

It also remains to be seen what impact the ‘false’ promise made by the departing British after 1945 had on the Nagas. This is not to give a clean chit to the post-independence Indian state either.

Overall, Franke’s book would raise the ire of the majority of India’s scholars who would probably categorise his work as imperialistic in nature. In reality, it is very difficult for an anthropologist to get data about the thoughts, attitudes and actions of the Nagas. Due to the operation of the inner permit line policy, it is very difficult for foreign scholars to conduct in-depth interviews with the tribes located along India’s north-east frontier. However, Weigold’s book makes a radical intervention in one of the core areas of Indian historiography—the independence–decolonisation debate. Whether these two books advance the cause of military history or not is a moot question.

Kaushik Roy

Department of History, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal

FINBARR B. FLOOD, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval ‘Hindu–Muslim’ Encounter* (New Delhi: Permanent Black), 2010, pp. 384.

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James Mill, introducing the ‘Mohammedan period’ in his *History of British India* (1817), effectively erased over three hundred years of Islam’s history in the subcontinent by beginning his account with Mahmud of Ghazni (d. 1030) who ‘bore the crescent beyond the farthest limits of the Persian empire, and laid the foundation of the Mohammedan thrones in India.’ Some years later, Mountstuart Elphinstone’s *History of India: the Hindu and Mohametan Periods* (1841) enlarged the temporal frame by drawing upon recent translations of Persian accounts undertaken by East India Company officers and political agents: Henry Pottinger (who first told the story of Arab al-Sind in 1816), John Briggs (who translated Ferishta *Tarikh* in 1828) and James McMurdo (who translated parts of Mir Masum’s *Tarikh* in 1834). Elphinstone properly framed the history of Islam’s arrival with the establishment of an Arab colony in al-Sind, by the Umayyad general, Muhammad bin Qasim in 712–13 CE. But he dismissed this history of over three hundred years of sectarian Muslim polities with varied ties to the capitals of Islam with a terse note that the conquerors themselves were ‘altered’ from ‘rude soldiers’ and ‘fanatical missionaries’ to ‘politic sovereigns’ and ‘magnificent and luxurious princes’ and then, dwindled out of view.

Mill and Elphinstone—and later, Henry Miers Elliot, James Tod, Richard F. Burton, Vincent Simth and others—canonised a binary ‘Muslims as fanatic/outsider/conquerors vs. Hindus as divided/indigenous/subjugated’ which persisted

through subsequent nationalist histories, asserting, on the one hand monolithically articulated, ahistorical, religious selves and on the other hand a complete erasure of the lived histories of communities across the sub-continent over centuries. Taken collectively, this discourse inhabited a precise will to truth which made taboo any dismantling of the categories of Muslim or Hindu or attempt to define the already-defined ‘community’ or ‘conversion’ or ‘temple destruction’. Post-colonial historiography largely failed to offer much redress, being limited both in its geographical imagination and its philological reach. Hence, Arab al-Sind remains either entirely missing (one recent and otherwise laudatory textbook called it a ‘backwater region’ with ‘little effect’ on the rest of South Asia) or is swiftly dispatched in a few sentences. More damningly, the overall narrative of ‘Muslim’ history in India continues to hew to the Millian template—a regnal history which forever pivots ‘new outsiders’ constantly interrupting the Indian milieu and then quickly fading away (precisely to enable the next ‘new outsider’), an emphasis on ossified identitarian reading for all political actors and a refusal to move beyond the initial ‘conflict’ paradigm. The sole critique of this historiography rests with the equally problematic ‘syncretic’ model which diffuses difference and introduces its own peculiar ahistoricisms. So it is that we have no systematic sense, in current historiography, of a ‘Muslim–Hindu’ pre-modern past that takes as its frame regional, ethnic, scribal communities with entangled and commingled histories and practices which reflect both conflict and cohabitation, as well as movement, migration, translation and to emphasise Sheldon Pollock’s phrasing, transculturation.

Finbarr Flood’s *Objects of Translation* is then a breathtakingly refreshing work of synthesis and analysis with great potential to show us a way out of this historiographical cul-de-sac. Flood offers us a ‘highly contoured landscape’ of pre-modern (his focus is roughly 800–1250 CE) central-south regions of Asia (from the river Amū Daryā to the Indus valley, from the Iranian region of Khurasan to the Ganges River). In his introduction, Flood makes two central points on the historiography—that the contemporary scholarly accounts of eighth to fourteenth century India are bifurcated, reductive and obscurest, treating this period as little more than background material for the Mughal ecumene; and that contemporary understandings of religious ideations are anachronistically projected onto earlier pasts. To reframe this discourse, Flood focuses on the framework of translation and transculturation where distinct modes of living and knowing are formed as a result of contact with prior forms and are reshaped to create newly intelligible ones. Methodologically, Flood re-opens vistas that modern South Asian studies has diligently avoided: the study of texts as objects, objects as texts and the environments within which both are placed and displaced.

The six substantive chapters share certain thematic strains. Flood recuperates flows (of objects, people and ideas) across networks (enabled by polities, by wars and by migrations) which interweave Indic and Islamic mentalités, forming both

anew. The first chapter focuses on the Arab al-Sind and the network of mercantile communities which parallel the eighth century Umayyad conquests and soon transcend it. Flood uses the circulation of coins and their legends (often bilingual Arabic/Sanskrit), to persuasively show the heterodox and multi-polar nature of Arab al-Sind—specifically its relationship to the neighbouring Indic polities of the Rashtrakutas and the Gurjara-Pratiharas. Flood's discussion of the presence of indigenous themes in the mosque architectures at Multan, Bhanbhore and Gujarat is highly informative, as is his discussion of the anthropomorphic bronze door-knocks recovered at al-Mansura. He is able to show not only the sectarian differentiation within Arab al-Sind (the establishment of the Ismaili *dawa* by the mid-ninth century and Mahmud of Ghazni's dedicated assaults on them) but also the ways in which the binaries of Muslim/Hindu fall flat under historical examination (from the reportage of al-Baladhuri on local military and administrative alliances of Muhammad bin Qasim to the presence of Hindavi troops in Mahmud of Ghazni's armies). Flood discusses temple-destruction and the creation of mosques (either on the same site or at other sites but using demolished materials) as an effort to utilise, redistribute, re-appropriate and re-contextualise sacral power across a broadly situated political and religious framework—from the internal frontiers of South Asia to West Asia. His is an especially rich and nuanced discussion which places, for the first time, temple 'looting' as an act of political theology, which is useful, especially for making political claims to the centre. Flood does not shy away from depicting the religious overtones of iconoclasm—from displaying images in Mecca or Basra or Baghdad to the 'distraction' of the metropole audiences to burying pieces at the threshold of mosques but he is careful in peeling back the curtain and exposing the social function such iconoclasm played in various Muslim communities.

The second chapter looks at the mutual comprehensibility of actions and objects which granted some political status. Flood focuses on robes of investiture and traces their deployment within the Islamicate systems and then across Arab al-Sind and Ghaznavid realms to the Indic courts—both as elite modes of translating political accommodation as well as transmuting the wearer itself. From the depictions of monks in Jain miniatures to murals in Buddhist shrines in Ladakh and most intriguingly, a masterful reading of the account of a treaty between Mahmud of Ghazni and Vidyadhara of Kalinjar, Flood is able to demonstrate the need and necessity for the working out of political and transactional homologies across the frontier space.

The third chapter exposes the notion that there was already a unitary 'Muslim' identity by looking at the flavours of Sunni and Shi'a sectarian polities dotting the political map of eleventh and twelfth century Islamicate realms. In terms of the Ghurid ascendancy and conquest of northern India and Bengal, Flood demonstrates that the Ghurid move from a sectarian understanding to the 'capital'

understanding of their faith, as well as the negotiations within the ‘infidel’ Indic court was never a simple oppositional binary. He does this through his reading of the Ghurid Qur’an of 1189; the minaret of Jam; the royal chamber (muluk khāna) in the Ghurid mosque; the Ghurid practice of retaining the deposed rulers as tributaries; and most importantly the reconfigured land-grant system (‘iqta). Perhaps most significantly, by demonstrating that many threads of conversation between communities persisted since the eighth century, Flood puts to rest the notion that each regnal beginning in Muslim India is a tabula rasa.

The analytical heart of this book lies in chapter five where Flood builds on his insights on translations across material cultures by doing a nuanced and detailed study of the materiality and textuality of six structures ranging from the royal palace in Firuzkuh, the Qutb Mosque in Delhi, the Arhai-din-ka-Jhompra Mosque at Ajmir in Rajasthan, the Chaurasi Khambha Mosque at Kaman, the Shahi Masjid at Kathu and the Masjid-i Sangvi at Larvand. The various sacral and political transformations of space and objects is melded with due attention to the agents and processes of such transformation. The sixth chapter is a similarly detailed and invigorating discussion of Ilutmish’s monuments in the thirteenth century, where a newly assertive rhetoric of conquest of rule is read as a political strategy of consolidating community allegiance, most probably as a direct result of the Mongol-led destabilisation of the Muslim world. The heightened religiosity of Ilutmish’s expansions also signals the mosque as locus for contestations over piety among the sufic and ecclesiastic orders in Delhi. Yet, even with Ilutmish, there are royal practices echoed from the Chalukyas or the Cholas—exemplified by Flood’s reading of the Ashokan pillar at Firuzabad.

Objects of Translation is a complex work and teasing out its many contributions as a corrective to historiography or as methodological innovation is not possible in such a short space. What can be easily asserted is that it builds dramatically on the already significant insights garnered by scholars such as André Wink, Sunil Kumar, Sheldon Pollock and Ronald Inden on the pre-modern period. In that respect, Flood’s is not the final word either—the various literary and political imaginations at work in Jain folk tales, in Sanskrit geographies, in the royal texts such as *Harashacarita* or Bilha’na’s *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* still need the same detailed regional contextualisation as Flood provides for the Persian histories of ‘Awfi or Juvayni. Similarly, Flood leaves largely unexamined the Sufic sites and networks that centred around Uch, Multan and Lahore from the tenth century onwards, creating another parallel sacral geography and a highly localised religious traffic (such as Khwaja Khizr’s ‘tomb’ in Uch, built on/near an earlier Shaivite sacred site, and widely cross-denominational in its appeal, is a particularly intriguing case).

Finbarr Flood’s *Object of Translation* deserves an audience wider than the purely academic, and Permanent Black should be congratulated for putting out

such an attractive volume with highly detailed reproductions and photographs—though I yearned for more substantial maps.

Manan Ahmed

Freie Universität, Berlin

SRINATH RAGHAVAN, *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of Nehru Years* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black), 2010, pp. 359.

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There has been much concern recently about the state of disciplinary International Relations in India with scholars lamenting, in particular, the lack of analytical depth and the absence of systematic theorising and the tendency to rely on theoretical frameworks developed for a Western context. In this regard, Srinath Raghavan's *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of the Nehru Years*, which is both a diplomatic history and attempts to theorise Nehru's foreign policy, is a welcome contribution.

Raghavan's work is meticulously researched and draws on untapped archival sources, such as the private papers of British officials, which allows him to partly overcome the limitations placed on researchers of diplomatic history by the Indian government's unwillingness to permit public access to its foreign policy archives even though it officially subscribes to the thirty-year rule followed by most democracies. He focuses on seven periods of crisis: the disputes over the accession of the princely states of Junagadh in 1947, Hyderabad in 1947–1948 and Kashmir in 1947–1948 and post-1951, the crisis involving the movement of refugees between East and West Bengal in 1951 and ensuing tensions with Pakistan, the border dispute with China from 1948 to 1960 and the subsequent war with China in 1961–1962. The author examines these crises in a comparative and chronological fashion and draws out the ways in which lessons learned during each period influenced the handling of future crises. The Junagadh crisis for example, 'showcased themes that would recur' such as Nehru's concerns about domestic opinion and the vulnerability of Muslims in India and his attention to the stance of external powers and international norms (p. 64). The Hyderabad crisis reinforced his concerns about communal relations and given the unforeseen violent reprisals against Muslims in the state in the wake of India's annexation, also confirmed his views on the limits of military force. The crises involving Kashmir buttressed Nehru's preference for the limited use of force or threats of force, rather than large-scale military action against Pakistan which, as Raghavan points out, has become the cornerstone of India's policy in relation to Kashmir. Nehru's handling of the China crisis, Raghavan argues, was influenced by the perception, gleaned from the management of previous crises, that as long as India proceeded slowly but steadily in