

Topmiller also discussed how political activism affected Buddhism in Vietnam, resulting in a book that is relevant for understanding contemporary Vietnamese Buddhism. The effects that the politicization of Buddhism had on the Buddhists in South Vietnam are still being felt in diasporic communities around the world, where the factions of the sixties remain divisive today.

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Bramadat, Paul and David Seljak, ed. *Religion and Ethnicity in Canada*. Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2005. 320 pp. Paper. ISBN 9780321248411. \$49.95.

The editors of *Religion and Ethnicity in Canada*, Paul Bramadat and David Seljak, explain that the purpose of their book is to elucidate the relationships that exist between religion, ethnicity, and Canadian society among Canada's six largest minority religious groups, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, the Chinese, Jews, and Muslims. Due to the multiplicity of ways in which such a program can be carried out, and the ambiguity of the terms religion, ethnicity, and even to some extent, Canadian society, the editors choose to further delimit the purview of their book. Bramadat and Seljak appear to settle on two separate, yet related, purposes for the text. The first purpose is an analysis of how members of the above mentioned religious groups negotiate their religious and ethnic identities in Canadian society, contained in the first section of the book. The second purpose is an examination of the ways in which these religious communities have been affected by, and in turn have influenced Canadian society, found in the second part of the book.

Under this still rather broad trajectory, Bramadat and Seljak make the central claim in both the introduction and conclusion of the text that it is imperative that matters of religion and ethnicity be consciously included in Canadian public policy-making if Canada is to progress towards a truly pluralistic and inclusive society. The three chapters on

public policy echo this underlying thesis brilliantly, however, many of the six chapters that focus on the specific religious communities appear to pay less attention to substantiating the fundamental assertion being made throughout the rest of the book. While these six chapters do complement the arguments being made in the introduction, conclusion, and the three public policy chapters by the very nature of their highlighting the relationship between religion and ethnicity within these communities, explicit affirmation of the central thesis is largely absent.

In order to further illustrate the disparate nature of the two sections of the text, one may consider the fifth chapter dealing with Chinese religion in relation to the other five chapters in this section. In the chapter on Chinese religion, the authors do make the explicit claim that recognition of Chinese filial religion as a “real” religion, at least partially signified by its inclusion on the national census questionnaire by the Canadian government, is necessary in order to end discrimination of the Chinese Canadian community. The emphasis of chapter five coalesces quite well with Bramadat and Seljak’s thesis that religion and ethnicity need to be more consciously made a part of the policy-making process. However, the other five chapters in this section appear to operate more independently from the overriding thesis, and focus more on providing a general understanding of the religious communities as they exist in Canada through the discussion of such things as worldviews, immigration histories, discrimination, gender, and transnational issues. The lack of support of Bramadat and Seljak’s overriding thesis in these five chapters creates a sense of incongruousness with the rest of the book, and is especially noticeable when transitioning from the first section of the book to the second.

In the introduction to the book, Bramadat identifies and defines what he calls five key concepts that are used throughout the text: ethnicity, culture, race, multiculturalism, and religion. Bramadat defines the first three of these terms along a spectrum from most biological to least biological. He explains that race is the most biological of the terms and represents geographical or phenotypical commonality, with ethnicity coming next as it usually contains some degree of both filial

and geographical commonality, and culture existing on the other end of the spectrum as he views it as being a mostly voluntary commonality. Bramadat goes on to define the term multiculturalism as both the official federal government policies that recognize the need for plurality within Canadian society, and also the more general commitment to plurality that exists within the Canadian imagination. Finally, Bramadat provides a very broad definition of the term religion, that being anything that the individuals or groups being studied would identify as religious.

In addition to these five key terms, Bramadat also discusses a few other terms in the remainder of the introduction, most notably the term diaspora. In order to avoid the exclusionary connotations that the term diaspora has taken on in modern history, which Bramadat claims renders the term useless as a meaningful concept, he suggests expanding the definition of the word to entail “all communities of people who harbour deep emotional ties to some other place” (16). Using such a definition, one wonders whether or not the term diaspora is any more useful than it was before the expanded definition that Bramadat offers. Under this revised definition, the term becomes so broad as to include any individual or group who maintains any kind of emotional connection to any geographical location.

What is troubling about the identification of these several terms is not the definitions given them by Bramadat, but rather the lack of uniformity in definition employed by the rest of the book’s authors when the terms come into future use. Most noticeable among these oversights are the uses of the word diaspora. For instance, the authors of the chapters on Hinduism, Sikhism, and Judaism, each use the word diaspora in a positive and even meaningful context for their respective religious and ethnic communities, which Bramadat earlier claims is not possible.

When moving from considering the content of the text to its methodology, one immediately notices the highly descriptive nature of many of the book’s chapters, particularly in the first section of the text. At least initially, many of the chapters found in the first part of the book do not appear to make any single argument at all, but rather

several independent arguments organized under the various chapter subheadings. For instance, chapters two and six in particular, dealing with Hindus and Jews respectively, provide a broad overview of the history of each religious community in Canada, with no discernible central argument found in their conclusion, but rather a summary of the many issues discussed throughout the chapter. In contrast, chapters three, four, five, and seven, dealing with Sikhs, Buddhists, the Chinese, and Muslims, do provide a discernible central argument in their concluding paragraphs. However, even these arguments are often difficult to clearly recognize due to the overwhelming amount of information and breadth of historical and social context that is covered throughout the chapter in what are relatively few pages for such a task. Chapters eight, nine, and ten, found in the second part of the book, each have much more tightly refined arguments than those chapters in the first section of the book. These three chapters clearly advocate for the recognition and consideration of religion and ethnicity in government public policy-making and argue that continuing to ignore these issues is detrimental to Canadian society.

The authors rely on an assortment of mainly American, British, and Canadian sources in order to either describe the various religious communities as they exist in Canada, or in order to argue for the inclusion of issues of religion and ethnicity by policy-makers. Many of the authors use primary sources, usually either published ethnographies or government documents, and a wide array of secondary scholarly sources. One area of concern with some of these sources is a lack of uniformity or explanation in the use of ethnographies or what the authors identify as personal accounts. There are a variety of published ethnographies cited within many of the chapters where one assumes proper research protocols were followed by virtue of their publication. Consider for instance, Mahmood and Brady, McLellan, and McDonough (53, 59, 75, 76, 78, 142). However, there are also a number of personal accounts which do not include any explanation of the types of people interviewed, the methodology, or the conditions in which the interviews were conducted (39, 44, 69, 70, 104, 105, 140).

Turning one's attention from methodology to ideological orienta-

tion, it is difficult to miss the fact that all sixteen of the authors of this text (not including Peter Beyer who compiled the demographic charts) tried desperately to put the best face possible on the religious communities being considered, and to highlight only the positive outcomes of recognizing religion and ethnicity in the public sphere. If the six chapters dealing with the specific religious communities have one thing in common, it is the sense that the members of these religious groups want very much to integrate into Canadian society and that Canadians should all just get along. There is little consideration of the fact that there are many Canadians who oppose the ideals of pluralism and multiculturalism and the various problems that this poses to Canadian society.

Despite some shortcomings, which are endemic to any book attempting to cover such a broad range of material, this text is especially helpful for two major reasons. First, the book provides terse histories of the immigration and discrimination of many of the six religious groups mentioned, which is very valuable to have in a single text. Second, the text offers the reader a concise summary of the contemporary lived experiences of the members of the six religious communities in their uniquely Canadian context, which makes this text a truly original contribution to Canadian scholarship. The ideal audience for this book is upper-year undergraduate and graduate students in any discipline considering the relationship between religion and ethnicity in Canada, as well as members of the general public with a similar interest.

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