Orientalism and the Modern Myth of "Hinduism"

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Is there really a single ancient religion designated by the catch-all term 'Hinduism' or is the term merely a fairly recent social construction of Western origin? This paper examines the role played by Orientalist scholars in the construction of Western notions of the origins of the concept of 'Hinduism'. It is argued that the notion of 'Hinduism' as a single world construction, largely dependent upon the Christian presuppositions of the early Western Orientalists. However, exclusive emphasis upon the role of Western Orientalists constitutes a failure to acknowledge the role played by key indigenous informants (mostly of Western Orientalists constitutes a failure to acknowledge the role played by key indigenous informants (mostly subject from history and perpetuate the myth of the passive Oriental. The paper concludes with a discussion of the usefulness of the term 'Hinduism'.
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