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### Title

New Faiths, Old Fears: Muslims and Other Asian Immigrants in American Religious Life. By Bruce B. Lawrence. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Pp. xvi+197. \$24.50.

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*New Faiths, Old Fears: Muslims and Other Asian Immigrants in American Religious Life.* By BRUCE B. LAWRENCE. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Pp. xvi+197. \$24.50.

In this book, Bruce Lawrence presents a series of proposals and arguments about the place of some recent immigrant groups from the Middle East and Asia in American religious life. Lawrence argues that radicalized class prejudice continues to shape both culture and religion in the United States and that a controlling white, hegemonic, Protestant Christianity constrains multicultural goals, which should be reexamined and redefined. As the book's subtitle indicates, he proposes that Muslims be included in the category "Asian Americans." Although his major emphasis is on South Asians, both Hindus and Muslims, he also brings Iranians into the arena, particularly in chapter 4, where his framing narrative (presumably elicited from an anonymous informant) is that of an Iranian immigrant. Lawrence also continually invokes other American minorities, Native Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans to reinforce his arguments.

<sup>12</sup> I base my discussion mainly on a Jiao ritual as observed in November 2000 in Huangpu Township of Northern Guangdong, and I presented the result of my fieldwork in a paper prepared for the PNC (Pacific Neighborhood Consortium) Annual Conference and Joint Meetings on January 15–20, 2001, at the City University of Hong Kong.

<sup>13</sup> One example would be those ethnographies contained in John Lagerwey's Traditional Hakka Society Series, published jointly by the International Hakka Studies Association, the Overseas Chinese Archives, and the Ecole Française d'Extrême-orient in Hong Kong; thirty volumes have been planned, and so far twenty volumes have been published. Another example would be Wang Qiugui's *Minzu quyì congshu* in Taiwan, for which one hundred volumes have been planned, with eighty-one volumes already published. As for the Jiao ritual in Hong Kong, a recent book is Choi Chi Cheung's *Dajiao: Xianggang di jieri he diyu shehui* (The Jiao ritual: Hong Kong festivals and regional society) (Hong Kong: Sanlian Shudian, 2000).

This wide-ranging and creative synthesis of interdisciplinary issues and literature aims at provoking thought about religion, race, class, and citizenship in America. Lawrence makes extensive attempts to link culture and religion in ways that do not reduce either to bounded static concepts or reduce religion to culture. He sets Diana Eck's advocacy of hegemonic pluralism (groups in dialogue) against Samuel Huntington's analysis of cultural fundamentalism (groups in conflict) as he explores the contemporary politicization of religion and religious and cultural identities. Lawrence introduces two new terms he believes will be useful. "Polyvalence" is a neologism that connotes "the many as equivalent to the one[,] . . . negotiated equivalence without guaranteed permanence[,] . . . pragmatic hope rather than utopian idealism." "Kaleidoculture" is proposed as an alternative to multiculturalism, "a changing spectrum of cultural values and experiences, each set of which is bright and scintillating, worthy of attention, examination, and appreciation as well as debate, critique, and transformation" (p. 9). Invoking these terms, he calls for movement beyond "Progressive Patriotic Protestantism" and corporate multiculturalism to "a shifting kaleidoscope of equal polyvalent parts" (p. 131), for movement beyond assimilation into a basically Anglo culture. Lawrence urges that cultural and religious difference be claimed as badges of distinction, not marks of discrimination. Seeing democracy as a work very much in progress, he urges that the privileging of European immigrants and Anglo-Americans in particular be acknowledged in discussions of cultural citizenship (p. 39). His is an inventive and timely exploration of contemporary American religion, politics, and culture, an exploration that will surely stimulate further research and discussion.

Lawrence follows a certain strategy of presentation and argumentation as he develops his proposals. Each of the chapters begins with two selections from poetry, film, or scholarly work, and he has a good ear (or eye) for compelling quotes. Also, most chapters begin by presenting two contrasting views of scholars or immigrants, views that he then discusses critically. The titles of the substantive chapters well indicate the issues he takes up: "American Religion as Commodity Culture," "Civil Society and Immigrants," "New Immigrants as Pariahs," and "Reimagining Religious Pluralism." As he deploys various voices to advance his rhetorical points, arguing against or for various other scholars and writers in text and footnotes, readers already engaged with this literature are best equipped to follow and appreciate the nuances of the discussion. This is a book for graduate students and other scholars, not undergraduates.

The author's interest in theory and his "cut and mix" technique combine to disorient the reader to some extent. Basic historical or contemporary material about Asian (or any other) immigrants and their religions is not presented systematically or in any detail. At times Lawrence specifies the "new faiths" as Asian, but he often refers to Latino and other religious strands in the American kaleidoscope as well. Never do we get demographic or other details of the groups being discussed, their migration timings, numbers, settlement patterns, or religious preferences. Furthermore, Lawrence blithely asserts what seems logical or desirable to him rather than exploring the contemporary social or scholarly landscape in any depth. This is particularly noticeable in his treatment of Asian American matters and his inclusion of "Muslims" as Asians, achieved simply by noting that the Middle East

should really be termed “West Asia.” He may be correctly anticipating a future expansion of the Asian American category, but the issue deserves more attention. While South Asians are now accepted in Asian American arenas, that was a hard-won inclusion; Iranians, along with Arabs and Turks, are not included and indeed have not asked to be included. Furthermore, Lawrence seems to think race has been incidental, not central, to Asian American studies, reflecting only a partial reading of the relevant literature.

This is very much an “idea” book, arguing that existing concepts of multiculturalism are inadequate and that accepted scholarly ideas about racialized class inequalities must be expanded to include racialized religious inequalities. Lawrence engages skillfully with a wide-ranging and important body of interdisciplinary literature concerning contemporary American pluralism and cosmopolitanism, adding new religions and new immigrants to the American religious landscape but doing so in ways that demand their respectful integration. It is an ambitious book, contributing new terms and venturing into new areas: another new term, “hypervisualization,” is proposed to examine the role of the Internet and other new media in positioning religion in public spaces (p. 121). These new terms and his diagram of religious identities in twenty-first-century America (p. 125) are now available for discussion, analysis, and possibly adoption and detailed investigation by other scholars.

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