

Shorter Notices

Jacqueline Suthren Hist and John Zavos. *Religious Traditions in Modern South Asia*. USA and Canada: Routledge Publications. 2011. 319 pages. \$ 35.51.

South Asia constitutes of 23 percent of the global populations, makes a significant impact on the global geo-political front, and is amongst the fastest growing regions in the world. However at the same time it is also the world's poorest region. One of the salient features of region is its religious traditions. This book is a combined effort of senior lecturers in South Asian Studies at the University of Manchester, UK. The authors have investigated the well-worn phrase "South Asia is region of great religious diversity", by exploring the development of its religious traditions in a range of social and political contexts.

In part one the book focuses on what have often been considered essential features of 'religion' as a generic category: deity, sacred texts, myth, rituals and teachers. These concepts give clear picture of what religion is, but this book has tackled it in different manner. It is an attempt to disrupt a single notion of religion and show multiple ways of looking at it that have been in the past and can be in present. In modern settings religion does not mean just to be aware of great diversity of contexts in which religious traditions are played out. The need is to explore impact of aspects of modernity on traditions that have endured and developed over many centuries by acknowledging the emergence of new systems of knowledge, new methods of communication, and new forms of social mobility. The challenge is to identify complex interactions that fashion development in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways. In part two such complex interactions have been focused, i.e. how Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism in South Asia have been shaped in modern period. As a whole this book considers the impact of gender, politics, and the way religion itself is understood in South Asia. It will interest researchers and students who are interested in obtaining a critical understanding of social, political and historical context of religion in South Asia. (*Amna Rubab*)

John Cockburn and Jane Kabubo-Mariara (eds.). *Child Welfare in Developing Countries*: New York, USA: Springer Science. 2010. 350 pages. Paperback. US\$ 15.00.

In developing countries there has been relatively little empirical work on the analysis and measurement of child poverty. This book is a collection of six articles in which the first three articles analyse "Multidimensional Child Poverty Analysis", while the final three articles discuss studies that have utilised "Impact Evaluation" to investigate child welfare in developing countries. The book based on original research in

Africa and South America using multidimensional poverty indicator approach, it identifies the existence of inequalities in child welfare, analyses their sources and evaluates the impact of policy responses to those inequalities. The main research questions that have been addressed in this book include a discussion on the: factors that affect child welfare and the policies to improve child welfare. The main topics considered in this collection include monetary poverty, asset poverty, nutrition, child mortality, access to education, school attendance, child labour, and access to health services. The main findings from this book demonstrate that while government programmes offering financial assistance, supplementary food and subsidised education and health care have a positive impact on child welfare, these outcomes require further improvement for which several policy prescriptions have been proposed. This book is recommended for researchers on poverty and inequality, professionals in international development and graduate students. (*Sarah Rabbani*)