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The Inter-Religious Riot as a Cultural System: Globalization, Geertz, and Hindu-Christian Conflict

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Constructing Indian Christianities

Culture, Conversion and Caste



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The Interreligious Riot as a Cultural System

Globalisation, Geertz and
Hindu-Christian Conflict

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The increased global flow of peoples and ideas brings religious people more regularly into contact with people who adhere to religions other than their own. And while that does mean that the nature of interreligious violence is now different — local disputes are now more frequently linked with national and global problems and concerns — it does not necessarily mean that we are in a period of more regular than usual interreligious violence. Nor does it mean that interreligious riots are actually *interreligious* in the narrowest sense. In fact, it seems to be infrequent indeed that people actually clash violently over differences in religious practice or doctrine. Rather, interreligious violence generally involves conflict among communities whose competing identities are differentiated along religious lines. Interreligious violence might in many cases be better described as ethnic violence, or as majority-minority violence. And if this is true, then it becomes clear why we might speak of the cultural aspects of interreligious conflict.

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Much has been written about interreligious violence around the world, and theorists have attempted to account for it with reference to economic, political or even psychological causal factors. Paul R. Brass, who has written extensively about Hindu-Muslim conflict in India, worries that by focusing on causal factors like these, academics essentially exculpate violent criminals by suggesting that their environment (or biology) is to blame for their actions. Moreover, in blaming certain kinds of actors — those, for example, who act violently against members of a religious group because of a specific grievance against them — one essentially exonerates others who participate in religious violence for different reasons, such as to enact interpersonal vengeance, or merely to loot, rape or vandalise. For these reasons, Brass prefers to focus on *whose interests interreligious violence serves* (Brass 2003: 11, 15, 20). I am sympathetic to Brass's views, and so this chapter will focus not on the causes of interreligious riots but rather on how they function or work. That said, the line between causal factors and interests or function is a blurry one, and discussions of the latter very often lead back, by necessity, to the former (as they do in this chapter).

It is the argument of this chapter that the interreligious riot functions as a cultural system. The language here intentionally harkens back to Clifford Geertz's seminal essay, 'Religion as a Cultural System' (1973: 87–125), which suggested that religion, among other elements of culture, serves to sure up and perpetuate certain cultural arrangements by fusing, in a mutually reinforcing way, the 'world as lived' (or a cultural 'ethos') with the 'world as imagined' (a 'worldview'). In what follows, I argue that the interreligious riot does the same, that is, that it insists upon certain ways conceiving of the world (in ideal terms) and then produces (or reproduces) on the ground a world that corresponds to and supports that ideal. It is therefore more likely to be perpetrated by groups for whom that basic correspondence (between the world as lived and the world as imagined) has been lost or ruptured, such as those most negatively affected by intrusive social forces like colonisation or globalisation.

Geertz's theory has of course been criticised by Talal Asad, practice theorists like Sherry Ortner, and others. And yet, in my view, while these critics offer a useful corrective for Geertz's theory, they do not convincingly refute it. In what follows, therefore, I will suggest that a Geertzian framework, expanded in ways suggested by his critics, remains a useful tool for helping us understand the interreligious riot. And I will do so with reference to recent Hindu-Christian violence in India.

The chapter begins by describing this violence, both in general and with regard to the recent series of anti-Christian riots in Kandhamal, Orissa (2007–2009). It then moves on to an analysis of anti-Christian violence, paying particular attention to its cultural aspects. Finally, after developing the argument that the interreligious riot functions as a cultural system, I will, in the conclusion, argue, if only tentatively, that this theoretical framework might be fruitfully applied to other incidences of interreligious violence.

Hindu-Christian Violence in India

Anti-Christian violence in India has been increasing since the late 1990s (Froerer 2007: 2; Sarkar 1999: 1691), and after 1998, for a brief period, at least, Christians began to rival Muslims as the primary targets of anti-minority activists associated with the Sangh Parivar (Sarkar 1999: 1691).¹ In that year, mobs in Gujarat attacked Christians as they celebrated Christmas. No Christians were killed in the attacks, but dozens of houses and places of worship were burned to the ground or otherwise vandalised (Gonsalves 1999). The year 1998 also marks a sharp surge in everyday acts of violence against Christians. According to one record, only 34 incidents of violence against Christians occurred between 1964 and 1996. But then in 1997 alone there were 48 incidents, and another 65 in 1998 (Mustafa and Sharma 2003: 168–169). According to the United Christian Forum for Human Rights, the numbers were even higher: 90 incidents in 1998, and 116 between January 1998 and February 1999, 94 of them in Gujarat (Aaron 2002: 47).

It is difficult, of course, to pinpoint the exact reasons why violence against Christians began to increase in the 1990s. The Sangh Parivar did suffer a disapproving public backlash after the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992, and some have claimed that Sangh affiliates believed their anti-Muslim rhetoric was bringing them increasingly diminishing electoral returns (*ibid.*: 44). At the same time, anti-Christian propaganda was gaining political traction, in large part due to the political rise of Sonia Gandhi, assassinated former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's Italian- and Christian-born wife. In 1998, Sonia Gandhi became President of the Congress Party (the primary opponent of the BJP). Her foreignness was a perennial issue, raised repeatedly by her nationalist critics and opponents, and her Christian faith was seen as a symbol of her non-native status. The stoking of anti-Christian sentiment not only helped the BJP burnish its nationalist credentials, therefore, but also implied a critique of the Congress Party and reinforced the BJP's contention that the Congress was a party that pandered to foreigners and minorities.

Another reason for the increase in anti-Christian violence may have been the impression, among Sangh Parivar affiliates, that Christian missionary activity was increasing in the last decade of the millennium. Many were aware, for example, of efforts such as AD2000 and Beyond and the Joshua Project, which set ambitious and quite public evangelical goals to be achieved by Christians, with the help of rational, calculating targeting and cooperation, by the turn of the century (Zavos 2001: 75). Still others have suggested that the rise in anti-Christian violence was related to the growing spread of globalisation in the 1990s, which provoked in many circles a nationalist and xenophobic response.

Whatever the cause, anti-Christian rhetoric and sentiment did increase significantly during the 1990s, and especially after 1998. Around the turn of the century, for example, VHP General Secretary Giriraj Kishore asserted that Christianity constituted 'a greater threat [to India] than the collective threat from separatist Muslim elements' (Aaron 2002: 31). It is perhaps no surprise, then, that anti-Christian violence should increase at around the same time. And it did. Between 1998 and the 2007 riots in Kandhamal, Orissa, the annual number of incidents of violence against Christians continued to rise (reaching, in recent years, about 250–300 *per annum*).

The Anti-Christian Riots in Kandhamal, Orissa

Many reports on the Orissa riots in district Kandhamal begin with an attack, by Christians, on the car of Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati, a regionally popular and well-known Hindu reformer and anti-conversion activist. And certainly this event did, more than anything else, energise anti-Christian forces. But the origins of the riot violence appear to lie several hours earlier, and elsewhere, in the small village of Brahmanigaon. In preparation for Christmas celebrations, Christians in Brahmanigaon had with permission from local authorities constructed a *pandal* (a long, cloth-covered scaffolding into which a nativity scene had been incorporated) over one of the town's roads (National Commission for Minorities 2008).²

In previous years, low-caste Pana Christians in Brahmanigaon had built the *pandal* in the same spot. But this year things were different. The Kui Samaj, a Kond *adivasi*³ organisation, had called for a state-wide *bandh* (strike) on 24 and 25 December 2007, to press its pro-Kond political agenda. Given the strained relations between the mostly non-Christian Konds and their substantially Christianised Pana neighbours, Christians took the planned Christmas *bandh* as an intentional provocation. And then, on 23 December, a group of

Hindus in Brahmanigaon warned some Christian women and young people not to continue erecting the *pandal*, which they argued desecrated the site of a recent Durga Puja (National Commission for Minorities 2008; VHP 2008). Sensing trouble, Christian delegations visited local officials responsible for law and order and requested extra protection. But many local police officers had been called to the capital of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, where the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), which ruled the state in coalition with the BJP, was to celebrate the 10th anniversary of its founding on 26 December. The Christmas celebrations began, therefore, without an extra police presence.

On the day before Christmas, Christians asked Brahmanigaon police officers to officially open the local market, despite the Kui Samaj's strike, so they could prepare for Christmas celebrations. The police did so at around 7 AM. An hour or two later a group of Hindus led (according to Christian eyewitnesses) by a prominent local RSS leader, Bikram Raut, arrived and attempted to intimidate merchants into closing their shops. But the police managed to keep the market open. Sometime later, however, the group returned and began physically abusing Christians in the market. According to one Christian eyewitness, Christians responded by looting the stalls of Hindu merchants. The market closed down (Pati 2008). Later, at around 10 AM, a larger mob arrived in town, set the Christmas *pandal* ablaze and attacked and destroyed Christian shops. One Christian teenager was shot (not fatally), and the town's Christians fled in fear to the jungle (Anand 2008).

Then, at around 10.45 AM, en route to Brahmanigaon where he had for some time, it appears, planned to conduct a public Hindu ritual, Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati's car got stuck in traffic in Dasingbadi. As the swami and his entourage waited for a broken-down vehicle to be cleared from the road, there was an altercation between his body guards and Christians at a church along the road. Accounts of the altercation (and who provoked it) differ, but Saraswati asserts that the Christians damaged his car and attacked its occupants, causing injury to Saraswati and his driver. Pictures of Saraswati looking tired but not showing any evident sign of injury in the hospital bed he rushed to afterwards were quickly picked up and published by local media outlets. National television stations also began broadcasting a video of him speaking from his bed, saying (in Hindi and Oriya) 'When people become Christians, they become enemies . . . of the nation. I will not tolerate this' (Dayal 2008). In response to the attack on Saraswati, who had ties to various Sangh organisations, the RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal⁴ jointly called a four-hour *bandh* for the next day (Christmas day).

As news of the day's events was broadcast, the violence spread rapidly. Churches and Christian homes were destroyed in two more towns by the end of the 24th (Christmas Eve). On Christmas day itself, the violence continued, with attacks in more than half a dozen villages. The state government directed a thousand police officers to the riot-stricken areas, but logs downed across main roads by miscreants obstructed their progress. By Christmas evening, the government had imposed a curfew on several towns in Kandhamal, including the district capitol of Phulbani. Despite this, and the eventual arrival of members of the better-trained Central Reserve Police Force, the destruction continued until 27 December. The riots affected an area of around 600 square miles, and affected towns in at least six different Kandhamal district blocks. Estimates differ, but the All-India Christian Council and the National Commission for Minorities assert that mobs destroyed 95 churches, several convents, mission schools and parish houses, and 730 homes, around 120 of which were Hindu homes destroyed by Christians (All-India Christian Council 2008). Six people were seriously wounded, several women were molested or raped and at least four people were confirmed dead. Of these victims of physical assault, all or almost all were Christian.

As a result of the violence, around 3,000 Christians entered refugee camps established by the government. And just when the last of them began to feel it safe to return, in August of 2008, a second round of violence began when Saraswati was assassinated in his ashram, in the middle of a religious service celebrating the birth of Krishna (Krishna Janmashtami). Anti-government but pro-minority Naxalites⁵ who may or may not have been Christian and who may or may not have had the financial or logistical support of Christians — the public, and the courts, are still debating, and a lower court conviction of seven Christians has been appealed — claimed responsibility for the assassination. This second and much more violent round of violence, which sputtered to an end in the last months of 2009, led to more than 50 deaths (and probably a great deal more), the destruction of thousands of homes and the displacement of over 5,000 people. As in the first round of violence, most (though not all) of the victims were Christian.

Many contributing factors combined to extend and exacerbate the violence in Kandhamal, among them pervasive conditions of general poverty, unemployment and discontent, the slow and ineffective response of a reduced and obstructed police force, the retaliation of Christians, and the possible involvement in or exploitation of the violence by Naxalites. But for the purposes of developing this chapter's thesis I will focus on two contributing factors — Kond–Pana relations, and the involvement of regional and national Sangh Parivar leaders.

Kond–Pana Relations

For some time there had been tension between the Dalit Panas and the *adivasi* Kond (or 'Kandha', 'Kondh') community, despite the fact that both groups speak the same language (Kui) and both have experienced a similar history of marginalisation and exploitation by higher-caste and more dominant groups in the region. (For more on this, see Chapter 8, this volume.) The reason for the tension is twofold. The first is that a high percentage of Panas (whom Pfeffer refers to in Chapter 8 as 'weavers' or 'Panos') have converted to Christianity, whereas very few Konds have (except in a few areas), creating somewhat of a cultural rift between the two communities. The second reason follows from the first, and has to do with the fact that the Government of India considers the Panas a 'Scheduled Caste' (SC) and the Konds a 'Scheduled Tribe' (ST). This is significant because STs who convert to Christianity remain eligible for ST reservations whereas SC converts to Christianity become ineligible for SC reservations.⁶

In the months before the riots, the Pana community had been agitating to have the government change its classification of the Pana community from SC to ST. Their demand was made on the basis of earlier ambiguous government proclamations about the status of the entire Kui-speaking community. The Orissa High Court had taken up the matter and had directed the Government of India to investigate it further. But at the time of the riots, the issue remained unresolved (National Commission for Minorities 2008; Pati 2008; Samantaray 2008).

If it had been successful, the change would have allowed Pana converts to Christianity to remain eligible, even after conversion, for the economically quite important reservations. But it would also, of course, have placed all Panas in direct competition with all Konds for reserved ST seats in the region. Many Konds already resented the Pana Christian community for the fact that it had become, over the years, noticeably more prosperous than the Kond one. In addition, some within the Kond community believed Pana Christians used their greater wealth and education to exploit Konds and expropriate their lands. And so, not surprisingly, many Konds viewed the Pana petition as yet another cynical ploy by the Pana community to improve its economic position still further. The secretary of the Kui Samaj declared in September 2007 that the Kond community opposed the proposed change, and insisted, with ominous prescience, that if the 'Government accepted Pana harijans as tribals then it would lead to violent clashes between the two communities' (*The Hindu* 2007). It was in protest against the proposed change in Pana status that the Kui Samaj called for the *bandh* on 24–25 December.

The story of anti-minority violence in India is often told as if it is directed by upper-caste members of the Sangh Parivar, who manage to dupe, provoke or perhaps employ members of lower castes and *adivasi* groups to do their grizzly bidding. And certainly, as I will argue here, members of Sangh Parivar organisations did in Orissa (as they do in other places) find ways to encourage and exacerbate the violence for their own nationalistic ends. But it is worth noting here the existence of significant tensions between the Christian community in Kandhamal and other low-status communities (most notably the tribal Konds). Konds were active participants in the anti-Christian violence, and were involved afterwards in its indirect justification. For example, Lambodar Kanhar, Chairman of the Kui Samaj, asked a reporter, 'How can we get along with Christians? It's like cat and mouse. We don't like the ways of even those who are Christians among the Kandhas' (Anand 2008).

Sangh Parivar Involvement

Many Christians, activists and other commentators ignored the role of local Konds in the Kandhamal riots, and blamed Sangh Parivar affiliates like the VHP, the RSS, the Bajrang Dal, and Orissa's Sangh-affiliated political parties — the BJP and the BJD. Some, for example, suggested that nearly all of the rioters were members of Sangh Parivar organisations brought in from outside of Kandhamal. Others suggested that the Sangh was not only involved in the violence, but also organised, pre-planned and intentionally provoked it. The role of individuals and groups affiliated with the Sangh Parivar in pre-planning the riots has probably been exaggerated. But their role as actual participants in the violence is undeniable, as is their role in providing rhetorical encouragement and justification for the violence once it began.

That participation was particularly important after the attack on Saraswati's car, which Sangh leaders used to provoke indignation among those who supported and respected the Swami. Sangh leaders also insisted that the attack on the Swami's car was the first and precipitating event, which allowed them to portray (and others to justify) the violence as retaliatory. (That said, in a context like this where 'everyday' violence against Christians was so common, it is indeed difficult to pinpoint the 'initial' event in any riot. Were the early attacks in Brahmanigaon the beginning of the riot, or just another more isolated attack on Christians?) They also frequently tried to portray the clashes as an exclusively Kond–Pana affair, and denied Sangh involvement. Some even denied that Christians had been targeted, suggesting instead that only Hindus had been injured or killed, or that Christians had in fact burned down their own homes and churches to reap a whirlwind of sympathetic

international charity, or that Christian aid organisations like World Vision had orchestrated the riots to encourage donations (VHP 2008). Sangh leaders also mounted a campaign against what they viewed as the pro-Christian bias of English-language news outlets, which a BJP journal called the '24×7 secular media' (R. P. Tripathy 2008). For example, Ram Madhav, a former RSS spokesperson, wrote:

[We] have created a funny nomenclature in our country: if you are a Hindu and defend your faith, you are a 'Hindu nationalist' ... But if you are a Hindu and use your lung power to loudly attack Hinduism and Hindus for crimes they never committed, then you are a great "secularist" (Madhav 2008).

For the purposes of this chapter, it is also important to point out that Sangh leaders in Orissa and elsewhere regularly portrayed the violence as a 'natural response' to long-term 'conversion activities' of 'missionaries' in Kandhamal. The BJP, for example, claimed that the initial violence in Brahmanigaon had been triggered by a 'conversion convention' organised by missionaries. When Hindus protested against this convention, the BJP alleged, Christians attacked them (D. Tripathy 2008). The justification of anti-Christian violence as a 'natural response' to the conversion activities of missionaries is a common one today, and draws upon the anxiety felt by some Hindus (and purposively stoked by others) about the possible extinction of Hinduism itself.⁷ During the Kandhamal violence, Sangh sources regularly inflated the number of Christians, and the growth of the Christian community in Kandhamal (and India more generally) to play upon these fears. In fact, Sangh sources quite commonly portrayed the Hindu community as a *minority* in Kandhamal, or in certain parts of Kandhamal (see, for example, VHP 2008). The Christian community had been growing relatively rapidly in Kandhamal, but not, it seems, as quickly as many Sangh sources asserted. And the Hindu community was certainly not a minority in the region as a whole.

In addition to playing upon fears of Hindu extinction, the Sangh's regular references to 'missionaries' were clearly meant to provoke a basic nationalistic response by implying that *foreign* missionaries were active in India. (There are still foreign missionaries working in India, but the vast majority of 'missionaries' today are Indian, and no more 'foreign' than a Malayali is to Orissa — though there is some significant cultural difference even there.)

Others focused instead on foreign money. After the first round of riots, for example, one editorial suggested that:

For decades the Christians [Kandhamal] have used American and European money to allure citizens into the church and convert them into Christianity ... it is certainly non-religious to pay money and promise all kinds of things like better education, higher standard of living and so on to convert naïve Hindus into Christianity (Reddy 2007).

Such accusations often lead rhetorically to claims of conversion by 'force, fraud and allurement' (where 'force', in a strained kind of usage, means the same thing as 'fraud' or 'allurement'). Later on in the same article, for example, the author implicitly justifies the anti-Christian violence by saying, '[c]ommunal riots are deplorable. But the forced conversion into Christianity is more deplorable' (ibid.). As I have argued elsewhere, there is some merit in the assertion that the great wealth associated with global Christianity has benefitted and does still trickle down and benefit India's Christians (Bauman 2010). And even if those benefits are not held out as an explicit allurements to potential converts, the very assumption that they exist may indeed 'allure' some converts to the faith. But that is a discussion for another time and place.

The point to be underscored here is that Sangh leaders played a conspicuous role in the Kandhamal riots by regularly and systematically linking local politics and the clashes themselves to broader national fears about the possible extinction of Hinduism or even of the nation itself (by way of a Christian demographic or even military coup), and thereby not only providing justification and cover for those involved in the violence, but also issuing a broader, national 'call to arms' in defence of Kandhamal Hindus. The rhetorical linkage, by Sangh leaders, of local and national concerns is not unique to Kandhamal, or to anti-Christian violence, but is, rather, a regular feature of communal riots in India. Stanley Tambiah has described the process as 'transvaluation' (1997: 81), and Paul R. Brass (1997: 16) has termed those who engage in it 'conversion specialists' (because they 'convert' all the peculiarities of localised conflicts into broader, more general and national terms).

Culture and Anti-Christian Violence

Hindu nationalism gained momentum just as globalisation picked up speed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and there is, no doubt, a link. Globalisation threatened to diminish the economic opportunities and cultural hegemony of the middle and upper castes and classes while at the same time it threatened traditional and more local status hierarchies (among and *within* all castes and communities) by introducing new avenues to wealth and power. Members

of the lower castes and tribes who could gain an education became thereby increasingly upwardly mobile. And all of this was perceived by the old elite as a threat to the 'traditional' social order (Lobo 2002: 38). The economic effects of globalisation were therefore seen not only as an economic challenge, but also (and perhaps more importantly) as a *cultural* challenge to the traditional Indian (or Hindu) 'way of life'. Similarly, the political effects of globalisation — the sense of lost sovereignty and anxiety about the integrity of the nation — were experienced as a challenge to the *nation* of India, conceived of not just in political but also (and, again, just as importantly) in cultural terms.

It is no surprise, then, that the response to these challenges should in significant ways have been a cultural one. A political response to the effects of globalisation, that is, to the loss of sovereignty entailed in taking loans from international lending agencies, would have been more or less impossible. India desperately needed the international funding and was therefore forced to open up its markets to foreign control and investment. And even if Hindu nationalists had wanted to contest the forces of globalisation economically, they would have been unable to do so *as a nation* because the national economy had been effectively dismantled. Moreover, the foreign nations and entities responsible for globalisation were effectively untouchable, and there was little interest in stemming the flow of foreign investment, once it began, by targeting the multinationals directly. Resistance to the effects of globalisation therefore shifted, out of necessity, to the cultural plane, as it did in other postcolonial contexts.

What is somewhat unique about India is the way in which Christians appear to have been targeted as proxies for the forces of globalisation as part of this cultural contestation. But the targeting makes sense according to a certain logic. In addition to being members of a cultural minority (and therefore inherently a threat in the view of nationalists who believe a unified, *national* response to globalisation is required), Christians were, because of their presumed connections to Western countries and their putative access to Western wealth and education, seen not only as purveyors of globalisation, but as its primary beneficiaries. And so, while acronymed entities like the US (United States), the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the WTO (World Trade Organization), or KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) are more responsible for globalisation in India, India's Christians are a more accessible and convenient (and therefore more regular) target (Sarkar 1999: 1698).

The irony, of course, is that when it took power at the centre in 1998, the BJP was quite friendly to multinationals because of its somewhat recently-embraced free-market orientation, while all the while its Sangh Parivar

associates were enthusiastically engaged in anti-globalisation efforts. For Sangh affiliates like these, attacks on Christians became 'a symbolic means of resisting the "foreign hand" and so reaffirming the indigenist credentials of Hindu nationalism' (Zavos 2001: 78). The shift was therefore complete from politics and economics to culture, such that 'the destruction of mosques and churches . . . [was presented as an act] of redemption of the national honour precisely at the time when the nation's publically owned assets [were] being sold to foreign investors and domestic capitalists alike, for a song' (Ahmad 2007: 117). Through this process, local threats (e.g., 'foreign religions') become homologous with foreign threats to the nation (e.g., Islam for Pakistan, Christians for globalisation).

The mode of contesting globalisation, therefore, is largely a cultural one. And all contestations require unity. But cultural unity is somewhat difficult to come by in a country as diverse as India. The fundamental basis of unity as constructed by Hindu nationalists is clearly Hinduism, or *Hindutva* (conceived of broadly, as a 'way of life'), and Hindu nationalists claim the right to rule on the basis of the Hindu majority. But many of these same Hindu nationalists conceive of Hinduism in rather traditional terms, with upper-caste Hindus still the guiding social and ideological force. The paradox, however, is that upper-caste Hindus are a distinct minority in India, constituting well under 10 per cent of the population (Schermerhorn 1978: 16–19).

Not only do upper-castes constitute a minority, their minority is a fractured one. In 1978, the sociologist Richard A. Schermerhorn identified two primary groupings of upper-caste Hindus, which he called the 'parochial neo-traditionalists' and the 'conditionally westernised'. The parochial neo-traditionalists tended to be educated in vernacular languages; to embrace local culture and entertainment; to prefer Indian garb (even for men); to be vegetarian; to observe caste in the home (if not outside); to consult gurus, rishis, swamis, and astrologers; and to be suspicious of the patriotism of Muslims and Christians. The 'conditionally westernised' tended to be inclined towards western languages, sartorial styles, entertainments, and culinary preferences (e.g., for meat-eating) and away from observing caste regulations and religious practices deemed 'popular' or 'superstitious'. The 'conditionally westernised' tended, as well, to be politically oriented towards an inclusive secularism, and only mildly patriotic (*ibid.*: 20). Active members of Sangh Parivar organisations tend to be drawn from the former group, because of its greater support for the Sangh's Sanskrit, upper-caste Hinduism-inflected vision for India's socio-economic order.

The statistics and proportions might be slightly different today (Lobo 2002: 48–49),⁸ as would the extent to which members of upper-caste

communities dominate high-level positions in the public and private sphere (their reach is declining). But the reality of their being a rather small and ideologically divided minority remains, and accounts for some of the difficulties they have had forging national integration on the grounds of a Hinduism conceived of in these terms. Upper-caste Hindus can no longer be considered an undisputed hegemonic community, and those who continue to assert that they are (or should be) are essentially fighting a rear-guard action against social processes that have already occurred, which have begun if not to marginalise them, at least to undermine their traditional status and authority.

Yet Hindu nationalists know that for Hindu nationalism to succeed culturally, ideologically and politically, Hindus must retain something akin to a majority. Retaining such a majority would require that Hinduism be defined broadly enough to include Dalits and *adivasi* communities. Because of this, there is a fundamental tension within the Hindu nationalist movement between, on the one hand, the desire of many upper-caste nationalists to retain for themselves certain traditional social and cultural privileges and, on the other hand, the fact that they are a minority and must therefore, to construct a majority, find ways of including within the Hindu fold a vastly larger number of Dalit and *adivasi* communities who might contest or reject their privileges. Upper-caste Hindu nationalists are therefore not so much fighting to regain a lost majority as they are to retain a formerly somewhat more compliant coalition of castes low and high (and many *adivasi* groups as well) who accepted, at least in practice if not ideologically, their pre-eminence. Their *de facto* minority status and declining influence, therefore, accounts for the obsession of upper-caste Hindu nationalists with numbers (Appadurai 2006: 74).

Christians become targets of Hindu nationalist ire because they threaten the Hindu nationalist coalition in two primary ways. The first is statistical. Conversions to Christianity threaten to weaken the coalition by removing members of the lower-caste and *adivasi* communities (from which Christian converts most regularly come). The reduction of Hindu numbers is particularly concerning to many Hindu nationalists because of the rather widespread belief that Hinduism is a non-proselytising religion with no exact equivalent of a conversion ceremony. By this logic, then, there is no way for Hinduism to regain numbers lost by conversion to other religions (Mustafa and Sharma 2003: 22).⁹ And this, at root, is the source of the aforementioned anxiety about Hindu extinction.

Moreover, many Hindus believe that proselytisation is at best an act of intolerance, and at worst a kind of violence (Sridhar 1999). Conversion

therefore constitutes a threat, and the much-publicised mass movements of conversion that occur from time to time even more so.

The discourse of Hindu nationalism is constituted partly through the need to articulate what it means to be a Hindu — a process of definition, of establishing the boundaries of Hindu-ness. From the experience of mass movements, a critical nexus is established between this need, the threat of conversion and the vulnerability of the Hindu margins (Zavos 2001: 82).

It is little wonder, then, that Hindu nationalists seeking to mobilise their constituents often cite questionable or even clearly false and exaggerated statistics about the growth of Christianity in India (Sridhar 1999), as was the case in Kandhamal.

Conversion to Christianity threatens the Hindu nationalist coalition ideologically as well. The mere existence of Christianity, of course, constitutes within Hindu communities an alternative to the Hindu social order. But more importantly, Christians are perceived by many Hindu nationalists to be in a variety of ways intentionally provoking members of lower-caste and *adivasi* communities to reject Hindu social structures. For example, Christian educational efforts among such communities are not only perceived by Hindu nationalists as a kind of allurements to the Christian faith, but are also believed to give rise to social aspirations that breed discontent with traditional Hindu social structures. Moreover, in a very practical sense, education (or even literacy itself) also decreases the exploitability of the lower castes and classes, and increases their economic competitiveness, which is perceived as a threat by the traditional elites (Aaron 2009: 111; Mustafa and Sharma 2003: 151; Viswanathan 2007: 346, 348). Christians and Christian missionaries have also at various times and places gotten involved in the mobilisation of lower-caste and *adivasi* communities for better treatment or greater autonomy, such as in the Jharkhand movement and the Dalit rights movement, and such movements threaten to overturn entrenched social arrangements as well (Aaron 2007: 17; Lobo 2002: 19; Zavos 2001: 73–74).

The work of Christians also threatens the Hindu nationalist coalition by competing with the Hinduisation or Sanskritisation projects that have been increasingly established by Sangh affiliates among rural lower-caste and *adivasi* communities since the late 1990s (Aaron 2007: 8; Hardiman 2002: 175; Lobo 2002: 57, 68). Such projects are intended, of course, to bring greater unity to 'Hindus' by homogenising their religious and cultural beliefs, practices and symbols. The fact that Christian workers have the loyalty of many of the

marginalised communities targeted by these projects presents an obstacle to their success, and creates resentment. In Kandhamal, for example, Saraswati's distaste for Christianity was surely related to the fact that Christians represented a hindrance to his work and goals (the feeling, the evidence suggests, was mutual).

On the surface, it might seem somewhat odd that Christianity, which has for decades constituted only 2–3 per cent of the national population, should be seen as such a threat. And if the concern were merely about the survival of Hinduism *qua* religion, there would be little need to worry. But this contestation is not just about religion, or at least not about religion conceived of as a set of doctrines (which is the way that many Westerners understand the term). Rather, many Hindus, particularly Hindu nationalists, conceive of 'Hinduism' broadly, as a way of life, and understand Christianity in the same way. The contestation is therefore a cultural one, and on those terms the perceived threat of Christianity becomes, perhaps, more clear.

In India today, Christianity is associated symbolically (if not in reality) with everything that threatens the ideal society as is articulated by many Hindu nationalists. Through its association with educational opportunity, Christianity symbolises modern merit-based (as opposed to ascriptive) status systems. Through its attempts to increase literacy (particularly literacy in *English*), Christianity comes to be associated with modern (and 'foreign') meaning-making systems. Because of its development and elevation of historically marginalised communities, Christianity represents an inversion of traditional caste/class hierarchies. Because of its demand for recognition and free religious expression, Christianity manifests a clear bias for secularism and religious freedom as understood in the West, and asserts that the Indian nation cannot and should not be a *Hindu* nation. By arguing that Dalits who convert to Christianity continue to be Dalits, and should therefore receive all the reservation benefits available to non-Christian Dalits, the Christian community implicitly suggests that the Dalit community is *not* Hindu (a suggestion which, if accepted as true, would divide and diminish the Hindu community). Because of its putative connections and greater access to Western wealth and power, the Indian Christian community is presumed to reproduce the inequities of global commerce on location, so to speak, and comes therefore to be seen as a symbol of globalisation itself. As such, it represents a threat to the sovereignty, integrity, survival, pride, and self-determination of India itself.

That threat may seem to many Hindu nationalists a genuine one because of the aforementioned divisions within Hinduism itself, which mean that in

this contestation a great mass of Hindus, perhaps even a majority (not to mention other minorities in India) are allied with the Christian community in opposition to Hindu nationalism, or at least in opposition to the kind of Hindu nationalism that leads to violence against minorities. And on top of all this, by allying with their Western (read: 'foreign') co-religionists, India's Christians could, in the views of many Hindu nationalists, become part of the Western hegemonic capitalistic alliance whose culture and way of life will, it is feared, swamp that of 'traditional India'. In a rather simplistic rendering, then, 'Hinduism' (or, rather, 'Hindu-ness') represents for Hindu nationalists the way things were and should be, and Christianity represents all that threatens that order.

The Riot as a Cultural System

In Clifford Geertz's seminal article, 'Religion as a Cultural System', the late anthropologist argues that:

Sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos — the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood — and their world view — the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order. In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well-arranged to accommodate such a way of life. This confrontation and mutual confirmation has two fundamental effects. On the one hand it objectivizes moral and aesthetic preferences by depicting them as the imposed conditions of life implicit in a world with a particular structure, as a mere common sense given the unalterable shape of reality. On the other it supports these received beliefs about the world's body by invoking deeply felt moral and aesthetic sentiments as experiential evidence for their truth. Religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often, implicit) metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other (Geertz 1973: 89).

This synthesis, according to Geertz, is generated through sacred ritual, in which 'the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turns out to be the same world' (*ibid.*: 112). In other contexts, Geertz speaks of the synthesis as a 'magical circle', arguing that '[i]t is when this magical circle is broken and religious concepts lose

their air of simple realism, when the world as experienced and the world as imagined no longer seem to be mere elucidations of one another, that perplexities ensue' (Geertz 1968: 39). At all times and for all peoples, the world is constantly changing. The magic circle is therefore in need of constant and assiduous maintenance. But there are moments of significant social and cultural change that threaten to or succeed in rupturing the circle altogether. I have argued elsewhere that colonisation represented one such rupture (Bauman 2008: 13). But surely the period of hyper-globalisation beginning in the 1990s represents another.¹⁰

Geertz has been often criticised, most notably by Talal Asad (1993), for neglecting to acknowledge that religious symbols are created and interpreted in the context of hierarchical social structures in which certain people and groups have more power than others to create and interpret religious symbols as they see fit, and to impose their creations and interpretations on others. Surely this is a blind spot in Geertz's theory. However, he does not deny this point; he simply focuses his attention elsewhere. And so, in my view, Asad's critique represents a corrective, not a refutation, of Geertz's theory.

Similarly, practice theorists have shifted our attention from symbols and sacred activity (that is, religious ritual) to the way that seemingly habitual or everyday activity inscribes, enacts, revises, or perpetuates culture.

The fundamental assumption of practice theory is that culture (in a very broad sense) constructs people as particular kinds of social actors, but social actors, through their living, on-the-ground variable practices, reproduce or transform — and usually some of each — the culture that made them (Ortner 2006: 129).

Practice theorists have therefore complained that Geertz's theory focuses too exclusively on religious 'symbols' and 'meanings,' and on grand cultural performances rather than everyday activity and 'on-the-ground' practices. Here again, however, there is nothing in Geertz's theory that would prevent the expansion of it in the direction of practice, and in fact Jason Springs (2008) has recently argued that one can profitably read Geertz as a practice theorist, and that doing so contributes not only to the improvement of Geertz's theory, but also redounds positively to practice theory itself.

Bringing Geertz into conversation with practice theory, and with critics like Talal Asad, therefore, creates a theoretical space which is greater, in my view, than the sum of its parts. And expanded as a result of this conversation, Geertz's theory becomes even more useful in helping us think about the

interreligious riot. By analysing the interreligious riot as a collection of acts of cultural production we are, I think, realising the potential of practice theory. And if we analyse these riots by asking Paul R. Brass's question (discussed previously) — 'Whose interests are served by the interreligious riot and what power relations are maintained?' — then we are essentially asking a question about power.¹¹

What I propose here is that the interreligious riot is in fact involved in a contestation about power between Hindu nationalists, on the one hand, and minorities and Hindus in agreement with the assumptions of Western-style secularism, on the other, in a context where neither group is clearly, mostly or irreversibly in control. For those who provoke, condone or participate in it, the interreligious riot is an attempt to re-establish a certain, distinctive but now ruptured circle, one in which the world as they live and experience it — the 'ground reality', so to speak — once again supports and is supported by the world as they imagine it, ideally, to be. The point, in short, is that this is not a story about elite communities reproducing the structures of their own hegemony. Rather, it is a story of small groups within the traditional local, regional and national elite having recognised, unconsciously at least, that a good deal of their former hegemony is already lost and trying therefore to re-establish and reproduce the conditions of their traditional power. There is, therefore, some discipline in the interreligious riot — some logic and intention (Das 1990: 27; Das and Nandy 1986). The riot does a certain kind of work.

However, the power of those who provoke, condone and participate in riots is not complete. I have already noted, for example, that the interreligious riot is not an expression of hegemony, but an *assertion of it*, one which, it is important to remember, is contested. No hegemony is ever complete (Ortner 2006: 6–7), let alone one, like this, in so divided a society. Moreover, one must keep in mind that once a riot begins, people join in for many reasons unrelated to the original provocation — fun, profit, sexual pleasure, personal vengeance, etc. 'There is no way', asserts Horowitz, 'to convert the riot into a wholly instrumental activity' (2001: 537). Or, to put it in the terms Mark C. Taylor (2009) has used (though not for the riot specifically), the riot is a network of individual and communal actions that take place within and are influenced by many other networks: biological, psychological, technological, economic, political, social, cultural, etc. It is, in this sense 'virtual', like the internet, structured but uncontrollable and unpredictable (*ibid.*). So the interreligious riot will have many effects. But an important one, I contend, is cultural.

As indicated here, it is ritual, for Geertz, which fuses the world as lived with the world as imagined. And the interreligious riot, in my view, is a ritual;¹² it is, as Geertz (1973) might put it, a 'cultural performance'. And this resonates, of course, with Brass's assertion that anti-minority riots are 'produced' (Brass 2003). The interreligious riot, therefore, is a performance (or a series of discrete performances) that enacts for those who participate in it a lived world which is once again consistent with the world as they imagine it should be. The question, therefore, is what exactly is *performed*, that is, what does the world produced by the anti-Christian riot look like?

To begin with, the world produced by the anti-Christian riot is one in which Hindu (and, more generally, Indian) men assert their virility, manliness and vigour by dominating others, a world which inverts the colonial-era hierarchy of 'martial races' by placing Christians (as proxies for the colonial and globalising other) at the bottom, and proves false the colonial accusation of Hindu effeminacy (Kesavan 2001: 95). It is a world where Christians become scared of and are forced to respect Hindus (if only for their aggression). It is a world where Hinduism is rescued from its association with putatively passive and impotent models of leadership like Gandhi's, who, according to Hindu nationalists (e.g., Savarkar), emasculated Hinduism through his 'mealy-mouthed formulas of Ahimsa and spiritual brotherhood' (Pandey 2006: 127).

In addition, the world created by the anti-Christian riot is one in which the privilege of traditional elites, whether local, regional or national, remains unchallenged by upstart members of formerly marginalised or minority religious communities. It is, in addition, a world where Hindu sacred space remains unchallenged (Das 1990: 15). (Remember, for example, the initial complaint in Orissa, that the Christmas *pandal* had been erected in or was near the space only recently used for a Durga *puja*.) It is a world where Christian possessions are destroyed and where the Christian community can therefore no longer pose a competitive economic threat to others. It is a world where Hindu assertions about the uniquely tolerant nature of Hinduism cannot be challenged or called into question by the existence of an evangelical religious other (because that other has been removed, destroyed or emasculated).

The world created by anti-Christian riots is also one in which traditional sources of authority retain their authority, and where ascriptive (rather than merit-based) and local status systems obtain (which is of interest not only to upper-caste Hindus, but also to the lower-caste and *adivasi* communities that compete most directly with convert communities). It is a world, then, where the incursion of modernity is literally reversed. Riots turn back clocks. They

wipe out infrastructure, forestall and reverse technological development, and reduce the ideological, religious and economic influence of the outside world by destroying or downgrading avenues of communication and transportation.

Finally, the world created by the anti-Christian riot is one in which there is no uncertainty about identity. One of the most fundamental aims of 'deadly ethnic riots', according to Horowitz, is the 'reduction of ethnic heterogeneity' (2001: 424). 'Homogeneity is what rioters want, and growing homogeneity is what they get... By far the most common consequence of the riot, apart from death, is the production of refugees' (ibid.: 438). Increasing homogeneity was a significant result of the Orissa riots, and therefore the desire for homogeneity appears to be an element, as well, in the interreligious riot. Hyphenated citizens, argues Gyanendra Pandey, 'have very often lived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries — the centuries of nationalism — under the sign of the question mark' (2006: 129). The question mark points not only to the ambiguous status of the minorities who bear it, but is also a constant reminder of the impurity of dominant (or formerly dominant) communities, or even of the nation itself. As indicated here, Kond leaders in Kandhamal expressed distaste even (or perhaps especially) for Christians even within the Kond fold, and certainly for Pana Christians (who, as Christians, represented the dilution of greater Kui identity. And Sangh leaders portrayed Kandhamal Christians as an anti-national threat. This threat to the purity of the nation is particularly strong in the case of Christianity because of its success among members of lower-caste and *adivasi* communities and the symbolic importance of these groups in the attempt, by Hindu nationalists, to forge a strong, unified Hindu majority (Zavos 2001: 73).

Anti-Christian violence therefore creates and reformulates the world in significant ways, and thereby, for those who participate in it, establishes a world as lived more consonant with the world as imagined. And lest one think that the effects of this created world are only temporary, it is important to keep in mind the longer-term effects of an interreligious riot. The displacement of large number of Christians in Kandhamal, for example, has forever altered the region's demographics (in the direction of homogeneity). Forcing minorities into refugee camps means that their power to dilute the purity of other communities is quite literally contained. And the fear still felt even by those who have returned (a much smaller number than originally left) will surely affect their behaviour in the future. Moreover, those who participated are affected over the longer term as well. Perpetrators are more likely to act aggressively in the future just as victims will for some time (if not forever) be more likely to keep their heads down and eschew evangelism,¹³ to know and

respect 'their place'. In addition, concerned citizens and scholars from abroad and elsewhere in India will think twice before visiting the region in the pursuit of justice, truth, business, or recreation. The interreligious riot therefore is a performance, a kind of social practice that produces and reproduces certain (older, more traditional) kinds of social and cultural constraints — constraints more hierarchical and less democratic than those they replace, and not just for the riot moment, but for some time afterwards as well.

The riot, therefore, *works*.¹⁴ It does *cultural* work; it is *culturally* meaningful. But that is not the same as saying everyone involved is fully conscious of the work they are doing. If we ask, with Paul R. Brass, 'Whose interests do anti-Christian riots serve?' the answer is simple. They serve the interests of those who participate in them. But in asserting this I insist upon a Weberian notion of interests which includes not only material interests but also ideal ones. And I also insist upon an argument I've made elsewhere (Bauman 2008: 75) that interests are often intuited as much as known, felt more than rationally articulated. It is quite possible, therefore, that many of those who participate in anti-Christian riots do so largely without having some rational goal clearly in mind, but merely because it feels right to them on some basic level.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the anti-Christian riot in India can be understood as a cultural system, one which for many participants asserts the continuing meaningfulness and vitality of a particular fusion of the world as lived with the world as imagined, a fusion threatened by the forces of globalisation, democratisation and Western-style secularism. Though space constraints prevent me from doing so fully, there is reason to believe that the same could be said of violence against other religious minorities as well, such as Sikhs in India, Muslims in India and Thailand or Hindus in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bhutan.

In each of these cases, anti-minority violence takes place in a postcolonial context. To the many threats and anxieties facing postcolonial nations, globalisation adds yet more. These threats, in the view of nationalists of all stripes, require decisive and unified action. 'Above all', writes Arjun Appadurai, 'the certainty that distinctive and singular peoples grow out of and control well-defined national territories has been decisively unsettled by the global fluidity of wealth, arms, peoples, and images' (2006: 7). And in the context of the uncertainty caused by that fluidity 'violence can create a macabre form of certainty and can become a brutal technique (or folk discovery-procedure)

about "them" and, therefore, about "us". This volatile relationship between certainty and uncertainty might make special sense in the era of globalisation' (ibid.: 6).

In the face of such threats, uncertainty about the identity of the nation must be eschewed and real or imagined challenges to that identity (in the form of religious, ethnic and other minorities) must be removed or neutralised. The 'implosion of powerful national economies' throughout the developing world, 'has been accompanied by the rise of various new fundamentalisms, majoritarianisms, and indigenisms, frequently with a marked ethnocidal edge' (ibid.: 23). In such situations, minorities come to symbolise external threats, either because they have or are assumed to have connections to foreign threats, or because they represent an impediment to the ostensibly necessary unity and homogeneity of the nation, a denial of the nation's presumed national genius. '[V]iolence against minorities enacts a deep anxiety about the national project and its own ambiguous relationship to globalisation. And globalisation, being a force without a face, cannot be the object of ethnocide. But minorities can' (ibid.: 44). In many cases the threat posed by minorities is framed in numerical or statistical terms, but at root, as I have argued, the concern about minorities and the response to that concern is generally cultural in nature.

One must be careful not to assume without investigation that the theory outlined here could be more widely applied. In each of the aforementioned situations of anti-minority violence (in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Bhutan), religious differences run along ethnic lines as well, which is not the case, in the same way, with Christians in India (or at least with Christians outside of Northeast India). Moreover, in each of these other cases, the government itself has been more clearly and regularly involved in anti-minority violence. Despite this, it seems rather clear, as well, that anti-Christian violence in India is by no means of a unique species, and that Geertz may be of some use in these other situations as well.



Notes

1. The Sangh Parivar, or 'Family of the (Rashtriya Svayamsevak) Sangh', comprises dozens of loosely affiliated national, regional and local organisations that work for the strengthening, reform or defence of Hinduism, and to realise the political agenda of the Hindu majority in India. All groups have a tendency towards Hindu

nationalism, and a good deal of sympathy for the ideology of Hindutva ('Hindu-ness'), that is, for the notion that the special genius and unity of India as a nation rests on the fact of its being Hindu, defined quite broadly as a cultural essence (but not broadly enough, generally speaking, to include adherents of 'foreign' religions like Islam or Christianity). Groups associated with the Sangh Parivar, or 'Sangh', pursue their work differently. On the one end of the spectrum are those that tend towards militancy and violence; on the other are groups that pursue their agenda through legitimate (if conservative and majoritarian) politics. The best known of the Sangh's national organisations are the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which focuses on social and cultural issues, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), primarily a Hindu reform and defence movement, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), currently the largest of India's national opposition parties, and occasionally the party in power. Sangh-affiliated groups work for similar goals, but not always in perfect harmony. In particular, the BJP has a tenuous and often strained relationship with other Sangh groups that form the core of its constituency because these other groups are often more radical in their politics and militant in their tactics than the BJP can afford to be.

2. For a more detailed account and analysis of the Orissa riots, see Bauman (2010). The erection of *pandals* in prominent public spaces has long been a way for various communities to assert or contest their social position. On this, see Bayly (1989: 31).
3. I use *adivasi* only in preference to the mildly pejorative and bagged term, 'tribal' (or the clunky official designation of 'Scheduled Tribes'), but not to declare my position in the debate about the ancient origins of India. (Many Hindu nationalists prefer the term *vanvasi* (forest-dweller) to *adivasi* because they contend that Indo-Aryan Hindus were the 'original inhabitants' of India.)
4. A sizeable, influential and often aggressive national youth organisation associated with the VHP.
5. The Naxalites are a vaguely Maoist insurgency group that now operates actively (as the *de facto* government) or surreptitiously over vast swathes of Indian territory (by some estimates 40–50 per cent of it). The Naxalites operate particularly in under-developed areas (areas where *adivasis* and Dalits are prevalent) in a 'red corridor' that stretches from Nepal and West Bengal in the north, to Andhra Pradesh in the south. Their reach is such that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh recently declared them India's greatest internal threat. For an excellent firsthand journalistic account of the Naxalites, see Chakravarti (2008).
6. In a system akin to affirmative action, a certain number of seats are reserved for STs and SCs in Indian government bureaucracies, legislative bodies and educational institutions.
7. The trope of Hindu extinction has been around, and influentially, for quite some time, at least as far back as U. N. Mukherji's *Hindus — A Dying Race* (1909). For an overview of the development of this trope, see Datta (1993).

8. Lobo both discusses Schermerhorn and updates his numbers.
9. Many scholars have questioned this logic, and have asked how it was that Southeast Asians became Hindu, or what happened to all of the Buddhists in India, some of whom, at least, appear to have been assimilated by Hinduism (Pati 2003: 1–3; Sarkar 2007: 358).
10. In addition to the problem with Geertz's theory (with regard to power) noted here, the cyclical nature of Geertz's theory (which he inherits from Émile Durkheim), makes it difficult to explain religious change. The problem is diminished, however, in the context of major social ruptures initiated largely by outsiders, such as colonisation and globalisation.
11. Though I might replace 'maintained' with 'asserted'.
12. I am certainly not the first to suggest that riots are in some ways like rituals. See van der Veer (1996).
13. Since the Dangs riots, for example, 'Christians do not dare to organize public meetings across the state as they used to . . . This is a successful enforcement of cultural illegitimacy on evangelicalism in the public sphere' (Aaron 2002: 79).
14. As it does in other Indian riot situations. See Basu (1995: 73–75).

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