

Proposed Bibliography on Religion in the Bengal Region

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Abstract. We are proposing to produce a bibliography of published scholarship on the subject 'Religion in the Bengal Region' and to offer alongside it a guide to research facilities available nationally and internationally that might be tapped to support further research in this area.

There is no single way to prepare a bibliography. Researchers, while writing a dissertation or essay, are expected to write about the studies already made on their subjects. This is called 'literature search'. The correct way to write this is to find literature relevant to the particular research / dissertation / essay and then to be able to assess their relevance to the paper to be written. Librarians, on the other hand, do not proceed in that way. They usually develop a sort of 'How to find out about . . . ' and then go on systematically to search the relevant sources of information including published as well as unpublished materials. The librarians have one advantage over the researchers in that the former would not necessarily take the trouble of reading the titles they find, but the latter must.

In our proposed project of producing a bibliography, we are not simply talking about a bibliography or list of references that usually follows a text between two covers, or a particular book or article. We are thinking of producing a 'stand alone' bibliography that would have some universal value albeit within certain limitations, such as time-space and determination of what constitutes our range of subject. We have to bear in mind that such bibliographies can never encompass everything, though there have been many attempts to do so. There was, for instance, an attempt to produce an up-to-date bibliography of all published books from 1475 to 1700, the *Short-Title Catalogue of English Books* (by Pollard / Redgrave and later Wing). But, considering that the inclusion of full 'bibliographical details' would be an awesome task, it was decided to make it

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short in details and thus it was named *Short Title Catalogue*, better known as STC. This was an attempt for an enumerative and comprehensive bibliography. But as the number of publications increased, upkeep or updating this became impossible. Much later, in 1950, *British National Bibliography* (BNB) was launched with weekly listing of books published with British imprint (i.e., the ones submitted as copyright deposits) with indexes cumulated monthly and quarterly, with full accumulation in a yearly volume. There are also published five-year cumulations. The beauty of this BNB is that though it does not annotate about the contents, nor offer any analytical entries, the entries are fully classified by Dewey (now also with Library of Congress) class numbers and indexed with added entries and subject details. Thus it is a great help for researchers. In the United States the Library of Congress (LC) produces similar bibliographies, but they are not restricted to the US copyright deposits or US imprints only, but cover whatever is added to the LC.

However, leaving aside these historical discussions, for which we may reserve another date, let me just mention here another development in recent years in the availability of academic library holdings. The dream of librarians to make a Union Catalogue of their catalogues could not be materialized successfully until the advent of electronic data processing through microprocessors (in short Computerized Catalogue). In the UK, COPAC (and some other systems) has successfully produced such a Union Catalogue of some major university libraries. This is an excellent tool to search for publications that are added to a number of academic university libraries irrespective of the place of publication.

Let us now talk about my idea of (A) what to include, (B) how to proceed to make the desired bibliography of 'Religion in the Bengal Region' and (C) what would be its format.

A – What to include:

- Primary materials (i.e., religious scriptural texts, writings by religious figures, documents of religious institutions etc.)
- Secondary materials (i.e., scholarly and reportorial material, even some fictional material of repute, if selected with extreme care)

- Guide to repositories of resources (i.e., libraries, museums, private institutions, internet resources etc.)

- Advice on accessing materials mentioned above.

(All pertinent materials are to be listed irrespective of their ready availability in Bangladesh, India or elsewhere. Even for items that are available, the bibliography need not give their location, though it should refer the scholar to libraries, websites or other means whereby they could be located and accessed.)

B – How to proceed:

- Because we do not have available much in the way of bibliographies on the subject area as such, we may consult the resources cited in dependable books and articles and from these extract materials to add to our lists. In this exercise a number of relevant journals would be searched for what they can contribute to our project. Internet websites may be utilized but should be screened with extreme care.

- Time factor. I believe that, once the project is agreed upon by sufficient participants and actually begun, a basic list can be prepared in three months (depending on availability of volunteers and their guides). After an additional three to six months of scrutiny, evaluation and formatting, an initial version could be ready for publication (in printed and digital forms) in nine months.)

C – What sort of format?

- *Main entry* will comprise serial number and full entry, including: (if book) author/editor, date of publication, title, publisher and place of publication; (if article in journal) author, date, article title, journal title, vol., no., pages; (if a paper / chapter in an edited volume) author, date, paper title, editor's name, volume title, publisher and place of publication, pages. There would be special styles for MSS, theses, Internet sources etc.

- *Subject note* should specify the subject(s) of the book / article etc. For this help may be taken from the CIP (Catalogue in Publication) found on the reverse of the title page of many books, also from a series title, if any, and one's own judgment. Usually it would be useful to have a number of subject names.

- *Title section* should comprise the title as given on the title page of a book, with full name and initials of any author(s) other than the main author already referred to in the author field. In some cases a book may be edited by a person other than

the author(s) of an(y) article(s) in the book. It would be necessary to include all such details in the note area.

- *Standardized form* will be provided in printed and digital format on which the information stipulated above may be entered for each source item.
- *Subject index, author/editor name index* and *title index* will be compiled by editor of the bibliography.