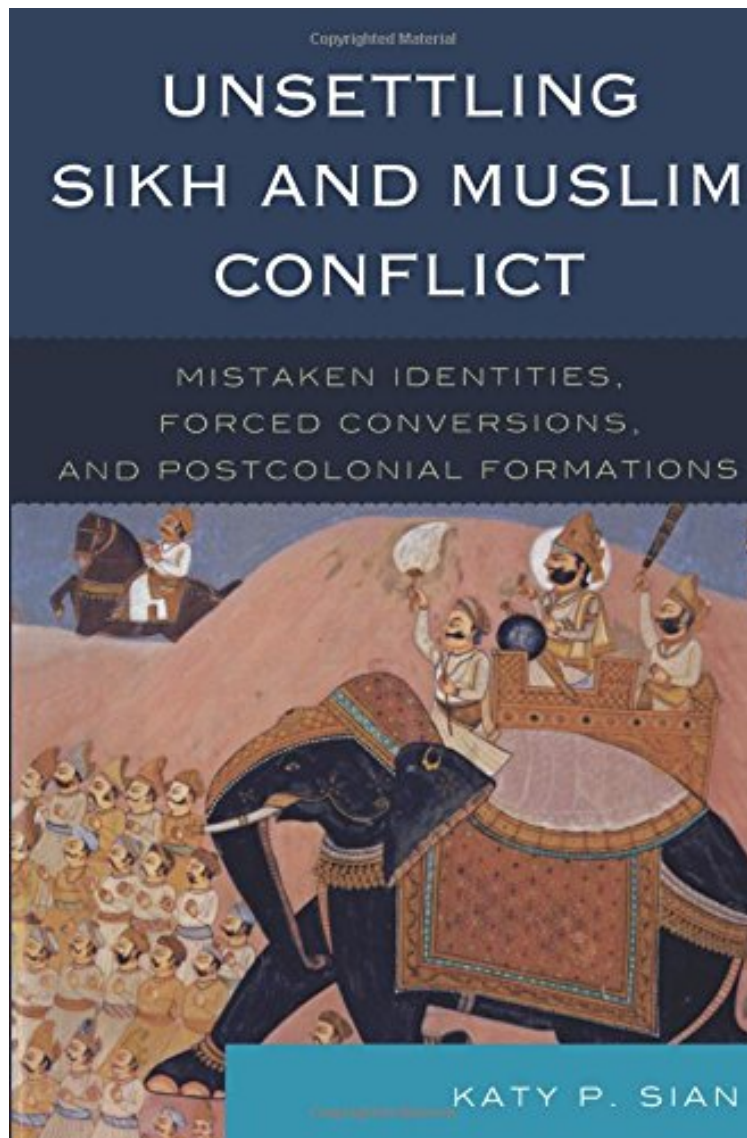


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Unsettling Sikh and Muslim Conflict: Mistaken Identities, Forced Conversions, and Postcolonial Formations

Katy P. Sian

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Katy P. Sian : Unsettling Sikh and Muslim Conflict: Mistaken Identities, Forced Conversions, and Postcolonial Formations before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Unsettling Sikh and Muslim Conflict: Mistaken Identities, Forced Conversions, and Postcolonial Formations:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommend this book.By R. SabirI highly recommend this

book. It is gripping, persuasive, and concise yet informed and detailed. At its core, the book is about how the Sikh community in the UK has formed its identity through a (historically situated) discourse that is based on constructing Muslims as an 'enemy'. Using the example of "forced conversions" (i.e., Muslim men allegedly manipulating and deceiving Sikh women in order to convert them to Islam), Sian shows how this narrative is nothing more than a myth or fantasy, which has no real evidential basis, and one that has given rise to a distinct form of Islamophobia. It draws upon and mirrors an orientalist discourse that views Muslims as innately hostile, barbaric and threatening, Sian argues. What I found particularly interesting was Sian's discussions around how this narrative was being used by Sikh men to renegotiate the shift in gender-relations and re-occupy a dominant position. The forced conversion narrative, Sian writes, is used by Sikh men to "restore a patriarchal balance" and take control of Sikh female bodies. Though some perceive this book to be "anti-Sikh" and "pro-Muslim" (as some reviewers on this website have claimed, wrongly in my view) this could not be further from the truth. Firstly, the author specifically says that the book is about understanding Sikh representations of Sikh-Muslim conflict and how Sikh identity is formed. It is not a book about how Muslim identity is formed or how Muslims represent/view Sikhs. Talking about the "Muslim-side" is not therefore relevant for this project since the book is about Sikhs. Secondly, Sian dedicates an entire chapter (Chapter 9 Who is a Sikh) to discussing the way in which the Sikh community can (re)shape its identity without constructing Islam/Muslims as an existential threat. Using a de-colonial framework, Sian argues that the Sikh community could redefine itself, for example, as a nation without a nation-state in the same way as the Palestinians and/or Kashmiris. Sikh identity would therefore be framed around statelessness; not antagonism and negativity towards Muslims. The key point here is that Sian is saying identity is constantly developing and is flexible, which means identity can be reformulated in a way that empowers and liberates Sikhs. Sikhs, Sian says, have fought successful campaigns around the turban, the "kara" (religious bangle) and the "kirpan" (dagger), and these successes show how the community has the determination and ability to fight for political recognition and to will to live their lives outside of the secular and "western" gaze. The only challenge the Sikh community faces, she argues, is that this political will/determination has not (yet) become dominant or "hegemonic". This book is critical of the ways in which Sikh identity has formed and evolved until date, but it provides an excellent framework that enables the Sikh community in the UK to free itself from an orientalist/"Western" gaze. Is this an academic book? No. Is it a blueprint calling for Sikh recognition and liberation? Yes, and that is why I highly recommend it.

This book provides a critical investigation into Sikh and Muslim conflict in the postcolonial setting. Being Sikh in a diasporic context creates challenges that require complex negotiations between other ethnic minorities as well as the national majority. *Unsettling Sikh and Muslim Conflict: Mistaken Identities, Forced Conversions, and Postcolonial Formations* maps in theoretically informed and empirically rich detail the trope of Sikh-Muslim antagonism as it circulates throughout the diaspora. While focusing on contemporary manifestations of Sikh-Muslim hostility, the book also draws upon historical examples of such conflict to explore the way in which the past has been mobilized to tell a story about the future of Sikhs. This book uses critical race theory to understand the performance of postcolonial subjectivity in the heart of the metropolis.

This book may be located within diaspora studies and the study of intercultural and interethnic relations, and more broadly, within the discourse on narrative performance where identity is viewed as intrinsically linked to storytelling. Using postcolonial theorists such as Said, Foucault, and Barthes, Sian attempts to interrogate existing narrative/s of Sikhness that are rooted in tales of Sikhs and their battle against the Muslim enemy. It is a battle centered on the notion of brave, courageous and heroic Sikhs who emerge victorious in the face of oppression and tyranny [by] the Muslim antagonist (2). Stories, she rightly argues, shape identity. . . . Sian's narrative questions the present discourse and masterfully weaves her own story. . . . [S]killfully expressed. (Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations) *Unsettling Sikh Muslim Conflict* takes central topics of our time diaspora politics, postcoloniality, anti-terrorism, identity, immigrants and national belonging, Islamophobia, religion, secularism, and race and places them under a new, penetrating light. This book radically shifts the focus from the current preoccupation with multiculturalism versus security,' to a more critical terrain of how subjects and nations come into being. Uniquely, the argument focuses not only on majority-minority relations, but on how relations among minorities are articulated and rearticulated through dominant frameworks that perpetuate racism, and that simultaneously invite/require Sikhs to align themselves to Islamophobic imaginings of the nation. This book compels readers to re-think how we understand Sikh identity, the political nature of Sikh-Muslim relations, and the possibilities of decolonization. At the same time, it not only challenges us to re-imagine how we understand Sikh diasporas in this age of terror, but also how political constructions of religion and Otherness more generally are produced in ways that secure both hegemonic practices of nation-building and colonized formations of the model minority.' Katy P. Sian offers a compelling and insightful analysis that should be read by scholars and non-academics concerned with the politics of difference. (Rita Kaur Dhamoon, University of Victoria) In this groundbreaking and challenging book, Katy Sian explores the under researched and often fraught issue of relationships between minority ethnic groups in the UK. Combining historical

and textual analysis with empirical research and personal reflections, and tracing the complex connections and disjunctions between South Asia and Britain, Sian provides a provocative insight into the formation of contemporary intra-Br-Asian and diasporic identities. This book poses difficult and important questions for researchers of race, ethnicity, religion and identity, and anyone who wishes to understand the textures and tensions of modern multi-ethnic Britain. (Claire Alexander, University of Manchester)About the AuthorKaty P. Sian is a lecturer in sociology at The University of Manchester. Previously she was a postdoctoral research fellow at The University of Leeds where she also completed her PhD. She takes a key interest in debates surrounding racism and ethnicity studies, sociology, Sikh studies, Islamophobia, postcolonialism, Diaspora and South Asian identity.