

interpretation – even as non-state actors, such as vigilante groups from the Hindu majority, have become coercive agents of cultural policing, trolling and religious fundamentalism in both physical and virtual spaces.

He also notes that the longer the Modi regime remains in power, the higher the chances that the separation between the actions of the majoritarian state and of non-state actors will further diminish. Thus, the book stimulates questions that need to be addressed by those Indian citizens who believe in the foundations of a righteous republic: Can there be a concrete opposition to this form of authoritarianism? What forms of socio-political alliances are required to stall the ethnicisation of democracy? And how do we contribute to a compassionate humanitarian society?

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1 The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019 provides citizenship to religious minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, but it excludes Muslims from these countries. The Act also defines illegal immigrants as foreigners without valid documents and subject to punitive action. Opponents of the bill view it as exclusionary and a violation of the secular principles enshrined in the constitution. According to them religious faith cannot be made a condition of citizenship or its refusal. The CAA is also linked to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) which is a list of people who can prove citizenship of India. A large section of scholars of Indian politics have viewed that the implementation of the nationwide NRC will divide the immigrant population into two categories: (predominantly) Muslims, who will be deemed illegal migrants, and all others, who would have been deemed illegal migrants, but are now immunised by the Citizenship Amendment Bill if they can prove that their country of origin is Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan. For more information on these acts, please see: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-citizenship-amendment-act-nrc-cao-means-6180033> (accessed 15 July 2022).

JYOTI GULATI BALACHANDRAN, *Narrative Pasts: The Making of a Muslim Community in Gujarat, c. 1400–1650*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020. 248 pages, £45.00. ISBN 978-0-1901-2399-4

*Narrative Pasts* studies the different ways in which Muslim communities of medieval Gujarat imagined their history through commemorative texts, spiritual networks and architectural monuments. The book moves beyond the Delhi-centric historiography and the state-focused narratives of the Muslim past. Jyoti Balachandran fully acknowledges the importance of the formation of the Gujarat Sultanate as central to the functioning of the Muslim community in the region, but she rightly adds that there were multiple historical processes – Sufi textual production, organisation of Sufi orders, construction of shrine complexes – that impacted each other and are therefore equally significant for understanding the history and experiences of Muslims in medieval Gujarat.

The book provides a social history of the region, a history in which centre stage is taken not by those in political power, but by the Sufis, their disciples and

descendants. The key figures include Aḥmad Khattū (d. 1445), of the Maghrabi order, and his two Suhrawardi contemporaries (descendants of the famous Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī) Burhān al-Dīn ʿAbdullāh (d. 1452) and his son Sirāj al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 1475), who settled in eastern Gujarat in the 15th century. It is around these figures, their social relations, their shrines, disciples and descendants, and the narrative power of their texts, that the story revolves.

The book consists of an introduction and five chapters, followed by a conclusion and an appendix. Chapter 1 prepares the backdrop for the 15th century: Balachandran notes the long presence of Muslims in pre-15th century Gujarat in places such as Khambayat, Bharuch, Rander, Veraval and Somnath, among others. These included trading communities, *qāzīs* and *khatībs*, some of which received stipends from the Rasulid Sultans in Yemen (pp. 40–43). Muslim settlement in the region increased when the Delhi Sultan ʿAlā al-Dīn Khaljī (r. 1296–1316) made Patan a provincial capital. There was also a Chishtī and Suhrawardī presence in the region from the 14th century, but our knowledge of their role among the Muslim communities of Gujarat remains limited. Unlike their counterparts in other regions, who were engaged in producing a variety of texts, no such textualisation is evident in 14th century Gujarat. This changes with the establishment of the Gujarat Sultanate in the 15th century and the settlement of Sufis (such as Aḥmad Khattū and his Suhrawardi contemporaries), who received patronage from the nascent Sultanate. “It was this fortuitous conjuncture,” writes Balachandran, “that produced the beginnings of sustained reflections on the Muslim past in Gujarat” (p. 55).

At the heart of these reflections was Aḥmad Khattū, who settled at Sarkhej and whose disciples Muḥammad Qāsim and Maḥmūd Īrajī wrote the two texts – *Mirqāt* and *Tuḥfat al-majālis*, respectively – that mark the beginnings of what Balachandran calls “the first narrative moment” (p. 69). While far inferior in their literary standards compared to those of early Chishtīs, the two texts drew upon rich Indo-Persian Sufi literary traditions to bolster the charisma and piety of Aḥmad Khattū, gave legitimacy to his spiritual lineage and established his centrality for the Muslim communities in Gujarat. Equally important was their role in creating a textual and oral history of Aḥmad Khattū, which later writers would refer to, incorporate and even build upon.

In addition to these texts, the shrine of Aḥmad Khattū and those of others became prominent “spatial zones for the oral dissemination of textual narratives about the Sufis and the production of new narrative remembrances” (p. 94). These shrines were venerated by the Gujarat Sultans, particularly Maḥmūd Begarha (r. 1458–1511), who converted Khattū’s shrine into a tomb complex with palatial structures. Chapter 3 explains this joint Sufi-state participation in the creation of sacral geography in medieval Gujarat. Besides Khattū, memories of his Suhrawardi contemporaries Burhān al-Dīn and Sirāj al-Dīn also became intertwined with the formation of the Gujarat Sultanate. Their shrines

became places of pilgrimage over the 16th century, testifying to their successful management by the family's descendants. Textual narratives of the two men became abundant in the 16th and 17th centuries, even though no contemporary records exist.

Chapter 4 explores the later Suhrawardi texts, particularly Ḥāshim Quṭbī's *Ṣaḥā'if al-sādāt*, that attempt to give historical depth and validity to the Suhrawardi establishment in Gujarat by providing long chains of transmission (*shajra*) inherited by Burhān al-Dīn. This is what Balachandran calls "the second narrative moment in the long-term articulation of the history of state and community in Gujarat" (p. 118). These later accounts (written in the 17th century) emphasise Burhān al-Dīn's and Sirāj al-Dīn's connections with Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī and with Aḥmad Khattū, who emerges as a conduit for the transfer of investiture from Bukhārī to the two Suhrawardi figures.

The production by the descendants of Sirāj al-Dīn (known as the "Shahi" branch) far outstripped the texts produced by the "Quṭbī" branch (from Burhān al-Dīn's eldest son Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd). This point becomes clear in the final chapter, which focuses on Ṣafī al-Dīn Ja'far's (d. 1674) *Ṣad Hikāyat* (a collection of 100 episodes relating to Sirāj al-Dīn) – the last significant contribution to 17th century Suhrawardi textual production. Here we see a clear attempt to reconfigure the relationships between the early Suhrawardis in Gujarat, Aḥmad Khattū, and Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī. In *Ṣad Hikāyat*, Khattū emerges as a disciple of Bukhārī, who essentially waited to transfer the *khirqā-i mahbūbiyat* (the ceremonial grant of a robe signifying spiritual succession; translated as "Robe of Divine Proximity"), which he received from Bukhārī, to Sirāj al-Dīn. With this explanation, Ṣafī al-Dīn was able to achieve the twin tasks of connecting the Suhrawardis to their famed ancestor (Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī) without ignoring the medium of Aḥmad Khattū, who had captured the imagination of the later generations.

The book is well written, well referenced, offers a lucid reading, is free from typographical errors and includes a useful appendix. What one might find lacking is any discussion of the Shaṭṭārī order, which had a marked presence in Gujarat, particularly from Wajīh al-Dīn 'Alawī's (d. 1590) time. Places in Gujarat such as Baroda, Mahmudabad, Champaner and Ahmadabad had a Shaṭṭārī presence from the 16th century. What place did the Shaṭṭārīs have in such narrative articulations of the past? Did they have any interactions with their Suhrawardi counterparts? Why did Aḥmad Khattū, a lesser-known figure affiliated to the relatively unknown Maghrabi order, with an unknown familial ancestry and with no spiritual successors or descendants, become so central for later Suhrawardis? Why did the Suhrawardi descendants of Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī considered it important to connect to him through Khattū, but did not seek any connections to the Shaṭṭārīs? Some of these questions may well be beyond the scope of the present study, but the absence of the Shaṭṭārīs from the narrative is quite noticeable.

These minor shortcomings should not distract the reader from the strengths of this book. Given the recent studies on regional experiences of Sufi orders, particularly in Bengal and Deccan, by Richard Eaton, Carl Ernst and Nile Green among others, this book is a welcome addition to the growing field. Focusing on Gujarat and utilising several rare and under-utilised manuscripts, Jyoti Balachandran has produced a wonderful study on how the past was remembered and transcribed in texts. Although the historical authenticity of such later accounts may be questioned, they nevertheless help us in understanding how posterity imagined the ancestral past, imparted historical depth to their lineages and employed the authority of prominent figures in new ways.

The study reminds one of the Chishtī-Ṣābrī order, where accounts of the 13th–14th century figures are initially meagre but become abundant and extensive in 17th century and later *tazkirahs*, linking the founder of the order (‘Alī Ṣābir, ca. d. 1291) more closely to his spiritual mentor Farīd al-Dīn “Ganj-i Shakar” and providing copious amounts of information, mainly based on oral traditions or intuition (*kashf*) of his immediate successors. Balachandran’s book will enable scholars to have a more nuanced approach towards such later accounts, often side-lined as apocryphal or unhistorical. It is certainly a book to be recommended.

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GIUSEPPE BOLOTTA, *Belittled Citizens. The Cultural Politics of Childhood on Bangkok’s Margins*. (Monograph Series 154). Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2021. 252 pages, 9 illustrations, 1 map, £22.50. ISBN 978-8-7769-4301-1 (pb)

Giuseppe Bolotta’s *Belittled Citizens* is an academic work about the politics of childhood for urban poor children in Bangkok. Based on extensive fieldwork over the past decade, during which the author spent long stretches of time in a “living-in experience” among the urban poor in slums over various visits, the writing provides a holistic and intimate picture of the multitude of lives of *dek salam* (slum children) vis-à-vis the authoritarian monarchical and tendentially militaristic paternalism of “Thainess”. Having conducted extensive fieldwork of a similar kind among urban poor activists in Jakarta myself, I know what a taxing as well as rewarding task it is.

To my knowledge, the book is among very few academic works published on urban poor children generally and is therefore very relevant as a new publication shedding light on the most forgotten among the most marginalised in Bangkok’s slums. Moreover, the author is able to bring about a very colourful,