Sanjay Subrahmanyam

Europe's India: Words, People, Empires, 1500–1800. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. Pp. xvii + 394. Hb, \$39.95.

A comprehensive grasp of Mughal and European history, in relation to India and the early modern world, combined with a command of a dozen or more languages, both Asian and European, enables Sanjay Subrahmanyam to delve into a wide array of archival sources. Moreover, his command of several scholarly disciplines—ranging from economics, history, and politics to literary theory, religions, and visual cultures—together with his intellectual imagination, has allowed him to tackle almost any issue he wishes. As a result, beyond greatly increasing our understanding of India's history—from the arrival of Vasco da Gama in the late fifteenth century to the establishment of the English East India Company's Raj at the end of the eighteenth century—he has now also increased our understanding of how Europe's knowledge of India increased during these same centuries. In intricate detail and with remarkable sophistication, he shows us exactly how certain Europeans became engaged with the inner workings of societies in the subcontinent and how, as a consequence, European understandings of cultures and societies in India gradually evolved.

Increasing exchanges of goods and ideas involved merchants, mercenaries, and missionaries, as well as diplomats, envoys, and scholars. Each person, whether from Portugal, The Netherlands, England, France, Italy, or Germany, brought particular motives, proclivities, and reasons for gaining an understanding of India. In aggregate, they gathered an ever-expanding stream of knowledge about India. The mounting body of knowledge that was acquired, along with the increasing amounts of knowledge brought to India from Europe, combined to shape significantly both European and Indian thought. Subrahmanyam carefully traces these changing ideas about India. He examines mutual exchanges, with special reference to how European fascinations with, and representations of, India changed over time and how these differed from each other. What began as a small trickle of artifacts, manuscripts, and paintings, both mundane and precious, began flowing into Europe from the sixteenth century onwards, increasing until it became a flood. This, in turn, shaped notions of India's geography, history, politics, religion, and society. What resulted can be seen as a culturally hybrid production of knowledge.

Subrahmanyam refuses to bow before currently fashionable historiographic idols of “discourse analysis” and “subaltern studies,” especially as parlayed by the late Edward Said and his disciples. He rejects any inherent binary opposition between “self-serving” Orientalists and a “true knowledge” of India. Rather, we are shown, in precise words and sophisticated argument, how valid

understandings must always stand in relation to concrete circumstances of acquisition and production. Indeed, this volume is concerned both with how Europe came to understand India as it was with how, in turn, Europe's ideas of art, commerce, language, and religion were shaped by ideas from India.

A forty-five-page introduction deals with intricate disputes over "Orientalism." This is followed by four long chapters. These address issues relating to: (1) the "Indo-Portuguese Moment"; (2) the question of "Indian Religion"; (3) the "Case of James Fraser, 1730–1750" and the "Coproduction" of knowledge; and (4) the "Transition to Colonial Knowledge." A long and intricate conclusion reverses our gaze—we are shown complex and changing vicissitudes of "India's Europe."

Throughout this work, we learn how each selected European became engaged with daunting complexities of what was encountered over an extended period of time, how each gradually gained understandings of Indian society, and how such understandings, while invariably partial, could often be remarkably insightful and thorough. The composite result of what eventually emerged is referred to as "knowledge production." Embedded within each such "knowledge complex" were beliefs and practices relating to what, for example, would eventually be fitted into the rubric now called "Hinduism." Again, there were encounters with what we now know as "caste." None of this array of knowledge could have been acquired without deep interactions with "local" or "native" informants. Penetrating and precise insights were conveyed to Europeans by individuals who were already embedded in India's cultures. Information gained now rests in manuscript collections scattered throughout Europe.

Europe's India, to repeat, is a remarkable study of materials accumulated over a span of three centuries. These materials reflect proclivities of the European individuals who did the collecting—occupational, social, or ideological. Elements of Portuguese presence and influence, so dominant in the sixteenth century, never disappeared. This gave way to the presence of Dutch, English, and French individuals, each in the service of a different East India Company that belonged to a different nation. But remnants of Indo-Portuguese influence persisted along the littoral fringes of India. Small contingents of individuals from Italy, Germany, Scandinavia, and even Scotland, added to this multinational brew. What resulted was an intricate composite of European presences in India, elements of which would remain influential, and insightful, long after the British Raj had become ascendant in the late eighteenth century. The multi-faceted nature of Europe's India revealed by Subrahmanyam needs to be much better appreciated than it has heretofore been.

Only a fraction of the many individuals who brought collections of valuable material back to Europe are brought to our attention. Perhaps no single

collection is more fascinating, or rich in texture, than the “coproduction” of knowledge acquired by James Fraser. This Scots servant of the East India Company, returned to England in 1741 after eleven years in India, bringing back with him a rich trove of manuscripts acquired in collaboration with local *baniyas* and prominent notables—Kayatha, Khattri, Parsi, and Mughal. This he bestowed on the Bodleian Library in Oxford. With this he published a detailed list. *A Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Persic, Arabic, and Sanskerrit Languages collected in the East* (London: W. Strahan, 1742) was appended to his *The History of Nadir Shah* (London: W. Strahan, 1742). Nadir Shah's forces had sacked Mughal Delhi only three years earlier, while Fraser was still in Surat.

The culminating chapter of *Europe's India* gives us vivid vignettes of four fascinating characters, each of a different nationality. Their careers coincided with the rise of British rule. One was Dom António José de Noronha, a Portuguese cleric who became deeply involved in local politics and military ventures. Another is Charles Joseph Palissier de Bussy, a French military commander who participated in efforts to establish a French imperium in South India and who, while making a fortune, became enmeshed in the politics of Hyderabad. The third is Antoine-Louis-Henri Polier, a Franco-Swiss adventurer and avid collector who would later become known among intellectual historians for linking the Enlightenment and Indology. And, finally, there is Alexander Walker. Yet another hyper-energetic and precocious Scotsman, Walker's career as a Company servant in South India ended when he was appointed governor of St. Helena (during Napoleon's incarceration).

Yet, some minor quibbles might not be out of order. Perhaps the greatest legacy of “coproduction” of all is that of Colonel Colin Mackenzie, a Scots servant of the Company. While Surveyor-General of Madras and of India, he had his team of native scholarly collaborators systematically collect manuscripts, or copies of manuscripts, from every town and village visited while engaged in the mapping of South India. The resulting private Mackenzie Collection was so vast that whole ships were required to convey all of the materials to London. Except for English language translations, maps, and paintings, however, most materials were returned to Chennai (formerly Madras), where they now reside in the Oriental Manuscripts Library. Appalled Company directors, to whom the collection had been bequeathed, were too parsimonious to build space for it in London.

Finally, among noteworthy collections that came into being before the rise of the Company's Raj, two deserve mention. First, rich troves of manuscript materials left by Jesuit missionaries of the Madurai Mission—by such famous figures as Roberto de' Nobili and Antonio Giuseppe Beschi—and now kept in the Shembaganur (Monastery) Archives, Kodaikanal, are ignored. Contributions of

knowledge produced by the Jesuits in India, as such, are only marginally addressed in this volume. Such contributions are fleetingly alluded to in only nine places, perhaps the most extensive being on pages 101–2. Secondly, valuable material amassed by Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg of the Danish (Pietist Lutheran) Mission in Tranquebar, preserved in archives of the Franckesche Stiftungen in Halle, Germany, are also overlooked. Why such collections are not mentioned can only be surmised. Yet knowledge so produced, especially as relating to the Enlightenment, must certainly be viewed as yet other elements of “Europe’s India.”

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