

BOOK REVIEWS

Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and various locations in Europe, America and India (such as Sikkim, Ladakh, Himachal, Darjeeling, Bodh Gaya and Sarnath). The author's training in visual and cultural anthropology equips him with the empathy necessary to portray this diversity. The book is also a unique personal portrait of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

None of the photographs appears to be posed, unnatural or out of context. Indeed, they beautifully blend colour, nature, individuals, devotion and divinity into one. *Vision of Buddhist Life* takes the reader on a conducted tour of the Buddhist world from east to west, sect to sect, from the exotic to the urbane. Two things emerge loud and clear; the devotion through which so many individuals conduct their every day lives, and lighthouse personality of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

It is difficult to find fault with the excellent layout of the book. However, one wishes that Don Faber had found the space to cover the lives and experiences of neo-Buddhists in India and elsewhere. Nevertheless, this is an excellent study in visual anthropology that should interest every ethnographer of Buddhist societies.

A.C. Sinha

North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, India

Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India

Harald Fisher-Tine and Michael Mann (eds)

London: Anthem Books, 2004

ISBN 1843310929

The impulse to assess and evaluate the British Empire has received fresh impetus in recent years, both within academia and the wider (predominantly British) cultural discourse. Niall Ferguson's Channel 4 television series of 2003 and the accompanying book, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), exemplify some key aspects of this trend, not least in the tendency to evaluate the colonial experience and impact in terms of an imperial balance sheet. The civilising influence of British rule is frequently entered in the credit column of such ledgers (Ferguson arguably does so, although less explicitly than other commentators). Yet, while many scholars have elucidated how a professed 'civilizing mission' acted as political justification for the widening and deepening of the reach of Empire, Michael Mann rightly points out in his introductory essay to this volume that a treatment of this as 'programme, concept and ideology' (pp 25–26) of British imperialism in India is virtually absent. *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission* thus aims to redress this lacuna.

The volume is sensibly organised into four sections, at once chronological and thematic. Part I, 'Trial and Error', consists of three essays examining the period c.1770–1830, focusing upon tentative attempts to secure the colonial regime in its initial footholds through administrative and social reform of indigenous law and society, with the civilising impulse balanced against the need for preserving an acquiescent colonial order. Part II addresses aspects of the 'Ordering and Modernizing' processes instituted during the nineteenth century, through which the imperial state sought to render India and her peoples knowable and governable. It comprises essays on the contested and contradictory civilising power of public works (in particular the railways), attempts to intervene in female infanticide among Rajput lineages in northwestern India, and the development of caste as an analytical category of imperialism. Part III, easily the strongest, most interesting and coherent section of the volume, proceeds to examine British civilising ideology and practices through interventions upon the indigenous 'Body and Mind'.

It includes stimulating and well-written essays by Paul Dimeo on sport (in particular football), Jim Mills on the civilising fantasies of a productive and ordered colonial society underpinning late nineteenth-century asylum regimes and psychiatric practice, Neils Brimes on how early nineteenth-century campaigns against smallpox saw the tentative emergence of a civilising discourse in colonial medicine, and Mridula Ramanna on health and sanitation in early twentieth-century Bombay. The volume is rounded off with three essays on the 'Civilizing Mission Internalized', analysing Indian responses to, and adaptations of the civilising ideology in the twentieth century. Experiments in indigenous educational reform, J.C. Kumarappa's attempts to propagate Gandhian economic ideas for India, and Ghulam Jilani Barq's advocacy of a reformed and modernised Islam to the Muslims of Punjab form the subject matter of these essays.

Almost inevitably in an edited volume, the quality of contributions is not uniform, and *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission* is no exception in this respect. Similarly, some essays give the distinct impression that the theme of 'civilizing mission' has been added as an afterthought to pre-existing research for the purposes of publication in this volume. However, very few contributions disappoint on both counts. Moreover, special mention must be made of Ravi Ahuja's excellent essay on the technologies of public works and transport as civilising forces, and the contestation of colonial hegemony that arose in particular around railway policy and pilgrimage traffic in colonial Orissa. Ahuja's contribution not only conforms to the aims of the volume, it offers an object-lesson in how to approach a challenging topic in a nuanced and sophisticated fashion (particularly welcome given the disappointingly superficial recent treatment of this subject by Gyan Prakash in his *Another Reason, Science and the Imagination of Modern India* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999]).

In summary, the strengths of this original and well-organised volume far outweigh its weaknesses, and it deserves shelf space in any academic library. Furthermore, if the publisher prices this book sensibly, it should be an attractive purchase for both postgraduate researchers and interested undergraduates alike.

Tim Pratt
Independent researcher, UK

When Borne Across: Literary Cosmopolitics in the Contemporary Indian Novel

Bishnupriya Ghosh

New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004

ISBN 0813533457

Most literary criticism of Indian Writing in English (IWE) focuses on writing produced within India, while work by Non-Resident Indians is classified as diasporic writing. Bishnupriya Ghosh's *When Borne Across* rethinks this dichotomy and its attendant problems, such as the commodification of South Asian writing in the global marketplace, the neglect of vernacular literatures in the global context, and the debates regarding authenticity of IWE. Ghosh begins with what has become a signature moment in the global fanfare surrounding IWE: the double issue of the *New Yorker* (23 and 30 June 1997) that celebrated 50 years of Indian independence by showcasing the emerging, glamorous generation of writers such as Vikram Chandra, Arundhati Roy, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie and Kiran Desai. The only writer featured from a previous generation (i.e., pre-*Midnight's Children*) was Anita Desai, whose presence seems to have been motivated by her daughter's emergence as a writer. Ghosh takes this