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Lal, Vinay

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social movement literature, as this scholarship has tended to focus on urban, European movements, neglecting struggles in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

With the Modi government, India stands at a political crossroads in a context shaped by neoliberal economics. While past events and elections have shown that predicting the fate of BJP and Hindu nationalism in India is difficult, this study provides incisive insights into its political strategies that will be useful in thinking about this party's success. Basu's work will further our understanding of the complex confluence of political factors at the national, state, and municipal levels that transformed the BJP's weak presence as a niche party in the 1984 general elections to a sweeping majority thirty years later.

Given its clarity of language and its complex yet well-structured arguments, I would recommend this book for senior undergraduate seminars and graduate courses.

SIKATA BANERJEE

University of Victoria
sikatab@uvic.ca

The Colonial State: Theory and Practice. By Sabyasachi Bhattacharya. Delhi: Primus Books, 2016. 228 pp. ISBN: 9789384092016 (cloth).
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Sabyasachi Bhattacharya is animated by the question “what makes a colonial state ‘colonial’?” What were the ideological, performative, and regulatory aspects of colonial state practices? His book should not, however, be construed as a return to earlier forms of administrative or political history, dominated by the lives of proconsuls of empire, the inner workings of the India Office, or colonial decision-making. He accepts as a premise the argument, reinforced most prominently in his view by Ranajit Guha (pp. 31, 139), that British rule in India represented domination without hegemony; at the same time, to the extent that the British exercised hegemony—increasingly reliant upon the consent of the governed to notions, for instance, of “fair play” and “the rule of law”—Bhattacharya is also moved to assert that Indians, more particularly as colonial rule extended into the early twentieth century, offered a “countervailing hegemony” (pp. 27–32, 139–75).

The Colonial State is organized around six chapters prefaced by a lengthy introductory framework. Bernard S. Cohn was among those highly influential scholars who did stellar research on how the colonial state sought to make visible its power to common people through various political rituals. While Bhattacharya finds work on grand colonial *durbars* (assemblages) intellectually productive, he cautions that the focus on the “higher macro-level dramaturgy of power” can be misleading (p. 54). As an illustration of how colonial officials, indigenous rulers, and ordinary subjects wove a pattern of interpretation and behavior around more common “sets of signifiers,” he looks at the protocols surrounding the wearing of shoes at the court of Indian rulers (pp. 46–51). Taking off one's shoes was a mark of deference; as colonial power expanded and the British gained more knowledge of the inventory of Indian social customs, they not only attempted to excuse themselves from having to signal such deference but also insisted that Indians were to remove their shoes in the presence of Englishmen in authority (p. 49). So much for the democratic sentiments that were alleged to be part of the

Englishman's natural inheritance! Though Bhattacharya's discussion is engaging, he is here anticipated by Guha's brilliant discussion, which he does not cite, of signifiers such as shoes and umbrellas in discourses of insurgency.¹

In chapters 2 and 3, Bhattacharya addresses the question of sovereignty. He submits that it is insufficient to understand—as historians have long sought to do—how the British sought to legitimize their rule, and that British attempts to delegitimize precolonial authority demand equal attention. Delegitimization could take symbolic form, such as when the Governor-General ceased to accept prestations or titles from the Mughal Emperor (pp. 61–62), or entail the loss of kingdoms, for instance when the British refused to recognize native notions of succession to political inheritance (p. 65). By the early 1800s, the idea that India was not on an equal footing with Britain and was lower down on the scale of “civilization” became another pretext to make a juridical claim that India now existed in a state of “pupilage” to Britain (pp. 90–91).

Notwithstanding the supposed adherence among many Englishmen to laissez-faire principles, argues Bhattacharya in chapter 4, “a collective monopoly” of private English capital, organized as Agency Houses and aided by the “servants of the East India Company's government in India,” characterized the economy of colonial Bengal in the nineteenth century (p. 99). It was the manipulation of the money market by British capital and the colonial state that accounted for the failures of Indian entrepreneurship, rather than the Hindu joint family or the superstitious attachments to religion (p. 107). In the penultimate chapter, he shows how the colonial idea of “interest representation” started to come to the fore in response to nationalism: not only was each Indian constituency entitled to representation, but the British alone were capable of representing everyone. This is what might be called the element of transcendence in colonial theories of representation.

Bhattacharya's command over the historiography of modern India and archival sources is unquestionable. Nevertheless, his account of colonial historiography in the final chapter has some unaccountable gaps, and in commencing his narrative with James Mill he misses the part played by eighteenth-century writers such as Alexander Dow and Robert Orme in establishing what would become the critical tropes of colonial historiography, among them notions of “Oriental despotism,” the “effeminacy” of Hindus, “unchanging India,” and a certain notion of climatic determinism. Readers may also have some nagging doubts about the ease with which he endorses the idea that domination rather than hegemony characterizes the British Raj. As Gandhi had argued in *Hind Swaraj* (1909), the British did not just occupy India; there were Indians who were seduced by the glitter of the material civilization of the modern West. The arm of the colonial state may not have extended to many parts of the hinterland, and yet British power had a way of inserting itself into the sinews and pores of Indian society. The manner in which Indians became captive to the idea of the sovereignty of history itself suggests how a greater sensitivity to the tension between domination and hegemony might have produced a somewhat different account of the colonial state as a form of cultural revolution in colonial India.

VINAY LAL

University of California, Los Angeles
vlal@history.ucla.edu

¹Ranjit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 61–65.