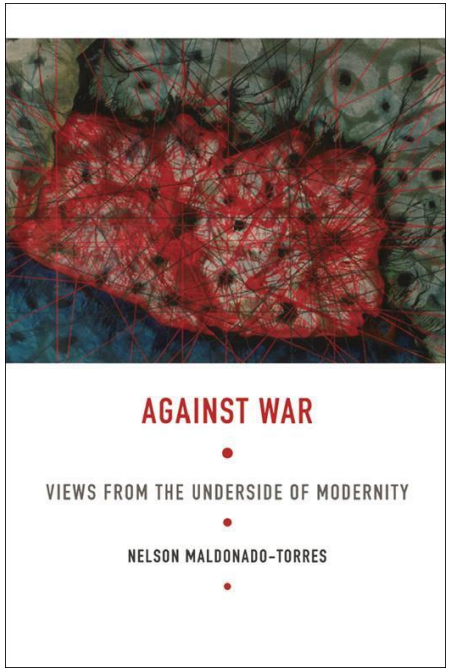
## Books on Genocide Studies

**Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*, Duke University Press, 2008**




Nelson Maldonado-Torres's *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* is a profound and influential work in the field of contemporary decolonial philosophy and critical theory. This book challenges the conventional understanding of modernity and demonstrates that modernity, war, and colonialism are not separate from one another; rather, they are part of an interconnected historical and structural process. In particular, through the concept of the "underside of modernity," the author brings to the forefront the experiences of those who have been oppressed and marginalized by the project of modernity.

The central argument of the book is that modernity itself is a form of violent structure, constructed through colonial occupation, racial hierarchies, and the devaluation of human beings. In this context, war is not an exceptional or abnormal event; rather, it is a permanent and fundamental feature of modernity. The author uses the concept of "paradigms of war" to demonstrate that the modern world order is structured in such a way that violence and domination are established as normal and legitimate.

One of the important contributions of the book is its analysis of the process of dehumanization. Maldonado-Torres demonstrates that within modernity there operates an epistemological and ethical framework that recognizes some people as fully human, while identifying others as the "Other." This division creates the foundation of colonial rule, slavery, racism, and contemporary global inequality.

Philosophical dialogue plays an important role in the book. The author establishes a dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas's ethical philosophy, Frantz Fanon's critique of colonialism, and Enrique Dussel's philosophy of liberation, and attempts to construct an alternative ethical framework. This framework is based on an "ethics of liberation," in which a sense of responsibility, solidarity, and the experiences of the oppressed are placed at the center.

Another important aspect of the book is its proposal for a decolonial ethics. The author argues that in order to challenge this structure of war and violence, it is necessary to move beyond Eurocentric thought and develop new ethical and political perspectives. This perspective emphasizes global justice, mutual recognition, and human dignity. It is not limited merely to theoretical discussion; rather, it is also relevant to contemporary world politics and social movements.

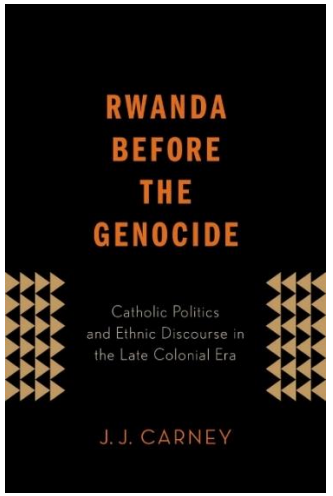
Methodologically, the book is highly philosophical and theoretical. Maldonado-Torres uses abstract concepts, theoretical debates, and complex philosophical language, which, on the one hand, gives the book depth, while on the other hand, may make it somewhat difficult for general readers. However, for those familiar with critical theory, postcolonial studies, or decolonial philosophy, it is an exceptionally rich text.

However, the book also has some limitations. Its analysis is primarily confined to the theoretical level, and consequently, the number of practical examples or empirical case studies is comparatively limited. In addition, because of its complex language and style of presentation, it may be somewhat difficult to understand for new readers. In some cases, there is also a noticeable repetition of arguments, which somewhat slows down the pace of reading.

Finally, it can be said that *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* is a profound, thought-provoking, and theoretically rich book that compels us to rethink the relationship between modernity, war, and colonialism. It does not merely provide a critical analysis; rather, it also points toward an alternative ethical and political perspective. The importance of this book in discussions of decolonial thought, genocide studies, and global justice is undoubtedly highly significant.

**Philip Reyntjens, *Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2013**






Philip Reyntjens's *Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era* is an important and deeply analytical work in the field of Rwandan history and genocide studies. The book sheds light on the political, religious, and social processes of the colonial era in order to understand the background of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. In particular, it demonstrates how the Catholic Church, the Belgian colonial administration, and local political forces jointly constructed and transformed ethnic identities.

The central argument of the book is that the Hutu-Tutsi division was not an eternal or natural reality; rather, it was a historically constructed and politically influenced identity. During the colonial period, particularly under Belgian administration, this division was institutionalized. Through identity cards, administrative policies, and the education system, social stratification was transformed into a rigid ethnic structure.

One of the important contributions of the book is its analysis of the role of the Catholic Church. Reyntjens demonstrates that although Catholic missionaries and Church institutions initially supported the Tutsi elite, they later shifted their support toward the Hutu majority. This change was not limited merely to the religious sphere; rather, it played an important role in altering the balance of political power.

Through education, political discourse, and social organization, the Church played an active role in shaping ethnic consciousness.

The concept of ethnic discourse is particularly important in the book. The author demonstrates how political leaders, religious institutions, and the colonial administration jointly created a discourse that presented ethnic identity as permanent, unchangeable, and conflictual. This discourse gradually influenced social relations and created a kind of "us versus them" mentality, which subsequently laid the foundation for violence.

The book further analyzes how the change in Church support during the 1950s and 1960s and the rise of political movements strengthened ethnic nationalism. Through this process, political awareness increased among the Hutu majority, which, on the one hand, gave rise to democratic demands and, on the other hand, created the basis for exclusion and violence against the Tutsi population. Consequently, the period preceding the genocide can be viewed as a process of constructing a slow but well-organized escalation of tension.

Methodologically, the book is highly strong. Reyntjens presents a detailed historical analysis based on archival documents, Church records, administrative reports, and contemporary writings. These sources have made the book a reliable and authoritative study. At the same time, it creates an interdisciplinary connection among history, political science, and theology.

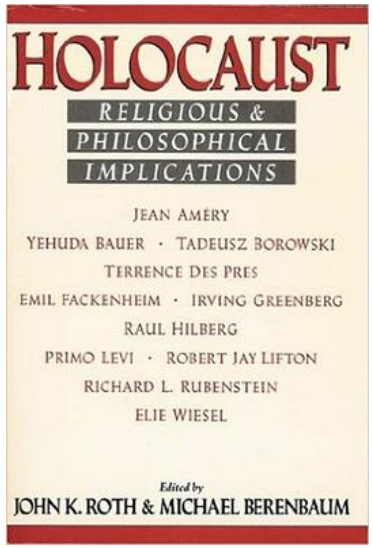
However, the book also has some limitations. Its analysis is primarily centered on institutional and elite-level discourse



and policymaking, as a result of which the experiences of ordinary people and the social realities at the grassroots level have been comparatively less reflected. In addition, the book could have established a more direct connection with comparative genocide theory, which would have further enriched its theoretical depth.

Finally, it can be said that *Rwanda Before the Genocide* is an indispensable work for understanding the background of the Rwandan genocide. It demonstrates that genocide does not occur suddenly; rather, it is the result of political, religious, and social processes that develop over a long period of time. Through analyzing the complex relationship among the construction of ethnic identity, the politics of power, and institutional influence, this book makes an important contribution to genocide studies and also serves as a source of relevant lessons for the contemporary world.

**John K. Roth, *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications,* Paragon House, 1989**




John K. Roth's *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications* is an important and deeply analytical work in the field of Holocaust studies and religious philosophy. This book is not merely a description of historical events; rather, it delves deeply into the ethical,

theological, and philosophical questions arising from an extreme human catastrophe such as the Holocaust. As a result, it creates an interdisciplinary field of discussion at the intersection of history, philosophy, and theology.

The central argument of the book is that the Holocaust poses a fundamental challenge to the conventional morality, religious beliefs, and philosophical concepts of human civilization. In particular, questions concerning the existence of God, justice, the nature of evil, and human suffering demand to be reconsidered in new ways. Roth demonstrates that the planned murder of millions of innocent people makes clear the limitations of conventional religious interpretations.

An important aspect of the book is its profound analysis of the "problem of evil." The author raises the question—if God is omnipotent and perfectly good, then how was such a horrific event as the Holocaust possible? There is no easy answer to this question, and Roth demonstrates that conventional theological interpretations often prove inadequate in the face of this reality. Consequently, the need arises for new forms of theological thought and ethical perspectives.

The book also contains an important discussion of human responsibility and the role of bystanders. The author demonstrates that the Holocaust was not committed solely by perpetrators; rather, the role of those who remained silent or did not resist is also morally questionable. This analysis provides the reader with a broader understanding of moral responsibility.



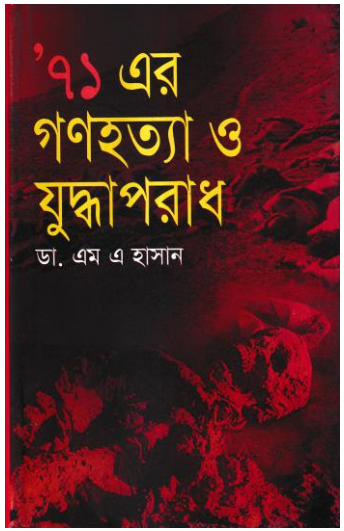
In addition, the questions of memory and interpretation constitute an important part of the book. Roth argues that remembering the Holocaust is not merely a matter of recalling the past; rather, it is a moral responsibility that can help prevent such violence in the future. He demonstrates that memory and the study of history are deeply interconnected, and through these, society determines its moral position.

Another strong aspect of the book is its interdisciplinary approach. The author brings together philosophy, theology, history, and ethics to present an integrated analysis. As a result, the book becomes equally relevant not only to religious or philosophical readers but also to the fields of history and genocide studies.

However, the book also has some limitations. Its language and style of presentation are quite abstract and theoretical, which may make it somewhat difficult for general readers. For those who expect a more empirical or event-based analysis, the book may appear comparatively less rich in information. In addition, its heavy reliance on the European theological context has, in some cases, limited its global comparative perspective.

Finally, it can be said that *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications* is a profound and thought-provoking work that provides an ethical and philosophical framework for understanding the Holocaust. It does not limit the reader merely to knowing history; rather, it encourages the reader to reconsider the fundamental questions of justice, responsibility, faith, and humanity. The significance of this book in the fields of genocide studies and religious philosophy is undoubtedly enduring.

**Dr. M. A. Hasan, *Ekattorer Gonohattya O Juddhaparadh [The 1971 Genocide and War Crimes]*, Tamralipi, Dhaka, 2010**




Dr. M. A. Hasan's *Ekattorer Gonohattya O Juddhaparadh* is an important and authoritative work in the field of Bangladesh's Liberation War and genocide studies. Focusing on the events of 1971, this book does not merely provide a historical account; rather, it presents a systematic analysis of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In particular, the role of this book is significant in establishing the concept of 'genocide' on a theoretical and evidentiary basis in the context of Bangladesh.

The central argument of the book is that the Liberation War of 1971 was not merely a military conflict; rather, it was a planned and organized genocide, in which the Pakistani military forces and their collaborators targeted the Bengali population. The author demonstrates that this violence included indiscriminate killings, rape, torture, arson, looting, and targeted attacks against intellectuals and minority communities. Therefore, it is reasonable to identify the events of 1971 as genocide and war crimes in light of international law.

One of the major strengths of this book is its documentary-based presentation. The author has constructed a strong



evidence-based framework by using various types of primary and secondary sources—such as government documents, international reports, newspapers, interviews, and accounts of eyewitnesses. These sources not only confirm the authenticity of the events but also provide a clear understanding of the scale, nature, and objectives of the violence.

The legal analysis of war crimes also occupies an important place in the book. The author has evaluated the events of 1971 in light of international law, particularly the Geneva Conventions and the Genocide Convention. He has attempted to demonstrate how these crimes are defined and prosecutable from the perspective of international law. This section has elevated the book from merely a historical account to a law-based study.

In addition, the book analyzes various dimensions of the violence—the military operations, the role of auxiliary forces (such as Razakar, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams), and its impact on ordinary people. The author has particularly highlighted the issue of the killing of intellectuals and the persecution of minorities, which is an important characteristic of the 1971 genocide. At the same time, the long-term effects of this violence—including questions of national memory, identity, and justice—are also discussed.

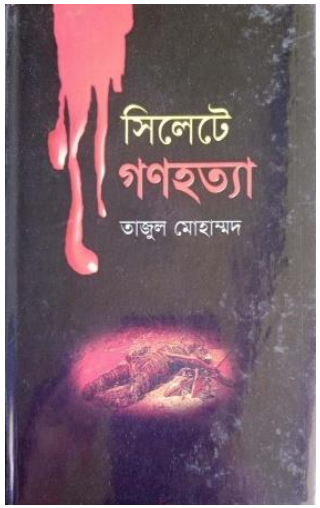
Another important aspect of the book is its moral position. The author did not stop merely at presenting the events; rather, he emphasized the necessity of justice, accountability, and the preservation of history. From this perspective, the book is not merely an academic study; rather, it is a moral appeal in which the importance of acknowledging the truth

of the past and ensuring the prosecution of crimes has been highlighted.

However, the book also has some limitations. The analytical framework could have been expanded further—particularly by establishing connections with comparative genocide studies (such as the Holocaust and Rwanda), its theoretical depth could have been increased. In addition, in some cases, descriptive sections have been given prominence, where critical theoretical analysis could have been further developed.

Finally, it can be said that *The 1971 Genocide and War Crimes* is an important and authoritative work that provides strong arguments and evidence for establishing the events of 1971 as genocide and war crimes. The contribution of this book to discussions on the history of Bangladesh's Liberation War, genocide studies, and justice is highly significant and enduring.

**Tajul Mohammad, *Sylhet Gonohattya* [Sylhet Genocide*]*, Sahitya Prakash, Dhaka, 2018**




Tajul Mohammad's *Sylhet Gonohattya* is an important and timely addition to the study of Bangladesh's Liberation War and regional genocide. The history of the 1971 Liberation War generally remains confined to the broader flow of major events at the national level; however, this book moves beyond that tendency and brings forward the specific experiences, patterns of violence, and spatial realities of the Sylhet region. As a result, it is not merely a regional history, but also an important attempt to enrich the broader discourse on genocide in Bangladesh.

The central theoretical position of the book is that the violence committed in Sylhet was not an isolated or random event; rather, it was part of a well-organized, planned, and politically directed genocide. The author demonstrates that the Pakistani military forces and their local collaborators—the Razakar, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams forces—collectively targeted innocent civilians, freedom fighters, and minority communities. This violence included widespread killings, torture, arson, looting, and forced displacement.

One notable aspect of the book is its methodological strength. Tajul Mohammad conducted extensive field research—he traveled to various upazilas and remote areas of Sylhet and collected interviews from eyewitnesses, victims, and members of martyr families. In addition, he utilized local documents, newspapers, memoirs, and previous research. The integration of these multidimensional data and sources has transformed the book into a strong documentary-based study.

The book presents in detail various incidents of genocide in the Sylhet region, specific locations, dates, and types of incidents. The author explains the context, nature, and consequences of each incident, which provides the reader with a clear understanding of the continuity and organized character of the violence. At the same time, the presentation of the personal experiences and memories of the victims gives the book a human dimension—going beyond numbers

and statistics, it tells the stories of human suffering, loss, and resistance.

Another important aspect is that the book emphasizes the necessity of preserving local history. For constructing a comprehensive history of Bangladesh's Liberation War, central or national narratives alone are not sufficient; rather, region-based studies such as those of Sylhet come together to construct a comprehensive and multidimensional picture. From this perspective, *Sylhet Genocide* is not merely a regional study; rather, it is an important part of national memory politics and historical scholarship.

The book also raises the questions of justice and accountability. The author demonstrates that such documentary-based research is essential for the prosecution of war crimes, the preservation of historical truth, and raising awareness among future generations. By specifically identifying and documenting the incidents of genocide in the Sylhet region, the book can play an important role in both the judicial and moral spheres.

Finally, it can be said that *Sylhet Genocide* is a valuable documentary-based study that clearly presents the history of genocide in the Sylhet region and enriches the overall historiography of Bangladesh's Liberation War. Tajul Mohammad's intensive field research, data collection, and humane presentation have made this book particularly important. The contribution of this work to preserving the memory of the martyrs of 1971 and establishing the truth of the genocide will undoubtedly carry lasting significance.

***Read Hossain***





*November 1971 - Bengali Refugees*
*Photographer: Raymond Depardon*