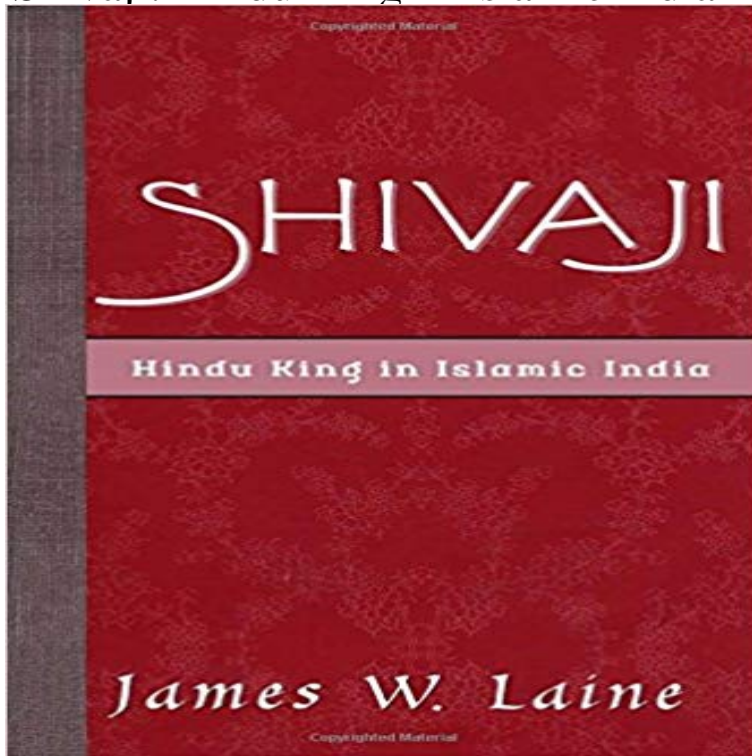


## Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India



Shivaji is a well-known hero in western India. He defied Mughal power in the seventeenth century, established an independent kingdom, and had himself crowned in an orthodox Hindu ceremony. The legends of his life have become an epic story that everyone in western India knows, and an important part of the Hindu nationalists ideology. To read Shivajis legend today is to find expression of deeply held convictions about what Hinduism means and how it is opposed to Islam. James Laine traces the origin and development if the Shivaji legend from the earliest sources to the contemporary accounts of the tale. His primary concern is to discover the meaning of Shivajis life for those who have composed-and those who have read-the legendary accounts of his military victories, his daring escapes, his relationships with saints. In the process, he paints a new and more complex picture of Hindu-Muslim relations from the seventeenth century to the present. He argues that this relationship involved a variety of compromises and strategies, from conflict to accommodation to nuanced collaboration. Neither Muslims nor Hindus formed clearly defined communities, says Laine, and they did not relate to each other as opposed monolithic groups. Different sub-groups, representing a range of religious persuasions, found it in their advantage to accentuate or diminish the importance of Hindu and Muslim identity and the ideologies that supported the construction of such identities. By studying the evolution of the Shivaji legend, Laine demonstrates, we can trace the development of such constructions in both pre-British and post-colonial periods.

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