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The Study of Indian Religions in the US Academy

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Introduction

The academic study of religion and the study of India as a region appear to have developed alongside one another over the last two centuries, and particularly in the realms of anthropology, history of religion, comparative religion, sociology, and the (now largely out of favor) science of religion.[1] The first scholars of religion, in the modern sense, began their work during the colonial periods of European powers, and the influence of information fed back to Europe from these colonial outposts no doubt began the process of understanding religion as a ubiquitous social phenomenon rather than as an exercise in theology or the historical description of the practice of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. In some cases, figures foundational to religious studies, such as Max Muller, Max Weber, Joachim Wach, and Mircea Eliade, were all also scholars of Indian religious phenomena. This long relationship between the study of India as an area, the study of religion in general, and the specific study of Indian religions is represented in the American academy. One can see this in an article written by the doyen of South Asia Studies in the United States, W. Norman Brown. Brown wrote "India and Humanistic Studies in America" as an introduction to a survey of the field "Indic Studies" commissioned by the American Council of Learned Societies and published in their *Bulletin* in 1938.[2] Speaking of the popular perception of India in the public sphere, Brown writes, "those who think of India are likely to think first, and perhaps exclusively, of her philosophy and religion. They do so not without justification." Brown goes on to note that in India as "nowhere else have so many aspects of civilization revolved so generally around a spiritual, religious center."[3] Almost three-quarters

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of a century later, whether for better or for worse, India is still intimately associated with religion not only in public spheres of cultural consumption in Europe and North America but also in the US academy specifically.

In this essay, I will review the history of the study of Indian religions in the US academy, discuss the present state of the study of Indian religions in the academy, and speculate on its future. This is a selective and perhaps even idiosyncratic walk through the history and current condition of the very rich study of Indian religions in the US, but one I hope might be sufficiently general to satisfy the diverse readership of this comprehensive volume of essays on Indian studies in America. As this is not a review essay, the reader will find a minimal reference to specific texts and authors,[4] and instead the reader will be presented with a broad view of the state of the study of Indian religions in the US academy.

I. Past

The study of Indian religions in the US academy originated within American Orientalism of the early nineteenth century and drew from a wealth of European scholarship initiated almost a century earlier, much of it occasioned by the presence of European colonies (as well as missionary stations) in Asia and the Middle East. In terms of Indian religious exploration, much of this European scholarship was explicitly comparative, correlating the identities and stories of Hindu deities with ancient Greek ones, for example, as we see in the scholarship of figures like William "Oriental" Jones.[5] This is the period in which an Indo-European language family had been identified, linking the cultures of modern Europe with those of India, and hence urging an understanding of language and culture, and especially religion. This comparative endeavor, however, was inflected by the inequities of colonialism and the prejudices of the growing discourse of a hierarchy of "races" and "nations" set alongside teleologies of social development. Hence the work of a scholar like Jones was not simply objective or "scientific" scholarship, but rather such investigations of Hindu religious life were meant to reflect either the veracity of the Christian Bible as a historical text or the superiority of Christian practice. Of course the same cultural and linguistic data could be used by those who wished to see Europe dethroned at the apex of world civilization; this was the use put to Indian religions by Voltaire, for example, in the

early eighteenth century. In both cases, though, the role of the study of Indian religions was imbricated in a global situation of colonialism and the rise of national chauvinisms in Europe. The interrelationship between scholarship and the demands or needs of a nation, state, or public has obtained from the earliest scholarship on Indian religions by Europeans to the most recent scholarship by Americans.

Given a different geopolitical context, the study of Indian religions in America took a special course and addressed a unique set of concerns, though it adopted many of the same theoretical methods as its European counterpart. As European scholars were presenting the evidence of an Indo-European language family, creating some of the early scholarly monuments of Indian Orientalism through text editing and translation, and forming institutional centers for the study of India in both India and Europe, America was struggling for independence from Britain and colonizing a different community of "Indians" in North America. Thus in the period when the study of Indian religions came into its own in European scholarship, the US academy was besieged by other anxieties. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, we see the US academy engaging in scholarship about Indian religious texts and practices that drew from the new "sciences" of the age, especially philology and ethnology, the core theoretical devices of Orientalism in general, and vital to the study of Indian religions in particular. In relation to the reliance on philology that one finds in the early study of Indian religions by American academics, we see another intimate connection with religious studies as a modern academic field. Philology was equally vital to the "rationalization" of the study of religion in the nineteenth century, as Jonathan Z. Smith, a theoretician and historian of the study of religion, has suggested: "with respect to practice, the history of religions is . . . a philological endeavor."[6] Philology and its attending emphasis on a scientific method of investigation that could afford critical objectivity appeared as the foundational paradigm for both the study of India as a region and the study of religion as a rational subject.

America, falling outside the pale of colonialism in India, appeared to host scholars who drew their sources largely from missionaries and amateur ethnographers or philologists resident in India rather than agents of a colonial state. As a result of curbs placed on missionary activity by the British, America became a gateway for missionary activity to the subcontinent for people from a variety of national

backgrounds, particularly British. American Orientalists interested in Indian religion would periodically correspond with their missionary (or ethnographer) counterparts in India, or those counterparts would themselves return to the US to deliver lectures, or write their own accounts and scholarship. The seedbed for the academic interest in Indian religions in the US grew from a confluence of the discursive product of missionary activity and a burgeoning interest in world religions, especially those of India, among organizations such as the Unitarians, as well as inside intellectual movements such as the American Transcendentalists. Within this context, the most intellectually rigorous and academically interesting works appeared at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society (AOS) or in the pages of the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (*JAOS*), both having been in existence since 1849, one of the oldest academic associations producing regular periodicals in US history.

Though the first very influential European investigations of Indian religion, such as those of William Jones, concerned fitting India's history and sacred literature into paradigms both structured and ruled by biblical history, American Orientalism, entering the field in the middle of the nineteenth century, took up the subject of Indian religions within the framework of "science," and in particular of the "science of religion" and the scientific study of language and text, or philology. Certainly American and European scholarship interbraided on many issues, but the study of Indian religions in the US academy of the latter part of the nineteenth century appeared less concerned with the kinds of data and language mastery that exercised British, French, and German Orientalism of the same period, perhaps because the needs of a colonial state did not exert pressure on American scholarship. However, what was shared among Orientalist scholars of Indian religions across Europe and America was the characterization of India as a "religious" place, as well as a place distinguished by "caste" and thus inequality; indeed caste and Hinduism became and remain nearly synonymous in most scholarship, the former absorbing the attention of many anthropologists of South Asia for almost a century.[7] In many ways, this early description of India, and consumption of its literary, visual and social lifeworlds, remains strong in the contemporary period, and hence we find that the study of India is still often relegated to the field of religious studies. In many cases, this ascription occurs even when "religion," as most modern scholars have defined it, does

not account for the phenomenon under investigation. This problem is particularly acute with regard to Indian philosophy, scientific texts, historical texts, and logic, where such material often passes through the US academy as "religion," a continued misapprehension that leads many to assume neither science, nor philosophy, nor historiography are native to South Asia. Still, the association between India and "religion," however it might have been conditioned early on by Orientalism, must in some part account for the fact that within religious studies departments the study of Indian religions remains well-represented today.

The subject of religion shared pride of place beside philology in the pages of the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* from its inception to the middle of the twentieth century.[8] Even though, since the 1960s, the *JAOS* has published less work explicitly about religion, throughout the period of the journal's publication, India, studied in some form or another, has held a strong position. In 1899, the AOS created a special section within the Society for the historical study of religions and India was well represented here, too. Furthermore, the study of Sanskrit held a strong position within Indian studies for over a century, and much of the materials recorded in Sanskrit became classified as "religion" under the schema of Orientalism and modern academic knowledge. Given the reliance on philology and ethnology, and the overall obsession with science that characterizes the middle modern period, we find that India is subjected to the "science of religion" as much as Christianity and other religions.[9] It is the innovation of this scientific perspective that seems to mark the creation of the first fields of religious studies, as opposed to Biblical or theological studies; in other words, the "science of religion" begins the secularization of the discipline in the middle of the nineteenth century, which reaches its full form in 1963, as we will see below.

By 1919, US government initiatives toward educating Americans in "living Oriental languages" were beginning to have an effect on the field.[10] In part a continuation of missionary scholarship, this impetus towards regional language ability saw the rise of investigations of "local" religious practices and literatures. This "vernacular" linguistic trend no doubt influenced such prominent ideas as Robert Redfield's notion of "great" and "little" religious traditions, first formulated in the context of Mexico but applied later by other scholars to India. The study of Indian religions appeared to form into two categories: the

study of its "great" traditions, primarily those recorded in Sanskrit, and India's "little" traditions, those represented in regional languages. The growing influence of anthropology also made an important impact at this point, juxtaposing the "local" expressed through site-specific fieldwork, and the "general" garnered from Sanskritic texts. Caste, construed as a feature of Hinduism primarily, came to form a significant subject in this juxtaposition, having been enumerated in hoary Sanskrit texts for centuries and also presenting the anthropologist with real-life data on the ground.

In 1899, Morris Jastrow—Professor of Semitic Languages at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *The Study of Religion*, published in 1919—wrote an article for the *JAOS* entitled "The Historical Study of Religions in Universities and Colleges" that lamented the lack of history of religion departments in the US. He noted this lacuna was not due to negligence on the part of universities but to "the bacillus of collegiate poverty" and to the view that "the study of religions does not fairly come under the category of a crying need."[11] The utility of the study of religion was in doubt in America according to Jastrow, even while the need to understand the religious persuasions of colonial subjects was hardly in question in British scholarship, for example. He presented arguments that resembled the call for a "well-rounded" and "liberal" education in our own day when he suggested that for "a young man who is laying the foundations . . . for his future career . . . to leave college without a general knowledge of [religions], not to speak of the history of Christianity, is certainly a lamentable defect."[12] Up to this point, the study of Indian religions and western religions was reflected in the way universities organized themselves.

Though comparatively few in number, as Jastrow's comments suggest, departments of religious studies are among the oldest academic subdivisions in the American academy (and some of the oldest schools are Divinity schools), and they retained the explicit character of biblical and theological study well into the middle of the twentieth century. Indeed, the study of Christianity still dominates religious studies departments in public and private universities, just as the study of American politics dominates political science departments in the US, or American history dominates departments of history. Despite the rise of the comparative study of religions under Max Mueller (who was a Sanskritist) and the creation of several endowed chairs in comparative religion at the end of the nineteenth century (in America, only

at the University of Chicago, Cornell University, and the Andover Theological Seminary), religious studies departments did not take up the secular study of religion until the middle of the twentieth century, and not fully until the 1960s.

Yet Indian religions, as a subset of the study of Sanskrit or of religion more generally, did exist prior to the 1960s. By 1938 one could study Indian religions in several academic contexts in the US.[13] A good number of the nation's largest universities taught courses on Indian religions, usually as a part of the study of a classical Indian language.[14] Among these and other institutions, there were several Chairs of Sanskrit established[15] that implied the study of Indian religions to some degree. In addition, students throughout the nation's colleges and universities had opportunities to study Indian religions in classes devoted, in part or in whole, to the subject.[16] In these institutions Indian religions were approached largely from the perspective of the history of religions or as an aspect of philology, history, or art history. Even more institutions taught one or more courses in Sanskrit or history but without significant emphasis on religion.[17] These sites and traces of the study of Indian religions in the US academy before the middle of the twentieth century indicate that an interest in Indian religions was recognized at an early stage as possibly a key component of the liberal arts education and an acceptable path for higher academic studies.

Aside from this impressive roster of private and public institutions of higher learning, one finds the study of India well situated within private religious institutions of higher education in the US at the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly in institutions that trained missionaries for their work overseas.[18] In these contexts India was approached primarily from a "comparative" standpoint, assuming a comparison between Christianity and the subject tradition. One should also note the significant offerings in Sanskrit, Sanskrit literature, and religious studies, particularly comparative religion and the history of religions, offered by the Theosophical University's School of Theosophy founded in 1900 in Point Loma, California. Akin to the Theosophical University, contemporary institutions of higher learning such as the Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, Iowa, or the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado are the contemporary inheritors of such "New Age" religio-philosophical institutions that draw heavily from the legacy of Indian religions, representing a kind of reverse missionary activity in the US. The implication of

missionary activity and the development both of the study of Indian religions and of South Asia studies in the US in general is an important feature of the mutual history of these fields. The biographical and professional backgrounds of many leading scholars of India in America reveal a connection to missionary work, especially among the first generation of scholars. Norman Brown, for example, came from a missionary family and lived in India from age eight to fourteen. Thus, a complex relationship between the academic study of religion and religious practice, particularly in the form of missionary activity, becomes interwoven with US national and international desires over the course of two centuries, culminating in the study of Indian religions in the US academy as we know it today.

II. Present

As we know, well before the 1960s the study of India was no stranger to the worlds of higher learning in the US. By 1948 Norman Brown succeeded in creating the first department of South Asia Studies, located at the University of Pennsylvania, and this perhaps marks the beginning of South Asia Studies as an institutionalized discipline in the US academy.[19] In 1958 Congress passed the National Defense Education Act, with its Title VI, providing resources for the study of cultures and languages important to US security issues, the result of which created 16 South Asia Centers at major research universities in America. This influx of funding supported a new generation of scholars of South Asia, many of whom entered the field to study Indian religions, and in particular to study them from the perspective of regional languages, local variation, and ethnographic detail, thus beginning to tilt the scales balancing the study of the "Great" and "Little" traditions of Indian religions in the latter's favor.

However, the full flowering of religious studies as a modern humanistic discipline, with the study of Indian religions as a subset of inquiry, entered the US academy in 1963, on the heels of Supreme Court rulings about prayer in schools and religious education in America; the very character of religious studies in colleges and universities began to shift toward secular study.[20] Up to this period the study of Indian religions remained the purview of Oriental studies or of the nascent departments of South Asia studies. This period saw a more lucrative influx of funding into area studies as US Defense Department money shifted to the Department of Education under the Higher

Education Act of 1965, which, like its predecessor of the same name, contributed to the study of South Asia primarily through language training, a continuation of the long-held notion that language opens up culture to observation. Additionally, funds from organizations such as the Fulbright program, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Ford Foundation were heavily invested in the creation of area studies in the US.[21] From 1963 onwards, the study of Indian religions found ample representation in the changing character of religious studies departments in America. In addition, in 1965 came immigration reform through the Immigration and Naturalization Act, increasing quotas for highly skilled workers from India (primarily medical doctors, computer specialists, scientists, and engineers). This influx of middle and upper middle class immigrants especially from South Asia had a direct and immediate influence on the representation of South Asian subjects in the US academy as we will see below, particularly in terms of demands for South Asia-content classes and the creation of endowed chairs.

The next forty years witnessed a minor revolution in religious studies of which the study of India was a major feature. While the study of the history of religions, the science of religion, the anthropology of religion, and comparative religions—all locations for the study of Indian religious life—had been a part of the academy in a minor way for a century, the political, cultural, social, legal and, importantly, global changes of the 1960s saw a significant influence across the academy in the study of religion. Departments now took as their mandate the representation of religious plurality in the world in the shaping of a liberal arts curriculum, whether private or public. Coupled with this change within the study of religion more generally, the 1960s marked the beginning of the proliferation of conferences and associations that cohered around South Asia as a region or around a distinct region within South Asia. Such organizations and conferences would include the American Institute of Indian Studies (founded in 1961), the Bengali Studies Conference (1965), the Research Committee on the Punjab (1966), the Maharashtra Studies Group (1968), the Society for South Indian Studies (1968), the Sri Lankan Studies Group (late 1960s), the Nepal Studies Association (1971), and the North India Studies Association (1974), as well as the creation of the American Institute of Pakistan Studies in 1973.[22] While none of these were associations for the study of religious phenomena, the study of religion played a major role in all of these contexts.

One can see that by the middle of the 1960s three key elements were in place to help find a new home for the study of Indian religions in religious studies departments. First, there was the "secularization" of religious education in public schools, a reflection of political and cultural changes as well as the arrival of a more diverse population in the US, or perhaps the recognition of the reality of the already diverse population of the US.[23] Second, there was the direct influx of government funding for the study of India, via its languages, and many of these scholars selected "religious" phenomena as their subject. And, third, we see the first substantial wave of immigration of highly educated Indians into the US, a trend that would lead in the decades to follow to a huge number of "heritage learners," or the children of these immigrants in US undergraduate and graduate institutions.

Since the 1960s, the study of Indian religions has flourished in the US academy within religious studies departments, though Indian religions are also studied to a lesser extent within anthropology and history departments (which, conversely, are the disciplines with the highest representation of India specialists within the US academy). Within religious studies, scholars of Indian religions are usually subdivided into regionally or linguistically specific areas (Sanskrit, Persian, Tamil, Hindi, Bengali, or Marathi, for example; or North India and South India) as well as "tradition"-specific arenas, the usual categories of which are Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Jainism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. In addition, one finds rubrics of time, where we have specialists in "classical," "medieval," and "modern" India, though these epochal strata are often simply heuristic.

The ambit of "Indian religions" has come to include areas outside the geographical region of the modern nation of India. Tibetan Buddhism is often with the sphere of "Indian religions," for reasons both political and practical, the latter attributed to the existence in exile in India of many Tibet Buddhists, including the Dalai Lama, and the texts and practices that have accompanied these refugees. One also finds the place of the study of the Indian diaspora's religious practices shared between the study of "Indian religions" and the study of the new geographical/national homes of members of the diaspora; thus a scholar of Indian religions or of American religious life might both study the same subject. This shared space is also reflected in burgeoning departments of "Asian-American Studies," where the religious practices of Indians in America are an important subject.

The character of the study of Indian religions in the US academy since the 1960s is multifarious, in terms of both sub-disciplines and subjects. Given the dual importance of language study and field work in the investigation of Indian religions, one finds ample ethnographic data generated by religionists of India, with emphasis on many areas of religious practice, especially aspects of performance and ritual. A strong tradition of philological work, through the critical editing and translation of texts, is similarly present, and often these two worlds intersect. While the study of Sanskrit, Pali, and related texts for the elucidation of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions in India remains a strong feature of Indian religious studies, since the 1960s especially, the study of religious text and practice in regional languages has grown to share an equal place with "classical" studies.

Today, almost all the leading research universities in America have a department of religious studies with a strong South Asia area focus. For example, of the sixteen "top national universities" in America as ranked by *US News and World Report* in 2005,[24] eleven have significant faculty in Indian religious studies[25] and of these, Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, Cornell University, and the University of Chicago are considered by many to be among the top schools in the nation for the study of Indian religions.

We can also see that all of the eleven universities that currently receive Title VI money to support a South Asia National Resource Center, seven (the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, Cornell/Syracuse Universities, the University of Chicago, Triangle South Asia Consortium [North Carolina State University, Duke University, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and North Carolina Central University], University of Virginia, and the University of Wisconsin, Madison) have religious studies departments strong in Indian religions. The remaining four institutions (the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Washington at Seattle, and the University of California at Berkeley), though they have no religious studies departments, have significant faculty within other departments who specialize in Indian religions.[26] There seems to be a strong correlation between having a South Asia (or similar area) studies department and having strong faculty in the study of Indian religions, suggesting both the continued importance of the study of Indian religions within South Asia studies more generally as well as the persistent association between South

Asia as a world area and the regional characterization of religiosity, the latter a highly problematic association and one rooted in the long legacy of Orientalism.

In terms of the professional landscape of religious studies in particular, the study of Indian religions has long held a firm, though marginal, place. The premier scholarly community for religious studies is the American Academy of Religion (AAR), founded in its current form in 1963. Within the organizational framework of the AAR, one finds only two region-specific subfields of study: North America and South Asia. In other words, one finds subdivisions such as "Buddhism," "Islam," or "Judaism"; "Women and Religion," or "History of Christianity," but not "Religion in the Middle East" or "Religion in East Asia." It is significant that only South Asia and North America appear to merit subfields within the largest collection of scholars of religion in the US, and this may mark two broad trends that have had significant currency in the field over the last four decades: the study of American religious life and the study of South Asian religious history.[27]

In 2001 and 2002, the AAR conducted a survey of the field of religious studies in America, asking questions about income, demographics, and employment rates primarily. Questions about fields of study also figured in this survey, and the results reveal a steady, though comparatively minor, presence for the study of India (or more largely of South Asia in general) within the field as a whole. Unfortunately, it appears the wording of the questionnaire equated "Indian religions" with Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism, thus leaving aside, especially, the study of South Asian Islam, probably the subset of the study of Indian religions with the greatest trajectory of growth currently, and the rich histories of Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism in India. The survey, though a great service to the profession, is helpful but not entirely accurate in measuring the study of Indian religions in the US. However, in practice, at the annual meeting of the AAR, panels composed within the subfield of "Religion in South Asia" or RISA represent the great variety of religious life and history in India.

The AAR survey investigated both graduate and undergraduate education in religious studies. The questionnaire was returned by almost 3000 graduate students in religious studies programs in the US. According to the 2002 poll, only 45 of those students identified their program of study as concerned with "Indian" or "South Asian" religions; that is roughly 1.5 percent, whereas 60 percent of all graduate students

identified themselves as studying "Christianity" in some way. These numbers set graduate students of South Asian religions on a par with the number of students studying subjects such as "Religion and Ethics" (43) and "Islam" (42).

Among undergraduate programs, roughly 27 percent of the religious studies departments in the US offered courses on "Indian religions," yet only about 6 percent of the institutions require a course in "Indian religions" to fulfill a major in religious studies. We also see that 68 percent of the institutions surveyed offered courses that had some content involving Indian religions. A course on Hinduism specifically was likely to fulfill a "general requirement" 61 percent of the time, whereas a course on the New or Old Testament was likely to do so 76 percent of the time. According to the AAR survey, public schools in the US showed a slightly larger number of courses on Indian religions than did private schools. The demographics of the study of South Asian religions in religious studies departments have also changed. More scholars of South Asian descent teach and research within the field now than in earlier decades, which in many cases raises the standard in terms of linguistic proficiency and cultural fluency at the graduate level. Overall, one can observe that the study of Indian religions in the US academy appears to remain relatively well-represented within the professional world of the field.

The AAR annually offers grants to individuals pursuing research related to the study of religion in general and gives awards for particularly excellent books published in the field. Within these contexts, we can see that of the eleven grants given to individuals for the 2003/04 academic year, three went to studies involving Indian religions. Of the grants given in the 2004/05 academic year, one went to a scholar of Indian religions, while another went to a scholar of Nepali religion. These funding numbers, though they may appear low, are indicative of the consistent place the study of Indian religions holds within the AAR, a further suggestion of the character of the field of religious studies as a whole in the US. One of the three books awarded a prize by the AAR in 2005 was by a scholar of Indian religions; in 2003, a scholar of South Asian religions, with a book on Sri Lankan Buddhism, won an award as well. Jeffrey Kripal's controversial book, which will be discussed below, won an award from the AAR in 1996. Since 1996, the AAR has given its Martin E. Marty Public Understanding of Religion Award to two scholars of India, David Knipe (2001) and

Diana Eck (2002). Since 1965 there have been only three presidents of the AAR who are scholars of India, Wendy Doniger (1985), Ninian Smart (2000), and Vasudha Narayanan (2002).[28] This number, while it may appear small, indicates the strength of Indian studies within the AAR, perhaps a reflection of a similarly healthy existence within religious studies in the US more generally.

The current profile of the study of Indian religions within the context of religious studies throughout the US academy might also be gauged by a quick look at publication trends in prominent religious studies journals. Few journals exist solely for the investigation of Indian religions, such as the *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (World Heritage Press); in most cases, articles on Indian religions appear within more general venues. Take, for example, the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (*JAAR*), a prominent peer-reviewed journal published by the American Academy of Religion in the US. From March of 2003 to October of 2005 the *JAAR* published eleven issues, eight of which had at least one article on Indian religions, and two of those eight were almost entirely devoted to Indian religions.[29] Another important journal in the field, *History of Religions* (*HR*) (University of Chicago Press), regularly publishes articles on Indian religions. From February of 2003 to October of 2005, the *HR* published eleven issues, out of which eight contained one or more articles about Indian religions. In general, most issues of *HR* contain at least one article pertaining to Indian religions. By contrast, the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (Routledge) published only one article associated with Indian religions within three years and the *Journal of Religion* (University of Chicago Press) published only one review article surveying subjects germane to Indian religions. A third important journal, simply entitled *Religion* (Elsevier), has published only one article about Indian religions in ten issues over three years. The latter three journals, prominent in the field of religious studies, tend to publish very little about Indian religions in their pages, though they do devote space to reviews of books on Indian religions, suggesting a general readership still concerned with knowing what new works arise in the specific field of Indian religions.

The character of the study of Indian religions within religious studies more generally echoes its roots in the nineteenth century. It remains a study that is usually textual, often historical, and increasingly anthropological. One still finds an emphasis on "scientific" principles

of rational inquiry, though the academic study of religion is situated firmly within the humanities. Primarily concerned with text, a scholar's success in the field is in large part determined by linguistic proficiencies. Sanskrit has slowly waned as the dominant linguistic medium through which to study Indian religion, but it still remains vital to the study of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, and secondarily, to Islam in India. From the 1980s to the present we find a greater emphasis on regionalism, regional languages, and non-elite religion. The comparative model of study has also lost ground to region-specificity, thus we rarely find scholars equally conversant in Judaism and Hinduism, for example, though it has become almost essential for all scholars of Indian religions to be conversant in Hinduism and Indian Islam regardless of their primary field of study. This latter issue, of the growing centrality of the study of Indian Islam to the larger field of the study of Indian religions, is a welcome change. The architecture of the study of Islam in the US academy (a subject I will not enter into here) tends to limit the "authentic" study of Islam to the Middle East, relegating the study of Islam in other areas of the world to a secondary position. This view seems to assume an argument of origins, suggesting that since Islam originated in Arabia, it is primarily tied to the language and history of the Middle East. Yet Islam in India, like Islam in America or elsewhere, is both part of the larger Islamic world and unique within that world, reflecting more than a millennium of influencing, and being influenced by, other cultural spheres of India. Thus, the study of Indian Islam is coming to hold its proper, unique place within both the study of Indian religions and the worldwide study of Islam. By comparison, the study of Buddhism shows an opposite trend with its own detrimental influences. Though Buddhism is original to India, not all, and indeed not even most, scholars of Buddhism are also scholars of India; many are scholars of East or Southeast Asia with no training in Indian religious history or the early languages of Buddhist scripture, such as Pali and Sanskrit. This is, of course, perfectly acceptable since the existence of Buddhism in China over two millennia has justified its uniqueness and the confinement of its study to Chinese sources exclusively. However, one drawback is the characterization by some scholars of "real" Buddhism as absent from the subcontinent in the contemporary period, despite the fact that almost seven million practicing Buddhists (both Tibetan and non-Tibetan) live in India today.

One finds religion regularly invoked in studies of contemporary Indian culture, especially film and politics. The historical study of India has come to be dominated by scrutiny of the colonial period and nationalism, yet even here, within the historical study of India, the study of religion in some ways remains important. Take, for example, the work of the Subaltern Studies Collective, where we find a regular reference to religious sentiment as a feature of "subaltern consciousness" particularly in the work of Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Gyan Prakash, Shahid Amin, and Dipesh Chakrabarty.[30] Guha, for example, states in one of the flagship essays of the Collective that it is "impossible to speak of [subaltern] insurgency . . . except as religious consciousness."[31] Despite such reliance on religion as a category of conscious action and thought, there is little love between devotees of subaltern studies and religious studies. Yet other lines of communication appear to remain open. Strong links exist between anthropology and religious studies, for example, as well as between folklore and religious studies.

If we look at the field of South Asia studies in general, we also find a mixed reception for the study of Indian religions. For example, at the 2005 meeting of the largest conference on South Asia in the country, the South Asia Conference held annually at Madison, Wisconsin since 1973, 16 out of 99 panels were explicitly about religion and another 21 contained one or more papers on religion. Religious studies and literary studies had the greatest representation at the annual South Asia Conference at Madison. The Association for Asian Studies (AAS), which has a specific South Asia Council within its organizational structure, has been, and continues to be, a primary conference for South Asianists in the US. Out of 213 panels, 22 were held on South Asia during the meeting of the AAS in 2005, compared to 75 for "China and Inner Asia," 38 for Japan, 35 for "Interarea" projects, 19 for Southeast Asia, 11 for "Border-Crossing Sessions," and 13 for Korea. Within the South Asia offerings, at least seven panels were explicitly about religion, and another four contained papers that dealt with religious life or history. By comparison, in 2004, the number was five out of 18 panels explicitly about religion within the South Asia offerings. However, from 2000 to 2003 the presence of papers and panels dealing with religious issues were far fewer (three out of 21 in 2003; three out of 23 in 2002; four out of 20 in 2001; four out of 16 in 2000). These numbers might indicate a trend toward a greater acceptance for the study of religion with this premier Asian studies venue.

Another site for investigating the status of the study of Indian religions within area studies more generally is to look at the funding and award trends of organizations that support the study of India open to all disciplines. For example, the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) is an organization that has served the study of India since 1961 by offering grants, research assistance, and publication opportunities (not to mention archival resources and infrastructure support to other programs). Maureen Patterson, in her study of the history of the AIIS, notes that "by the 1970s . . . History and anthropology were still the chosen disciplines of the largest number of AIIS Fellows . . . [but] the field of history of religions showed the steepest rise in numbers of fellowships awarded in the seventies."[32] In both 2003 and 2004, two of the four books that won the AIIS book prize involved, to a large degree, the study of Indian religious life. Since 2003, the AIIS has awarded 115 fellowships to junior (graduate students) and senior (post-graduate or independent) scholars. Of these, thirty went to scholars studying religion, out of which thirteen recipients were affiliated with a religious studies program.[33]

Among the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad awards given in 2004, of the fifteen that went to graduate students studying subjects in India, five were from students within religious studies departments. By comparison, three went to general area studies of South Asia, and three went to art historians, with the balance divided among ethnomusicology, history, and anthropology. Among recipients of the International Dissertation Research Fellowship awarded by the Social Science Research Council in 2004, only one went to a graduate scholar of India, who is also within a religious studies department (one went to a scholar of Pakistan from a sociology department). In 2005, six awards were given to scholars of India or South Asia, but none to religionists. Among recipients of fellowships administered by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2003, three went to scholars of India, one of whom is a scholar of religion.

The Association for Asian Studies offers two awards to books within the field of South Asian Studies, the Coomaraswamy Book Prize and the Ramanujan Book Prize for Translation. Since 1993, the Coomaraswamy prize has gone to four authors whose books involve religion in some way, though none of the authors are fully within religious studies departments at their home institutions. Among the

awardees of the Ramanujan translation prize, of the five awards given since 1996, one might consider two of them to be within the realm of Indian religious literature.[34] Though several scholars of India have won the AAS's prestigious award for distinguished contributions to Asian Studies—such as Romila Thapar (2005), Eleanor Zelliot (1999), Joseph Elder (1995), Edward Dimock (1991), and Milton Singer (1984)—none of these scholars are properly within the realm of religious studies. The leadership of the AAS also reflects the strong presence of South Asianists. Past presidents of the association include David Ludden (2002), Wendy Doniger (1998), Barbara Metcalf (1994), Barbara Stoller-Miller (1990), Stanley Tambiah (1989), Susanne Hoeber Rudolph (1986), Ainslee Embree (1982), Richard D. Lambert (1974), Holden Furber (1968), and W. Norman Brown (1960). Within this celebrated roster of luminaries in South Asia Studies, only Wendy Doniger is primarily affiliated with religious studies, though several others, such as Barbara Stoller-Miller, David Ludden, Stanley Tambiah, Ainslee Embree, and Barbara Metcalf have contributed significantly to our understanding of religious history and texts in South Asia.

We might also gauge the presence of the study of Indian religions within area studies by examining a selection of periodical publications within South Asian studies and Asian studies in general. In the last few years, several new journals have emerged from US publishers that focus entirely on India or South Asia as a region. These include *India Review* (Routledge), *South Asian Popular Culture* (Routledge), *Contemporary South Asia* (Routledge), *Journal of South Asia Studies* (Routledge), *South Asia Research* (Sage), as well as *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* (Duke University Press). These journals do sometimes publish materials relevant to religion, but their focus appears to be toward social science and political economy, engaging religion as it involves these spheres. Older journals of Asian studies present mixed offerings with regard to Indian religions. For example, the *Journal of Asian Studies*, a publication of the Association for Asian Studies, arguably the premier journal of Asian studies in the US, regularly publishes articles on India or South Asia; however, in the past three years, I counted only one article involving Indian religions. Likewise, the *JAOS*, despite its rich history as a source for publishing articles about Indian religions, has over the last several decades published less on this subject. In the last three years, I counted a single article

directly involving Indian religions, though one finds many articles about philological or historical issues pertaining to South Asia.

What appears to be a trend away from dealing with Indian religions in Asian studies or South Asian studies periodicals might reflect a broader mandate that area studies in general embrace social science as its regnant paradigm. This might be symptomatic of the disciplinary peculiarity of both area studies and religious studies. The two share the lack of a methodological or theoretical core—they both have drawn widely from the various theories and methods of the humanities and social sciences over the last two centuries, and have contributed to theorizing the study of culture and society more generally. In its inception, as noted above, the study of Indian religions reflected the broader idea of the science of religion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a kin perhaps of the scientific study of texts, or philology, a method important in the history of religious studies. From its nineteenth-century origins as a social science, religion has now become characterized largely as a humanistic study, and one can see a decline in the representation of social scientists in religious studies departments, especially sociologists and anthropologists. The field of the "history of religions" hopes to straddle the two worlds of social science and the humanities, and to display an ample representation of the study of Indian religions. Indeed, one finds that the work of many scholars of Indian religions is difficult to fit into simple disciplinary methodologies, especially since most work on Indian religions requires excellent language training, fieldwork (loosely considered "ethnography"), archival-historiographic work, and the engagement of societal structures, all at once. This is also the fate of the area studies scholar: to master several methodologies and disciplines, brought to bear on a single subject.

Perhaps this affinity accounts for what we might call a "love/hate" relationship between scholars of area studies and religious studies of the area-specific variety. The ambivalence seems to have been embraced by religious studies as a discipline, as represented by the significant representation of "India" and "South Asia" as areas of study within religious studies more generally; whereas area studies appears to have largely ostracized area-specific *religious* studies, as trends in annual meetings and publications would seem to suggest. The two fields have been mutually, and often symbiotically, entwined throughout their respective histories, and it seems only to the benefit of both

to foster a productive relationship; one hopes this is a trend of the future, whatever else the future of these fields may hold.

III. Future?

The future position of Indian religions within the field of religious studies seems stable, with increasing emphasis on Islam, gender studies, contemporary religion, and interdisciplinary breadth. In years to come the field will no doubt continue to grapple with defining the boundaries of its study, both in terms of practice, subject, and place, especially as the world becomes increasingly defined by transnational networks of global trade and media exchange. The changing shape of undergraduate student populations has exerted, and will continue to exert, a mobilizing force on the field of study. As more students of South Asian ancestry demand more classes on South Asia, hiring in particular fields will increase. Religion and history appear to have benefited most from this demand in recent years, though one sees job listings for film studies of South Asia (and particularly India) on a regular basis. An average of 10–15 jobs in the general field of Indian religions appear each year, of varying rank, and this suggests a stable, if perhaps growing, number of positions in Indian religions within religious studies departments in the US; and importantly this bodes well for the renewal of key positions vacated by retirements within the study of Indian religions founded and staffed from the 1960s onwards. In terms of classroom demographics, it is not uncommon to find that a majority of the students in a South Asia-content course is of South Asian descent, either from India or the children of émigrés. As students of South Asian descent, and their parents, continue to demand South Asia-content courses, and especially religion courses, and as they continue to form a larger part of alumni funding networks, we are likely to see offerings and positions steadily increase across the area-specific spectrum.

The US federal government will continue to play a key role in influencing the study of South Asia as an area and consequently of Indian religions. For example, through the Department of Education, the American Institute of Indian Studies received three consecutive years of funding (2002–04) to hold seminars for its fellows and others on Indian Islam. Outreach, as part of the mandate of Title VI funding for Area Centers in the US, will continue to win competitive funding from organizations such as Fulbright to undertake outreach training

seminars in India for American educators, as the University of Pennsylvania did in 2005. However, the strongest non-academic influence on the study of Indian religions today comes not from the public sector but from the private one.

The study of Indian religions in the US academy has been particularly affected by financial, political, and social influences that are directly related to growing South Asian communities in the US, and the desire on the part of various individuals and communities to effect the portrayal of India in the US academy, especially the portrayal of Hinduism and Sikhism. In relation to this issue, we find that several private organizations across the political spectrum wish to influence the academic study of Indian religions through funding programs, chairs, and donations. These would include such organizations as the Infinity Foundation, the Hinduja Foundation, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (and especially through its former collegiate associated organization, the Hindu Students Council), the Vedic Foundation, the Hindu Education Foundation, and the Sikhs of America. In some cases, these interventions are cooperative and mutually useful for the academy and the interests of the particular groups or individuals; indeed, this very volume is supported by private funding (unconnected to a religious proclivity as far as I know), in this case from the Observer Research Foundation, itself funded by a large Indian company, Reliance. However, there are trends towards hostility when the academy meets well-funded people or organizations that can influence the public sphere, as we will see below.

A very tangible and positive product of this interaction between the academy and members of the Indian or South Asian communities of the US is the handful of endowed chairs at major research institutions throughout the country, most having been established in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. The University of California at Berkeley hosts three endowed chairs of South Asian studies with funds raised primarily from Indo-Americans in California, but also with donations from other Indian communities throughout North America. These are the Indo-American Community Chair in India Studies (established in 1991 and currently held by the political scientist Pradeep Chhibber), the Sarah Kailath Chair in India Studies (established in 1995 and currently held by sociologist Raka Ray), and the Chair in Tamil Studies (established in 1995 and currently held by Indianist George Hart). The Indian community of Indiana, in partnership with

Indiana University, Bloomington's Department of Religious Studies, successfully endowed the Rabindranath Tagore Professorship in Indian Cultures and Civilizations in 1995. Religionist Gerald Larson held the post until his retirement in 2003, at which time political scientist Sumit Ganguly accepted the position.

Not all efforts to endow positions in US universities have been as successful as those at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Indiana at Bloomington. For five years from 1995 to 2000, the Hinduja Foundation supported the Dharam Hinduja Indic Research Center at Columbia University in affiliation with the University's Religion Department (but with an endowment separate from the University), and endowed the Dharam Hinduja Senior Lecturer in Sanskrit, still held by Gary Tubb. The arrangement to host the Center drew criticism from some members of Columbia's faculty and from the public at large because of the donor's status as a dealer of military arms (which is a fact) and his perceived alliances with Hindu chauvinist political groups in India (a speculation). The work of the Center also received praise from members of the academy and the public, though this was less publicly perceived than the criticism. These issues aside, the Hinduja Foundation elected to terminate most of its funding for reasons attributed to dissatisfaction with scholarly production during its granting period, though it retained the lectureship in Sanskrit.

Sikh communities in North America have been very successful in endowing chairs that represent their interests, yet the results of these endeavors have been mixed. The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor established a Chair in Punjabi and Sikh Studies in 1999, called the Tara Singh and Balwant Kaur Chattha and Gurbaksh Singh and Kirpal Kaur Brar Sikh Studies Chair, following the model established at the University of British Columbia with their Chair in Sikh Studies, funded in 1987. However the position at the University of Michigan, like that at the University of British Columbia, has suffered the dissatisfaction of some vocal members of the Sikh communities that sponsored these initiatives. These critics charge that scholars who occupied these positions defamed Sikhism with their scholarship; such was the situation faced by the excellent scholar of Sikhism, Harjot Oberoi, who held the University of British Columbia's Chair but was later forced to resign it. The same difficulties over representation have plagued the University of Michigan as well, and despite making offers to candidates over the last several years, academic and community

forces have not been able to reach a consensus on a scholar who can fill the position. Yet other efforts at establishing a Chair in Sikh Studies have been successful, such as the appointment of Gurinder Singh Mann as Kundan Kaur Kapany Professor of Sikh Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1999. Similarly, Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair Sardarni holds the Kuljit Kaur Bindra Chair in Sikh Studies in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Hofstra University. These centers for the study of Sikhism have not encountered the same difficulties as those at the University of British Columbia or the University of Michigan. Indeed, many universities continue to welcome the opportunity to host chairs in Sikh studies and actively seek such endowments, such as Columbia University. In addition, many institutions seek more general endowments for the study of India, such as the newly endowed Mohindar Brar Sambhi Chair for Indian Music at UCLA; the Madan Lal Sobti Chair for the Study of Contemporary India at the University of Pennsylvania; or the Chandra Bhandari Endowed Chair in India Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, among many other nascent endowment projects.

More generally in the public spheres of the US and India, when the academy and private interests are at odds over questions of representation, discourse can quickly turn hostile. This has especially been the case in recent years, particularly surrounding the work of Jeffrey Kripal, who wrote a book on the modern Bengali mystic, Ramakrishna. The book, entitled *Kali's Child*, elicited both critical and vitriolic responses from readers, many Indian, who perceived Kripal's scholarship as either flawed or his conclusions about Ramakrishna's mystical experiences insulting to the legacy of this religious figure, though many who waged this battle admitted to having not read the book but rather their anger was generated by its description in the public sphere. Likewise, Wendy Doniger, a premier scholar of Indian religious thought and history expressed through Sanskritic sources, has faced regular criticism from those who consider her work to be disrespectful of Hinduism in general. In one case, a book by the scholar of Indian religions, Paul Courtright, that had been published in 1985[35] was recently (almost two decades later) targeted by critics for its display of a naked image of the Hindu deity Ganesh on the book's cover, as well as its use of psychoanalytical theory to understand the Hindu deity in cultural contexts. Interestingly, these three scholars share in common the use of psychoanalytical theory, and this seems to be a

kind of lightning rod for the censure these scholars receive from freelance critics and "watch-dog" organizations that claim to represent the sentiments of Hindus.

Public, harsh, and un-academic criticism of this variety directly related to the "defense of Hinduism" has been interpreted as a direct result of the rise of Hindu Right nationalist parties to power in India over the course of the last two decades. Many observers consider the increase in public scrutiny of the study of Hinduism in the US academy as having received its political (and in some cases financial) support from a powerful Hindu Right presence in India, often channeled through the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. In any case, the rise of Hindu Right politics has affected the study of Indian religions in many ways. Whatever the situation, the fact of the ascendancy of such politics so clearly tied to Hindu religious life requires that scholars of Indian religions in the US become intimately familiar with domestic Indian politics, a requirement not present to this degree during the long years of Congress-centrist rule in India since independence in 1947. Second, the religiously inflected nature of political discourse in India, and that which filters out into the rest of the world, affects the subjects religionists study, especially history and literature as it pertains to "religious" aspects of India's past. Thus, scholars of Indian religion are more likely to be familiar with debates in India about revising history texts and curricula to reflect the influences of those who wish to manage the image of Hinduism in Indian history. Third, the stark bifurcation of India into "Hindu" and "Muslim" that is so much a part of Hindu Right political practice has required of scholars of Indian religion a more nuanced understanding of the deployment of these terms in Indian religious life. Coupled with a rise in positions within religious studies departments that pertain to Islam, we see a general increase in awareness of the history and practices of the Islamic world and of Indian Islam specifically within the study of Indian religions. This religiously charged political environment enters classrooms, as well as scholarship, and increasingly scholars of Indian religion must deftly manage the politics of identity in pedagogical environments.

At times the influence of religious politics on the US academy can cause blind spots to appear with regard to other subjects. A recent book by a US scholar of religion, James Laine, sparked protests, violence, and legal prosecution in India. The book, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India*, explores the historiography surrounding a king who

ruled an area of central-western India in the seventeenth century.[36] Shivaji (1627–80) used religious motifs, both Hindu and Muslim, to generate support for his political and military activities; however, in the last century, Shivaji has come to represent an ideal of a "Hindu king" positioned as a champion of Hinduism against Islamic rule, represented by the Mughal ruler, Aurangzeb (1619–1707), with whom Shivaji fought many battles. In writing his book, Laine sought to "rescue" the image of Shivaji as a Hindu king from Hindu nationalist historiography.[37] However, the anger his book generated in India was not about Hindu nationalism or Islam, but rather about the caste politics of the specific region of India in which Shivaji is most strongly remembered, the area of the state of contemporary Maharashtra; the controversy was thus not about the "Great" tradition of Hindu–Muslim antagonism in India but the "Little" tradition of caste-based politics in Maharashtra. The book was banned from the state, withdrawn from India by Oxford University Press, and Laine and many people thanked in his acknowledgements had court cases brought against them for the defamation of an important figure of Indian history. Outside the activities of the state, one organized group, which does have alliances with the Hindu Right, attacked a key figure acknowledged by Laine, and the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, where Laine had conducted much of his research, was ransacked by a different political organization, one not aligned with the Hindu Right. In both cases, the violence engendered by Laine's book did not distinguish between Hindu or Muslim—we saw only Hindus attacking other Hindus—but rather between "Brahmin" and "non-Brahmin," that is specifically Maratha, the largest caste cluster of Maharashtra. Despite the clear attribution of political intention on all sides, many scholars in the US assumed the violent reactions to Laine's book came from the Hindu Right as a defense of Hinduism, even though there was no evidence for this supposition, and ample evidence that the violence was instigated by caste rivalry among groups all self-identified as Hindu.

This reaction to the reception of Laine's book that inaccurately emphasized Hindu nationalism may have been conditioned by the political environment in which many scholars of Indian religions in the US now operate, one charged with Hindu nationalist sentiment and antagonism toward this sentiment.[38] With the loss of the national elections by the Hindu Right in May of 2004, and with the realization

that violence against scholars and the censorship of scholarship are not solely activities of the Hindu Right, we may see a trend in the US academy toward re-evaluating the many nuanced expressions of identity that occur under the banner of "Hinduism" in general within Indian and diasporic public and political culture.

A second influence may soon be felt from India. The secular study of religions in India—that is, excluding institutions such as *madrassas* (schools of traditional Islamic instruction), schools sponsored by the Hindu Right (such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS), Christian schools, etc.—has never been strong or represented in higher education. The closest allied field one finds in India is Orientalism, which has a long history there as a field of study, with many active institutions and scholars at work today, if primarily in the service of the study of Sanskrit (in western India, for example, there are the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Sanskrit Department of Pune University, and Deccan College in Pune; the Institute for Oriental Study in Thane; and the Oriental Institute at Baroda). There are almost no departments of religious studies in India's university system. However, over the last few years several educational institutions, such as the Center for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi, have organized religious studies or "Indic Religions" conferences, arranged by Madhu Kishwar and Ashis Nandy, with significant funding from the Infinity Foundation as well as the International Association for the History of Religions.

A third influence that may soon arise in the US academy is the direct intervention of "watch-dog" organizations purporting to speak for Hinduism by means of lobbying school boards, trustee boards, and other governing bodies of education institutions. This was evident in the efforts of organizations such as the Hindu Education Foundation (HEF) and the Vedic Foundation (VF) in 2005/06 to alter history textbooks in the California public school system to reflect what they felt was a more "accurate" and positive view of Hinduism. These changes largely targeted references to any oppression towards women or descriptions of the injustices of casteism, though other edits (fewer in number) were suggested that clarified, rather than misrepresented, important aspects of Indian history. However, the essential effort on the part of these two organizations in California seemed clearly aimed at erasing from Hinduism legacies of social injustice at the expense of historical accuracy. The California State Board of Education rejected

most edits proposed by the NEF and VF in its vote of February 28, 2006. What is perhaps most interesting to note here is the way in which opposition to these edits was organized. A significant front of opposition to the edits arose from the academic community, organized largely by Michael Witzel, a premier Sanskritist and professor of Indic Studies at Harvard, and composed of scholars of India, a good number of whom were also scholars of religion. Yet equally important are the many Indian and South Asian organizations that opposed the edits, such as the Friends of South Asia, the Ambedkar Center for Peace and Justice, the Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America, and the Coalition Against Communalism. Rather than a battle between academic and popular, community-based representation, the California textbook controversy highlights the way debates about Hinduism and other Indian religions may reside significantly within the public sphere of the US and not be confined to academic intervention.

I would like to end this essay by dreaming one possible future for the study of Indian religions within religious studies and the larger field of South Asia area studies. In conversations with colleagues who study India from disciplinary perspectives, especially from the point of view of modern historiography, I have often found that the voice of the "religionist" is disregarded as possessing historical authority, as if the Tower of Babel had fallen in the academy and argots of the various disciplinary approaches to studying Indian culture had all become incoherent to one another. Furthermore, religionists are often treated by other members of the academy just as Hegel treated India: as the people without history. In a strange replication of the old Orientalist conceit that India, because of its religious proclivities, did not maintain a rational historiography, I find that scholars of religion who study India are sometimes imputed the same irrational adjudication of historical data by their colleagues in the social sciences. The study of Indian religions is but a single aspect of the study of India and South Asia in general, the latter a field with a higher population of historians and anthropologists than of religionists. However, the study of Indian religions has always held an important position within the study of South Asia. The study of religion is also part of the genealogy of modern historical and anthropological studies of India, as I hope to have shown above. Yet in many ways disciplinary distinctions appear set up like tall fences in some bleak metropolitan suburb, dividing the various neighbors who all inhabit the same community, who share the

same goals toward innovative and valuable scholarship, who hew to the same principles of scholarly integrity, and who can quite possibly learn from one another despite differences in academic training and discourse. I hope this is our future as scholars of South Asia, to eschew disciplinary chauvinism in favor of fostering communities of interaction and communication; all else would remain simply babble.

NOTES

1. The history of religions and the science of religions, having originated in German scholarship of the nineteenth century, are often referred to by their German monikers, *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* and *Religioswissenschaft*, respectively.
2. W. Norman Brown, "India and Humanistic Studies in America," *Bulletin* No. 28 (May 1938), pp. 1–26.
3. Brown, "India and Humanistic Studies in America," pp. 3, 4.
4. For an excellent set of review essays on the study of Indian religions, see the work of Mary McGee, John Stratton Hawley, Lawrence A. Babb, Paula Richman, Norman Cutler, José Ignacio Cabezón, and Bruce Lawrence in Joseph W. Elder, Edward C. Dimock, Jr., and Ainslie T. Embree, eds., *India's Worlds and US Scholars: 1947–1997* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998).
5. This was a common practice in early modern Europe. See Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
6. Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 364.
7. For a brilliant critique of the history of the study and reification of caste in colonial and postcolonial periods, see Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
8. Challenges to the central position of the AOS in matters of philology first arose in 1869 with the American Philological Association, and some of its offerings in the area of near Eastern biblical history likewise shifted in 1880 with the creation of the Society for Biblical Literature and Exegesis.
9. The "science of religion" was a nineteenth and early twentieth century theory that applied scientific principles to religious phenomenon. Specifically, the science of religion promoted ideas of social evolution and the rational explanation of religious actions.
10. William Phillips, the Assistant Secretary of State in 1919, on "The Need of an American School of Living Oriental Languages". Phillips suggested that World War I, and the League of Nations, had taught the US government that there was a need for a "machine" that could instruct young Americans intent on Foreign Service in the languages of the Orient (p. 186) for the sake of business ventures, an exchange of ideas, "friendship," and "American ideals" (p. 188). W. Phillips, "The Need of an American School of Living Oriental Languages," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* Vol. 39 (1919), pp. 185–8.
11. M. Jastrow, Jr., "The Historical Study of Religions in Universities and Colleges," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* Vol. XX (1899), p. 321.
12. Jastrow, "The Historical Study of Religions in Universities and Colleges," p. 324.
13. This information is based on data assembled by Horace I. Poleman, the first specialist in Indic materials at the Library of Congress, published in "Facilities for Indic Studies in America: A Survey," *Bulletin*, No. 28 (May 1939), pp. 27–108.
14. Such as the University of Southern California, the University of California, Yale University, the University of Hawaii, the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, Boston University, Harvard University, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota, Drew University, Duke University, Princeton University, Columbia University, the University of Washington, and the University of Pennsylvania.

15. Such as Yale University (1841), Johns Hopkins University (1876), Harvard University (1880), Columbia University (1880), the University of Chicago (1892), and the University of Pennsylvania (1904).
16. Such schools included James Milliken University, University of Illinois at Urbana, DePauw University, Butler University, the State University of Iowa in Iowa City, Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa, Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, Smith College, Mt. Holyoke College, Wellesley College, Williams College, Carleton College, Millsaps College, Montana State University, the University of New Hampshire, Drew University, Hamilton College and Colgate University in New York, New York University, Vassar College, University of North Carolina, Ohio University, the University of Cincinnati, Western Reserve University, Ohio Wesleyan University, Oberlin College, Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, Brown University, Fisk University and Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, the University of Utah, State College of Washington, West Virginia University, and Walla Walla College in Washington.
17. Such as Stanford University, the University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado College, Crozer Theological Seminary, Trinity College, Mercer University, the University of Kentucky, Louisiana State University, Johns Hopkins University, Clark University, University of Missouri, Hamilton College, College of the City of New York, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Ohio University, Bryn Mawr College, Temple University, Beloit College, and the University of Wisconsin.
18. These include the Pacific School of Religion, the Hartford Seminary Foundation School of Missions, the Catholic University of America, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Bangor Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary, Western Theological Seminary, and Southern Methodist University.
19. See Nicholas B. Dirks, "South Asian Studies: Futures Past," *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*. University of California International and Area Studies Digital Collection, 2003. Edited Volume 3, available at http://repositories.cdlib.org/uciaspubs/editedvolumes/3/9.
20. Specifically, see Abington School District vs. Schemmp, and many that followed.
21. For more on this see the excellent survey by Maureen L. P. Patterson, "Institutional Base for the Study of South Asia in the United States and the Role of the American Institute of Indian Studies," in Elder *et al*., eds., *India's Worlds and US Scholars: 1947–1997*, 17–108.
22. See Patterson in Elder *et al*., eds., *India's Worlds and US Scholars: 1947–1997*, pp. 45, 49. The American Institute for Bangladesh Studies was formed in 1989 and the American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies was formed in 1995 (Patterson in Elder *et al*., p. 85).
23. See Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
24. These rankings are highly suspect, as a recent article by Colin Diver, President of Reed College (and former Dean at the University of Pennsylvania) in *The Atlantic Monthly* Vol. 296, No. 4 (November 2005), pp. 136–9, makes clear, where he writes, "Trying to rank institutions of higher education is a little like trying to rank religions. . ." (p. 139).
25. These are Yale University (with Jacob P. Dalton, Hugh Flick, and Phyllis Granoff), Duke University (with Bruce Lawrence, Ebrahim E.I. Moosa, and Leela Prasad), Stanford University (with Linda Hess and Michael Zimmermann) Dartmouth College (with Brian Didier and Reiko Ohnuma), Cornell University (with Dan Boucher, Daniel Gold, and David Holmberg), Brown University (with Donna Wulf), and Rice University (with Anne Klein and Jeffrey Kripal), in addition to those mentioned above.
26. For example, at Michigan, scholars whose work is important to the religious studies of India include Barbara Metcalf (History), Christoph Emmrich (Asian Languages and Cultures), Luis O. Gómez (Buddhist Studies), Donald S. Lopez (Buddhist and Tibetan Studies), Farina Mir (Buddhist Studies), and Ashutosh Varshney (Political Science); at Texas,Joel Brereton (Sanskrit), Oliver Freiberger (Buddhist Studies), Edeltraud Harzer (Sanskrit), Syed Akbar Hyder (Islam), Richard Lariviere (Sanskrit), William Malandran (Zoroastrian Studies), Patrick Olivelle (Sanskrit), Martha Selby (Sanskrit, Tamil, Gender), Shylashri Shankar (Political Science), Gail Minault (Islam and History), Cynthia

Talbot (History of South India), Stephen Phillips (Philosophy), and Lester Kurtz (Sociology); at Seattle, Collette Cox (Asian Languages and Literatures), Purnima Dhavan (History), Ter Ellingson (Anthropology and Ethnomusicology), Clark Lombardi (Law), Heidi Pauwels (Liberal Studies), and retired professors Karl Potter (Philosophy) and Frank Conlon (History); at Berkeley, Vasudha Dalmia (Dept. of South and Southeast Asia Studies), Robert Goldman (Dept. of South and Southeast Asia Studies), Sally Sutherland-Goldman (Dept. of South and Southeast Asia Studies), Lawrence Cohen (Anthropology), Munis D. Faruqui (Dept. of South and Southeast Asia Studies), George Hart (Dept. of South and Southeast Asia Studies), Alexander v. Rospatt(Dept. of South and Southeast Asia Studies), and Joanna Williams (Dept. of South and Southeast Asia Studies).

27. By comparison (and based on an informal survey of colleagues) South Asia as a region, compared to its representation at the AAR, is relatively under-represented in the annual meetings of the American Historical Association, American Anthropological Association, the Modern Language Association, American Political Science Association, and almost completely absent from the American Sociological Association.
28. I chose to count from the year 1965 because this marks a turning point in the inclusion of "non-Western" subjects in the study of religion in religious studies departments in the US as noted above.
29. Vol. 71, No. 3 (2003) and Vol. 73, No. 1. (2005).
30. See my essay, Christian Lee Novetzke, "The Subaltern Numen: Making History in the Name of God," *History of Religions*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (2006 forthcoming).
31. Guha in R. Guha and G. Spivak, eds., *The Prose of Counter-Insurgency*, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 46.
32. Patterson in Elder *et al*., p. 47.
33. My thanks to the AIIS, an especially Elise Auerbach, for sharing this information with me.
34. Patrick Olivelle, *Upanisads* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)(winner in 1998); and Rajagopal. Parthasarathy, *Cilappatikaram of Ilanko Atikal (The Tale of an Aklet): An Epic of South India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
35. *Ganesha: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
36. For more on this book, see my review of *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* in *The Journal of Religion* Vol. 85, No. 3 (July 2005), pp. 524–6.
37. James Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 6.
38. For more on this subject, see my essay "The Laine Controversy and the Study of Hinduism," in *The International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 8, Nos. 1–3 (2005[2004]), pp. 183–201. See also an essay by Adheesh Sathaye, "Attacking the Text: The Spectacle of Censureship in the Ransacking of Bhandarkar Institute," delivered to the American Academy of Religion's annual meeting in 2004 (San Diego) and "Censorship and Censureship: Insiders, Outsiders, and the Attack on Bhandarkar Institute" forthcoming in *the Journal of Hindu–Christian Studies*.

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