

use of sex worker and prostitution. This issue is particularly relevant because the linguistic turn from prostitute to sex worker was critical for the movement, and the women identify as sex workers (*jouno karmi*). As to the question of motherhood, Ghosh accurately emphasizes single motherhood, which is a challenge but also an emotional anchor for the women. Nonetheless, here we do see a departure from the manifesto, since the women still see their single motherhood as a deficiency, and often enter into relationships with men as a semblance of heterosexual domesticity. The notion of the single mother, which carries extensive political connotations mainly in the Global North, seemed misplaced in the context of Sonagachi where the struggles of motherhood extends to bringing a pregnancy to term vis-à-vis livelihood.

The work is theoretically dense, and sometimes the language may seem inaccessible. However, its deep analyses of “work” will be of immense significance to economists as well as across disciplines and to scholars who are looking to move beyond the agency/choice binary in relation to sex work, and labour studies in general. Ghosh’s contribution is especially invaluable in offering an analytic window into collectivizations that take root outside and in spite of the hegemonic human rights narrative governed by the Global North.

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THE HIMALAYAS AND INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS. *Nepal and Himalayan Studies.* By Devendra Nath Panigrahi. London; New York: Routledge, 2016. xiii, 159 pp. US\$150.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-138-19117-4.

Devendra Nath Panigrahi’s *The Himalayas and India-China Relations* places contestations in the Himalayas at the heart of India-China divergence, and locates bilateral strain in the two countries’ “incompatible” strategic cultures to fathom the depth of lingering mistrust. Panigrahi brings home his points about strategic culture shaping China’s “aspirations as a world power” in juxtaposition to India’s inadequate appreciation of power (114–130). Inasmuch as the Himalayas figure prominently in the framing of the book, more is needed to thoroughly contextualize their importance in this relationship.

Thus, “problems of authority and control of the national minorities” in Tibet (65–86) and the larger Himalayan cultural, ecological, and political space are the points of reference in Panigrahi’s treatise of this region. The author’s rendition of the salience of Himalayan ecology in defining “the idea of India” is captivating (16–33), which reveals his erudition in respect to India’s spiritual and cultural heritage. His rendition captures how the veneration of the Himalayas has run across millennia and religious mosaic, both in the spiritual as well as secular universes—all beautifully brought out by Panigrahi (28–29).

The author underlines that even though ancient Hindu cultural contacts neither make Tibet Hindu nor enable India to lay any political claims over Tibet (98), strategic and environmental issues of the Himalayan region do shape relations fundamentally. China's sense of vulnerability in Tibet became entangled with boundary disputes with India, and the 14th Dalai Lama's presence in India keeps China apprehensive about India's intentions. This explains why Pakistan might have been its "low cost secondary deterrent to India" (140). China's strategic control over rivers originating in Tibet, and the environmental consequence of its massive exploitation of natural resources there, are also strategic concerns for the region. As such, the book needed a clearer focus on investigating historical and present, and internal and external dynamics of unrest in Tibet, as well as more explanation on environmental issues and how the Himalayas are a possible arena for cooperation. But at present, these inquiries, encumbered by gripping but lengthy literary, cultural, and ethnographic descriptions, appear more as a geopolitical addendum to the author's paean of the Himalayas. Besides, a discussion on corresponding Chinese appreciation—cultural or strategic—of the Himalayas, or on its absence, would have kept the discussion on an even keel. Incidentally, readability was affected by an abruptness and lack of flow between paragraphs.

However, the author's discourse on the two countries' strategic culture is fairly structured. Panigrahi argues that talks of historical-cultural commonality between China and India are somewhat overstated (43). He opines that Chinese strategic culture has been far more appreciative of power and conscious of territoriality (60–61), but disagrees that India lacks strategic culture (59), drawing on the ancient Indian text *Arthashastra* (57–58). He explains Nehru's value-based peace-oriented foreign policy in terms of strategic choice (59–60) and strives to find ancient cultural justifications for China's contemporary strategic behaviour and nationalistic assertions (58–61). Panigrahi ignores Mao's "People's War," which remains an important analytical category in contemporary history. Separately, he underlines that developing solid people-to-people relations in private spheres, beyond government-guided interactions, is an absolute necessity, although difficult to achieve due to systemic and cultural incompatibilities (122–128). Panigrahi's recalling of "a forgotten episode on India's defence" is good research (86–113). He records how the British annoyance with Nehru over his non-aligned values constrained Kennedy's willingness to support India during the 1962 Sino-Indian War (92–93) and highlights Kissinger's and Zhou En Lai's shared hostility towards India (98–107). The author further traces how evolving perceptions of Chinese power by the US have finally created convergence in Indo-US relations, prodding Pakistan from being an American "surrogate" to becoming a Chinese one (133–135).

Whether China's political and military rise is the natural outcome of its economic growth, or that its strategy of pursuing world hegemony over

the last several decades has recently revealed itself, remains unsettled. In this regard, the author provides Indian commentary on China's so-called hundred-year marathon to establish global hegemony (131–141). The present nationalistic assertion by the Chinese leadership stems from post-Tiananmen evolution in the “cosmology” of the Communist Party. Jiang Zemin's “patriotic education” brought about a “silent revolution” in China, which after a long pause, retro-activated historical indignations about “the century of national humiliation” in the 1990s, to ensure justification for the party's perennial rule. However, Panigrahi cites Joseph Needham to stress the Chinese belief of their civilizational glory (128–129) and bases himself on Kissinger's impressions from his conversation with Zhou En Lai (30, 137) to underscore a nationalist or traditional cultural continuity in China (47–48). However, how cultural continuity influenced Mao's Marxist-Leninist analyses or the Chinese Communist movement is insufficiently discussed. Separately, China's threat perception vis-à-vis the continued US presence in Asia Pacific deserves as much consideration as US skepticism about China's “peaceful rise.”

Noting the view that “traditionally the Chinese have subordinated bilateral relations or approaches to a given region to the requirements of the Chinese world-view,” Panigrahi maintains that it is still difficult to ignore “China's style and symbolic of an imperial power-seeking domination” in the world (137), which shapes its relations with South Asia and has particular implications for India. However, this argument holds true about China's “all-weather” support for Pakistan only. Whether China has sought to undermine India's interests and influence in its relations with other countries in the region, is a matter of perception. Besides, this argument transfers pre-existing issues between India and its neighbours to “Chinese designs.” Moreover, it is difficult to treat the perceived Chinese discomfort for sharing regional and international high tables as an established fact, or ignore the broader multilateral dimensions involved in such matters. Panigrahi appears to be alluding that the left-wing and other insurgents in India receive “Chinese support” (54, 95–97). However, available information only points to their contacts with the Chinese black market. Incidentally, the author notes that China refused to see India as a threat (100) and open a second front against it during the India-Pakistan War in 1971, despite Kissinger's instigations (102). Thus, India-China strains have been multilayered, and changing geo-political contexts have shaped those layers.

Finally, the book is engaging, although the exposition on the Himalayas needed a better structure. On a factual note, the author has misperceived the transport corridor between Kashgar and Gwadar under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as an “underground tunnel ... to be constructed by China with US\$88 billion” (12, 62, 84, 87, 134). Similarly, Taktser village in Qinghai is the birthplace of the 14th Dalai Lama, not Tawang as the author mentions (68, 79). These two howlers need rectification in the second edition.

Better sources can be used for China's so-called "string of pearls" instead of relying on Wikipedia (62–64).

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BECOMING BETTER MUSLIMS: Religious Authority and Ethical Improvement in Aceh, Indonesia. *Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics.* By David Kloos. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017. xvii, 212 pp. (Map, B&W photos.) US\$27.95, paper. ISBN 978-0-691-17665-9.

Becoming Better Muslims: Religious Authority and Ethical Improvement in Aceh, Indonesia provides an overview of how Aceh has more to offer than just a site for religious violence and political rebellion. David Kloos goes beyond the usual approach to Aceh and Islam by looking into how the making of individual religiosity intersects with the state's installment of shari'a law, village structures of leadership, and the religious authority of scholars. Kloos argues that becoming better Muslims in post-conflict, post-tsunami Aceh not only involves both the pursuit of individual piety and one's perception of sinfulness and repentance as a personal project, but also takes into consideration how the state's implementation of shari'a law seeps into public awareness of what is morally acceptable and abominable. Kloos taps into the cultural phenomenon of how Muslims cultivate their own ethical formation as a process that correlates to one's individual life stages.

As Kloos values the process of ethical formation, he looks into the historic and ethnographic contexts in which such devotion is rooted. Here is where Kloos' approach to his subject matter and his interlocutors merit its own consideration. In presenting individual religious ethical formation as a project, he intersects history and anthropology. The historical approach allows Kloos to reframe the continuity of social structures and practices that nurture the communal setting, whereas his anthropological account gives voice to individualized experiences in forming religious agency. As Kloos is interested in delving into the development of individual ethical agency as a project, he is successful in providing connectivity between the historical practices of Islam as embodied in Acehnese social and political structures, and the cultural phenomena of being Muslims in a post-tsunami and conflict context.

Becoming Better is divided into five chapters. In the introduction, Kloos argues that Islam in Aceh is a contesting subject, as much emphasis is given to its political dimension. Against this backdrop, this book sets out to discuss Islam as a factor in an individual's life changes—whether successes or failures. Such ordinary ethics not only corresponds to individual life