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Modern History of South Asia

A selection of recent publications

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During the last two decades South Asian history experienced major changes in perspective and approach. After the independence of Europe's Asian colonies, especially of Pakistan, India as well as Indonesia, the interpretation of the colonial rule soon reached a "nationalistic" level in the new national states. Dadabhai Naoroji's and later Romesh Ch. Dutt's early thesis of the "drain of wealth" fitted well into the wholesale damnation of colonial rule. On the other hand, British historiography began to stress its positive aspects even more, namely, the modernization of static Asian societies. This "imperialistic" interpretation of a fundamentally benevolent colonialism further provoked Asian response. Ultimately both positions reached a dead end. Edward Said's *Orientalism* gave a new impetus to the discussion when his thesis of the Western approach of "essentialising the Orient" backfired and scholars of Indian history were accused of essentialising the colonial impact and, in our context, the consequences of the British Raj in India/South Asia. Therefore, recent publications point more towards lines of continuity from pre- to post-colonial regimes than highlighting the rupture caused by colonial rule. The academic discourse is presently dominated by re-interpretation of South Asian history from the 18th century onwards.

A very early attempt at re-interpreting (South East) Asian history was already undertaken by J.C. van Leur in the 1930s. He strongly demanded a shift away from the Eurocentric perception of extra-European history towards an independent interpretation of South and South East Asian history, at least until the beginning of the 19th century. But only from the early 1980s can we observe a basic change of parameters. With Frank Perlin's, Nicholas B. Dirk's, André Wink's and Christopher A. Bayly's, to name but the most prominent authors, "revisionist" approach, new and promising paths of interpretation have been opened. As a result, a vast amount of literature has been produced at an accelerating pace during the last fifteen years. Especially the historical research of the last five years was both productive and innovative.

This review essay points out the main trends in recent publications and novel interpretations. Six sections provide a rough orientation. The first

section introduces the "long 18th century" as a (questionable) category of Asian history and outlines the major aspects of re-interpretation, starting with the "kingship and authority in South Asia", passing on to the "decline" of the Mughal Empire and ending with the latest publication on the role of the Compagnie Perpetuelle des Indes in the Indian Ocean. A recently opened and most innovative field of research, agrarian and environmental history, is presented in the second section, emphasising the dimensions of the colonial impact on indigenous societies and the latter's impressive varieties of everyday resistance and avoidance strategies. Colonialism, imperialism and information gathering in the British-Indian empire is the theme of the next section. The tools of rule developed in the colonial context strikingly demonstrate how colonial power slowly but surely succeeded in establishing ruling networks. The fifth section deals with different mechanisms of ruling the Raj long after its zenith in the 20th century. Dominance without hegemony, the latter being supplanted by ideologies of the Raj, is quite an appropriate way of characterising British and probably other European colonial rule in Asia. The next paragraph is about the subcontinent's development after independence, pointing out the most recent aspects of liberalizing policies and the still dominant theme of "legitimacy" in South Asia. The last section is about teaching materials, a *genre* which has been neglected for many years, by historians as well as publishing houses.

I. South Asia and the Indian Ocean in the – very – "long 18th century"

The question of indigenous "state-formation" in South Asia has come to prominence during the last decades. Most historians tried to construct a scoring mechanism denoting success or failure in the state-building, centralizing, and aggrandizing efforts of individual sovereigns or dynasties. Nine essays in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, edited by J. F. Richards, are a result of reassessment and a "response to this re-evaluation of monarchy in its South Asian setting." (p. 2) It was worth reprinting this volume originally published as a now hardly accessible xero-print version of 1978. Apparently the volume is still a landmark in the vast field of publications on the subject.

According to Vedic understanding of authority the king had to be part of the community and at the same time foreign to it to guarantee his own authority. This understanding of kingship originated in a transcendent world, guarded by the brahmins who monopolized authority through their renunciation of the world, as J. C. Heestermann points out. Ronald Inden takes as his reference on Burton Stein's model of the "segmentary state",

supplementing it with his notion of the Indic kingship. This usually was decentralized and feudal (segmentary) as well as centralized and bureaucratic (constitutional or absolutist).

> "The apparent contradiction between these linked pairs [...] is both stated in royal rituals and resolved in them by the device of alteration or oscillation between the pairs on a cyclic, periodic basis." (p. 43)

Royal authority and legitimacy of the king's rule is based and first demonstrated in the ceremony of royal accession. Transcendent and immanent forms of the king's newly gained authority have henceforth continuously to be re-invigorated by various "oscillating" actions and ceremonies, thus expressing the cyclic character of his rule.

Despite major differences between Hindu and Muslim concepts of establishing legitimacy and authority – vide for example the idea of a one-directional "vested authority" in Islamic thought and the above mentioned "cyclic" understanding – the early Delhi sultans do not appear to have trespassed the norms of tolerable conquest expressed in ancient written tradition or broken decisively with the conventions of the "conduct of state". Instead of establishing a tight rule, the Muslim conquerors, as Peter Hardy argues, tried to set up a system of indirect rule. But basically,

> "the evidence for there being, in the thirteenth century, formal public occasions at which both Muslim rulers could assert authority and Hindu chiefs be present formally to acknowledge authority is difficult to find." (p. 229)

Which leaves the reader in the rather unhappy situation of being consoled with the open air, everyday life and common occasions when such evidence is most likely to be found.

Akbar broke deliberately with older notions of legitimacy and authority. Moving his capital from the historical site of Delhi and founding the three residences at Lahore, Agra/Fatehpur Sikri and Allahabad, he finally deserted them in favour of a permanent capital camp that toured through the empire, thereby creating his own legacy and legitimacy. Moreover, Akbar established a degree of spiritual authority for the emperor unprecedented in Indo-Muslim experience. And undoubtedly Abul Fasl's Akbar-Nama and its voluminous appendix, the Ain-i-Akbari, provided the best means of founding the new ideology of Akbar's reign, thereby simultaneously establishing the emperor's dynastic tradition and legitimacy. At the beginning of the 17th century the elite of the empire had become a corporate body of loyal nobles and paid officers. J. F. Richard elaborates on the model of the officer and soldiers, master and servants and teacher and disciples, the single person in this relationship being the emperor who demands loyalty, obedience and obeisance qua his authority.

Steward Gordon suggests four principles for the legitimate ruler in the so-called successor states of the Mughal empire in the 18th century. A legitimate king had to be a proven protector of the people, to have a commanding personal presence, being an heir according to the rules of heredity and the holder of a genuine *sanad* from a strong power. These principles were already laid down in the Dharmashastra and the Arthashastra. As those positive characteristics are generally applicable to a South Asian ruler, the author fails to point out what was specifically 18th century, the only exception being the *sanad*.

One of the still prevalent questions of 18th century South Asian history are the causes and reasons of the Mughal Empire's decline. There has been a major change in perspective and interpretation during the last two decades. Andrea Hintze's *The Mughal Empire and its Decline* scrutinizes this change in the historiographical process to give "a fresh look at the decline of the Mughal Empire" and "to reconsider the existing theories of this decline." (p. 5). The book is basically divided into two parts. The first part makes a vertical cut through the history of the Mughal Empire. Here, the main purpose is the application of Michael Mann's (London School of Economics and University of California) four theoretical categories of social power (military, economic, political, and ideological), as elaborated in his famous *The Sources of Social Power* (Cambridge 1986), to provide new parameters for interpreting the decline of the Mughal Empire. The second part mainly analyses the historical development throughout the first half of the 18th century.

The author produces a great piece of comprehensive historiography in which she lucidly summarises the results of historical research. The book is without doubt an extremely valuable introduction for scholars of the Mughal Empire's history. Besides, she points out various desiderata. The "Summary and Conclusion" presents the results rather briefly, culminating in the last sentence:

> "The transformation of the eighteenth century indicates a process of structural adaptation to changing conditions rather than a 'decline' in terms of a net result of the historical development."

In the end, the reviewer misses the connection to the initially mentioned "Sources of Power". Moreover, it is quite striking that in the first chapters the author frequently refers to the works of C.A. Bayly (*Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, Cambridge 1983; *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Cambridge 1988) and most obviously to Jan Heestermann's article "Was there an Indian reaction?" (in: H. L. Wesseling (ed.), *Expansion and Reaction*, Leiden 1978, pp. 31–58). On the other hand, she ignores major recent publications, for example Stewart Gordon's *The Marathas, 1600–1818* (NCHI II,4), Cambridge 1993, and his *Maratha, Marauders and*

State-Formation in Eighteenth Century India, Delhi etc 1994, and Iqbal Husain's fundamental study *The Ruhela Chieftaincies. The rise and fall of Ruhela power in India in the 18th century*, Delhi etc 1994.

Apparently Andrea Hintze is not very familiar with the Persian terminology of the Mughal Empire's personnel like *subahdar*, *nawab*, *diwan* and *nazim* – the latter is not mentioned at all and the first two should not be used synonymously. A clear understanding of these words is decisive for the interpretation of state formation processes in 18th century India, at least in Bengal and Awadh. Finally, one is astonished that the purpose of a doctoral thesis seems to be

> "the reformulation of questions and ideas in an accessible form and language, highlighting the context and common denominators of current research, [which] would help to establish a coherent level of discussion, and point out areas where essential questions and comparisons have been neglected and in which further research is needed." (p. 218)

This is, more or less, the common notion among South Asian historians at the end of the 20th century.

A wider background to the development of South Asia and its maritime surroundings is given by Om Prakash's comprehensive analysis *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*. Until the middle of the 18th century, Euro-Asian trade was essentially a continuation of the earlier pattern of trade with regions such as Asia. Prakash convincingly demonstrates that neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch were able to alter the traditional and well-established intra-Asian trade routes. It was the English East India Company, after obtaining control over the fiscal resources of Bengal in the years following the battle of Plassey, which "owed a great deal [of the unprecedented success] to the gross misuse of political authority wielded in the province since about 1760." (p. 313). The book is a superb introduction for students of the European expansion into Indo-Asian commercial spheres, and advanced scholars will still gain a lot of new information. The text is quite comprehensible, despite an occasional abundance of statistical data, figures, numbers and years. A reduction and concentration of the tables according to the most prominent disparities and differences would have been helpful.

Om Prakash mainly operates through the "eyes" of the Dutch Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie. The VOC is the focus of his attention as regards the trading activities of Europeans in the Indian Ocean. Even when he deals with the English EIC, he uses VOC records. Chapter VII "The Supremacy of the English East India Company" (pp. 268–314) is basically the history of the VOC in comparison to the EIC. The opiumtrade is described exclusively from the VOC's perspective. In this chapter, as in some other cases, the organisation of the sub-chapters is not quite convincing. Pages 283 to

286 hardly analyse the English opiumtrade but account for the reaction of the Dutch factors in Bengal, whilst pages 327 to 334 in the following chapter indeed deal with the British opium monopoly in Bengal. In this respect and under competitive commercial aspects a more coherent depiction would have outlined the significance of the opiumtrade in a far better way. Finally, the French Compagnie Perpetuelle des Indes is characterised out as the only major European rival of the English and Dutch in the Euro-Asian trade, but in spite of its trading activities and considerable economic success it is dealt with rather marginally.

Despite these critical remarks Om Prakash's recent work can without hesitation be recommended as a valuable contribution to the analysis of the Indian Ocean's "Commercial Revolution". The various European trading activities from the 16th well into the 18th century are portrayed in a professional manner and the major changes and the shift in trading patterns after 1760 have duly been emphasised. Nevertheless, a comprehensive history of Indian maritime trade and commercial enterprise still remains to be written. The recent publication *Merchants, Companies and Trade. Europe and Asia in the early modern era*, (ed. by S. Chaudhury and M. Morineau, Cambridge 1999) definitely points into the right direction, at least in Part II "Routes, markets and merchants" (pp. 55–172) where regional and continental trading patterns are scrutinized and a range of new hypotheses is offered.

Trading patterns in the Arabian Sea were partially revolutionised by the advent of the European merchants, as Lakshmi Subramaniam demonstrates in her study *Indigenous Capital and Imperial Expansion*. Long distance trade between Surat and the Persian Gulf was controlled by a passport system similar to the Portuguese *cartaz* system. Nevertheless, the English East India Company failed to gain an overall control, let alone a monopoly of trade in the western Indian Ocean. In 1795, the Bombay government therefore decided to leave the maritime trade to free competition which ultimately led to a general increase in the commercial activities. In the meantime, Bombay and Gujarati merchants had gained dominance in the rapidly expanding Chinese trade, to the detriment of Calcutta's China connections. Along with the re-establishment and continuity of old trading patterns new ones had emerged at the end of the 18th century.

The backbone of these commercial activities was the credit market in Surat which until the last decade of the 18th century was efficiently run by the local *sarafs* and *banias*. The well known decline of Surat as the major mercantile entrepot not only of India's west coast but generally of the Mughal Empire, caused a shift of commercial and financial activities from the 1720s, with Bombay emerging as an alternative to Surat. The stunning element in this process is the dominance of Surat's financial capacity and potential until the beginning of the 19th century. As Subramaniam convinc-

ingly elaborates, it was the *bania* financial system which had survived the decline of the Mughal Empire that now served British commercial interests and ultimately led to the imperial expansion of the East India Company in western India. Bankhouses and firms emerging all over India, especially the Panchbhais in Haiderabad, Kashmir Mal in Lakhnau, Hari Bhakti in Baroda and Pune and most prominently Gopaldas Manohardas in Banaras, among others, made British military expansion viable. The Indian bill of exchange, the *hundi*, worked well for British financial needs, transferring revenue surpluses from Bengal to Bombay, thus supporting the military campaigns against the Marathas.

Lakshmi Subramaniam does not convincingly partially fails to demonstrate why the Marathas could not employ the same financial mechanisms as the British. Instead she insists on a well known "Orientalism" of the Marathas' chaotic revenue collection. As Steward Gordon has recently shown in his brief survey of *The Marathas, 1600–1818* (vide above), there was hardly any difference in the mode of revenue assessment and collection between the British and the Marathas. Whilst abundant source material supporting British success is scrutinised, the Marathas' financial capacity is presented by rather obsolete literature. Besides this, the title of the book is rather misleading because the author rarely deals with "indigenous capital". Instead the reader gets to know a lot about established facts of Surat's decline in the 18th century, about military transactions of the British in Western India and about "communal riots" in Surat at the end of the 18th century. In this respect the book is disappointing. The "riots" as well as the role of the Marathas vs the British are interpreted along established patterns of colonial rupture and religious conflicts in India.

Since J.C. van Leur's doctoral thesis and his few essays, the question of the 18th century as an adequate category for South and South East Asian history has still not been answered definitively, as the publication of selected articles from the commemoration colloquium in the Netherlands in 1992/93 demonstrates. More or less all authors refer to the 18th century as a period starting about 1680 and ending in the 1830s. This periodisation largely corresponds with European notions of historiography and the widely accepted category of a very long 18th century with respect to the "Commercial", the "Financial" and, finally, the impact of the "Industrial Revolution". None of the contributors undertakes a re-assessment and a re-interpretation of the periodisation of Asian history according to intra-Asian historical processes. On the contrary, most articles reconstruct the European or Western 18th century as an appropriate time span to explain Asian history. It would have been more reasonable to further develop van Leur's assumption of an independent categorisation and periodisation. Here Burton Stein's *A History of India* (Oxford UK/Malden USA 1998) provides a useful approach in

making a caesura at around 1700 and beginning a new period which lasts until the present. The colonial era is hereby included in a wider Indian historical process.

In the Asian context we have major changes on the political stage after 1660, initiating processes of state formation in South East Asia as well as in South Asia which range from Ayutthaya to the Maratha states. From the Asian perspective it would be reasonable to terminate this process in the 1850s. This would include the European (colonial) state formation processes both in India and in Indonesia and duly incorporate them into an Asian historical development. As recent research has suggested, the colonial state was in many instances the successful development of indigenous institutions and structures, enriched by European administration and bureaucratisation. Even in respect of economic history it would be reasonable to pinpoint this historical process in a time span from the mid-17th to the mid-19th century and to emphasise the role of the intra-Asian trade by Asians as well as European merchants and traders. Here, it is the development of Asian maritime structures which should be stressed. The European trading companies were able to use those structures, even re-directing and finally dominating them. It would still be questionable if Europeans were able to control those maritime trading structures effectively before the middle of the 18th century.

As many of the contributions show, van Leur's provoking position is not tenable in every case. Without doubt, he has underestimated the impact of the European trading companies' influence on intra-Asian developments. But whilst C.A. Bayly argues in favour of an era of continuity between 1780 and 1830, Irfan Habib strongly opposes any such continuity, challenging Bayly's and other scholars' well known, though not always convincing revisionistic approaches with a rather old-fashioned nationalistic attitude. Some re-orientation has definitely taken place since van Leur's rebellious negation of the European 18th century as an Asian historical category. Still, a different notion and understanding of Asian history, backed by further research, should at some point lead to a more sophisticated perception of the same.

That this might be a rather difficult task, despite an innovative view of Asian history, is demonstrated by S. Chaudhury's *From Prosperity to Decline*, which hardly develops any new perspectives. Chaudhury's main thesis focuses on the battle of Plassey (1757) as the turning point of Bengal history. He argues basically that it was the East India Company servants' private trade which caused the "Bengal Revolution" and the onset of the country's plunder. Until then, the Bengal economy was prosperous and even expansive, an assumption supported by new evidence. Apodictically rather than based on sources, Chaudhury asserts the dominance of European private trade in Bengal. The author does not contemplate the East India

Company's corporate identity and its function as an "agency", alongside others, operating at the *darbar* in Murshidabad and in several factory-towns. The role of the Bengalis in the conspiracy of 1757 is not mentioned at all, thus creating the impression of British traders dominating the political as well as the economic situation from the very beginning, i.e. from the sack of Calcutta in 1756. Chaudhury seems to follow an old scheme of contradictory interpretation, assuming that the British took over the "territorial possession" of Bengal more or less absent-mindedly, whilst passive Bengali observers were not able to foresee the consequences of the Company's involvement in the conspiracy.

Catherine Manning's study on the French trading activities in the Indian Ocean in the first half of the 18th century merits some attention, although the book is rather disappointing in its results. Starting with a chronological description of the newly launched Compagnie des Indes of 1719, the author convincingly elaborates the economic "take off" of the French company in the 1730s. At that stage financial difficulties of the previous decade had been overcome, when the Compagnie was one of the major victims of Jean Law's speculative consolidation scheme. Finally, the increasing trading activities of the French merchants, both private and company businesses, became threatening to the English. The Compagnie des Indes worked more profitability than its English rival, as is suggested by Manning's evidence. Otherwise, the commercial activities of the French were much the same as that of her European counterparts, who were partially partners and turned into short-term enemies only in times of European wars. The economic success of the French, though the volume and value of their trade never reached English figures, made the English more and more suspicious of the French. Private trade turned out to be the touchstone. Whilst the younger East India Company servants' private trade was only allowed on restricted terms, the senior servants of the Company soon realised that the French were successful in breaking into the lucrative Gulf trade, traditionally dominated by the British. This caused a francophobic atmosphere in British home correspondence and remained an important factor for years to come.

Recent research has shown that a partial decline in the all over Asian trade took place in the middle of the 18th century. This made European trade in Asian waters more competitive. A general lack of home funding by bullion exports due to warfare aggravated the situation and intensified competition among the European trading companies. Dupleix was the first who thought of territorial acquisitions so as to be independent of European investments. Catherine Manning blames the French company for shifting towards a more aggressive policy in India especially after the peace of Aix la Chapelle (1748).

> "French reaction to the war was not the passivity that has characterized their behaviour in previous conflicts. In part, this was because the years of peace had built a more robust structure in India than the fragile organization which had been so ably tended by François Martin in the late seventeenth century. It was also due to the increase in French assertion and bellicosity. Paradoxically, though peace was needed between European nations for French commercial success, trading in Asia encouraged French aggression against local states. As French commerce increased, force came to be seen as a useful adjunct to normal trading practice." (p. 201)

The last chapter is hardly based on scientific research but seems to be a mere invocation of the old stereotypes of peaceloving British versus warmongering French. We should bear in mind that the idea of farming revenues or gaining territorial possessions was first suggested by governor Aungier of Bombay in the second half of the 17th century. And it was Colonel C. F. Scott in 1753 who drew up a plan for a revolution in Bengal in the event of Alivardi Khan's death and the imposition of a compliant nawab as a solution for the disastrous economic situation of the English company. Obviously the French, as well as the English East India Company, were ready to use force in order to reach their commercial goals around the middle of the 18th century.

II. Environmental and agrarian history

Richard Grove's latest publication *Ecology, Climate and Empire* is a useful introduction to the subject. As Grove says in his foreword, the book is the result of about two decades of research. Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 6 were published previously. Throughout the book the author points out the growing global consciousness of environmental changes especially in the context of European expansion. It was the so-called periphery which stimulated a dramatic growth in scientific and state interest in the apparent links between climate change and deforestation. French and English colonial servants first studied the results of these environmental disasters and developed the desiccation theory which is more or less prevalent up to now.

The fourth chapter, "The East India Company, the Australians and El Nino: Colonial scientists and ideas about global climatic change and teleconnections between 1770 and 1930", is definitely one of the most interesting. Grove demonstrates very convincingly that scientists like William Roxburgh, Superintendent of the Botanic Garden in Calcutta, 1793–1813, and later the New South Wales Observer H. C. Russell at the end of the 19th century, were first struck by the coincidences of drought and general climatic change in western Africa, South and Central America, Australia and

India. The idea of some kind of teleconnection between El Nino and the Southern Oscillation (ENSO) was developed during the 19th century. It was, indeed, the colonial periphery which produced new scientific methods with adequate results and was thus far ahead of the imperial centre. Though, and this should have been clearly pointed out, the staff of the colonial periphery was of European origin, educated at British universities and maintained close links with the academic world of England and Scotland.

A valuable book for further reading is John Chappell's and Richard H. Grove's *El Nino*. A chronological survey of climatic coincidences from the 16th to the 20th centuries corroborates the thesis of intercontinental teleconnections. *El Nino* impacts are clearly visible in the years 1789–92, 1877–79, 1982–83 and 1997–98. As the editors point out:

> "The degree to which ENSO was implicated in those events is unclear but what is certain is that ENSO has and will continue to be an enduring fact of life. The recent New Guinean drought and Indonesian fires not only signal the impact of ENSO; they also show that the need to identify the full range of ENSO variation and to adapt to its consequences is no less now than in the past and may never have been greater." (p. 3)

Wide ranging articles deal with the enduring problem of ENSO, suggesting explanations and theories. An overall impression is that much further research and analysis has to be done until more precise and reliable results can be presented.

Richard Grove's book *Ecology, Climate and Empire* provides a superb approach to a rather complicated if not complex subject, in that Grove focuses on significant examples. This enables him to come "Towards a global synthesis", as the last chapter is entitled. Different aspects of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial efforts at environmental control over local populations by means of a sophisticated state forestry policy are presented in a rather cursory way. However, the target of environmental control has always been social control. Grove's latest publication is also useful as a "post-Green Imperialism" reading. Various footnotes in *Ecology, Climate and Empire* refer to Grove's major and unequalled study on the European history of science in the colonial periphery. This meticulous and elaborate opus is now being supplemented by a more general view.

Environmental and social change between 1750 and 1830 is the main focus of Meena Bhargava's book *State, Society and Ecology*. By establishing traditions the colonial state being the sole and legitimate interpreter of history, the British were eventually able to give their government in India a sound foundation. Nevertheless, the colonial regime was confronted by various forms of resistance against changes of social status. Zamindars, taluqdars and other notable intermediaries opposed their being reduced to mere Company servants on the local level. Bhargava convincingly demon-

strates how the Company endeavoured to understand local knowledge which it made the basis for the recreation and redefinition of indigenous knowledge and tradition. However, as is pointed out, the Company was clever enough to refrain from any close interference and restricted its changes and innovations to practicable forms, so as to avoid conflicts as far as possible. Of course, results were not always satisfying as the process of transforming information into knowledge and thus providing the necessary means for wielding power ultimately failed in the revolt of 1857–59.

The need of more fiscal resources in the course of north Indian state formation led to an expansion of agricultural cultivation during the second half of the 18th century. The process of expansion into the forests of Gorakhpur was already induced by the late Mughals. Now it was further intensified by the nawabs of Gorakhpur and, finally, by the British. Special leases granted to migrating labourers let them clear the forests and settle there. The Company state also granted leases to vagrant peasants and soldiers disbanded from the nawab's erstwhile army which permitted them to clear the land and extend cultivation. Credits further enhanced the process of agricultural expansion. Forest clearance for agricultural purposes came to halt only after the introduction of railways on the Indian subcontinent and the beginning of the insatiable demand for sleepers. It was the conservation policy of the 1860s which redefined the use of natural resources and instituted new regulations, thus securing the state's interests to the detriment of the local population. Interestingly enough, until then the Indian as well as the British notion of the forests and jungles had been that of a remote and uncivilised area, infested with wild beasts and a refuge for criminals.

Although Bhargava gives evidence of an environmental change, she does not elaborate the consequences. Expansion of cultivation at the expense of forest areas must have caused an ecological disequilibrium. Climatic change as well as a long term deterioration of agricultural production are most likely and ought to have been duly emphasised. Instead, the reader is provided with a list of soils, different qualities, their fertility and so on. The same must be said about the last chapter, which deals with "Markets, Merchants and Artisans". Here again, the reader is supplied with a list of different markets and their functions, with a catalogue of merchants and their multifarious businesses and, finally, with the variety of artisans. Though all the information is based on source materials we are not, for example, given any information about the extent of the trade. Rather apodictically, Bhargava argues in favour of a period of agricultural, commercial, in short, a thriving economic expansion. This seems to be very likely but one misses the quantitative proof. Nevertheless, students of Indian history are provided with rich material on the transition period from the nawabi rule to the colo-

nial state. In this respect Bhargava really convinces both by argument as well as the materials presented.

Raymond L. Bryant's work on *The Political Ecology of Forestry in Burma 1824–1994* deals with forms of local resistance and forest use under the colonial regime, thus extending the focus of the last book into the second half of the 19th century and scrutinising a different region. The main question centers around the political consequences of the foundation of a Forest Department in Burma in 1856 for forest access, the timber trade, and popular resistance. After decades of fierce onslaught on Burmese forests, the British Indian government was forced to regulate the fast diminishing timber resources. As can be demonstrated by the early East India Company's forest policy on the Malabar Coast between 1792 and 1823, there are surprising analogies as regards territorial rights, land use, private versus state controlled timber trade and forms of local resistance. In Burma the British apparently trod on similar paths of misinterpretation, misunderstanding and mismanagement. Until the First World War the struggle over forest conservation and local rights intensified, especially when, for the first time, a government statement recognised the climatic significance of forests in 1894 and introduced their partial protection. To argue with Richard Grove, the desiccation theory had at least influenced state policy in the wake of accelerating deforestation.

The more forest reserves were created, the more the conflict exacerbated, and forest administration became another unpopular aspect of colonial rule.

> "Forest politics in colonial Burma was an escalating process of control and resistance. The forest bureaucracy grew, but so, too, did the number and the severity of forest offences. Even before administrative retrenchment and political intervention began to weaken the Forest Department in the 1930s, it could scarcely be said that Burma's forest users were becoming more law-abiding." (p. 196)

Resistance developed a broad variety of actions, from everyday individual resistance to open and collective violence. But we ought to be careful with a definition of resistance. The continuation of habitual behaviour by local people, like the collection of forest products or cattle grazing, is, from the peasants' perspective, neither criminal nor a form of protest but, in the first place, the utilisation of accustomed rights. On the other hand arson etc is, without doubt, a form of resistance, because the actors turn purposely against state authorities, institutions and laws. A historian or anthropologist would have appreciated more detailed information about acts of resistance and the scale of counter-measures.

Michael Adas illustrated the great variety of everyday forms of resistance in his various articles now compiled in *State, Market and Peasant in South and Southeast Asia* and published in the "Variorum Collected Studies

Series". Adas' main focus lies on the strategies of "avoiding resistance", a hardly traceable form of action of resistance, because they are seldom mentioned in governmental records. Whilst common forms of everyday resistance range from hiding agricultural products to concealing agricultural productivity, avoiding strategies comprise simple forms of petitioning, processions and protestations. Temporary migration of individuals and small groups and complete migration of whole villages are more obvious forms of avoidance. Flight and ultimately the amalgamation of parts of the population with bandit groups are the last stages of this very special mode of resistance. Michael Adas' conceptualisation has definitely enriched our understanding of local forms of resistance. But as in Bryant's study, the colonial context does not seem to be quite clear. The forthcoming study by Primal Ghosh on *Brave Men of the Hills. Resistance and rebellion in Burma, 1825–1932* will hopefully shed more light upon this aspect.

The last chapter of Bryant's book compares Burma's forest policy and her colonial legacy with major countries of South and South East Asia. The fate of post-colonial political regimes seems to be that the more they become integrated into the international economy, the greater the temptation to diminish the country's forests to "catch up" with the surrounding countries. Most South and South East Asian countries experience a widespread deforestation concomitant to economic development. By granting licences to relatives or close friends of the ruling elite "crony capitalism" in Indonesia and Thailand led, in the 1960s and 70s, to a further depletion of these countries' forests. One might end with the rather frustrating comment that former "imperial interests" have become "national interests" and are turning into "global interests" in the 1990s. In this respect the role of firms and trusts operating internationally should have been pointed out.

Japan's demand for South East Asian timber has been scrutinized by Peter Dauvergne in his case-study *Shadows in the Forest*. Since the 1960s Japan has been the major importer of tropical timber from Indonesia, the Philippines, Sewak and, more recently, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Dauvergne borrowed the term "ecological shadow" from J. Mac Neill's, P. Winsemius' and T. Yakushiji's *Beyond Independence*, but delineates clear definitorial boundaries to specify diverse forms of indirect influence:

> "[...] the ecological shadow of a national economy is the aggregate environmental impact on resources outside a country's territory of three sets of factors: government policies and practices, especially official development assistance and loans; corporate conduct, investments, technology transfers, and purchasing and distribution patterns; and trade, including export and consumer prices, amount and 'type' of consumption, and import barriers." (p. 11)

Due emphasis is put on the asymmetrical relations which are constituents of ecological shadows.

Patron-client politics in the timber-producing countries and the ecological shadow of the national economy in Japan are the means by which an accelerated deforestation is taking place. Despite temporary timber export bans and legislative measures, legal and illegal logging with corporate Japanese assistance still takes place and demonstrates the latter's influence on the South East Asian clientele states. Since 1990 Japan's demand for tropical timber, shifting from logs to plywood, has remained on roughly the same level. Though imports from South East Asian countries decreased, Japan has been successful in finding new resource countries – in Africa. At least some explanatory paragraphs, and not just statistical figures, might have stressed Japan's unchanging and obviously unchallenged role in a growing global context, in view of the fact that Japan is one of the most densely wooded countries in the world, with about two third of its surface covered with forests.

A quite avantgardistic approach towards re-writing the history of so-called forest communities or tribes, such as the Bhils and Koknis or, to use the colonial administrative phrase: the Dangs (i.e. hills and hillpeople!) of the Western Ghats in India, is presented by Ajay Skaria in his study *Hybrid Histories*. Emphasising a different notion of time and space and consequently stressing the indigenous categories of *moglai* and *mandini*, the author demonstrates how various oral traditions are used as separate items of remembering the past in connection with Western ideas of history.

> "Hybrid histories are best understood as simultaneously produced by constant engagement with the hyperreal Europe and by proceeding its limits. [...] they are created through active escape from hyperreal Europe." (p. 13)

Mandini basically refers to colonial and post-colonial times but includes the extra-colonial context as well. This marks the point at which generally acknowledged categories of European chronology are denied. *Muglai*, therefore, not only describes pre-colonial circumstances but the possibility of acting in traditional ways even under the *gora raj*, the rough and harsh British rule. *Mandini* is not identical with *gora raj*, but the latter is part of the former.

The book can doubtless be read as the story of subduing and incorporating the Dangs under British colonial rule. British forest policy was the most effective method of disintegrating the hill people. Recent German research on Indian history, as for example the reviewer's own contributions to the subject, would have been quite a useful addition. It took the British some hundred years to differentiate between the "civilized" plains and the "wild" hills – to mention only the most important colonial categories, – which con-

cluded with a great demarcation scheme, completed in 1901. In the pursuit of this policy we find the usual patterns of criminalising local inhabitants, breaking up social structures, trying to sedentarize the semi-nomadic population and in due course branding them as "naughty boys making a disturbance in the school-room when they believed the school-master's attention was momentarily diverted", as one British official characterized the rebellion of 1914 (p. 272).

Since the beginning of the 20th century the Bhils consciously and wilfully acted against the *sarkar*; during the 19th century they had still believed in an alliance-seeking system in which the British played the major part. This system was based on a balance of rule, not of power. As the British misinterpreted this system or deliberately misunderstood it, the Bhils themselves misunderstood the European notion of power and dominance. Besides well-known traditional forms of resistance it is the most subtle, though effective form of "epic resistance" which releases the "Dangs" from passivity and gives grounds for hope, even today. *Goth*, the orally transmitted stories, provide an ideal medium to survive in *mandini*. This point seems to be stressed rather idealistically.

A book on ideas, theories and ideologies is Peter Robb's most recent work *Ancient Rights and Future Comfort*. He presents an elaborated aggregate of his past research on North India's agricultural history, especially Bihar in the 19th and 20th centuries. Robb concentrates on the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 and its effect on Bengal rural society. Since the Permanent Settlement of 1793 the British developed their colonial regime by professionalising and perfecting the administrative sector, causing a considerable extension of bureaucracy. This revolution in government with its successfully introduced principles and rational structures is the major colonial legacy of the British. Picking up the revisionists' (C.A. Bayly, F. Perlin, B. Stein et al.) argument of continuing Indian social and political structures even under British rule well into the 19th century, Robb extends this continuity in respect of agrarian relationships to the end of that century.

> "Rising population and extending land use indicate that conditions were not so severe in the early parts of the century as they have been painted. [...] this suggests that any sharp decline in the conditions of Bihar raiyats should not be attributed to the permanent settlement and the early administration of the East India Company. It implies continuity." (p. 303)

The impact of the colonial regime's agrarian policy seems to vanish in the vast fields of Bihar.

It was basically indigenous Indian social defects which still persisted at that time. The zamindars were (still) considered unfit and unable for agricultural improvement and innovation. As the Regulation of Permanent Settlement disallowed any interference by the state, the British initiated a long-

lasting debate on how to solve the rather unsatisfactory situation. The non-regulated province of the Panjab, where a "manly" form of government over a "martial race" established a supposedly loyal, independent and increasingly prosperous peasantry, had delivered the mould in which the agricultural development of Bengal was to be cast. What one misses here is the confrontation with the well-known metaphor of the "effeminate Bengali" and a most likely different form of government (and ideology?). But actually the British tried to reach the same end with different means. The later nineteenth century saw a shift in agricultural production towards higher-value crops. In the Punjab a new agricultural elite was created and continuously supported by the British government whereas in Bengal the British tried to intervene on behalf of the better-off peasants.

This was precisely the aim of the Bengal Tenancy Act which was fairly successfully implemented. Via its bureaucracy the state penetrated Bengal society below the zamindar level, though not on a very large scale, as Robb frequently admits. All suggested revisions and even the record of rights as was stipulated in the famous section X of the Act were never completed. It seems that the limits of the colonial state had hardly changed by the beginning of the 20th century. It might be necessary to have a closer look at a history from below, or, to be more precise, from within, as it mostly achieves a more detailed picture of the historical setting. Of course, normative and theoretical texts provide an opulent frame but certainly not paint and brush to the gifted painter.

Though the agricultural history of the Panjab is a well investigated field, M.M. Islam's study on *Irrigation, Agriculture and the Raj. Punjab, 1887–1947* provides new evidence of the long-term consequences of British policy in this province. Different patterns of irrigation were practised for centuries in the Punjab. The British promoted agricultural development in this region by launching a canal construction programme. Funds were raised on the London stock market. The whole scheme was the largest the British ever undertook on the Indian peninsula. But it differed in some important points from other canal projects. Because it was planned on such a large scale, internal colonization had to accompany the programme. And whilst in Madras and the North Western Provinces traditionally irrigated areas were systematically enlarged and agriculture intensified, in the Punjab vast tracts of waste land were brought under cultivation by the canal constructions.

Canal irrigation has, however, well-known defects. Waterlogging, swamping and partial salinisation as well as malaria and other diseases increased at the end of the 19th century. The whole process resulted in a marked decrease of soil fertility as could have been predicted by the development in the North Western Provinces since the beginning of the 19th century. There

was also a slight shift from food crops to cash crops. Two to three percent of the irrigated soil was used for sugarcane and about 25 percent for cotton. No figures are presented for the pre-irrigation scheme. These figures ought to be compared with population density and the enormous increase of population in the canal-irrigated districts during the period under examination and with agricultural production at the beginning and at the end of this period. The reviewer supposes that there was an absolute decrease in food production.

British policy looked upon canal irrigation as a commercial venture. Irrigation revenue therefore constituted the largest part of the total canal receipts. Besides, water was priced on the basis of irrigated lands, not on the actually consumed amount of water. Water rates almost doubled between 1890 and the 1920s. The net income from irrigation investments of Rs 410.000 amounted to Rs 128.000 in 1921–36. Not surprisingly water rates were the most profitable income for the colonial state besides land revenue. Still, there are positive aspects of the great irrigation scheme. Without doubt, dynamised agriculture resulted in higher yields per acre and a greater variety of products. As a consequence, the Panjab was the most, and certainly earliest, market-orientated agricultural area throughout Asia. This transformation was deliberately encouraged by a colonising programme which settled about 6000 officers on selected 420,000 acres in the aftermath of World War I. The problem of demobilized soldiers was solved in a way fairly typical of British colonial policy: the settling as farmers in restricted and remote but fertile areas.

The beginnings of this policy have been scrutinised by Seema Alavi in *The Sepoys and the Company*. To stabilize their political as well as social control in the newly acquired territorial areas the East India Company settled its invalid *sipahis* on government land in frontier districts. By giving the former soldiers not only revenue-free land but also minor recruitment duties, the colonial regime created pockets of loyalty. In some districts there were so-called "Invalid Thanas" at distances of about 14 to 18 miles, providing a network of stability by an indigenous "agency" and a powerful means of internal colonisation. Thus the British demonstrated the benevolent character of their rule and simultaneously altered the nature of legitimacy from that established by the Mughals. Though Alavi provides a few figures on the size and population of the "Invalid Thanas" it would have been quite useful to have some kind of general survey, at least a map indicating the localities. By and large, the colonial state gained some control over the fringes of its growing empire between 1770 and 1830. Early attempts of pacification as pursued by Captain Browne, and the establishment of the later famous "Santal Hill Regiment" by Augustus Cleveland are good examples for a successful policy of penetrating the turbulent hill tracts.

What was striking about the Company's army was its "high-caste" composition. The British partly pursued the policy of Chait Singh of Banaras who had established a high-caste Hindu army for internal (legitimatory) and external (political) reasons. An especially developed "high-caste" diet, the protection and encouragement of and an occasional participation in religious festivals tightened the *corps d'esprit* of the Company *sipahi*. After half a century of successful recruitment, the British reached their own limits on the *sipahi* market. As they paid well and regularly, the British peasantized the *sipahis* in the long run and made them concentrate on agricultural enterprises rather than on enlistment rolls thereby penetrating political as well as undermining local social structures. On the other hand the Company created tensions between its "high-caste" *sipahis* and north Indian local magnates when it reduced its military staff after 1820, disbanding thousands of Indian soldiers. As Alavi points out, this may be seen as one of the main reasons for the mutiny of *sipahi* regiments in North India in 1857. Without doubt Alavi's study provides further insight into the everyday practice of colonial rule which seems to have been based on indirect ruling mechanisms on a much larger scale than hitherto supposed.

III. Colonialism, imperialism and information gathering in the British Indian Empire

R. Singha's *A Despotism of Law* is a new approach towards colonial state-formation against the background of a "geographically extensive and socially intensive dynamic rule of law provid[ing] another facet to the expansionistic momentum which drew Indian states into fiscal and military orbit of the Company" (p. xvi). As in contemporary England, the Company servants in India were of the opinion that a criminal act affected the public sphere and interest which is represented by the state. But the British could not enforce their notions of justice and law as they pleased. The Company was in search of traditional values to legitimise its rule until the middle of the 19th century. The criminal law machinery was therefore tied up with earlier institutions, personnel and legal-sacred texts. The application of Islamic law as well as Nathaniel Halhed's famous "Hindu Code" to the legal claims of the state involved the indigenous literati service agency. To a large extent the British in India had to rely on the information they received from their Indian staff.

The major expression of the modern state's sovereignty, as it developed in the 18th century, is capital punishment. Since 1772 the British in Bengal had tried to obtain the final approbation of death sentences. One touchstone of capital jurisdiction in India and its resumption by the Company is the legislation against *thuggee*. Singha convincingly attributes the campaign

against *thuggee* to the military expansion of the British in Northern and Western India in 1818. Thereafter more security was needed in these territories outside direct British rule, both for commercial and for military purposes. The region was also important for strategic reasons. As the British attitude towards the culture of "men on the road" had always been one of unease, because those people eluded the reach of taxation and policing, the Company servants' attempts to categorise criminal communities, as *thugs*, *dacaits* and others were summarily called, failed. Singha concludes that *thuggee* was a less structured phenomenon than hitherto depicted in British as well as Indian historiography. The "system" of *thuggee* could only be suppressed because of the extraordinary judicial powers of the residents in Haiderabad and Indore and the Governor General's Agent in the Sagar and Narbada territories. Summary executions at the beginning of the 1830s had their intended effect. But, and this clearly indicates despotism and not rule of law, had these *thugs* been committed to judges in British Indian territory, the suppression of *thuggee* would have failed.

There was definitely a strong attempt at reclaiming sovereign rights by the colonial state. Nonetheless Singha provides us with several examples where the British Indian government had to back down. The "jail regime" is perhaps the most outstanding. Besides barracks the British mostly built prisons on the Indian subcontinent. Their condition was utterly lamentable. Judges therefore often sentenced convicts to imprisonment with hard labour. This was outdoor work, mostly road construction or canal digging. Large groups of prisoners, sometimes comprising several thousand people, camped next to the construction area, accompanied by family members and friends. As the British were in desperate need of labourers whom they could not recruit on a free market, even the Military Department relied on convicts. Within prison-camps as well as ordinary prisons convicts recreated the social stratification of Indian society. Only in a very few instances could the British enforce messing. Basically prisoners were allowed to prepare their own food. Sometimes convicts ridiculed the whole colonial jail system, regarding themselves as *sarkar ke naukari* i.e. employees of the state, due to the fact that they were even paid for their work. Obviously the prisoners regarded this work as a kind of indentured labour or *begar*. In the context of Indian working relations imprisonment with hard labour was probably not viewed as punishment. The author might have asked precise questions such as: was it the colonial state's deliberate policy to recruit enough forced labourers by jurisdiction? One might suppose so in view of the Company's attitude towards "criminal communities" and their summary imprisonment. Besides some disturbing repetitions of facts, a summary is missing which could have succinctly emphasised the despotism of law. Moreover, the author might have pointed out the very weak position of the colonial state

which still formed but a thin superstructure over hardly known Indian societies.

Another feature of the colonial state's legal despotism is worked out by Indrani Chatterjee in her *Gender, Slavery and Law in Colonial India*. Colonial law became a means by which the new regime separated the traditional elite from non-elites and created new forms of kinship and proprietorship. The ultimate goal of this kind of distinction was the Company's control of the former ruling classes' wealth and, finally, the curbing of their potential for political action. The Company's policy towards slavery in India highlights this in an exceptionally subtle manner. The author focuses her study mainly on the Bengal Nizamat and other prominent ruling families. Generally speaking, Chatterjee successfully challenges the hitherto widespread assumption that slave holding in South Asia involves only the adult male. Instead she points out that minor female slaves were bought, kept and eventually sold again by female slave holders during the 18th and most of the 19th century. Apparently, the evidence was difficult to collect, but Chatterjee is able to reconstruct an important facet of the colonial regime's policy towards slavery by putting together bits and pieces. Though, in some instances the mosaic remains fairly fragmentary.

Let us turn to one significant aspect which may demonstrate the British policy. The English assumption that concubinage and loose forms of cohabitation were the closest forms of relationship between a female slave and a male freeman turned the existing law upside down. According to law in Bengal, inheritance from such relationships centered around juniority and seniority in claims to honours and privileges rather than to legitimacy or illegitimacy. The British made the "proper form" of marriage the only criterion for a lawful inheritance, which clearly signifies the colonial impact. But a ritual marriage was not the key event to change the status of women within a household. Therefore it was not birth or marriage, but public acknowledgement as a mother which was the effective determinant of the privileges of a woman. Besides, the British denied any forms of social mobility of slaves within a household.

Having re-defined the status of a slave the British were able to interfere in the distribution of wealth by inheritance. Slave-born daughters and sons were in most cases regarded as illegitimate offspring and therefore their "inheritance" was changed into a "maintenance" which, of course, became vulnerable to shortages and final confiscation. Besides, no form of maintenance was inheritable. On the other hand, the Law Commission of 1837 prevented masters like the Nazims from inheriting from their slaves. In pursuing her policy of making everything taxable and confiscable the colonial state in both cases was the ultimate legal "usufructuary".

Indrani Chatterjee's study is highly commendable in that she sheds, for the first time, some light on a hitherto completely neglected aspect of Indian history. Chatterjee's partially "thick description" (p. 225) sometimes gets lost in details. Other aspects like the "slave market" or the situation of the slaves below the "elite level" ought to have been better illustrated. In some cases regulations and laws of the colonial state are mentioned but not explained. A glossary of the numerous Bengali and Hindi terms would have been very helpful. And more emphasis could have been laid on the colonial state's passive role in restructuring Bengali society due to its lack of information.

Christopher Bayly's *Empire and Information* focuses on this aspect. He argues that successful information gathering had been a critical and decisive feature of British domination of India. The book shows how the British took over and manipulated the sophisticated systems of internal Indian espionage and political reporting which had long been employed by Indian kingdoms. Bayly distinguishes two separate networks of information, the one dominated by the state and the other the autonomous sphere, which sometimes overlapped. To make the whole range of intelligence systems understandable Bayly moulds them into an "information order" including literacy, social communications, informing and surveillance by the emerging state. The book is definitely outstanding in its perspective and approach, pointing to important aspects of colonial rule and the mechanisms of maintaining – as well as losing – control over a vast population.

A public sphere developed in India during the 18th century, creating a cultural and political debate long before the establishment of print media. Public associations (*sabha*; *samaj*) were not divided along communal lines but constituted collectivities which went beyond the limits of social and religious groupings. The communication of political discussions was carried on in coffee shops, at druggists' stalls and sweetshops which served as important places of gossip and information exchange. Long distance communication of intelligence and news was performed by travelling artists, puppet shows and other touring groups or individuals, turning up regularly at fairs, pilgrim places or princely courts. The British tried to become a part of this information order in their endeavour to conquer India. Especially at the turn of the 18th century they had developed a highly sophisticated intelligence system which offered them logistic advantages over their Indian military rivals. In the 19th century it was primarily the superior British surveillance technique which ultimately led to subjugation of the Indian subcontinent.

New information parameters were introduced in the wake of pacification and political stabilisation. From then on the British relied more on "exact" Western sciences, especially in the vogue for data collecting to "construct"

statistics, trigonometrical surveys and revenue records according to western categories of systematisation. After 1830 British information about India below the district level remained tenuous. Away from the centres of British power the old intelligence networks still functioned. It was the local, decentralised network of lithographic presses, the *joshis* and others who took printed texts out into the countryside, as well as the *sipahis* returning to their villages etc. Here colonial institutions and agencies failed to mix with the indigenous traditional information structures. Against this background stereotypes of thugs, religious fanatics and robber gangs were created, now generally stigmatised as "criminal communities". Eventually, this bifurcated development led to the Great Rebellion (1857–59) which was, by and large, a fierce battle over information and communication along old and new lines.

Bayly depicts a system of Indian information systems that persisted from the 18th well into the 19th century. When the colonial state introduced new methods of information-gathering, local networks were in some way preserved and probably reduced to a hardly recognisable level. Bayly's construction of an "information order" makes it necessary to apply a qualitative method. The sudden appearance of the traditional intelligence systems during the Great Rebellion certainly indicates the survival of indigenous information networks under colonial rule but not its real extent. Besides Bayly cannot explain why the ways and means of British intelligence gathering were more successful than those of their Indian counterparts during the 18th century and even in the middle of the 19th century when the colonial regime was surprised by the sudden outbreak and extent of the Great Rebellion.

Creating knowledge is the main focus of M. Edney's *Mapping an Empire*. Backed by the recently established European science of geography, cartography became one of the East India Company's major systematisation and categorisation items. From the very beginning of territorial expansion in India the British surveyed the country. James Rennell, who did the first general survey of Bengal between 1765 and 1771, drew up the prime outline of imperial space. The contemporary European notion of epistemological gains by rational constructions gave Rennell the means to mould different methods of measurement and other information into one cast: a Map of Hindustan, or, as later cartographical works came to be known, an Atlas of India. Generations of British cartographers undertook the immense task of collecting local information, making route surveys and compiling the vast amount of data during the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India in the second half of the 18th and first half of the 19th century. But the maps the British constructed did not merely reproduce the landscape. In practice, their examination of the landscape was thoroughly ideological. Collecting

data and mapdrawing in fact is the creation of knowledge, no matter what the origin of the information. Combining numerous observations into an image of space "without perspective", as Edney points out, the maps provided the official and perfect cartographic image of India. The geographer thus becomes, whilst "at work", an autonomous observing machine.

Because the science of geography and the art of mapdrawing, as a sign of Europe's culture of Enlightenment, were transplanted to India, it would have been important to stress the role of European sciences in the colony as a major contribution to science in Europe, especially in Great Britain. India was the great laboratory not only for moral improvements or technical innovations but also for scientific research. In the colonial context science becomes its own function. It not only legitimises the political regime but it provides the colonial state with the means of further expansion. In combination with other sciences including, historiography, cartography has its specific position in an expanding scientific world. In short, European expansion is fostered by its concepts of scientific research. Mapping the imperial space was the demonstration of British capacity for rational categorization in contrast to Indian superstition. Here more emphasis could have been laid on the fact that because the British dominated the field of science they were competent to dominate India and ultimately felt themselves bound to rule India.

Edney presents a highly complex and difficult subject in an appropriate way. He avoids simplistic models of explanation and gives a broad overview of the cultural, intellectual, scientific, and personal background of his "men on the spot" in the context of Europe's age of Enlightenment with all its implications for self-understanding. Edney duly elaborates the ideological, cultural and scientific background of his protagonists as well as the contemporary European notions of natural science as an appropriate means to systematise and categorise the observable earth.

A political and social history of the British military in India is presented by Peter Stanley's *White Mutiny*. The title refers to the unrest and partial mutiny (1859–61) of European East India Company soldiers, who openly showed their disaffection and resentment at being indiscriminately incorporated in the newly created Indian army. There had always been tensions between the Company's and King's troops, later Queen's troops, especially amongst the officers. Generally the Company offered better promotions whilst their men and officers had the reputation of being undisciplined and basically "commanded by their men". Company officers seem to have tolerated conduct which in the Queen's army would have been regarded as insubordinant or even mutinous.

Some of the reasons for dissatisfaction and unrest among the British soldiers in the Company's service can be derived from the structure of contemporary British society. Partly the mutiny was more felt as a strike, especially in regiments where recruits were mustered in British industrial areas and sent to India as additional forces to quell the Great Rebellion. This class of respectable labourers regarded enlistment more as employment on a contract basis than a military duty, involving regimental traditions and complete subordination. The Company service, either civil, administrative or military was principally based on a contract system which may raise the question if the distinction between late recruits and older soldiers is valid. On the other hand, precisely the younger soldiers referred to rather traditional notions of "English rights". Literate men expressed their dissatisfaction in a more refined way. In some regiments the military culture seems to have prevailed over the barrack-room and made men withdraw their applications for discharge. The diversity of protest indicates that the transfer and the subsequent announcement that discharge and bounty were inadmissible precipitated debate within European barrack-rooms, in which men with different interests sought to attain their own ends.

Class and culture are the main categories with which to define the White Mutiny. Despite some lack of quantitative evidence Stanley is able to reconstruct this part of military and social culture with convincing qualitative arguments. The unrest among the former European Company troops mirrors the social and political development in mid-Victorian England where major transformations shaped a more harmonious state. The participation of respectable working men in the parliamentary governance of Britain was conceded with the second Reform Act of 1867. This is the broad context in which the White Mutiny as a hitherto marginal episode of British Indian military history has to be placed. It also shows that the mid-century social crisis of Great Britain was not restricted to the British Isles but extended to its imperial outposts.

The Great Rebellion of 1857–59 is definitely the major event of British colonial rule in India in the 19th century if not of the entire period of British presence on the subcontinent. After the Massacre of Amboina (1623) and the Black Hole of Calcutta (1756) the Mutiny became the third disaster during British overseas expansion and colonial enterprise, thereby marking catastrophes as well as inducing a specific colonial myth and creating legacy. Since Eric Stokes' *The Peasant Armed* (Oxford 1986) detailed historical research concerning the reasons for the Great Rebellion is still outstanding – despite new interpretations. In this context the rather conventional resource of *A Companion to the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857* (gen. ed. P.J.O. Taylor) concentrates more or less on the military operations during the rebellion. A longer introduction would have been quite useful, summa-

rising the results of recent scholarship. Basically the book is an alphabetical listing of persons and places, only helpful for military Mutiny historians.

A broader approach towards military history is undertaken by T.A. Heathcote in his *The Military in British India*. For the first time a book on the military in British India comprising the period from 1600 to 1947 does not seem to be a history of glorious campaigns and superior weapons but a rather critical study of the difficulties which led to the establishment of British rule in South Asia. In this respect it indeed departs from the Eurocentric approach of many other writers. The military cosmos presented by Peter Stanley is now enlarged on a much broader scale. Heathcote concentrates on the continuing tensions between the different military establishments in India and the Home Government. Growing interference from the latter prevented much innovation and reform.

After the Great Rebellion and the White Mutiny, the Indian army was actually an occupation force, using half the troops to watch the other half and one third of the British army to watch them all. Reforms were launched by Governor General Lord Lytton (1876–80) to prevent a recurrence of mutiny. In accordance with modern structures of European armies and to reduce military expenditures, Lytton favoured a reserve system which was successfully denied by the home authorities.

The centralisation of the army administration in 1884 and 1885 effectively destroyed the presidential army system and made way for a basic restructuring of the Indian army which finally came into being in 1893. This reform towards unity was further strengthened by Lord Kitchener before the outbreak of World War I. Following Kitchener's recommendations, the Military Department in Bengal was abolished, leaving the Commander in Chief the sole military authority in India. All this was not achieved without dispute and argument, public discussions, as well as parliamentary commissions and private statements. To have devoted attention to this hitherto little known process is the great merit of the book.

The most northerly expansion of the British Raj occurred in the heights of the Himalayan mountains in the aftermath of the Great Game. Younghusband's famous expedition to Tibet forcefully opened the country for British interests. Backed by the unique imperial Governor General and Viceroy, Lord Curzon, the British Indian Government established the Tibet cadre which had its base in Sikkim. Until 1947 the Political Officer of Sikkim and his subordinate staff in the Tibetan outposts developed some kind of indirect rule, perhaps its weakest form, in order to retain the imperial grip on the region and oppose growing Chinese demands. Both "imperial" countries tried to intensify their influence on the Tibetan government. After the Simla Convention (1914) the British position seemed to be promising, but

deteriorated continually over the next decades, ending in China's formal annexation of Tibet in 1950. Nevertheless, the Tibet cadre had prevented an earlier Chinese expansion.

The Tibet cadre was an elite order of imperial officials. Most of its some twenty members had been educated in British public schools and at the universities of Cambridge and Oxford. Further training took place in India in order to get a good selection of suitable candidates for the Tibet service. Personal protection and a patronage system guaranteed the high spirit of the cadre. As a result, it developed a distinctive character, designed to produce a particular type of actor. Sir Charles Bell came closest to this ideal of a British officer on the outer fringe of the empire in India in the second decade of the 20th century. The main task of the cadre was together intelligence from all possible sources. Selected and trained by the cadre staff, indigenous intermediaries established contacts to local agencies and supplied the British with various information. These intermediaries were able to express themselves in British form and to translate their knowledge of the local culture to the cadre. The ideal type of intermediary was the citizen loyal to the imperial power, but highly placed in the local society. It was still the collaborating native as envisaged in Macaulay's (in)famous *Minute of Education*.

The Tibet cadre understood its presence on "the roof of the world" as a "civilizing mission", based on a genuine desire to help the country and its people. Its members saw themselves as diplomats, protecting India against Russia and China and developing the local society. Their literary products moulded our understanding and image of Tibet up to the present day. To some degree existing prejudices and pictures were further stressed and perpetuated by the cadre, definitely encouraged by publishers who demanded "colourful" and "thrilling" descriptions. The author's evaluation of the cadre's policy and attitudes seems sometimes contradictory and quite unbalanced. Torn between reluctant admiration and cautious critique Alex McKay's scale generally tips in favour of benign imperialism and neglects a critical approach to this sort of fundamental imperial penetration. Besides, the book's more appropriate title would have been *The British Raj and Tibet* instead of *Tibet and the British Raj*.

Independence and Partition is the title of a new study by Sucheta Mahajan. Partition was not the only option for an independent India, as Lord Mountbatten, His Majesty's Government and quite a number of British historians would make us believe. Nor can a rather totalitarian Indian National Congress be made responsible for partition, thereby saving a Hindu core-area and letting go of the Panjab and Bengal Provinces, over which Congress had a weak control anyway. Instead, Sucheta Mahajan attempts to rehabilitate Congress politics against the communal claims of the Hindu

Mahasabha and the destructive attitude of the Muslim League. The book pursues the question of why the Congress and ultimately Gandhi himself voted for the partition of India.

The hegemony the British regime had gained until the end of the first world war eroded rapidly in the 1930s. This is demonstrated convincingly by Mahajan with two outstanding examples. First, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was at a breaking point by the end of 1943. The British Indian bureaucratic "steel-frame" had become extremely unattractive to Oxbridge candidates. By 1945, the ICS was an outworn administrative apparatus, which was hardly capable of office routine. Erosion had set in especially after the 1937 elections when British Indian Civil Servants were made to work under Indian provincial governments led by ministers whom the former had prosecuted during the civil disobedience campaign.

Second, besides Congress resuming activities and organising meetings from 1944 onwards, the campaigns started outside the Congress give evidence of a national movement far beyond the "party-frame". Various mass meetings and demonstrations in favour of the Indian National Army-prisoners incorporated hitherto apolitical sections of the population in relatively inactive regions of the country like Assam, Sind and Orissa. Here a good sense of patriotism and nationalism emerged which helped strengthen the freedom movement.

Sucheta Mahajan's main focus is on the role of communalism especially after the Second World War. As she points out, Congress decision to opt for partition was not guided by communal arguments but was the result of a failed nationalism. The Muslim League's pressure for partition along the lines of the "Two-Nation-Theory" failed as well when they were drawn along communal borders. This became evident after the 16th August 1946, when communal violence spread across India with increasing brutality and frequency. At this stage, S. Mahajan argues, Congress refrained from taking a clear stand against communalism. The British Indian government kept its ambiguity alive, serving both the interests of the Congress and the Muslim League. Ultimately, the Congress accepted partition whilst the Muslim League insisted on unity on the provincial level. The curious reversal of the previous positions created a paradox, which kindled the flames of communal violence even more. Finally, independence day and the partition award let all hell loose.

Many sections of the book are to a large extent based on the *Transfer of Power* edition, supplemented by the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* and the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Though the study aims to correct the picture drawn especially by Ayesha Jalal, Sucheta Mahajan does not quote from any "Muslim" source material. In this respect the study ap-

pears rather unbalanced, being a counterpart of S.M. Burke's and Salim Al-Din Quraishi's *The British Raj in India. An historical review,* Karachi (OUP) 1995, which is not mentioned at all. Nevertheless, Mahajan's new approach emphasises for the first time the role of the nationwide agitation besides Congress activities and its impact on the people's consciousness. Moreover, despite generally supporting Congress politics between 1944 and 1947, the author points out quite elaborately the tensions within the Congress as well as the different levels and stages on which it had been and had to be active. This might explain why the position of the Indian National Congress was so ambiguous during the final phase of the freedom movement. Gandhi, who is rather often presented – and quoted – as a wise philosopher and prophet, officially accepted partition to keep in line with Congress policies because, at that stage, opposition against the Congress would have been interpreted as rebellion against the whole country.

The endgame of Britain's Asian empire in fact took place in South East Asia. Here, the British position was challenged three times between 1942 and 1950: with the fall of Singapore, the end of colonial rule in Burma and India, and with the advent of the cold war in the Far East. Each time Britain reaffirmed a strong determination to hold her position or, at least, to maintain her influence in the region. Rolf Tanner's study on Britain's struggle for hegemony in South East Asia, entitled *A Strong Showing*, tries to explain how Britain wanted to emphasize her continued will to remain a world power. The disastrous defeat in Burma generally questioned the re-establishing of colonial rule in Asia after the war. The United States favoured an anti-colonial settlement, thereby giving way to national movements in the region. In the wake of the "communist threat" and de facto advance in Asia, the USA no longer opposed a dominant role of the former colonial powers. Britain's shattered economy and her battered status as a major political power as well as the dissolution of her Asian empire since 1947 forced her to stabilize her political and economic influence in South East Asia, especially in Malaya, the then most important supplier of raw materials for the British economy. Malaya finally became the focus of British post-war overseas attention.

In a well balanced way, Tanner explains Malaya's pre-war dollar-earning capacity which would eventually have created a serious problem in reorganising the post-war political landscape. Britain's attempt to consolidate her power and position in Asia by developing the idea of the Commonwealth as a form of economic, political and ideological union ultimately failed. Despite the Colombo Plan, launched in 1950, and supported by financial aid from the US, Britain's position weakened in the long run. Nevertheless, she continued to play a prominent rule in South East Asia, though on a smaller scale. To a large extent, Tanner's study concentrates on international (West-

ern) diplomacy and "high politics", leaving the indigenous population in the position of passive participants, if at all. More emphasis should have been laid on the power and influence of South East Asia's national and local (resistance) movements.

IV. Ruling the Raj

What is colonialism and what is a colonial state? These very simple and often asked, but nevertheless most difficult and still insufficiently answered questions are the subject of two contributions from the end of the 1980s and the middle of the 1990s. One is Ranajit Guha's *Dominance without Hegemony*, the other Thomas R. Metcalf's *Ideologies of the Raj*. That this book appears in its second edition underlines its importance. Two long articles from the "Subaltern Studies" series, volumes VI (1989) and VII (1992), have been included in Ranajit Guha's present publication.

Ranajit Guha develops the theorem of the colonial state as fundamentally different from the contemporary European notion of a (national) state. Given the fact that every state is characterised by dominance and subordination, the European state's main feature is hegemony in which persuasion rather than coercion prevails. Because the colonial state has no bourgeois class as a bearer of national ideas and is, therefore, non-hegemonistic, the moment of persuasion is far outweighed by coercion. Dominance without hegemony characterises the colonial state. Guha interprets this as an obvious paradox to the contemporary bourgeois state. The main evidence of this was Indian historiography under colonial rule and its aftermath, as the British made Indians write their own history from the coloniser's point of view which was, in essence, British history. This paradox was topped by the internalisation of British concepts of stately order, social discipline, and rightful resistance by the emerging Indian intelligentsia. Whilst these points are worked out very clearly, the book unfortunately ends rather abruptly. A concluding chapter, summarising the main ideas and updating the discussion would have been useful.

Guha presents a brilliant analysis of the colonial state and the ways and means by which it stabilised its political regime. Especially the role of historiography in the colonial context is lucidly elaborated and deserves close attention. Obviously Ranajit Guha favours an independent national historiography as it evolved in Bengal at the beginning of the 20th century, though it was successfully suppressed by the British. His theoretical approach might enable national historiographers to leave the old trenches of nationalistic versus imperialistic historiography. Moreover, Guha's book is

a very useful attempt to combine books on history with a political consciousness which, hopefully, will open new perspectives on a history dominated by facts and not by ideologies.

If we take Guha's paradigm of dominance without hegemony as the characteristic notion of the colonial state, the *Ideologies of the Raj* must be treated as the missing link between colonizer and the colonized. Or, to put it more plainly, ideologies became the substitute for hegemony and, simultaneously, softened the coercive moment of dominance. Thomas R. Metcalf's brilliant analysis of the various forms of the British Raj's ideologies opens new perspectives in interpreting colonial rule in the second half of the 19th century.

The main feature of colonial ideologies was the construction of the "Other". This process was set in motion under early governors of Bengal like Warren Hastings and Charles Lord Cornwallis and further promoted by William Jones, Richard Orme and Alexander Dow, to mention but a few. The concept of "Otherness" ranged from different climates, different nature, different people, different characters, different races, to different beliefs, culminating in constructions of "masculinity" and "femininity" to "honesty and deceit". Chapters 3 "The creation of difference" (pp. 66–112) and 4 "The ordering of difference" (pp. 113–59) masterly work out how the acquisition of knowledge and opening of research fields in India as well as the presentation of results in scientifically based hierarchical systems was propagated by the late Victorian empire.

These two central and most instructive chapters clearly outline the rather complex mechanisms of colonial rule. Metcalf sees a direct continuity between the European Enlightenment understanding of science as a discipline of systematisation and late Victorian scientists who ordered and systematised everything they could get hold of. Science obviously had its own impetus. Victorian science constructed and placed India in a hierarchical relationship with Europe mainly by ordering Indian society along Census lines of caste, tribe, race, and religious communities. Though "India was known in ways that would sustain British colonial rule and through categories which made it fundamentally different from Europe." (p. 113).

As Metcalf demonstrates, the British could well live with inconsistencies of race and rule which they had created towards the end of the Raj. Inconsistency of ideologies seem to constitute British ruling principles. This fact could have been stressed more poignantly. The persistence of some of the ideologies can be seen in present-day political or communal tensions and frictions within Indian society. Metcalf's book is a valuable contribution to the mechanisms of colonial rule under the Raj. Sometimes it reads like a farce with imperial ideologies as the screen-play. This stylistic device

makes the book even more interesting. Besides, Metcalf's work is an impressive study based on Michael Mann's fourth category of "The Sources of Power".

Christopher Bayly's latest publication, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia* contains the four Radhakrishnan Lectures given at Oxford University in 1996 and five previously published articles. Whilst the former set of papers has a consistent line of argumentation, the latter contributions seem to be a rather artificial annex. The volume is basically a collection of all Bayly's articles which attempt to "push the tiller in the opposite direction from modernist critiques of Indian nationalism in the hope that the boat will eventually find a truer course" and "challenge the drastic foreshortening of history which is implied in many recent critiques of nationalist modernity" (p. vii).

To explain his thesis of a more or less continuous development of an "Indian nationalism" from pre-colonial times Bayly borrows the term "traditional patriotism" from American historiography. Emerging forms of "national awareness" in the 18th century were related to local traditions and patriotic feelings. Therefore, Indian nationalism was not implanted by an external colonial factor but had its roots in an Indian tradition, even if this tradition was invented by local magnates or literati as in contemporary Europe. A striking example of this independent development is definitely the Karnataka Rashtriya (Vijayanagara) and the Banaras Raj in the middle of the 18th century. Religious disputes became more polemic and frenetic as Muslim and Hindu dynasties came to power in that century, which saw a kind of *Kulturkampf* (p. 48). But it was still a local factional dispute, not a communal one. Bayly argues in favour of some preconditions for communalism, not for a foundational pre-history.

Certainly the Great Rebellion of 1857 marks a caesura in Indian history. In this respect historiography ought to change its perspective once again and re-interpret the revolt not only as an uprising of discontented peasants and frustrated merchants who accompanied mutineering sepoys but as a war of publicity and opinion which for the first time expressed the threatened common homeland of Hindustan. There is definitely a more coherent line of patriotic and nationalistic sentiments in India in the 18th and especially the 19th century than has hitherto been realised or accepted.

What still seems to be very problematic is Bayly's article on "Pre-history of Communalism" which was published first in 1985 and has caused a hurricane of protest not only among Indian historians. What remains questionable is the lack of exact terminology or definition of expressions. Moreover, land wars, religious riots, social conflicts and ethnical clashes are not clearly differentiated. Interestingly enough, Bayly's vocabulary shifts slowly

but steadily from "conflict" to "communal savagery", from "deliberate religious harassments" to "communal conflict and violence" (pp. 223–225). The line of argument is still too sketchy. Though further research on the subject may show the validity of Bayly's assumptions. In this respect the book marks a current position, among many others, in the "discourse on communalism".

The question of continuity from pre- to post-colonial regimes in caste and society is raised by Susan Bayly in her *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*. Explicitly she turns against the "Chicago School's" assumption of caste as an imagined India or as a category of colonial construction. Acknowledging the general impact of colonial rule, the author points out that many changes with respect to caste were under way before and after the British Raj. Caste, with its present-day connotations, was in fact shaped in and perpetuated from the 18th century onwards, i.e. along with the process of state-formation in South Asia. This is paradigmatically shown by the emerging Maratha state under Shivaji (1630–80), who, as a *homo novus* became a model for several regional rulers in south as well as in north India. The British Raj stressed, in some cases unintentionally, the process of caste formation which had been taking place since the commencement of the 18th century. Even in independent India this development has not come to an end. Thus, she argues very closely to C.A. Bayly, her husband, and puts even more emphasis on long-term developments.

Data collecting along lines of distinction (caste, profession, religion, colour) was not invented by the British but was used as a means for the maintenance of stately rule. Map-making, ethnographic observation and information gathering was certainly not new to the subcontinent's regimes from the Mughals to the Marathas. Nonetheless, the colonial regime's policy differed from her predecessor's. Informed by British scientists' academic attitudes and ambitions India became a vast source for the European demand for empirical data which helped to shape her universal(ist) hegemony. Instead, Susan Bayly suggests that "again it would be wrong to reduce all aspects of this period's pre-Rebellion map-making [...] to an assertion of colonial relationships." (pp. 108–109) More or less every aspect of colonial rule is indiscriminately subjected to the author's thesis of continuity. Rather than appropriately highlighting the colonial state's needs and ends at crucial points in its development, ways and means of Indian statehood are upgraded so as to construct continuity.

The line of continuity is, nevertheless, convincingly drawn from the "endgames of the Raj" to the end of the 20th century. It seems that the claims of caste have actually grown stronger in important aspects of Indian life. Especially the private sector is very likely to have perpetuated or even

enhanced the relevance of *jati-varna* identities. The expanding urban middle class plays a most decisive role in this development.

Government attempts to deal with the "uplift" of the "Scheduled Castes and Tribes" in the 1980s resulted in well-known measuring exercises of the Risley era, completed by modern techniques of large-scale DNA-testing samples. Thereby caste, as a category of social and racial disability, is not only defined and fixed more precisely but treated again as universal and permanent. Supported by the latest scientific methods, "essentialising" India's castes is raised to a hitherto unprecedented level. However, one may argue that this kind of data collecting is an appropriate means of current, i.e. modern statesmanship which still leaves us with the apparently difficult question of the long-term effects of continuity. Or, to put it into more radical terms, the case may be irrelevant because one can no longer tell the difference between the colonial legacy and the present Indian state's policy.

Another aspect of the British Empire is its desperate search for labour which led to an increased emigration of indentured Indians from the countries and colonies along the shores of the Indian Ocean in the second half of the 19th century. Most prominent became South Africa where Gandhi developed his various forms of non-violent resistance (*satyagraha*) as well as experiments in different kinds of communities (*ashrams*). Since R.A. Huttenback's *Gandhi in South Africa* (Ithaca and London 1971) and M. Swan's *Gandhi's South African Experience* (Johannesburg 1985) *Gandhi and South Africa. Principles and Politics*, edited by Judith M. Brown and Martin Prozesky, is certainly an important contribution to Gandhi's life in South Africa where he stayed for about 20 years from the beginning of his 20s.

In his article Bill Guest gives valuable background information about the immigration pattern of Indians into Southern Africa. Karen L. Harris demonstrates that the common notion of Gandhi's ambiguous relationship with the Chinese community is not valid. The importance of Gandhi's South African years as a formative phase for the "Indian" Gandhi is pointed out by J.M. Brown. During his 20s and 30s Gandhi changed from a humble and insecure lawyer into a self-assured public figure. South Africa gave Gandhi "a vision of public work, including political activism, as the service of all humanity [...]." (p. 24) South Africa created a certain common cultural identity among the Indians from different social backgrounds, religions, ethnics, languages etc which must have influenced Gandhi's perception of India as a "multicultural society". Gandhi's main heritage, among many other items listed by M. Chatterjee, is his understanding of a nation. For Gandhi nation-building implied the participation of all parts of society and the incorporation of diversity into a stately unit. To reach this end, people generally had to be trained to live and work as responsible individuals. Against this background Gandhi's well known comprehensive education

programme becomes even more important. In fact, one may argue, this does not differ very much from Western understandings of a nation.

In her concluding remarks J.M. Brown directs attention towards the vision and reality of Gandhi's non-violence. Gandhi was well aware of the fact that a non-specific campaign would do harm to the whole idea of *satyagraha* and make it easy for the British to control the actions. And he also realised quite early that mere non-violent resistance would not drive the British out of India. But Gandhi knew very well that it involved violent measures to quell the resistance, which would eventually erode the status of the Raj in India and on an international level. *Satyagraha* as developed in South Africa, is without doubt a means to resolve violent conflicts. The question, however, remains how to manage and solve conflicts peacefully and which means should be applied. To opt for non-violent action is probably Gandhi's major bequest.

The end of the "British Raj" is strongly connected with Britain's last Governor-General and Viceroy in India, Lord Mountbatten. Now a professional and extremely thoroughly researched bibliography provides scholars with a most comprehensive presentation of the literature on the life and career of *Earl Mountbatten of Burma, 1900–1979*. Compiled by E.L. Rasor, the last of the British Empire's illustrious figures is dealt with in nine historiographical narratives. The second part of the book comprises an annotated bibliography. An author and a subject index provide easy access. The series "Bibliographies of British Statesmen" should be continued and deserves due attention.

V. After Independence

Legitimacy and Conflict in South Asia, edited by S.K. Mitra and D. Rothermund, is a collection of thirteen papers given at a Heidelberg Symposium in 1995. In the various articles, the problem of effective governance and legitimacy at the level of general and comparative theory is applied to the contemporary politics of South Asia and is presented in a convincing manner. A general feature of current South Asian politics seems to be the re-establishment of legitimacy, Sri Lanka and India being the most prominent examples. Another way of gaining more acceptance for the political regime is pursued by Pakistan, provoking conflicting legitimacies whilst establishing her "Islamic Republic".

Weak states seem to rest on repression while strong ones are based on legitimacy. The latter is sustained by simple and intelligible democratic institutions and mechanisms, a good government and a liberal economic sys-

tem. As long as the "rules of the game" are accepted by the bulk of the society, and as long as these rules are reasonable and it is obviously more costly to break than to obey them, the state is based on sound legitimate principles. Nevertheless, the question still unresolved in South Asia seems to be where the line between current political developments in the strong, repressive and legitimate states and the weak coercive states has to be drawn. Conflict seems to be inevitable in both cases. The challenges to legitimacy, therefore, may be posed not through direct conflict, but by slow erosion of the elements which support it. But this "erosion of legitimacy which ends in violent conflict", as one of the editor's summarised the symposium, "would require another conference."

Sri Lanka. Past and Present, edited by M. Domroes and H. Roth, is a compilation of recent German research on the island and dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of Ceylon's independence from colonial rule. A great variety of articles dealing with archaeological, historical, geographical, economic and political aspects provide a good outline of Sri Lanka's past and present. The island looks back on a thousand years' history of interregional commercial and economic intercourse as multilingual ancient documents from the 6th and 13th centuries demonstrate. Discussions on long-distance trade relations between Sri Lanka and the African as well as the Arabian and South East Asian coastal areas have led to an intensive archaeological surveying of the island's southern shores. The historical site of Godavaya, Hambantota District, proves the importance of Sri Lanka's early naval connections since the second century AD and confirms the important role of the ancient Ruhuna kingdom. In its capital Mahagama evidence of furnaces and exceptionally well paved roads has underlined the unique contribution of the town to South Asia's early technological development.

The northern part of Sri Lanka was dominated by the state and capital of Anuradhapura from the 3rd century BC to the 10th century AD. Situated in the "Dry Zone" of the island the perfect management and distribution of tank water became Anuradhapura's economic backbone, by turning large parts of the country into a prosperous rice-bowl. Next to internal economic stability came external trade relations. Indo/Lanka-Roman trade expanded rapidly after the Monsoon passage had been discovered in the 1st century AD. Besides this the Anuradhapura king's policy of systematic endowment of religious symbols and, of course, land and revenue grants to monasteries, was the other major pillar on which the success of this early state was based.

Sri Lanka's present-day economy is to a large extent still based on agriculture. In spite of structural changes since the 1970s, government and private economy concentrate on the export of primary sector produce. "Ceylon tea" is the most prominent item. Though Sri Lanka almost belongs to the

group of middle-income economies, it nevertheless faces major structural problems. The ethnic conflicts of the 80s and 90s have caused a severe setback in the country's attempts to liberalise its economy. The sharp decline in tea quality and capacity of production which directly influenced export figures during these decades indicate the failure of this policy, for which the government is largely to be held responsible. But since the middle of the 90s we can observe a trend towards economic progress due to a further deregulation and privatisation of the island's main economic sectors. The success of this economic liberalization policy remains to be seen. This is indeed a critical aspect which ought to have been pointed out.

VI. Teaching materials

A rather neglected field of South Asian history is now partially filled by some remarkable publications. Ainslie T. Embree's and Carol Gluck's compilation of a vast number of essays in *Asia in Western and World History. A guide for teaching,* comprising Asian history from 500 BC up to the 20th century, provides teachers as well as students with short introductory texts on various aspects of the subject. This volume of almost 1000 pages is divided into four main parts, namely, "Asia in Western History", "Asia in World History", "Modern Asia, 1600–1990" and, finally, "Themes in Asian History". Each part starts with one or several introductions to special subjects followed by numerous thematic essays, mostly in a chronological order. Particularly the change of perspective is very laudable: the focus is Asia through the eyes of Asian development, not European perception. Hopefully, this change in point of view will lead to more appropriate ways of looking at Asian history.

Two publications visualise the British Raj in India. Ray Desmond's *Victorian India in Focus* presents a selection of early photographs preserved at the India Office Library. Published in 1982, it is still very useful for demonstrating the British perception of their Raj in India and how they preserved it, through their own eyes and the lens of a camera, thereby creating an "imago" of the British Empire in India at home.

Wonderful material is presented in *Victorian India. Tea Garden of the World* which has been designed especially as teaching material. It consists of a handbook of 72 pages plus 25 laminated primary source cards, ranging from early paintings of tea plants, several pictures of the tea cultivation areas in India, Indians preparing tea in an English kitchen in India, a painting of a tea garden drawn by a native artist, illustrations on tea processing, as well as the auctioning of the packed tea, to mention only some of the

beautifully selected plates. All plates are explained by one or two page descriptions in the accompanying handbook. This starts with "Suggestions for introductory or concluding activities" for pupils. Nine categories with different levels of "activities" for school lessons will help teachers to present this chapter of British history. Nevertheless, more emphasis could have been laid on the Indian part of that history.

VII. Conclusion

Though there has certainly been a change of parameters in writing on South Asian history since the 1980s, the variety of recent publications shows that the new agenda of historiography, as introduced by the above mentioned authors is a difficult task. Only a few of the books reviewed here have actually left the trodden paths of established historiography. Economic history still deals with the role of the European companies in the Indian Ocean. One misses the Indian part. Only sporadically do articles appear here and there in conference volumes or periodicals. "State formation" in South Asia during the 18th century is considered as a major issue of current research. "Taxes", the "military" and "administration" are the touchstones for the emergence of the modern state in Europe. A history of Maisur under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, or Awadh under Shuja ud daula taking these determinants into account has still to be written. The question of continuity was asked by Christopher Bayly and has most consequently been further traced by Susan Bayly. More research has to be done in this direction. Peasants in South as well as in South East Asia are the topic of resistance movements. Max Weber's dictum that India is the country of villages, seems to be extended into the 21st century. Urban resistance, which emerges in the 19th century indiscriminately disguised as "communalism", is hardly mentioned. This does not imply that there has been and still is no communal violence. But India is still dealt with as a peasant society, fragmented in religious communities which sometimes clash in urban centres.

One of the most innovative fields of research concentrates on the subtle mechanisms of colonial rule. Ideologies supported the political regime much better than the points of the bayonets. Intelligence gathering and the adequate criteria for selecting relevant information as well as the British perception of the Empire in India are rare outposts in the landscape of historiography on colonial South Asia. The post-independent subcontinent is confronted with its political fragility and economic weakness. At the end of the 20th century liberalising markets seem the appropriate means for stabilising political regimes. While deregulation opens new opportunities for an

increasing part of society, the gap between rich and poor deepens and creates new tensions. This has to be taken into account when suggesting models of more peaceful societies in South Asia. Western concepts of polity and economy may not necessarily be appropriate for South Asia.

Ecology and environmentalism has been given due attention during the last two decades producing valuable results. But academic research very often concentrates on forest policy, the fierce onslaught on tropical forests by colonial and post-colonial countries and resistance by the indigenous population, whilst agrarian history very often ends up as the history of canal irrigation and its consequences in the late 19th and the 20th century. Both fields have been opened in the 1970s and 80s and are still heavily ploughed. Further research should concentrate more on the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, though source material might not be as plentiful as for the above-mentioned period.

Some historians have been touched by the "wind of change" but it has not yet developed into an overall breeze.

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