India, Modernity, and the Great Divergence

Kaveh Yazdani’s India, Modernity, and the Great Divergence: Mysore and Gujarat (17th to 19th C.)

Reviewed by Caleb Simmons

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India, Modernity, and the Great Divergence takes as its primary premise that historical periodization is flawed. This critique resonates with almost anyone who is working on historical issues, especially those thought by some historians to be most rigid. Particularly, Yazdani’s book is a thorough examination of the periodization of modernity, which is at the center of his study. For the author, the rise of modernity has to do with a process a process that unfolds over a long period of time of several “historical stages” and encompasses a number of core regions within South Asia and beyond the 16th century, also the Americas (p. 23). He explains the work of Sanjay Subrahmanyan that modernity slowly develops over a long process of transition. He continues by defining modernity:

To give a very condensed and abbreviated definition, it can be suggested that, in a very broad outline, modernity radically transformed the economic, social, political, judicial, military, epistemological, cognitive and techno-scientific structures of society, as well as the basis of energy consumption. Significantly, human-social relations and the relationship between humans and nature, humans and society and humans and Gods/Gods were transformed in a way, unknown to ‘pre-modern’ humans (p. 23).

With this definition Yazdani attempts to provide a ‘holistic’ approach to modernity that will help us to understand the long process of transition, rather than a ‘reductionist’ definition of modernity that either emphasizes socio-economic, political or epistemological facets (p. 23). By broadening the definition of modernity to be holistic, the author sees modernity everywhere and far before most people date early modernity. Therefore, Yazdani creates a new periodization scheme in which modernity is contrasted to the ancient: “Indeed, modernity undermines the old and substitutes ancient forms with new ones; despite the continuity of an array of persistent traditional elements (p. 25). In this periodization scheme that he proposes, modernity is pushed back in time to a new early modernity that could be called ‘nascent or budding modernity’ between the 10th and 15th centuries (see p. 31 fn. 88 and 89 for other scholars who have taken similar approaches). Next comes ‘mid-modernity’ that existed from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries, which led to ‘late modernity’. While I admire Yazdani’s attempt to rethink periodization regarding historical periods, it is not clear how they will help us to understand the long process of transition better than a ‘reductionist’ approach to modernity. While I think that this attempt at re-periodization was ultimately unsuccessful, the process of thinking about our assumptions regarding historical periods, especially in the epilogue regarding the transition from ‘mid-modernity’ to ‘late modernity’ closely resembles the author’s other writings that have called the same period ‘early modernity’.

To conclude this review, however, I must say that I admire the attempt by Yazdani to rethink periodization because it is always fraught with the problem of thinking about our assumptions regarding historical periods. That being said, I do not believe that the author’s attempt at re-periodization is successful. Therefore, I believe that the book’s organization is very large by contemporary monograph standards. An impressive 669 pages is divided into only one introduction and four chapters, one of which is the epilogue. The material on Mysore and Gujarat is divided into two massive chapters that make up the bulk of the book, 296 and 194 pages respectively. These chapters are subdivided into sections with further subsections and conclusions, but the overall organization and narrative are too easily lost amongst the many details and directions. Readers who are familiar with some of Yazdani’s other publications should not expect the same succinct argumentation, but for the reader willing to put in the time and effort there are many things they will discover of great value throughout its pages.
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failed to increase state revenue as the costs flowed freely and profitably into Britain. The forest exploitation and timber exports policy as fallacy. The tram did facilitate the tram to improve security and access to through forest exploitation, putting forest, and the regional level archival material from the British. He argues that the Forestry objectives stated in the policy documents evidence to refute all claims to conservation or Brahmin deities as well as animist spirits. This allows them to negotiate with the god. Asking for babies. The offerings given which getting pregnant couples visit religious sites (chapter 4). To increase their chances of getting pregnant (chapter 3) as well as with modern biomedicine engage with a ‘sacred geography of fertility’. Thus, parenthood is important to fertile woman. Men, however, are not immune for Thai women’s femininity. This is paired is heightened by the centrality of motherhood is also a liminal space because despite all the

Why and how the book should have done more

The main story emerges through five short chapters, the most important of which outline 1) colonial forest policies in Cochín, 2) the creation of the tram, and 3) the aggressive tactics through which the British maintained control of the area forests through 1900, despite local resistance. The data for these sections is rich and Joseph pulls on important strings that resonate through the later part of Cochín’s globally. Unfortunately, the nugget of data he mines regarding the Cochín forest exploitation are not sufficiently connected to those later sections. Specifically, the two chapters, on 1) historiography and theoretical positions, and 2) colonial policy antecedents, are thin and the variety present the scope of scholarship on environmental history and colonial interventions in the 'new' development world. Despite claiming to take a 'global world systems' theoretical approach (pp. 31-38), this entails little more than noting the importance of the British Empire as an 'exceptional global ecological moment in world history, and the... transformation of natural systems into legible colonial spaces' (p. 27). It is a thin volume and beyond deepening the theoretical and historical context mentioned above, the presentation would have benefited from at least two more chapters. The first would discuss the British railroad project in India, which had strong implications for the Cochín tram and also for colonial extractivist projects globally. The second would deepen the discussion about British forestry in India to include a discussion of British colonial forestry practices in general. These are key issues. For an experienced reader, the volume may be rollicking不过是做 Cancelled out the data increase while the benefits of development accrue outside the state apparatus. In this case, the British colonialism marks an ‘environmental watershed’ in the Cochín region and is an example of technological imperialism. Such has already been argued and the data added from this study further validates this argument.

Critique, theoretical and intellectual shortcomings

The only glaring concern with the overall treatment is the author’s insistence that the pre-colonial period had a ‘apolitical outlook’ that evolved in an ‘eco-sense’, through which the ‘administration of the forest wealth did not collide with the interests of the people’ (p. 6). This is unfortunate. There is scant evidence provided for his conclusion that the pre-colonial plantation was not adequately situate that contribution in the larger field of scholarship critiquing colonial extraction and gives an incomplete picture.

Why you should read this book

Courtney Work

Cochin Forests and the British Techno-ecological Imperialism in India


Reviewed title:

Cochin Forests and the British Techno-ecological Imperialism in India

Sebastian Joseph.

The Review

is heightened by the centrality of motherhood for Thai women’s femininity. This is paired with fears of desertion by their husbands who might abandon them for a younger, more fertile woman. Men, however, are not immune to the issue as fertility is equated with potency and virility. Thus, parenthood is important to couples to feel complete as well as to fulfill their respective gender roles. Adoption is not seen as a viable solution due to the lack of a biological connection to the child. Further, the existence of birth parents is seen as highly problematic. For these reasons, couples who can afford the treatment opt for assisted reproduction.

On the whole, Whittaker has made some inroads into the academic studies of assisted reproduction. Here Whittaker has made some inroads into the role of assisted fertility treatment and their feelings about it. With Thal in Vidro Andrea Whittaker, has made some inroads into the role of assisted fertility treatment and their feelings about it.