quia ineptum, „es ist glaubhaft, weil es unsinnig ist" (De carne Christi, Kap. 5,4), das in der griffigeren Formulierung vor allem einer dem Geist der Aufklärung verpflichteten Religionskritik zum Kennwort für die extremste theologische Position in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Glauben und Vernunft geworden ist.

Rainer Kimmig

IAN COPLAND: *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947.* (Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society 2). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. XIV, 302 pages, £35.00 / US$ 59.95. ISBN 0-521-571-79-0

The history of the Princely States in the last decades of the British Raj has long remained a neglected area of study. Nevertheless, as early as 1974 R.J. Moore devoted a substantial part of his work on *The Crisis of Indian Unity 1917-1940* to the role the Princes and their ministers played during the Round Table Conferences - perhaps the only time in the 20th century that they came near to shaping the destiny of the subcontinent. His lead has been followed by Barbara Ramusack's study on the politics of the Chamber of Princes (*The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire: Dissolution of a Patron-Client System 1914-1939*, Columbus 1978) and Stephen Ashton's research on *British Policy towards the Indian States, 1905-1939* (London 1982). Whereas both of these books limit their scope to the period before the Second World War, Copland can claim the merit of pursuing their destiny up to the last. To this end he draws on an impressive amount of source material collected not only in London and Delhi but also in the archives of Karachi, Hyderabad, Baroda, Bhopal, Patiala and Bikaner.

Copland was wise enough not to persist in his original aim of attempting at a "reconstitution - in some form - of the modern political histories of several hundreds of separate principalities scattered across a large part of the subcontinent" (p.8), a task which would probably need the preliminary work of a whole generation of historians concentrating on individual states. (Although perhaps more work has been done than he is aware of: just taking as an example the English literature on Hyderabad, he might easily have consulted and profited by the studies of V.K. Bawa, *The Last Nizam. The Life and Times of Mir Osman Ali Khan*, Delhi 1992, Caroline Elliot, *Decline of a Patrimonial Regime: The Telengana Rebellion in India 1946-51*, in: *JAS* XXXIV (1974), pp. 27-48, and the standard work on the Kayasthas by Karen Leonard, *Sociology of an Indian Caste. The Kayasths of Hyderabad*, Berkeley 1978). Starting from the "firm historiographical assumption,

namely that history should not be written backwards" (p. 13), that the fact that the princely states met their extinction in 1947 did not mean that they were doomed right from the beginning of the century, Copland sets about to save, if not the rulers, then at least their place in history: "The *maharajas* have been maligned and marginalised by the historical profession to an absurd degree. It is time the record was put straight." (p.8). In his sympathy for the princes and their *darbars*, in his attraction towards the orientalist discourse (which does not lose its charm for the author, though he himself hints at the way it was instrumentalised by the princes, p. 27 and 276), in the weight he attaches to persons and personalities, Copland evidently feels at home in the atmosphere of the Political Department in the 1930s and 1940s. Like the officers of the Political Department, he tends to underestimate the growing power of the nationalist movement and, specially, the Congress. It does not require the advantage of hindsight to claim that the chances for the states to preserve their political culture intact when surrounded by an independent Republic of India, pledged on democratisation and even socialism, were not very high. Copland, however, affirms that the military force and economic power of the States would in themselves have enabled them to hold their own, if they had but stood together. It certainly would be very interesting to have some more elucidation on this thesis, as up to now, historians have tended to maintain the contrary and the only occasion when the army of a State was put to the test, the so-called Police-Action against Hyderabad in 1948, ended in quick disaster.

The main emphasis of Copland's study lies on the detailed rendering of the discussions of the Chamber of Princes, of the Round Table Conferences and of those held by the Princes, ministers and British among each other. Every phase of these debates is drawn so painstakingly that the reader is sometimes in danger of losing the thread. However, he can derive consolation from the fact that, at times at least, he seems to share this fate with the protagonists themselves. Without suggesting an undue simplification of intricate matters, the study might perhaps have gained in clarity by regular summaries - a form of hindsight which should certainly be permitted to the historian.

Margrit Pernau-Reifeld

THOMAS R. METCALF: *Ideologies of the Raj*. (The New Cambridge History of India, Vol. III.4). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. XII, 244 pages, 13 illustrations, £ 30.00 / US$ 49.95. ISBN 0-521-39547-X

The decision of the editors of the New Cambridge History of India to divide the 18th and 19th century into Christopher Bayly's volume on *Indian Society*