

Reviews

Rule Britannia. Subjects and Empire *The Oxford History of the British Empire*

The Oxford History of the British Empire. Editor-in-Chief Wm. Roger Louis. Volume I, *The Origins of Empire*, edited by Nicolas Canny, pp. xx, 505; Volume II, *The Eighteenth Century*, edited by P. J. Marshall, pp. xxi, 609; Volume III, *The Nineteenth Century*, edited by Andrew Porter, pp. xxii, 741; Volume IV, *The Twentieth Century*, edited by Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis, pp. xxvi, 739; Volume V, *Historiography*, edited by Robin W. Winks, pp. xxiv, 700. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998–99.

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The *Oxford History* is a big read. Five volumes, all but 150 chapters and 3,300 pages. It can be read in two ways. Either one can go shopping in the chapters whose titles imply a relation to one's own work and interests, or, in a sustained effort to follow the editors' purpose in attempting to see the story whole, one can buckle to the task of reading the lot. With its half-century-old predecessor, the *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, the latter, aside from its even larger size, was scarcely possible. Publication dates stood years apart, and to a major extent the story was divided into individual Dominion and Indian volumes. While clearly a formidable achievement in its day, with more original work presented for the first time than in the present *History*, a comparison of their contents provides a gratifying index of the extent to which the field has now moved on. By seeking in four successive century volumes (along with a final volume on *Historiography*) to pull the whole story together the *Oxford History* is not without its problems. It unquestionably demonstrates, however, that while the British Empire may well now be over, it is very far from done with. Not only do its legacies still pervade great swathes of humanity. Judging from *OHBE*'s endlessly tight-packed chapters, with their countless references to recent work, the scholarship nowadays lavished upon it is nothing less than prodigious.

All in all, these five volumes constitute an extraordinary achievement which has brought Roger Louis' dauntingly formidable editorial skills to their apogee. Not only has he mobilized five volume editors and (no doubt with their help) no less than 128 chapter authors (only a handful of whom might have been improved upon). He has brought the whole enterprise to a conclusion all in one go and in an astonishingly short period of time. Those of us who have organized similar (if very much more modest) ventures can only mop our brows in amazement.

Britannia's Rule

The story as it is told here is largely familiar. But its telling in this form will long command the broad space between single volume surveys and detailed specialist monographs, and is thus bound to constitute the master narrative for some while yet.

The Origins of Empire, as Volume I outlines this, began somewhat abruptly in the fantasies in circulation around 1600 about what might be secured upon the further shores of the Atlantic and in the colonizations already taking place in Scotland and Ireland that set the pattern for so much that followed in the New World. The initial settlements along the North American seaboard were frequently pathetically weak, but somehow they—or at least their successors—survived until, by the end of the seventeenth century, ‘about 350,000 Englishmen had crossed the ocean’¹ to take up residence in a string of colonies from Maine in the north to the Carolinas in the south, on into that ‘hub of empire’ in this century and the next, the Caribbean. In part that soon meshed with a rather different enterprise—the contemporaneous move to win control of a major share of Europe’s trade with ‘the East’ and, en route, of West Africa too. For the latter soon became a key link in the cat’s cradle which in the next century went to the making of the first British empire by providing a constant supply of the slave labourers that were crucial to the new colonies’ money-making staples, sugar, tobacco and cotton.

These developments, Volume I is at pains to emphasize, did not stand alone. They were critically dependent on the simultaneous emergence of England’s naval supremacy, which first secured niches for its peoples where Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch had gone before, and in due course, at a time when its principal rival, France, was fixated upon its landward preoccupations, enabled her to become by the end of the seventeenth century ‘unquestionably Europe’s dominant maritime and colonial power’.² An empire of settlement and trade buttressed by the Royal Navy was thus born.

Half-a-dozen chapters in Volume II on *The Eighteenth Century* emphasize, however, that its future was in no way assured. While emigration continued apace across the Atlantic, between 1688 and 1815 no less than seven large-scale intra-European wars brought as much failure as success, with France regularly proving Britain’s most formidable enemy. There were certainly spectacular victories, in Canada for example and elsewhere in 1759, but two decades on, there followed Britain’s major reverse in the revolutionary war of its American colonists—whose origins continue to spawn an immense historical industry which, despite pervading several chapters here, has required two magisterial chapters in the *Historiography* volume to relate.

Three developments, so Volume II has it, preserved Britain from going under. From the end of the previous century there had been several critically important advances in the effectiveness of the British state. Based on ‘benign natural endowments’, these included: ‘the early industrialisation of

¹ Vol. I, p. 402.

² Vol. I, p. 444.

the workforce, the prior and steady accumulation of the mercantile and financial skills required to manage global commerce, [and] strong and consistent support from an effective fiscal state, dominated by perceptive aristocrats'.³ To this there was added: 'the British fleet, the largest in Europe . . . [whose] primary function was to guard against invasion'. To that end it was regularly concentrated in wartime in the 'Western Approaches' to the English Channel, there to fend off any French or Spanish fleet that threatened the British position: 'from the command of these waters the command of the world derived'.⁴

However, during the American war the fleet was dispersed with near fatal results across the Atlantic, and as a consequence Britain came 'closer to major invasion than ever before in the century'. That 'traumatic experience' had a seminal effect. In the ensuing French revolutionary wars the British leadership (Pitt and Dundas particularly), driven by 'defensive, financial and naval rather than aggressively Imperial and territorial' considerations, was absolutely determined 'to establish beyond future hazard financial and naval supremacy over their rivals'. By 'prodigies of exertion' and 'by destroying the colonial resources of our enemies and adding proportionately to our own' (Dundas' terms): 'One by one the navies of Europe were smashed or confiscated'. 'Britain . . . gained a political dominance over India secure from all European rivals'. 'The twenty-six British colonies of 1792 had grown to forty-three by 1816', and: 'Britain was now in a position to impose an extra-European *Pax Britannica*'.⁵

That set the scene for the story extensively recounted in the central volume on *The Nineteenth Century* of a British Empire now as much about rule as about settlement and trade, with substantial armies in India and at home complementing its great naval power, stretched out across the world, long free of any challenge from any rivals, complex and hugely variegated. For Canada was not Singapore, Jamaica was not India, Gibraltar was not New South Wales. Its reach, moreover, went well beyond its formal boundaries, with much 'informal empire' in Latin America, China and the Middle East. Over the ensuing century there were then constant additions: large parts of Canada and Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and other Pacific islands, Sind, Kashmir, Punjab, Burma, Hong Kong, the Malay States, Cyprus. In the last twenty years still more came to be added: control over Egypt, and large swathes of south, central, east and west Africa. All of which was accompanied by geographical exploration, missionary expansion, old and new (i.e. Indian) migration, the abolition of slavery, cultural changes at home and abroad, technological changes, issues of colonial government, issues of colonial defence. Throughout there was the immense story too of the economics of empire, on which upwards of ten chapters over four volumes constitute perhaps the most impressive sequence (along with that on Ireland) in the whole venture. Intriguingly they leave an enduring impression of uncertainty about the scale of economic benefits which empire

³ Vol. II, ch. 3.

⁴ Vol. II, ch. 8.

⁵ Vol. II, ch. 9.

brought to Britain, except latterly in meeting its adverse balance of payments and supporting its sterling area.

Of another benefit there seems no doubt. As once more in 1914–18 war engulfed Europe: ‘Some of the best assets of British security turned out to be the bonds of the English-speaking world’ created over three previous centuries. ‘In 1917 the allied margin of superiority was very small, and Britain might have had to settle on difficult terms without this imperial support’.⁶

The Twentieth Century volume like its predecessors covers a huge span. Its story, however, differs from its predecessor in having to engage with four Empire-wide sagas: two World Wars, the intervening Depression, and the subsequent twenty-year imperial collapse. Both World Wars are treated in notable chapters—by Holland and Jeffries. Surprisingly, the Depression is only given minimal attention, while in spite of first-rate opening chapters by Darwin on the ‘Dominions idea’ and McMahon upon Ireland, the end-of-empire story is never pulled together as it needed to be.

The dimensions of the whole epic are then extensively delineated in the forty-one chapters of the *Historiography* volume. Doubtless many of these will be overtaken by the burgeoning industry which (despite university cuts) this portrays. Several, however (Frykenberg on pre-1858 India, Stafford on Exploration, would be just two examples), will warrant revisiting for a long while to come, while Higman on the tension between Caribbean and British West Indian history, Macintyre on the development of Australian historiography, Turnbull on ‘East Asia’, and Douglas on the Pacific Islands, are amongst those that amount to interpretive essays of a larger kind. The volume ends with a quartet of arresting reflective essays of which Washbrook on ‘Colonial Discourse Theory’ is particularly worth visiting.

Two matters seem worth engaging larger comment: one concerning what ought now to be, but not always is, the instinctive approach of imperial historians; the other concerning a long-running theme which several authors illumine but which in their separate chapters they were hardly able to encompass.

Subjects and Empire

It should by now be—and thankfully frequently is—a golden rule that imperial history is as much about subjects as about rulers. That is widely exemplified in the plethora of weighty chapters in the first two volumes on the early American colonies which are replete with the experiences of their European migrants. So much so are they discussed indeed in their own terms that they more frequently appear here as colonial Americans than as British settlers. Such treatment, however, is not always meted out. For there is in this volume the first sign of the fault line which variously resurfaces in each subsequent volume. Chapter 15 is entitled ‘Native Americans

⁶ Vol. III, ch. 30.

and Europeans in English America'. It is only very partially that. Overwhelmingly it is about 'Europeans and Native Americans'. The same is largely true of the next volume's counterpart chapter on 'Native Peoples of North America and the Eighteenth Century British Empire'. Learned as this clearly is, there is no sustained account here of how the European advent was perceived, handled, and suffered upon the Native American side.

Volume III contains a number of examples that variously exemplify what can and surely should be done. In an impressive account of the post-1882 British occupation of Egypt, al-Sayyid-Marsot, for example, quite naturally assumes that he should pay as much attention to Egyptians as to the British. In their chapter on 'Australia and the Western Pacific' Denoon and Wyndham twice invert the customary order. Not only do they pay as much attention to the latter as to the former. Rather than placing the European advent and the establishment of European colonies in the region at the centre of their story they give primacy of place to the countries and to the peoples to which they came. That approach refreshingly marks their later discussion and illustrates the revolution which 'area studies' have now so often brought about here and elsewhere. At the end of the volume there is an excellent chapter by McCaskie on 'cultural encounters' between the British and a wide spread of African peoples prior to the colonial advent, which, while spelling out the shifting attitudes of the former, graphically relates the structures and perceptions that governed the responses of the latter.

Volume III further includes what some will think the most noteworthy chapter in these five volumes: Washbrook on 'India 1818–1860'. Its purport is propounded at the outset. The period is to be considered, Washbrook writes, 'less from the perspectives of British rule and more from those of the practices of Indian society'. There are several threads to his story. One central one looks back to the eighteenth century when Clive and Hastings fostered a British–Indian military-fiscal state rooted in the values of 'Oriental despotism'. That, as is well known, precipitated a sharp reaction in Britain which found expression in Hastings' trial and in Cornwallis' reforms of the mid 1780s to the early 1790s. These, however, did not assure India of 'modernisation'. For soon afterwards there followed a succession of wars of conquest at the hands of the British during which, Washbrook affirms, Munro and his fellow army officers turned the British administration of India back into its despotic, military-fiscal form. As a result India became 'a very military state'. The army was highly visible. Martial Law was freely employed. Military expenditure 'absorbed most available resources'. All of which was compounded by a considerable degree of 'traditionalisation'. Peasantization proceeded apace. A hardened theory of caste restructured 'public worship, physical mobility, marriage, inheritance, and even property ownership'. Princes, 'scribal gentries', warrior noblemen, 'martial communities', subordinate officers in the so-called autonomous 'village communities', were given much greater security of tenure than they had ever had before. While because between the 1820s and the early 1850s there was a debilitating recession many advanced institutions of indigenous commerce and investment came to be destroyed. Between 1846 and 1856 Dalhousie as Governor-General, along with a new generation of civilian administrators,

sought to turn all this around once again. But since in so doing they precipitated the Great Revolt of 1857 the changes they sought to introduce were only half effected. That had numerous implications. As India's 'Brahmanic scribal gentries' moved to become its national intelligentsia so, Washbrook writes, their nationalism was 'torn between attempts to pursue a modern Western future and . . . [an] "Oriental" Indian past'. To which might be added that India's military-fiscal tradition lived on, particularly in Punjab, there to provide the distinctive infrastructure of independent Pakistan. Here is a masterly example of a recounting of 'the meaning of British imperialism for the ruled as well as the rulers' which as Editor-in-Chief Louis affirms to be one of *OHBE*'s principal objectives.

Once more, however, this volume displays the earlier faultline. A chapter on 'Religion, Missionary Enthusiasm, and Empire', while providing an exemplary account of ecclesiastical and missionary expansion, scarcely says a word about converts (or non converts). The chapter subsequent to Washbrook's for late nineteenth-century India is, as its title affirms, simply about 'Imperial India'. The terms 'tenancy acts', 'alienation of land from agriculturists', and 'famine' can be found once each; 'railways' and 'irrigation' twice; but there is not a single word of elaboration about any of them, despite their huge importance for India's 'three-quarters of male workers [who] were employed in rural activities'. Nor is there any discussion of population growth, canal colonies, the currency crisis, or the shifts in power structures in these years in rural societies. Even more worrying is a chapter on 'Southern Africa, 1795–1910' which relates the oft-told story of Briton–Boer conflicts in these years, but does nothing to recount the experiences of South Africa's Africans even in relation to the threats they faced in the sustained advance of British and Boer forces.

Like its predecessors, Volume IV has a full quota of exemplary accounts: Johnson on the West Indies, Robinson on the Muslim world, Falola and Roberts on West Africa, Marks on Southern Africa, and a characteristically scintillating chapter by Lonsdale on East Africa. It is a pity that its chapter on 'Critics of Empire in Britain' is not balanced by one, say, on Bankimchandra, Gandhi, Nkrumah and Nyerere. While, aside from Constantine's chapter on migrants, it palls somewhat to have to wait 379 pages until Hanlon's refreshing chapter 16 on Gender has something to say about some of the empire's rank and file.

The fault line is sadly at its most salient in the inadequate attention given in these volumes to subjects of empire in their accounts of the beginnings of empire and in significant aspects of the end of empire. The fifteen or so early chapters upon the American colonies in Volumes I and II have numerous references to Native American confederacies, and, where not explicitly at least by implication, to the overrunning of Native American lands by large numbers of European settlers. Between them they cover two centuries of frontier engagement. They offer little insight, however, into the prevenient and concurrent features of Native American histories which conditioned these encounters. Only spasmodically do they refer to the strategies Native Americans employed (and toyed with) as the settlers advanced, or to any agency they exercised of their own. In Australian (and so much

African) historiography the concern here is with 'the other side of the frontier'.⁷ Upon the evidence of these chapters that agenda remains at a discount here.

It is surprisingly absent elsewhere too. Volume II has much to say about the reasons for the British conquest of India, and as with the origins of the American revolution there is considerable debate. Bayly's argument that this was critically assisted by the nexus the British established with India's merchant communities is reinforced by Ray who asserts that it was less 'superior European technology and powers of organisation' that made the British conquest possible than their 'ability to mobilize a flow of resources through the good offices of Indian bankers'. Bayly's related argument that the paramountcy acquired by the British was built upon economic growth in the regions rather than the collapse of the imperial Mughal power at the centre, whilst still persuasive to many, is under challenge, as is faithfully recorded here. What, however, is too often inadequately explained is how precisely British rule came to be established on the ground. There are a number of statements to the effect that: 'The British won power as participants in Indian political struggles'. Yet even in discussing Bengal in the late 1750s no elaboration is provided of what such participation entailed. Later we are told that following five years of war with an Indian confederacy of Marathas, Hyderabad and Mysore the British made peace by 1784 'with nothing to show for it'. Fifteen years on, however, Mysore was separately conquered, Hyderabad was overawed, and 'at a critical moment' when the British forces advanced into Maratha country 'civil war . . . paralyzed the mechanisms of the Maratha confederacy'. Accounts of these events are, of course, available elsewhere, but in the two references made to them here the Indian side to this denouement is left quite opaque.

Volumes III and V have important chapters on 'The Partition of Africa' which naturally focus on the territorial carve-up of the continent amongst the European powers. But even more than in these other instances there is next to nothing on what immediately followed—the establishment of British colonial rule over so much of Africa, let alone the range of strategies to which African leaders variously resorted as this first threatened and then burst upon them. There is a whole literature about all this—Ranger, Prins, Lonsdale, Iliffe for East and Central Africa for a start⁸—none of which, apart from a paragraph in a later chapter, significantly by Lonsdale himself, is given attention here. A serious consequence of these kinds of lapses is that it makes too many distinguished area specialists not just impatient with but disdainful towards 'imperial' history, when as so much else in *OHBE* attests that any such disjunction is quite unnecessary.

The case is not helped by the treatment of important aspects of decolonization. Where authors have some first-hand knowledge, the accounts by Johnson on the West Indies, Balfour-Paul on the Middle East, McIntyre on the South Pacific and others too are impeccable. In the *Historiography*

⁷ See Henry Reynold's book with this title (Townsville, 1981).

⁸ E.g. T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* (London, 1967); Gwyn Prins, *The Hidden Hippopotamus* (Cambridge, 1980).

volume, however, the 'Decolonization' chapter is not just perfunctory in its references to 'the particularities of local politics' (i.e. the key nationalist-imperialist struggles). It is so focused on the international and 'domestic' (by which it means the British) scenes as to miss even their importance. While correspondingly its 'Select Bibliography' of 20 items contains not a single work by any non-westerner; for India alone, no Nanda, no Gopal, no Kumar, no Sarkar, no Jalal, no Pandey, no Chandra.

The principal stories suffer too. The introductory chapter to *The Twentieth Century* volume tells us that: 'The precipitate end of the Raj [in India] was caused by shifts in world politics and power, not by nationalist demands or liberal British intent' (drawing on a near identical statement in the main Indian chapter). Not simply is no evidence adduced. This is about 180 degrees mistaken. Five years before the 'precipitate end' the Cripps declaration of 1942 ensured that India would have independence so soon as World War II was over.⁹ That decision was precipitated (to be specific) by the insistence of a fifteen-year-long observer of the mounting force of Indian nationalism, the British Deputy Prime Minister and Labour leader, Attlee, that 'the East is now asserting itself against the long dominance of the West' and that 'it was impossible to accept . . . crude imperialism' any longer.¹⁰ The preeminent issue thereafter was not whether the British would go—they said they would, and they did—but (as so often at this stage elsewhere) the distribution of power on their departure. The Indian chapter states that: 'By the 1930s the British and many Indian politicians were amazed at the social spread and depth of the Congress [i.e. nationalist] appeal', but never really allows for this, and then avows that at no stage did this make India 'ungovernable'. That was hardly the view of India's British administrators. Early in 1932, in a move to restore their fractured authority in the face of Congress' second Civil Disobedience movement, they incarcerated over 30,000 Congressmen. Ten years later they went to the lengths of mobilizing over 50 battalions of troops against Congress' 'Quit India' campaign so as to do so once again. Why there should be this downplaying of the nationalist thrust is hard to say.

The major chapter in Volume IV on the 'Dissolution of the British Empire' is in its own terms a masterly account of the unfolding course of British policy. More than once, moreover, it acknowledges 'the local strength of nationalism'. It is nevertheless flawed. For its overwhelming focus is on the British side of the encounter, and that leads it awry. It describes (to take one example) the British Colonial Secretary's actions in 1959–61 in unravelling the empire in East and Central Africa as those of the 'Macleod juggernaut'. It makes no mention, however, of those who were actually bulldozing the British edifice there—and thereby forcing Macleod's hand: from Nyerere twisting Tanganyika's multiracial constitution to death in 1958 (and Nyanza Province and other parts proving 'ungovernable'); to

⁹ E.g. W. K. Hancock, *Argument of Empire* (Harmondsworth, 1943), p. 38, written while serving within the British Cabinet Office.

¹⁰ Attlee's memorandum, 2 Feb. 1942, Nicholas Mansergh, *Constitutional Relations between Britain and India. The Transfer of Power 1942–47* (London, 1972), Vol. I, p. 60.

Nyasaland's nationalist eruption in 1959; on to Kaunda in the latter part of 1961 making a breach for black majority rule in Northern Rhodesia against Macleod's mid-year backflip on this (and thus ensuring the final breakup of the Central African Federation) by a brilliantly orchestrated, physically destructive, but personally entirely non-violent nationalist agitation. The difficulty with one-sided accounts—and those simply propounding a 'freedom struggle' are equally deficient—is that they never come to grips with the intensity of the *two-way* struggles these key decolonizations entailed, and so misrepresent their course.

A more comprehensive thesis cannot be fully elaborated here. Its crux turns on recognizing that extensively in Asia and Africa the generation of a nationalist movement was both the prime mover and ultimate propellant of any advance towards independence. Imperial policies, under such metropolitan and international influences as might in any particular case be relevant, were nevertheless of major importance—and so call for extensive study—because, more than anything else (as any glance at the corresponding Dutch, French and Portuguese stories will reaffirm), they determined the nature of the ensuing nationalist–imperialist struggle. But never the eventual upshot.

Empire and Subjects

Winding their ways through these volumes are a number of intriguing themes. Volume I, for example, has a superb chapter by Pagden especially about Locke's justification for the pursuit of empire. Later developments in British thinking on this matter are eruditely considered by Porter in Volume III writing about 'Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery and Humanitarianism' in the nineteenth century, and equally by Hyam in Volume IV on 'Trusteeship' in the twentieth, and the issue periodically engages others. Likewise Drayton contributes an exemplary chapter in Volume II on 'Knowledge and Empire' in the eighteenth century, which is further pursued in his chapter on 'Science and Medicine in the British Empire' in the *Historiography* volume. Such themes, however, warrant further systematic study.

Here a larger one will be sketched. Some years ago Jeffrey produced a table showing that in the 1930s the numbers of Europeans in proportion to the total population in Indonesia stood at 1:200, in Vietnam at 1:475, while in India at 1:3650.¹¹ That in part reflected the difference between the strong tendency in the Dutch and the French empires (as indeed the Spanish and Portuguese) towards submitting their subjects to the direct rule of colonial officials with the long nurtured preference of the British for incorporating them under some substantially autonomous local authority standing intermediate between them and the imperial power. Madden has traced out the early pedigree of this propensity in the feudal forms of the medieval English empire where, subject to the overall sovereignty of the

¹¹ Robin Jeffrey (ed.), *Asia—The Winning of Independence* (London, 1981), p. 5.

Crown, 'a considerable amount of sturdy self-government' existed in Anjou, Aquitaine, Gascony, Ireland, Wales, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, the marcher lordships of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford, and the Bishopric of Durham. In many ways Durham became the prototype for this whole approach.

The story here goes back to the grant by Henry II of a charter in 1153 'to God and Saint Cuthbert, and the church of Durham and Hugh the Bishop' to enable them to maintain 'the Bishop's peace' in northern England, appoint officials, mint coinage, grant pardons, and in due course have exclusive possession of pleas of the Crown in their courts. In fulfilling these tasks successive Bishops were supported by an entourage of officials (steward, sheriff, chancellor etc.) and a shire court of tenants and freemen which came to have rudimentary legislative, taxative and even appropriation powers. Two centuries on, a parallel development, borrowed from the Guilds, saw the granting of similar powers of self-government to Merchants of the Staple in Flanders in 1359 and at Calais in 1363.

Somewhat unfortunately this earlier story finds no place in *The Origins of Empire* since it clearly shows that the later strong tendency within the British empire for devolved government already had by 1600 over four centuries of varied practice behind it. What is more, not only did the feudal grant in fief become the model for the proprietary grants that were made to Cabot in 1496 and half a dozen others through to Penn in 1681, but the grants to merchant adventurers were then replicated in that to the Muscovy Company in 1555, the East India Company in 1600 and several others. In three instances, the Caribees, Maryland and Carolina, the grants specifically conferred powers that 'any Bishop of Durham . . . ever heretofore hath held'.¹² So the line of descent was extraordinarily direct. In each instance, moreover, as in Durham and Calais, a three-tiered institutional structure developed of proprietor/chairman, council of advisers/ assistants, and court of freeholders/shareholders which through various vicissitudes evolved into the characteristic British colonial structure of Governor exercising most of the functions of the Crown (and others too); a Council consisting of holders of administrative and other offices; and (in line with the developing rights of the Durham shire court) a Legislative Assembly with legislative and local taxation powers.¹³ By the mid-eighteenth century with six centuries of practical application behind it, it scarcely seems too much to suggest that in these terms the mind-set of the British empire, despite periodic thrusts to the contrary, was very largely set. Notable chapters by Braddick, Dunn and

¹² The Durham precedent in the Maryland charter is noted, Vol. I, p. 297, but is dated to the 14th not the 12th century.

¹³ Frederick Madden with David Fieldhouse (eds), *The Empire of the Britagnes, 1175-1688, Select Documents on the Constitutional History of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, Vol. I (Westport, 1985), *passim* but especially pp. xxiii-xxiv, 1-2, 151-4, 221, 223, 421; and e.g. A. F. Madden, '“Not for Export”: the Westminster Model of Government and British Colonial Practice', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, VIII (Oct. 1979), 1, pp. 10-29; and 'Constitution-Making and Nationhood: The British Experience—an Overview', *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, XXXVI (July 1988), 2, pp. 123-34.

Steele in Volumes I and II elaborate upon these later details, as do many of the particular colony chapters.

In due course proprietary grants came to be overtaken by events; ultimately in the case of the East India Company by the Great Revolt of 1857. But just a quarter of century later 'chartered' rule was revived—for the British North Borneo Company (1881), the Royal Niger Company (1886), the Imperial British East Africa Company (1888), and the British South Africa Company (1889). It survived till 1923 in Southern Rhodesia, and in Borneo till the Second World War. Upon its final demise it had variously been in evidence for almost eight centuries.

Meanwhile, two centuries earlier there had been the one major innovation in the system. This was first devised in India in conjunction with the great expansion of British dominion there at the hands of the East India Company. As this occurred the Company was in no position to increase its European staff to the extent that would have enabled it to institute direct rule over all its new conquests. To begin with, therefore, much the greater part of India was left beneath the Company's hegemony under the rulership of the Indian Princes. With these the Company constructed a number of 'subsidiary alliances' and other associations that left the Princes 'a considerable degree of sturdy self-government'. In that sense their position was structurally akin to that of the Bishop of Durham and the Seneschal of Gascony. Nevertheless, whilst from time to time the British might topple a particular prince, since these arrangements preserved the rules of succession and the authority which the Princes' traditional rulership (in the Weberian sense) gave them, their position was very different from that of Bishops and Seneschals whose appointment and authority came from the King. It was this difference which led to the most significant structural addition which the system saw. For in a situation where indigenous rulers were preserved and where neither their appointment nor the source of their authority derived from the paramount power, that power needed to have some other means by which to exercise its dominion. As a consequence, stemming from the system of commercial agents the Company had posted to Indian courts, there came into being the structurally quite new office which after some debate came to be called 'Resident'—resident overseer, that is, of the paramount power's interest in the workings of a subordinated polity.

That system not only spread across around one-third of the Indian sub-continent and variously over some 500 and more Princely States. As in the nineteenth century British dominion, informal as well as formal, spread still further afield its basic principles came to be applied to the sultanates of Malaya and Zanzibar, the emirates of Northern Nigeria and the Persian Gulf, several chieftaincies and kingdoms in southern and west Africa, the kingdoms of Uganda, and even in the very varied circumstances of Fiji, Thailand, Egypt, and Iraq. Its more detailed operations varied according to the degree of direct imperial intervention in the operations of the subordinated government (light in the Persian Gulf, heavy in Malaya) and over time (notably in India, and in Nigeria). At the hands of Lord Lugard at the beginning of the twentieth century it was all elevated into a 'doctrine' of

'Indirect Rule'. In Princely India it came to be called 'Paramountcy'. Its principles, however, with the addition of the office of Resident (or its equivalent), went back to that early charter of Henry II (if not before). Many of these later matters are canvassed in distinguished chapters by Burroughs and Cell in Volumes III and IV.

Two misconceptions, however, are abroad. It is often stated that there were sharp differences between those parts of the British empire subject to 'indirect rule' and those under 'direct rule'. The latter certainly operated in places, but in two respects this needs qualifying. In substantial parts of 'British India' (namely those large areas not incorporated within the Princely States) large landlords exercised a governing authority very similar to that possessed by Indian princes. (Anand Yang provides an illuminating study of one such case under the telling title: *The Limited Raj*).¹⁴ Such authority was particularly exercised within British India after 1857 by the highly privileged Taluqdars of Awadh. Their arch-champion Butler's claim to be ruling through 'the natural leaders of the people' closely paralleled Lugard's contemporary doctrine of 'Indirect Rule'. The further qualification relates to the determination of Munro as Governor of Madras in the 1820s, and others thereafter, to rule India through 'native agency'. In practice that meant employing members of India's 'service communities'—mostly Brahmins and Kayasths—such as Indian Princes did.¹⁵ That tendency died hard. In very many places in Africa later British administrators sought to create governing chieftaincies where these had not existed before. Where all this proved especially difficult to effect, British rule proved to be particularly vulnerable. But that is another story.

The other misconception states that there was a major difference between those places where imperial rule was authoritarian and those where representative institutions could be found. In both instances, however—certainly initially the latter and in many cases in the former—there was devolution to local elites: to nominated and elected settler leaders, and traditionally sanctioned rulers. Thanks to a long inheritance, the British were thus able to manage an immensely extensive empire without overdue strain. At five stages, so *OHBE* illuminatingly relates, those in the metropole sought to tighten the reins: during the last years of Charles II's and then James II's reign; both before and (particularly by means of Crown Colony government) after the American Revolution; in the moves to establish Imperial Federation around 1900; and at the Ottawa conference in 1932.¹⁶ It was not long, however, before all such efforts aborted. The mind set seems to have been extraordinarily strong.

In the end the system had one great advantage. For its predilection for devolution meant that following the disastrous attempt to coerce the American colonists it first proved possible to let out the rope through the three

¹⁴ See Anand Yang's book with that title (Berkeley, 1989), and Sarah Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power* (Cambridge, 1992).

¹⁵ Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro. The Origins of the Colonial State and His Vision of Empire* (Delhi, 1989), ch. 7; R. E. Frykenberg, *Guntur District 1788-1848* (Oxford, 1965).

¹⁶ Vol. I, ch. 20.

classic stages of Representative Government (an elected legislature), Responsible Government (a Legislature-dependent executive), and Dominion Status (which since this implied complete independence that could very easily follow). Then, when this progression seemed too inflexible, variations were concocted; in India, prior to full Responsible Government, 'Dyarchy' (i.e. with only half the ministers dependent on the legislature); while later in Africa and elsewhere several smaller incremental steps in the localization of the legislature and executive simultaneously were devised. Parallel loosening, meanwhile, transformed the British Empire into the British Commonwealth in 1926–31, and then into the Commonwealth of Nations in 1949.

The old formula nevertheless lives on. By 1999 the great majority of Australians wished to have an Australian Head of State. But deep disagreement over the details aborted the ensuing referendum. In spite of a total devolution of governmental powers, as the twenty-first century opens Elizabeth II thus remains Australia's sovereign. Wherever he may be, Henry II is entitled to a wry smile at the persistence of the principles he adumbrated eight-and-a-half centuries earlier.

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The Weak Body of a Useless Woman: Matsuo Taseko and the Meiji Restoration. By ANNE WALTHALL. Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1998.

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Anne Walthall has already done much to challenge received ideas about Japanese society in the Tokugawa period, and she has done so not only by discovering the hidden subjectivities of the powerless, especially peasants and women, but also by scrutinizing them with a concern both to historicize them and to explore their theoretical potential. She has already had important things to say about rural popular cultures, about peasant self-representation and about what she has called the 'invisible presence' of women in the history of social protest in nineteenth-century Japan. Readers of this book, then, who approach it with high expectations will not be disappointed. They should certainly not be put off by the unappetizing main title, which is a paraphrase of one of Matsuo Taseko's poems. It is presumably intended both as a reflection of Taseko's perceptions of herself and as an ironic challenge to modern readers, but it becomes clear in the course of the book that, although she may have written a poem entitled 'on regretting being a woman' and in her poetry did give voice to such a depressing view of her sex, such reflections did not translate themselves into passive inaction, either in her case or in the case of certain other women she encountered.

Walthall declares at the outset that her subtitle constitutes 'a deliberate challenge to a male-centred genre of history writing that demands the

public story of the public life', by reflecting the title of Marius Jansen's *Sakamoto Ryōma and the Meiji Restoration* (1961). This does not mean that she is seeking to present Matsuo Taseko (1811–1894) as one of the leading figures in the Restoration movement, but neither does it signify that she is simply excavating a private life, one that may be interesting and revealing, but one that remains stubbornly private. For in a way that deserves the warmest praise; Walthall has, through her portrait of one woman, shown how the economic position of rural women was changing in the nineteenth century as a result of protoindustrialization, how information and elite culture percolated through to rural areas and how farmers, including some women, could be and were drawn into political issues, particularly through the medium of *waka* poetry, which served in the last decades of the Bakufu as a conduit for loyalist and anti-foreign sentiments.

Matsuo Taseko may have been a peasant woman, albeit a relatively well-off one, in a remote valley, but she was literate in both Chinese and Japanese, had no difficulty composing poetry, and was not cut off from information on political events or on the arrival of Commodore Perry. But it was the years leading up to the Restoration that were to have a revolutionary effect on her life. In 1861 she joined the Hirata School of Kokugaku founded by Hirata Atsutane, and became one of several thousand registered followers scattered around Japan. Whatever she thought of the School's disdain for women, she clearly shared its views on the superiority of Japan to all other countries and on the need to reject foreigners and their influences, including Buddhism, and she actively raised funds for the publication of the writings of Hirata Atsutane. What is still more surprising is that, during her sojourns in Kyoto in 1862 and 1868, she engaged in various clandestine activities and political intrigues, and established lasting contacts with activist intellectuals such as Fukuba Bisei and with members of the court nobility such as Iwakura Tomomi. And these contacts were not fleeting or unimportant: she became a house-guest in Iwakura's mansion, and in 1868 she was able to make use of them to place a number of her acquaintances in government positions. If the extent of her political activities is undeniable, they posed serious difficulties for her earliest biographers, who were torn between admiration for her loyalism and the feeling, stimulated by the Civil Code and other redefinitions of the role of women in society in the Meiji period, that it had not been proper for a woman to behave in this way. They also pose difficulties for us, since Taseko's life represents a challenge to preconceived notions of the hermetic world of rural women in the Tokugawa period. These difficulties are worth exploring further.

Firstly, Walthall tends to present Taseko as a unique case, a remarkable woman who achieved things that other women in the Tokugawa period could not, partly on account of the turbulent times in which she lived. Yet there are sufficient hints along the way to suggest she was not quite alone. Walthall mentions several women poets and the like with whom Taseko had dealings in Kyoto, and also notes that she was one of twenty-nine registered women members of the Hirata School; this is less than 1% of the total, but it goes against our expectations to find any at all. There is enough here to suggest that this book is telling us not simply about one remarkable

woman but also about possibilities that some women were taking advantage of, possibilities that may have been created by the uncertain times and that were to be circumscribed by the Meiji state. By the end, I had begun to suspect that even in rural society there were perhaps more opportunities for women to become literate and socially active than we have realized, at any rate by the first half of the nineteenth century, and in this sense it is difficult to contextualize Taseko. Some answers to these questions can be found in books such as Ōguchi Yūjirō's *Josei no iru kinsei* (1995), which documents cases of rural women engaging in financial activities or serving in the Shogun's castle, but as yet no more than a start has been made on exploring these issues.

Secondly, on a number of occasions Walthall mentions Taseko's fervent anti-foreign feelings. These she clearly retained in the Meiji period, for after 1868 she was offended by the sight of a Western organ or of Western ships in Tokyo Bay, and by the westernizing reforms of the early Meiji government. In a sense, she remained loyal, as did many others, to the anti-foreign line of the Hirata School, which became rapidly marginalized in the Meiji period. But it is unclear what can have stirred her to such xenophobic views, or how in the Meiji period she reconciled her instincts with the westernizing world that was developing around her. Her xenophobia is heartfelt, rather than a tool for the embarrassment of the Bakufu, but what were its wellsprings?

Finally, Taseko's encounters with Kyoto aristocrats in 1862 and 1868 are nothing short of astonishing. However, for Walthall, unless I am misreading her, it seems to be her gender that occasions the greater surprise and her lowly status the lesser. This needs care, for there is a possibility that her gender neutralized her status, in other words, that a woman of her background could do politically what a man could not have done. Be that as it may, there is surely something here to be learned about the wealthier peasants known as *gōnō* and their ascribed rather than prescribed status at the end of the Tokugawa period. Taseko's activities were made possible, as Walthall makes clear, by considerable financial resources derived partly from raising silkworms, and what difference wealth made to status perceptions is an unanswered question. In this connection, it is striking that there is no mention in this book of Taseko encountering any prejudice against women among the activists she mixed with in Kyoto; nobody tells her she does not belong. Possibly she did not choose to record such incidents in her diary, but the lack of them raises the question how she gained acceptance in spite of both her sex and her background.

I am hard-pressed to find shortcomings in this book. Misprints are almost non-existent; it is a nuisance, to be sure, that there is no bibliography, and that the footnotes at the end of chapter 12 do not correspond with the references; and purists might object to references to the heir to the British throne as the 'crown prince', but this is trivial stuff. One of the many strengths of this book is the thick description with which it abounds and which in many respects will force a reevaluation of the pluralities of Tokugawa society. It can be mined for patterns of family life, for literacy expectations, for the social and political uses of poetry, and for much else besides.

If you have any interest in Japan in the Tokugawa period, read this book. There is much to ponder in it, and I can think of no way of praising it more highly.

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Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India. By ARVIND RAJAGOPAL. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. viii, 393.

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In the burgeoning literature dealing with the meteoric rise of Hindutva in the subcontinent, there has been a conspicuous absence of monographs specifically analysing the influence of the media on Hindu nationalist mobilization in the 1980s and 1990s. *Politics after Television* helps to eliminate this deficit. The book presents a densely researched and carefully argued analysis of the interaction between electronic and print media and the startling success of the ideologies of Hindutva in the 1980s and 1990s. Each of its major themes are presented in parallel: the political context of a disintegrating Congress, economic liberalization and growth of the market; the consequent transformation of the place of television media in the public sphere; the running of the Ramayana serial by Doordarshan and, most crucially, the 'split' response to the Ram Janmabhumi movement in the print media. Rajagopal rounds off this *tour de force* with an illuminating study of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and its support base in the United States. *Politics after Television* represents a relatively new departure in interpretations of Hindutva in its emphasis on Hindu nationalism as part of a 'passive' revolution, whose fortunes have been determined largely by the specific contexts of the 1980s and 1990s. Rather than approaching Hindutva through its historical or institutional transformations, or as a 'nationalist' agenda of evolving ideological strategies, Rajagopal examines its success in terms of the market and media environment. As a consequence, the late 1980s and 1990s were the specific historical moment for the author, 'wherein a different relationship between communication and public participation was made possible by three factors: the growth of new media; the expansion of the market; and the legitimation crisis of political authority.' (p. 273). Hindutva is represented as a contradictory and internally inconsistent phenomenon, not easily structured by theories of ideological strategy or institutional development. Whilst this approach offers some startling insights into the connections between the media and the mobilizations of political ideology, the de-emphasis of Hindutva's historical context occasionally undermines the attempt to represent Hindu nationalism as institutionally and ideologically fractured.

Central to Rajagopal's overall argument in the introduction and first chapter, is the idea of a new media regime accompanying economic liberalization, which produced a 'structural set of mutual misperceptions'. The

advent of television and the electronic media serves partly to mask societal divisions. Yet Rajagopal shows that a closer analysis of the media reveals diversified meanings that are appropriated through what is described as the 'split public'—a theme which appears with more force in later discussions of print media. It is argued that the fluidity in interpretations of television images helps to explain the internally contradictory nature of political regimes that mobilized around them. Rajagopal's free employment of Gramsci's thinking on political regimes and civil societies here is curious against his on-going assertion that the meanings of media and political messages are contextually contingent. Gramsci's own context is not included. Nevertheless, the argument is attractive: The split public which the new media environment exhibited was seized upon by Hindu nationalists, taking advantage of a structural set of mutual misperceptions between English-language elites and those of regional languages. A residual problem would seem to be that Hindu nationalism is being represented here as both instrumental and the passive recipient of a set of conditions arising with the free market and liberalized communications. What was the decisive moment for Hindu nationalism, if such a moment can be identified, and how far was it determined by strategic decisions surrounding the Ram Janmabhumi movement? Rajagopal, perhaps deliberately, never resolves this conundrum.

Instead, he prioritizes the broad relationship between the rise of *Hindutva* and changes in the market economy in the 1980s. The core of the argument is that liberalization contributed to the development of a political vacuum in the late 1980s, providing Hindu nationalism with an electoral and propagandistic opportunity. The post-Emergency dilemma of the Congress and the 'structural crisis of the Indian state' are seen as central to this process, allowing the BJP to offer a 'cultural and ideological accompaniment' to liberalization, infusing it with religio-mythical narratives for popular consumption. Yet there is another paradox here. There was no guarantee that the rise of consumer culture, and the appropriation of consumer styles would favour the specific projects of the BJP. Rajiv Gandhi also placated Hindu nationalist opinion in his sponsorship of mythological films and the Congress as a whole had experienced an intermittent engagement with Hindu populism. The crisis of the Indian state argument helps to explain the rise of the institution of the BJP. But accounting for the appeal of Hindu nationalism involves different questions. The very 'internally incoherent' character of *Hindutva's* appeal, as described by the author, allowed Hindu nationalist ideologies to operate in more diffuse ways—broader in scope and not explicitly tied to the Sangh Parivar in all contexts. It was a Congress government which initially sponsored the serialization of the *Ramayana* in 1987—a move which represented a clear break from the policy of religious neutrality in state-sponsored broadcasting. Rajagopal's evidence suggests that the net of Hindu nationalism was cast much wider than the institutions selected by this book.

The broad appeal of Hindu nationalism is aptly illustrated in the second and third chapters, in which Rajagopal presents a richly researched and highly entertaining account of the serialization of Ramanand Sagar's

Ramayana by Doordarshan. With the rapid expansion of electronic media in the late 1980s and the onset of satellite, it was increasingly difficult to restrict religious themes in broadcasting content. The parallel with the liberalization process is clear. But the serialization of the Ramayana was particularly startling in the manner in which the idea of a unified 'Hindu culture' was projected onto the message of the epic. Commentators on the serial asserted that the all-embracing values of the Ramayana, and of 'Hinduism' itself brought together previously separated realms. This process too has a history: long-standing, regionally diverse traditions in religious story-telling involved the reproduction of the Ramayana in forms such as the *katha*. The idea of the Ramayana as a congregational experience that engaged with the political sphere through Hindu nationalist rhetoric, had been a project of earlier nationalists, and not exclusively those of the Hindu right. S. S. Gill, the retired secretary to the Ministry of Information, stated in 1988 that 'In his search for an expressive metaphor to symbolize a welfare state of his dreams, Gandhiji could do no better than think of Ram Raj.' (p. 85). An investigation of Congress meetings in north India in the 1930s and 1940s would reveal the recurrent political re-adaptation of Ramayana imagery, in speeches and public processions. Congress leaders of the left, such as Sampurnanand commended the use of such rhetoric in political mobilization. The significance of the Ramayana for political ideology was not only institutionally broad (Rajagopal mentions how Rajiv Gandhi employed the actor who played Ram to raise crowds in a bye-election for Congress), but also had important historical precedents. The theme of *Politics after Television*, that electronic media transforms the context of politics and acts as the 'backdrop, stage and vehicle of social interaction', changing the constraints within which politics takes place, is tightly argued. It is illustrated in Chapter Five by the connections made between the serialization with its setting up of a new visual regime and the public responses to similar visual dimensions in the Ram Janmabhumi movement. These visual and theatrical regimes had historical precedents worthy of further consideration, and were not confined solely to the mobilizations of the Hindu right. Nor would social scientists and historians of the Hindu right necessarily agree that it was only in the 1980s that Hindu religious practices came to be defined for the first time as acts of national citizenship (p. 67).

The explanations of television's power, as a mechanism that 'processes time', creating a decentred 'multi-layered flow' (p. 129) combine well with Rajagopal's arguments about symbolic politics. But it is in his study of the print media that some of the most exciting pieces of research can be found. Here, the idea of the 'split public' is unpacked—the concept of different languages of politics circulating in incompletely overlapping spheres. This neat analysis allows the author to transform the worn dichotomy of elite and subaltern by emphasizing translation between the split levels, rather than asserting the sovereignty of one over the other. Compared with television, the print media 'allows for a fuller engagement with the experiences conveyed' (p. 155). This immediately raises the question as to how far this engagement has been transformed since the explosion of electronic media,

and to what extent the print coverage of Ram Janmabhumi really represented a new departure for the press in the late 1980s. Nevertheless, Rajagopal's delineation of the 'split public' produces fruitful results. Whilst for the English-language press, Ram Janmabhumi was essentially inexplicable, the Hindi papers' proximity to religious symbolism demonstrated a more direct emotional engagement with the movement. This contrast is characterized by Rajagopal in multiple forms—the 'dispersed' nature of Hindi press comment against the more consolidated English-language papers, or the essentially nationalist Hindi interpretation versus the neo-colonial English. This again begs the question of how far these differences can be seen in earlier phases. The 'structured set of misperceptions' arising from this split media might be seen as an enduring phenomenon, appearing in earlier phases of print journalism in India. Religious symbolism appeared in the burgeoning Hindi press of the 1920s and 1930s, and was frequently decried by colonial reporters. For Rajagopal, the important point is that the 'structured misperceptions' of the 1990s were directly exploited by the Sangh Parivar. Young reporters were cultivated, their material insecurity exploited with BJP gifts. The selling power of communal sensationalism was harnessed to the Sangh's political chariot. In a limited sense, the split media was managed by the Hindu right. During his *rath yatra* Ram Advani represented himself as devotee of Ram to the Hindi press, and as politician for the English-language papers. The distance between the Hindi and English presses became 'a strategic resource' for Hindu nationalists. Yet the central argument that the context of television media transformed the nature of this distance is not explicitly demonstrated. Rather, Rajagopal's arguments about print media stand alone, offering a wealth of new material and a unique insight into the image-machine of the Sangh Parivar.

Chapter 6 presents a fascinating insight into the nature of VHP organization and activity in the United States. Its perceptive and entertaining accounts of the predicament of the Non Resident Indians are based on first-hand experience—partly the fruit of the author's involvement in a three-day camp of the Hindu Swayamsewak Sangh. In this chapter, Hindutva is represented less as a global phenomenon than as a force moulding itself to the particular cultural crises of South Asian experiences in the States: The problems of parental control, racial hierarchies, and a coming to terms with the 'dollar or dharma' dilemma. The arguments concerning racial self-perception are particularly useful in representing the varied success of Hindutva ideologies and institutions amongst the diaspora. These variants, and hence our understanding of the VHP's global project might have been enriched through comparisons with other diasporic communities. Rajagopal emphasizes the point that great differences in responses to Hindu nationalism can be seen between first-generation and later Indian immigrants. Against this argument, specific comparisons with the earlier emigrants to the U.K. would be instructive, especially as the Hindu Swayamsewak Sangh has a longer history there. Since racial thinking is also central to this study, where 'Indian immigrants' assertion of Indian/Hindu identity were indissociable from their experience of racial marginalization in the U.S.' (p. 268), the 'more hostile racial environment' of the U.K.

would surely have provided an interesting counterpoise. Indeed, the study of the VHP's financial contribution to Indian projects, and the nature of its global organization could be compared to other contexts, for example the Parishad's fund-raising activities in South Africa, or the appeal of Hindu nationalism amongst Indians in the Gulf, East Africa or Mauritius. These spatial comparisons would surely enrich this unique study of the United States presented by Rajagopal, as would temporal analyses: the 1993 'Global Vision 2000' held in Washington—the centenary of Vivekananda's appearance in Chicago—paralleled many of the arguments of the 1893 Parliament of Religions. Vivekananda's comparison of the contrasting 'feminine' and 'masculine' *shakti* worship of East and West at that conference foreshadowed the dharmic/materialist dichotomy a century later.

In the conclusion to this book, Rajagopal refers to the argument of V. P. Singh in 1991, that other parties too could 'claim Ram' (p. 271). An unexplored theme seems to be exposed here: one which compares the content of Hindu nationalist motifs—its symbol manipulation—with institutions and parties outside the main right-wing institutions. This theme is crucial to understandings of the political and ideological relationships between Congress, regional parties and Hindutva. Recent interpretations, including Rajagopal's, have highlighted the 'hiatus' following Congress's fall from power to help explain the similar electoral bases and national aspirations of the Congress and BJP. The latter is described as filling the Congress vacuum with its assumptions of high caste Hindu 'majoritarianism'. Yet, given the sophistication with which Rajagopal has delineated the intrusion of Hindu nationalist motifs into civil society and the splintered nature of its media environment, as well as its relationship to marketing and consumption patterns, one might expect the book to offer more diversified explanations for the ideological reach of Hindu nationalism. The research helps Rajagopal to unravel the original argument that the Ramayana serial served as a 'moment of condensation' (p. 278) for diverse and divided publics in the subcontinent, translating public responses at certain historical junctures into an artificial sense of Hindu unity. But the question remains as to how far the sense of a tolerant, 'scientific' Hinduism is attributable to the Sangh Parivar. *Politics after Television* accepts the assumption that a monolithic view of the Nehruvian developmental Congress was replaced by a new kind of all-encompassing rhetoric belonging to the Hindu right. Although Rajagopal shows how this new political language drew upon the performative character of politics and, in recognition of the ideas of Gramsci, was limited and 'make-shift', the diffusion of such a political language outside the Hindu right is left to the reader's imagination. This would seem to be a potential area of further exploration in the face of the BJP's capricious electoral base, and the breadth of the religious symbolism so carefully described in this book. The opening discussion of *Politics after Television* indicates the author's awareness of these implications without fully unravelling them: 'Paying attention to the language of politics offers a way of contesting the stereotype of Hindutva as a separable and aberrant phenomenon somehow existing apart from the mainstream of nationalist politics' (p. 2).

Despite these unresolved questions, the originality and sophistication with which this book approaches the changing nature of the language of

politics in India means that it will probably represent one of the more important studies of Hindutva to appear for a number of years. Other historians and commentators on the Hindu right in the subcontinent and beyond may well dispute Rajagopal's emphases on the themes of market and media, tied explicitly to the specific historical juncture of the late 1980s and 1990s. Alternative contexts for this turbulent period would include the massive increase in sectarian violence across north India from the late 1970s and the growth of regional separatist movements in the early 1980s. Research into the 1940s to 1970s also questions the extent to which the Nehruvian consensus was ever entirely consensual, or a period in which despite electoral fortunes, the ideologies of Hindu nationalism were voiceless. In the two decades following Independence in U.P., the Hindu traditionalist voice was a strong and lingering one within the state Congress and governments. The theme of 'Integral Humanism' in the political thought of RSS leader Deendayal Upadhyaya in the 1960s appropriated elements of Gandhianism—perhaps foreshadowing the flexibility and adaptability of Hindu nationalist ideology in the 1990s. The inter-relationship between the ideological and mobilizational forms of the Hindu right and other parties is an area of research that a study such as Rajagopal's opens up. The book makes this plainly clear in stating that 'the interaction between the Congress and the BJP is an intricate story, pointing to the shared social bases and overlapping histories of the two parties' (p. 58). Nevertheless, in selecting the original and relatively intangible theme of media and its popular consumption, *Politics after Television* will undoubtedly spawn a renewed interest and thought-provoking discussion into the manufacture of political images and the language of politics in South Asia.

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