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Jürgen Schaflechner. *Hinglaj Devi: Identity, Change, and Solidification at a Hindu Temple in Pakistan.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 360 pp. $99.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-085052-4.

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I leapt at the chance to review this book. How many people study Hindu goddess traditions in Pakistan and in Balochistan? The photograph on the book jacket, of a family walking in the unending gray desert—one presumes, to Hinglaj Devi—conjures up inaccessibility, arduousness, and complete unfamiliarity. What might one learn about this goddess, claimed as one of the fifty-one Śākta pīṭhas, and what must it have been like to do the six years of fieldwork, 2009-15, that went into this study? Jürgen Schaflechner's monograph and associated film are a magisterial, evocative achievement, and, as a Hindu goddesses scholar unlikely to travel to Pakistan, I feel profoundly grateful to him for his research.

Hinglaj Devi: Identity, Change, and Solidification at a Hindu Temple in Pakistan is a book about change, meaning, contest, and hope, and one of the larger aims of the project is to challenge and undercut common assumptions about the Islamic Republic as being inimical to Hindus and Hindu spaces. As nineteenth-century colonial accounts attest, pilgrimage to the temple, which is north of the coast and west of Karachi, used to be a strenuous, punishing journey on foot, and the merit of the pilgrimage was commensurate with the austerity involved. Since 2001, however, with the construction of the government-sponsored Makran Coastal Highway, access is much easier, crowds have increased, and a growing need for the management and coherence of experience has been felt by particular groups of Pakistani Hindus. Because of the remoteness of the site and yet its new accessibility, the changes in its circumstances, and the contestation over its goddess and her demands, Hinglaj is a perfect location for the "ideals of Hinduness to be performed" (p. 281).

Schaflechner ranges over many topics relevant to the Hinglaj temple. What can one responsibly glean about its history? The first mention of the name Hinglaj dates to between the ninth and fifteenth centuries, and the first claim of the site as a Śākta pīṭha—whether it was the top of Sati's head or her navel that fell here is still a matter of debate—occurs in the Pīṭhanirṇaya, dated only to the early eighteenth century. The pilgrimage to Hinglaj may however be dated as far back as the fourteenth century, or possibly earlier. During the course of his fieldwork, Schaflechner found as many texts and stories of association with the goddess as possible, in Urdu, Hindi, Sanskrit, Gujarati, Sindhi, and Bengali; he consulted religious texts, novels, and even films; he notes caste and clan stories from various merchant, pastoralist, farming, and Dalit groups from areas in current Sindh in Pakistan, as well as Gujarat and Rajasthan in India; and he even took the trip to Hinglaj several times, one discussed in detail with the Kapris of Gujarat, in 2011. A marvelous accompaniment to this book is Schaflechner's film, *On Becoming God* (2011), which documents this trip.

Apart from the construction of the Makran Coastal Highway, a second innovation responsible for significant changes to the temple and its meaning has been the formation in 1986 of the Hinglaj Sheva Mandali (HSM) by upper-class Sindhi devotees of the Lohana caste. This group has made a number of changes to the temple: it tiled over part of the original image of the goddess, the shape of which had formerly given credence to the claim by its Zikri-Muslim devotees that the temple once housed

a Muslim grave; it began to emphasize a yearly festival to the goddess over a pilgrimage to her site, spatializing a sedentary experience over a movement-oriented kinesthetic one; it purposefully neglected ancillary stops on the pilgrimage route; and it introduced a number of rules and regulations, the most controversial of which was its prohibition of animal sacrifice (*bali*) at the shrine. Behind the discourse against *bali* is an effort to define Hindus as distinct from Muslim sacrificers at *bakr ʿĪd* (Festival of the Sacrifice). Schaflechner refers to these moves on the part of the HSM as an attempt by a certain class of devotees to enforce a cultural hegemony, based on their sense of proper versus improper, or true versus false, Hinduism. He also interprets the changes wrought by the highway and the HSM by introducing the distinction between the "solidification" and "sedimentation" of tradition: agents of a solidifying tradition are reacting to recent moments of dislocation by pushing their own viewpoints but have not yet convinced their critics, whereas a sedimented tradition has already succeeded in creating a reasonably undisputed interpretive terrain. Note that, following Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci, Schaflechner does not claim that hegemony and the influencing of people's behaviors rely on violence but on institutionalization and rationalization. Hinglaj is still solidifying, and Schaflechner devotes chapter 6 to descriptions of attempts by non-Lohana devotees to overthrow the HSM-introduced ban on animal sacrifice.

Where is our author in this book? He is not entirely absent from its pages, for he appears occasionally in notes and stray comments. With one exception, when he speaks of a long and exhausting trek to photograph carvings on a mountainside apparently made by Lord Rama, when he had undertaken the journey in the Treta Yuga, one does not get an anthropologist's log of a journey; there are no burning feet in the sand or adjudications between the various competing perspectives on Hinglaj represented by his informants. Sometimes he hints at frustrations when people would not tell him information or show him sources they claimed to possess. Nevertheless, what comes through clearly is the author's commitment to showing a different side of Pakistan, where, in spite of the fact that many Hindus "live a life of anxious caution," they can experience a "free and unfettered Hindu religious practice" (pp. 7, 12). The last sentence in the book bears witness to this concern: I "wish that other such studies into the rich cultural landscape of Pakistan will give the Islamic Republic a place within South Asian studies beyond the dominant narratives of a failed state, ethnic violence, and terror" (p. 309).

If I could meet Schaflechner, I would ask him a couple of questions. In chapter 2 he claims that Hinglaj emerges as the hallmark of "syncretic Sindhi nationalism," but it is not clear how the Sindhi Lohana HSM feels about such a syncretism, since they seem interested in removing it (p. 79). Nor is it clear what Balochis think about the temple that is, after all, located in their province. I would also be very intrigued to hear what Schaflechner predicts about the future of Hinglaj and of her "solidifying" tradition. Will it become "sedimented"? Are Dalit critiques of Lohana policies of sufficient force to prevent the vegetarianizing, Hinduizing process to complete its work?

Mainly, I would thank Schaflechner for writing a most fascinating book that invites his readers (and film viewers) to enter, vicariously, the world of a desert goddess.

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