

DIETMAR ROTHERMUND: *Government, Landlord, and Peasant in India: Agrarian Relations under British Rule 1865-1935*. (Schriftenreihe des Südasiens-Instituts der Universität Heidelberg, Bd. 25) Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978. 211 pages, bibliogr.

"My approach", writes D. Rothermund, "is that of a historian who tries to understand the present by reconstruction of the past". This approach is welcome not only to historians, but to anyone dealing with contemporary development. By grossly overlooking the past when assessing the present, political scientists and economists all too often reach wrong conclusions and simplistic views.

The author has achieved his stated goal with a fine analysis of agrarian relations in India. The subject is comprehensive and complex, since it includes not only ancient indigenous systems, but British innovations and subsequent changes as well. Thus, D. Rothermund follows a very broad and diachronic approach to these problems.

The first chapter, "The elements of agrarian relations", gives a broad outline of the work. Subsequent chapters deal with the economic context, revenue and property, indebtedness, tenancy and finally, heritage. In all these areas the author moves with ease, analysing and revealing inter-relationships.

Our only minor regret regards references in the last few pages to the so-called green revolution. Unfortunately, D. Rothermund relies too much on the highly questionable point of view shared by Francine Frankel and others and does not take into account the latest trends in Indian agriculture.

This, however, is a very small defect in an otherwise excellent and very useful book. It is no mean achievement to have concisely presented us with a broad, yet minute analysis of one of the most difficult subjects of India's socio-political and economic life.

Gilbert Etienne