

So hilfreich Dillers Gesamtüberblick für eine erste Orientierung auch sein mag, so verwirrend ist die Umständlichkeit des Stils, die Abundanz von Details wie Schifffahrtslisten wie auch der Überreichtum an Quellen. Widersprüchliche Aussagen in Bezug auf das ursprüngliche Startkapital fallen schon kaum mehr ins Gewicht und drohen bei der Faktenfülle fast unterzugehen. Auffällig ist bei beiden Autoren das Versäumnis, die vorgenommene Periodisierung plausibel zu begründen. Während Krieger das Ende des Untersuchungszeitraumes auf 1868 legt, als der damalige König Dänemarks feststellt, die Nikobaren gehörten nicht mehr zum dänischen Hoheitsgebiet, begrenzt Diller seine Betrachtung mit dem Jahr 1845 und der Übergabe der dänischen Niederlassungen an die Briten. Der fortgeführte Chinahandel hätte aber bei der Terminierung des Untersuchungszeitraumes unbedingt berücksichtigt werden müssen, so dass es sich wieder einmal zeigt, wie fragwürdig so offensichtliche Ereignisse wie der Verkauf von Territorien oder die Verlautbarung eines Monarchen für die Zäsursetzung bei historischen Prozessen ist.

Leichter zugänglich ist zweifelsohne Kriegers Studie, obgleich auch sie gelegentlich in allzu detailreichen Schilderungen versinkt, wie beispielsweise im Fall der minutiös genauen Nachzeichnung der Eroberung der Nikobaren, was eventuell auf einen erfreulich umfassenden und gut erhaltenen Quellenbestand zurückzuführen ist; die Inseln an sich waren aber recht unerheblich für den dänischen Handel. Gravierender ist es jedoch, die Bedeutung des Chinahandels als letztlich einzig lukrative Einnahmequelle des dänischen Handels in Asien derart zu unterschätzen und stattdessen zu sehr dem *country-trade* verhaftet zu bleiben. Bedauerlicherweise kommt denn auch Krieger zu keinen eigentlich neuen Ergebnissen in Bezug auf die etablierte Forschungsmeinung. Wohl weil beide Autoren oftmals dasselbe Archivmaterial benutzten, gilt Gleiches im Wesentlichen auch für die Untersuchung Dillers, der die Forschungsergebnisse Ole Feldbaeks in der Hinsicht bestätigt, dass die Dänen deshalb so erfolgreich im Asienhandel waren, weil sie eine stattliche Anzahl an gewinnbringenden Rückfahrten nach Europa zuwege brachten. Viel Neues ist also mit beiden Büchern nicht geleistet worden.

Michael Mann

IAN J. KERR (ed.), *Railways in Modern India*. (Oxford in India Readings: Themes in Indian History). New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001. XVII + 356 pages, 5 maps, Rs. 625.00. ISBN 0-19-564825.

Can only scholars who have preserved a boyish fancy for ancient railways or suffer from a perverse and outmoded interest in hard-core economic history be tempted to indulge in the study of railway development in South Asia? You may possibly be more inclined to answer this question in the negative after reading a recently published volume in OUP India's 'Themes in Indian History' series. The idea of this excellent series is to introduce non-specialist readers to central themes of South Asian history by way of republishing a collection of carefully chosen scholarly contributions. The themes selected have usually long been a subject of historical research or have become a focus of historiography more recently. Indian railway history is, however, a subject that *ceased* to be a major topic of historical research after the 1980s when linguistic and culturalist 'turns' led scholars away from ma-

terial aspects of human existence and often to more conventional literary sources. The editor of the volume under review, Ian J. Kerr, one of the few historians working in this field in the 1990s, has not merely provided a good selection of relevant historical sources and of important, sometimes pioneering, articles. Rather, his contributions to the volume open up a whole new research agenda, underscoring the relevance of railway development for a better understanding of South Asia's specific form of 'modernity', for its social, cultural, political and ecological history, and pointing at crucial aspects that have as yet hardly been explored.

The volume gives a taste of historical debates on Indian railways by reproducing Karl Marx's famous article on the 'Future Results of British Rule in India' (1853), a speech by the colonial Governor of Bombay H.B. Frere (1863) and an excerpt from M.K. Gandhi's 'Hind Swaraj' (1921). Daniel Thorner's seminal article 'The Pattern of Railway Development in India' (1955) can be found and, perhaps redundantly, John M. Hurd's magisterial contribution to the Cambridge Economic History of India (1982), that substantiated Thorner's analysis with rich information on the economics of Indian railways. The economic implications of the 'railway age' were highly uneven across the subcontinent, and two articles on Bengal (by Mukul Mukherjee) and North India (I.D. Derbyshire) exemplify the potential of regional studies. Kerr has also selected texts that discuss the consequences of changes in transport infrastructure for city-hinterland relations and the formation of nationalist elites (McDonald, Gumperz), introduce one to the administrative history of Indian railways (G.S. Khosla) or discuss the adaptation of British railway technology to Indian conditions (Ian Derbyshire). A brief excerpt from an article by Robert G. Varady gives a mere taste of the potential of studies on ecological consequences of railway construction – a topic that has eluded systematic research as yet. Moreover, a brief 'think piece' by David Arnold is reprinted that stresses the importance of railways in understanding cultural transformations in South Asia. The most innovative contributions to the volume are, however, those of the editor himself. In his detailed introduction Kerr has turned the major drawback of the volume into an asset: As the present state of historical research does not allow any balanced picture of the role of railways in the history of South Asia's society, Kerr has chosen to confront his readers with the fascinating potential of further research. Hence his introduction does not merely provide an overview of major historical trends and the existing literature, but devotes much space to discussing theoretical problems and to opening out new avenues of enquiry. Moreover, in a perceptive and hitherto unpublished article, Kerr looks at the implications of railway construction for the 'reworking of a popular religious practice', namely of Hindu pilgrimage.

To add a word of criticism, a conceptual problem of Kerr's approach may be to separate railway development too much from the history of communications as a whole. Historians of railways may have to look more closely at the interdependence of railways with road and water transport, as Sunil Kumar Muni has shown convincingly for Eastern India. But Kerr's 'Railways in Modern India' undoubtedly provides non-specialised readers with an excellent introduction to the subject and explores, even advertises possibilities of a new social history of communications that could interest geographers no less than historians and economists as much as anthropologists. John Harrison's report on the railway archives of Gorakhpur, also



reproduced in the volume, exemplifies that there is no lack of documentary evidence in colonial archives, while non-official sources have so far not even been tapped.

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MIHIR K. JENA / PADMINI PATHI / JAGGANATH DASH / KAMALA K. PATNAIK / KLAUS SEELAND, *Forest Tribes of Orissa. Lifestyle and Social Conditions of Selected Orissan Tribes*. Vol. 1: The Dongria Kondh. (Man and Forest Series 2). New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2002. XXVII, 433 pages, 4 maps, 19 figs., 19 tables, 40 col. plates, Rs 800.00. ISBN 81-246-0189-5

In the name of development, a group of four Indian scientists in co-operation with the Chair of Forest Policy and Forest Economics, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), inquired into the indigenous knowledge of the "Dongria Kondh" (usually Dongria Kondh) and have now jointly published a voluminous book (433 pages) with many maps, tables and pictures. The authors' research objectives are manifold: they intend to understand the people's "attitude towards or perception of the local environment", their "general way of life", to record data on economic activities, oral traditions and ethno-botanical knowledge and to inquire into the role of specialists for the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge as well as the changes that take place due to "the intervention of external forces like the Forest Department" in particular (p. 5-6).

The results of their inquiries are presented in ten chapters the last two of which directly discuss the role of indigenous knowledge for forest management. The first chapter informs us briefly about the geographical location of the Dongria Kondh, a rather small 'scheduled tribe' living in the Niamgiri hills of Orissa (India), about research objectives and the methods and techniques of data collection. The bulk of ethnographic data is contained in chapters 2 to 8 which deal with the social and economic organisation of the Dongria, the role of certain specialists, oral traditions, religion, classifications and their practice of shifting cultivation. Chapter 9 deals with the question of what can be learned from the Dongria for forest management, while chapter 10 informs us about forest policy and forest legislation in India that prohibits shifting cultivation.

In the list of contents no mention is made of the respective authors, but the quality of the individual chapters differs. Outstanding are chapters 5 and 7 dealing with oral traditions and classifications of the Dongria Kondh. Having myself done fieldwork among them, I have experienced the difficulties in collecting their mythology. All the more surprising is the richness of myths presented in chapter 5 which will be of great value for the understanding of Dongria society. Rather than interpreting this rich mythology the authors, however, restrict themselves to comments on the interrelation between a few mythemes and prohibitions of killing certain animals or the protection of particular trees, undoubtedly the main theme of their general inquiry into forest management.

Very rich ethnographic data is also presented in chapter 7 which deals with indigenous classification of hills, forests and types of soil. This chapter combines exact botanical knowledge with sociological observations and impressive inquiries into