

dischen Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte, geführt wurde, demonstriert der Autor den Zusammenhang zwischen Archäologie und Politik, indem er „Archäologie als Herrschaftswissen“ (S. 354) charakterisiert.

Das Buch enthält ein Autorenverzeichnis und einen umfangreichen, gegliederten Index.

*Antje Richter*

MICHAEL MANN, *Bengalen im Umbruch. Die Herausbildung des britischen Kolonialstaates 1754–1793*. Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte, Vol. 78). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2000. 469 pages, 4 maps, DM 148,-. ISBN 3-515-07603-4

Rendered into English, the title of this book would read *Bengal in Transition*. It is concerned with that momentous phase of colonial state formation, from the coup d'état that brought the British to power in this highly productive region up to the end of Cornwallis' governorship which was marked by the introduction of the Permanent Settlement of land revenue and the renewal of the East India Company's charter. Mann's monograph is an original contribution to a debate that has been controversial for more than a century and will doubtless remain so. Based on a broad reading of the relevant literature and on new archival material it is, among other things, an elaborate response to two recent suggestions by C.A. Bayly: first, the necessity to "return the British to South Asian History" after decades of historical research emphasizing continuities in South Asian social history or even the "Indianness" of the colonial state without being able to explain the transformations effected under colonial rule. Second, that South Asianists needed to take account of recent exploits of "domestic" British history and to utilize the concept of a "military-fiscal state" in the analysis of the early colonial regime. Mann has, accordingly, not confined himself to presenting a detailed account of a specific, regional variation of a colonial polity, but has taken into consideration the whole spectrum of social actors involved in the process of colonial state formation in Bengal including the higher echelons of decision-making in London, the British *nabobs* in Calcutta, their Indian allies and subordinates, as well as the Indian agencies in the countryside. He discusses meticulously the British Parliament's commercial and fiscal legislation, its increasing interventions in the East India Company's administrative structure and financial operations; he goes on to re-examine the legislation of the successive Governors-in-Council in Fort Williams, including the repeated attempts to establish an undivided sovereignty that was new to this region; finally, by examining the revenue, judicial and police administration on the local level he considers the extent to which oft-discussed normative texts were actually implemented – a survey of popular

resistance in the districts of Bengal is one of the most vivid chapters. The main hypothesis is that colonial state formation in Bengal was an expression of a wider process of British "fiscal imperialism" – an hypothesis related to the concept of the "military-fiscal state". Hence, he focuses on fiscal dimensions of government and Company policies concerning India, arguing that they have hitherto escaped due attention. Mann remains unconvinced of the die-hard thesis that Bengal was annexed by the British in a fit of "absent-mindedness". Going beyond the examination of views and ambitions of leading individuals he seeks for structural pressures towards imperial expansion. One of these pressures he finds in the growing fiscal hunger of the British State which led to a consistent policy of integrating the Company's commercial and financial operations into a framework of imperial finance and the concomitant urge to establish "undivided sovereignty" in Bengal. He also points out, however, that this process was slow and ridden with inconsistencies: The Company's administration was by no means as "rational", their accountancy standards were not as "scientific" as commonly believed and, most importantly, various social forces (which he subsumes under the term "Bengal agency") set limits to colonial dominance. Mann's copious and valuable study provides interesting leads for further research, pointing out e.g. the importance of the crisis period of the early 1780s. At the same time, it provokes criticism on many counts. One central problem remains that of the characterisation of the early colonial state. Mann tags it variously as "despotic" and "absolutist", while insisting simultaneously that it was no more than a thin institutional layer covering a society the depths of which it could not really "penetrate". But would such a polity be anything more than a phony despotism, a mere caricature of an absolutist state? Or, to pose the question differently, how to explain the alleged structural stagnation of Bengal's rural society in the face of considerable reallocations of resources and exportation of revenue? Mann has placed this old paradox squarely before us, but he has not been able to solve it. Yet some of his own material nourishes the suspicion that the impact of colonial rule on fundamental structures of early colonial Indian society may not have been as insignificant as we still tend to think.

Ravi Ahuja

JOHN MCLEOD, *Sovereignty, Power, Control. Politics in the States of Western India, 1916–1947*. (Brill's Indological Library, Vol. 15). Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1999. XIV, 307 pages, € 96.00. ISBN 90-04-11343-6

Weniges in der Forschung regt die Diskussion und damit den Erkenntnisprozeß mehr an als ein gekonnter akademischer Schlagabtausch. Wenn ein Autor daher schon in der Einleitung den bisherigen Koryphäen auf dem