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The Last Nizam: The Life and Times of Mir Osman Ali Khan. By V. K. BAWA. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1991. xviii, 404 pp.

V. K. Bawa, formerly an officer of the Indian Administrative Service, has produced an important and timely book on Hyderabad State's last reigning Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan, ruler from 1911 to 1948. Both more and less than its title promises, the book includes copious materials on earlier periods of Hyderabad history as well, yet it fails to make a clear and well-supported argument about the last Nizam's place in history. Dr. Bawa mentions me as an interviewee and as one who read the manuscript and commented on it in detail. I did read large portions of the manuscript just before it went to press and made comments which my friend the author and I discussed in lively fashion; now I find myself making some of those comments again.

Dr. Bawa, a leading historian of Hyderabad, conducted impressively thorough research. The note on sources, which replaces a conventional bibliography, indicates that he worked in archives and libraries in Hyderabad, Delhi, Karachi, and London, and he interviewed some 96 people, many of them key participants in Hyderabad State politics. He discusses works in English, Urdu, and Telugu, advising scholars to avoid prejudiced sources; he remarks that "if one were to look for a critical analysis of the events leading up to the Police Action and the ending of Hyderabad State, one would not find it in Urdu or English books published by Hyderabadis living in India" (p. 352). This seems overly cautionary, since his own work fits the description! But his remarks are generally useful, although one still wants a bibliography for ready reference. Another scholarly support one wants is more footnoting. Dr. Bawa avoided dense footnotes to make the book accessible to the general reader, yet as he says himself about another work, it is "sometimes difficult to assess the authenticity of the data, for want of footnotes" (p. 350). I often wanted to know the source of an anecdote or piece of information, particularly in the final chapters where a range of new material is used.

This manuscript needed a good eye for organization, the definitive use of topic sentences and paragraphing, and the rigorous pruning of material irrelevant to the main line of argument. Computer printouts make even the roughest drafts look good and lead to inadvertent repetition of phrases and information in different places (e.g. pp. 73 and 90, about the Nizam being titled "King"). As the book stands, it is often hard to discern and evaluate the argument.

The short introduction and prologue raise questions and set themes—Bawa states that the two major issues of the Nizam's thirty-seven year reign were his frequent interference in the State's administration and his "infructuous attempts to assert his independence" (p. xvii). Then Chapter One presents detailed material, not chronologically, on various Mughals, the first Nizam, Shivaji, the Qutb Shahis, Clive and other Englishmen, the French, the Peshwas, Hyderabad's later Nizams and officials, and more. The first of the two apparent themes of the chapter asserts that, although earlier Nizams had never claimed independence from the Mughals, the last Nizam tried to claim independence in the mid-twentieth century. The second theme is that Hyderabad culture was "medieval," meaning it was based on allegiance to tribe and caste and to Central Asian notions of nobility modified by Mughal and Deccani practices; also, that its Mughal traditions were "unchanged in the lotus-eating atmosphere" (p. 15), and that in 1911 the 7th and last Nizam came to the throne of a state "steeped in feudal traditions" (p. 36). Fair enough, but these themes are obscured by much ill-organized miscellaneous material.

Chapter Two, opening with undated poems by the Nizam, the second speaking of himself as "King," covers the Nizam's birth in 1886, his education, and the early years of his rule. Dr. Bawa states that while Osman Ali Khan was brought up a Sunni Muslim, "his mother's Shia faith overcame this early training" (p. 41), but he offers no support for this still-controversial view (a later remark that the Nizam "openly patronized the Shia faith" (p. 65) is unpersuasive, since the Nizam openly patronized many other religions at times.) Setting another of the book's major themes, the Nizam's view of himself as "centre of the universe," Dr. Bawa points to the Nizam's lack of a (British-advised) public school education with members of other princely families as one source of this view (p. 42). The development of Hyderabad city, its culture, and the role of outsiders is discussed, along with the strong role played by the British in Hyderabad affairs. Dr. Bawa dates the Nizam's tendency to see himself as "a prospective king" from the British Resident's 1914 request that the Nizam issue an appeal supporting the British action against Turkey, seat of the Caliph of Islam, a request with which the Nizam complied "rather reluctantly" (pp. 71-72). The chapter closes with discussions of the Nizam's personality and the positive innovations introduced during his direct rule (there was no Diwan from 1914 to 1919), innovations ranging from irrigation projects and urban infrastructure to the founding of Osmania University, India's first university to use a vernacular (Urdu) as a medium of instruction.

Chapter Three, "The Turkish Connection," actually has more on the British connection. Again, undated poems by the Nizam open the chapter, one expressing the hope that the royal connection through marriage with the Turkish empire will be auspicious. This refers to the 1931 marriages of the Nizam's two sons with the daughter and niece of the deposed Turkish Caliph. These marriages seem to constitute Dr. Bawa's chief evidence for the Nizam's kingly ambitions and his "implicit claim to the . . . caliphate" (p. 96). The Khilafat movement is revisited here, linked to the marriages and to the Nizam as potential leader of India's Muslims. We also learn much about British (rather than the Nizam's) interference with Hyderabad's administration. In that context, the Nizam's 1924 dinner celebration of the first Asaf Jah's (mythical) declaration of independence seems closely linked to his attempts to get the province of Berar back from the British rather than, as Dr. Bawa sees it, more broadly linked to pan-Indian politics and ambitions. I also question his interpretation of Maharajah Kishen Pershad's 1926 appointment as Diwan as "an apparent reversal of pro-Muslim tendencies" of the Nizam (p. 119), since evidence of such tendencies has not been given for that period.

To his credit, Bawa raises important questions and helps us move toward answering them. He addresses many controversial issues in recent Hyderabad history in the final chapters, moving his focus away from the Nizam to provide a wealth of information on the increasing impingement of nationalist activities elsewhere in India on Hyderabad, the injection of communal sentiments into what had been a relatively noncommunal political arena, the rise of rural, vernacular language based associations and leaders, and many other developments. The scarcity of references makes it hard at times to distinguish the author's opinion from that of a written or oral source, and attributions might help also in resolving some apparent contradictions in the text. The underlying theme is that of a ruler determined that his own power should not be diminished, a power based not upon religion but upon traditional concepts of kingship. Sometimes the Nizam leaps vividly out of the pages, unexpectedly missing opportunities to exemplify Dr. Bawa's theses, as when he moves against Bahadur Yar Jang and the Majlis Ittehadul-Muslimeen in 1943—

44 (pp. 204–7), appoints a Council President opposed by Jinnah and the British in 1946 (pp. 230–31), or is suspected of being behind the public statement made in August of 1948 by seven courageous Muslims urging accession to India and disbanding of the Razakars (p. 276)! Surprises like these remind us that the essential nature of the Nizam remains an enigma—one is still not sure whom he meant when he rebuffed Jinnah in 1946 by saying he could take care of “my own people.”

In the final analysis, this book makes a real contribution to the history of Hyderabad and its last reigning Nizam. The product of hard work, it presents much valuable material and offers many sound assessments. Dr. Bawa has raised significant issues, taken stands on them, and provoked a debate which other historians of Hyderabad must now join.

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Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia. Edited by CAROL A. BRECKENRIDGE and PETER VAN DER VEER. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993. viii, 355 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), \$17.95 (paper).

This volume extends Edward Said's critique of Orientalism to South Asia. Most of the essays are sympathetic to Said's ethical concerns, as are the editors, who exhort those who study the (ex) colonial orient to acknowledge “the role of their academic disciplines in the reproduction of patterns of domination” (p. 1). At the same time, the essays are critical of some of his methods and arguments. Several contributors seek to correct Said's literary reading of history, which they see as sacrificing historical detail to rhetorical effect. Rocher and Ludden show that Orientalism was not the embodiment of a monolithic European attitude toward Asia, but rather a discourse that changed over time. One surprise is the rather favorable portraits of some early British Orientalists, by Dharwadker, Dirks, and Rocher in particular, showing how they were at least partly motivated by a desire to correct the Eurocentrism of their day.

Several issues of contention come to light in the volume. Is Orientalism determined by relations of production, or is it an autonomous intellectual field with its own developmental path? Lele sees close links between “objective conditions” and much of the Western tradition (including Said's critique of Orientalism), while Rocher and others resist the attempt to derive all knowledge production from economic imperatives and hegemonic position. Straddling the fence is Ludden, who views Orientalism as part and parcel of the growth of English imperialism, but also argues that once Orientalist knowledge was codified and published, “its veracity escaped the political nexus” (p. 259).

Were Indian realities like caste and Hinduism “constructed” by Orientalists? Rocher, van der Veer, and Ludden demonstrate how certain powerful ideas—the distinction between religious and secular law, the image of India as a land of autonomous village communities sustained by caste and Hinduism, and the idea of an essential cleavage between Hindu and Muslim—were indeed colonial inventions, reified by Orientalist research and verified by bureaucratic procedure. But Orientalist understandings of classical India were not created ex nihilo; Dharwadker and Rocher show that Orientalist literary theories were often consistent with indigenous ones,