

fine introduction on the interaction of landscape and memory ties it into the dominant theme of the collection.

The editors of *Interactions with a Violent Past* are to be congratulated for bringing together this imaginative and wide-ranging collection.

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Violence and Vengeance: Religious Conflict and its Aftermath in Eastern Indonesia. By Christopher R. Duncan. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013. 240 pp.

Grounded in North Maluku, *Violence and Vengeance* makes an immense contribution to our understanding of the ways in which religion shapes local understandings of violence. Christopher Duncan builds from a disjuncture that he encountered throughout his considerable fieldwork. While most accounts of conflicts in Eastern Indonesia emphasize politics and critical junctures, these were absent from accounts offered by those who experienced violence, whose perceptions are coloured by faith. While we should balk at primordial and sensationalist accounts of religion as a cause of war, rationalist responses may have also gone too far, dismissing a role for religion in war. By locating religion as a factor that comes to delineate violence, shape discourse and reframe memories, this book provides a sensible study of the relevance of religion in violent conflicts.

Duncan provides a concise account of how religion seeped into a conflict in North Maluku that initially concerned specific migrant groups and ethnic identities. Christian and Muslim beliefs and fears came to displace more nuanced understandings of what was going on, as the social life of the conflict narrative shifted towards holy war. Rumours of sadistic violence, forced conversions and grand plots became commonplace as religious narratives came to make sense of violence for those experiencing it. This was furthered by

influences from outside of North Maluku, in Poso and Ambon, as well as in the Indonesian national media, security forces and *laskar* militias. While there have been efforts to bridge differences between the two sides through *adat* and interfaith ceremonies, Duncan notes that these were not enough as horrific massacres were carried out in the name of defending faith.

Nowhere is the way that religion has come to dominate the conflict's framing clearer than in post-conflict remembering. Duncan details the creation of emblematic memories that cast violence from the other side in terms of its religion, even as one's own side is remembered as defending God. Christians in North Maluku have memorialized violence by labelling their dead as martyrs in highly visible gravesites on church grounds. Interestingly, Duncan did not find similar efforts among Muslims because of a modernist scepticism towards grave worshipping, although one might think that similar claims to martyrdom would exist in the spoken narratives of Muslim survivors.

Violence and Vengeance is not an effort to collect facts and define causes, but instead a study of how violence is remembered. Duncan is sensitive to his respondents' views and, on a few occasions, locates himself in the telling of these narratives in a compelling way. One of the core issues with which the book wrestles is reconciliation. It rightly notes that reconciliation has been promoted rather blindly by various NGOs, using the English term, and that the state has supported this effort in its desire to return displaced persons to their homes. However, the narratives of those who experienced violence remain at odds, with divergent understandings of what happened as well as why it happened. This has stoked continuing mistrust and fears of renewed violence. Without greater attention to an entrenched religious conflict narrative, the author is not optimistic that reconciliation will progress in North Maluku.

If reconciliation cannot move forward because divergent narratives continue to be distilled into bifurcated religious accounts, what is to be done? What immediately struck this reviewer was the uncomfortable possibility of engineering this narrative to emphasize complexity. Can we rewrite the social script to make peace work? In

a second quibble, while the author denies a causal role for religion, in some of his book's accounts religious understandings were said to motivate specific acts of violence. My major concern was the author's treatment of the relevant literature. In a theory chapter titled "Religious Violence?", Duncan locates his study alongside the work of Gerry van Klinken, Jacques Bertrand and others whose accounts downplay the role of religion in violence. While perhaps fair, he then shifts to theories of remembering, neglecting to engage with literature that speaks to the core focus of the book. The reader may immediately think of work by Stanley Tambiah, Hans Kippenburg, Mark Juergensmeyer or Michael Jerryson. Much later in the book, these authors do appear, and their ideas shape Duncan's conclusions. The engagement with theories of religion and violence would have been far more effective if those theories had been addressed earlier and more directly.

In concluding, Duncan notes that "Although religion may not have been a causal factor in the conflict, it became the defining one over time as the conflict narrative changed" (p. 172). This is the essence of the book, moving beyond essentialism in discussing the ways in which religion matters for those who experience violent conflict. *Violence and Vengeance* succeeds brilliantly in accomplishing this important task.

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Conflict and Conversion: Catholicism in Southeast Asia, 1500–1700.
By Tara Alberts. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. xvii+
242 pp.

There is much to like in this interesting new book, which looks at the efforts of Catholic missionaries in the early modern period in Melaka, Siam and two areas of what is now Vietnam. Alberts is