians. There the matter might have ended. However, the following month the Shiv Sena, a Hindu nationalist group based in Maharashtra that takes its name from the "army of Shivaji," decided to take up the issue.

On 22 December members of the Shiv Sena entered the office of Professor Shrikant Bahulkar. Bahulkar is a Sanskritist who assisted Laine in translating the *Sivabharata*, and Laine thanked him in his acknowledgments. For this the Shiv Sena cadres roughed up Bahulkar, made him stand on a chair, and blackened his face to humiliate him. The next day Shiv Sena members also went to the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. Laine mentions BORI as his "scholarly home" in Pune and thanks several scholars associated with the institute. The Shiv Sena made inquiries about BORI's role in Laine's research, and one can imagine this involved some amount of physical intimidation, but evidently the

cadres satisfied themselves that the scholars of BORI were not responsible for Laine's aspersions, and they took no further action. Meanwhile, from snowy Minnesota, Laine sent an apology. It was, he stated publicly, "never his intention to defame the great Maharashtrian hero."

On the morning of 5 January 2004 a new group dramatically entered the controversy. About 150 members of a group called the Sambhaji Brigade barged into BORI, ransacked the library, destroyed rare manuscripts, and disarmed a statue of Sarasvati, goddess of learning. Damages were estimated at around Rs 1.25 crore (or roughly \$300,000), though some of the losses were unrecoverable. Who were these new disputants? When I first read of the attack, I assumed it was another new Hindu nationalist group that I had never heard of, allied with the Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and other Hindutva groups. However, I soon learned that things are more complicated. The Sambhaji Brigade is the aggressive youth wing of the Maratha Seva Sangh (MSS). The MSS is an organization patterned on the RSS, in that it is a militant cultural organization, and it emulates the tactics of Hindutva groups. However, it perceives the RSS as excessively brahmanic in orientation, and the purpose of the MSS by contrast is to promote the interests of the Maratha community. From its anti-brahmin standpoint, the MSS no doubt viewed the BORI, famous for its research on the Sanskrit heritage of India, as a brahmanic institution, and the controversy over Laine's book provided its members an opportunity to act, not so much against Laine's aspersions as against a bulwark of brahmanic culture. The book had now been drawn into Maharashtrian caste politics.

After the attack on BORI, police arrested some seventy activists of the Sambhaji Brigade and the MSS. In a reassuring display of cooperation and support, students and teachers from colleges and universities around Pune, as well as scholars from abroad who were studying in Pune, joined together to clean up the institute and to stack up the disheveled books. Meanwhile, scholars employed by BORI and all those persons mentioned in Laine's acknowledgments learned to live with police security.

On 15 January the Maharashtra state government, led by Chief Minister Shinde of the Congress Party, banned the book. But by an interesting accident of timing, the following day Prime Minister Vajpayee of the Bharatiya Janata Party visited Mumbai airport for the ceremonial unveiling of a new statue of Shivaji. Vajpayee heaped praises on the great Maratha hero, as is appropriate for such an occasion, but he also took the opportunity to criticize the state government's action in banning the book. The best way to oppose a book, he argued, is to write a better one. "If you want to make a line appear short, do not erase it, but draw a longer one beside it," he advised. Of course, Chief Minister Shinde responded by criticizing Vajpayee's interference. And two months later, on 27 March 2004, with a national election campaign just getting under way, Vajpayee had taken a harder approach. What had happened to Laine, he asserted, was a warning to all foreign authors that they must not play with our national pride. The book and the events surrounding it, stemming from the misinterpretation of one sentence, are now employed in Indian election rhetoric to invoke "national pride" and to pose a dark threat to other "foreign authors."

I am afraid that the story is not over yet, and at this point it does not seem a particularly edifying tale. However, it does illustrate some of the dilemmas and pitfalls involved in writing about Hinduism in an age of Hindutva. James Laine may have intended his thoughtful critique of both Hindu nationalist and secularist historiography to have a Foucauldian effect of disturbing the tranquility of socially constructed syntheses. However, early on the law of unforeseen consequences kicked in, and the disturbance has taken on forms he never could have anticipated, over a single passage that to most readers would not appear as polemical or problematic.

Long ago, in an 1882 address at the Sorbonne, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" the philosopher and historian of religion Ernest Renan observed, "To forget and—I will venture to say—to get one's history wrong, are essential factors in the making of a nation." While Laine does not put it quite so baldly, his book illuminates the social processes by which the story of a significant cultural hero is retold and transformed in accord with changing conceptions of Indian nationhood. Forgetting inconvenient aspects plays a significant role in this transformation. Renan goes on immediately to point out that for this reason, "the advance of historical studies is often a danger to nationality." Historical research may indeed reveal the "deeds of violence which have marked the origin of all political formations" (in Renan's words) or the "cracks" in a heroic narrative (in Laine's terms) that nationalists would prefer to plaster over. It appears that in this period of Hindu nationalist ascendancy in India, historians of Indian religions, who have until fairly recently enjoyed an apolitical immunity, will have to come to grips with the possibility of being perceived as dangers to Hindutva definitions of nationality.

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Superpower Syndrome: America's Apocalyptic Confrontation with the World. By Robert Jay Lifton. Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2003. 211 pages. \$12.95.

For four decades Robert Jay Lifton has practiced the art of psychohistory in the service of moral conscience. He has illuminated, explained, and decried some of the most egregious violations of peace and humanity: Nazi medical experiments, the U.S. war against Vietnam, Aum Shin Rikyo's efforts at mass murder, the spread of nuclear weapons. In *Superpower Syndrome* Lifton applies the fruits of this life's work to the post-11 September 2001 world and particularly to the George W. Bush administration's reaction to the 9/11 attack.

All of the hallmarks of Lifton's work are here: careful research, deft interweaving of psychology and politics, stimulating insights, a fluid readable style, and above it all a sensitive conscience pointing toward a better human future. As always, Lifton's rhetoric is so compelling that it seems to offer a powerful

analytical argument. As so often, though, there is ultimately more fine rhetoric than fine logical argumentation. Trying to reconstruct Lifton's logic with analytical precision is often like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall. This may be a minor sin in a writer with such a refined moral compass and such a large audience. But for those who study the interface between contemporary politics and religion, the result is a somewhat frustrating mix of sharp insight and murky overall argument.

Lifton's master trope here is "apocalypticism" (hence the subtitle: "America's Apocalyptic Confrontation with the World"). He finds a worldwide trend toward apocalypticism throughout the twentieth century. He warns that the Bush administration accelerated this trend by pushing U.S. policy far too much in apocalyptic directions. But what, precisely, is this apocalypticism? At times, Lifton seems to be talking about the classic Jewish and Christian vision of apocalypse: a cataclysm that destroys the entire existing world to usher in a new and perfect world. Most often, though, he uses the words *apocalypse* and *apocalyptic* more loosely to refer to any act of large-scale violence intended to purify some part of the world of evil and thereby renew it.

Although Lifton always places acts of apocalyptic violence in their particular historical contexts, he has little interest in analyzing or classifying the differences among them. His persistent theme is to find a psychological thread connecting all apocalyptic gestures. All are ultimately efforts to fend off vulnerability, particularly vulnerability to death, he suggests; all aim at transcendent life. But all apocalyptic believers know, if only unconsciously, that their gestures are futile. Therefore, they are very likely to feel threatened and see themselves as potential or actual victims. To still their own doubts (and guilt feelings); they identify the threat as coming from some evil other. Then they set out to erase their doubts by destroying that other.

Apocalypticists also battle their death anxiety by identifying themselves with God or some equally cosmic force or symbol. This totalizing impulse constantly raises the stakes: every frustration becomes evidence of radical victimization at the hands of absolute evil. The logical response is to plan greater acts of violence commensurate with the scale of the victimization and evil. So the whole process must unfold on a grandiose scale, creating visions of a final battle between global good and global evil. Thus apocalypticists see themselves as serving the ultimate force in control of history; they wield their violence to bring history to a purified, perfect end.

This is all very thought-provoking stuff (though perhaps familiar to specialists in apocalyptic studies). And Lifton hangs numerous smaller insights on his overall structure. But when he comes to the meat of his subject—the conflict between the U.S. government and "Islamic terrorists" as represented by Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda—the structure sometimes seems to run too quickly past demonstrable facts.

For Lifton, the violent form of *jihad* practiced by Al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups reflects "a powerful, amorphous impulse to destroy a tainted world and renew it through Islamist purity" (75). This impulse emerges from Muslims' sense of humiliation at the hands of the West. Yet Lifton's own words, and