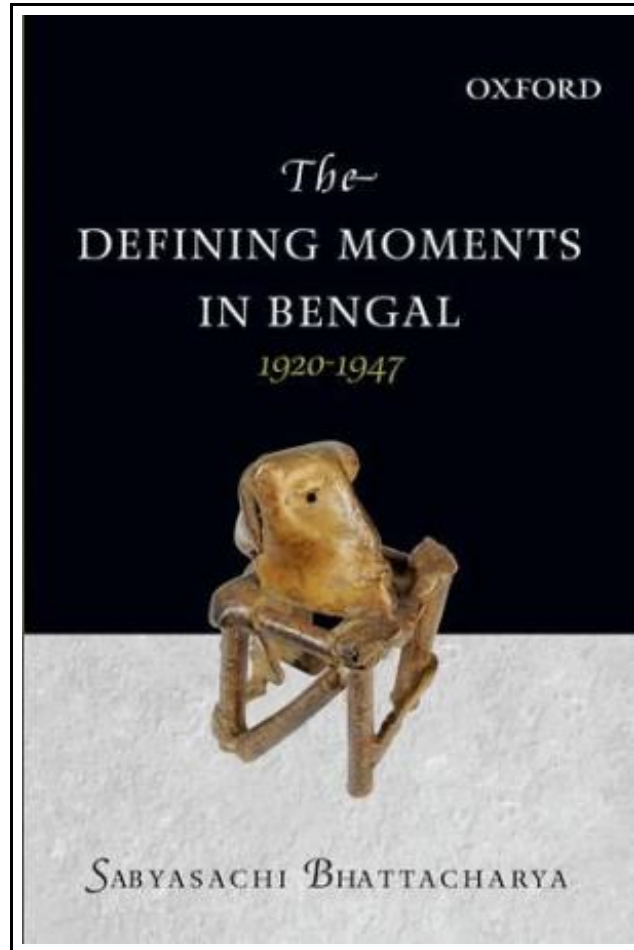


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Reviews

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(Dr. Raven Ledner)

THE DEFINING MOMENTS IN BENGAL



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Oxford University Press. Hardback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, The Defining Moments in Bengal, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, This work explores the early twentieth-century trends which shaped the life and mind of Bengal for decades later. Bengal as we know it today emerged in the years between the 1920s and the twin events of Independence and Partition in 1947. It is one of the arguments in this book that in the twenties there began a redefinition of Bengal's identity that distinguishes twentieth-century Bengal from the past, the era of the 'Renaissance' and its climactic moment, the movement against the Partition of Bengal. In the 1920s there were signs of a new 'Bengali Patriotism' of the bhadralok elite. At the same time, there emerges a new bhadra-mahila, with a critique of conventional notions like chastity, and along with it the entry of women in politics and the public sphere. As for the so-called lower castes and the Muslim community, the fault-lines in the old social order are increasingly manifested in the discourse of Muslim identity in Bengali journals. This work argues that the activities of political parties were only an external manifestation of the root cause, a deep-seated division that appeared in quotidian life and social exclusion. As regards politics, the keynote is Bengal's engagement in Gandhian politics along with a contrarian search for alternatives to the Gandhian path, for example, the Swarajya party, biplabi or revolutionary nationalism, and the Left as an alternative to Gandhism. The 1940s witnessed a series of crises: price inflation during World War II, corruption in public life, the great famine (1943), and finally the communal riot in Calcutta (1946) signalling an irreparable rupture between two communities. The book concludes with a depiction of the political process leading to independence and the second partition of Bengal. That was...



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