

such accounts became more detailed and emotional, with attention shifting from spousal violence to cases involving young sweethearts, or similar crimes which had occurred in foreign locations.

All authors discuss primary evidence in detail and engage closely with historiography, often drawing on arguments presented by scholars whose foci of research are chronologically and geographically divergent from their own, while several analyse 'big data' using digital history methodologies. Although not a collection specifically about urban history, major cities feature prominently, with one significant finding of the volume being that women in urban centres were more likely than their rural counterparts to seek justice in law courts, but were also more likely to be charged and incarcerated for acts of public disorder. As well as considering similarities and differences in female experiences across time and space, it is pleasing also to see authors consider how gender intersected with age, class and ethnicity to shape how women experienced legal systems. However, the chronological and geographical coverage of the collection might have been more balanced. The primary focus is north-west Europe, with five essays focusing on Britain (and one on Australia) in the decades after 1850, and while these six pieces dovetail well, historians whose interests lie pre-1850 and those who study southern or eastern Europe will find less to engage than they might hope.

This is an impressive collection of strong essays, albeit with less breadth than the title suggests, with the introductory statement about contextual methodology likely to provoke strong responses, while the uses made of digital resources will provide readers with much to ponder. This is not the definitive statement on gender and crime in (early) modern Europe, but constitutes an important series of interventions which will stimulate debates about methodologies, in particular how to use 'big data', and how women of different ages, classes and ethnicities have engaged with various legal systems since the sixteenth century.

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Arash Khazeni, *The City and the Wilderness: Indo-Persian Encounters in Southeast Asia*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020. xv + 244pp. 2 maps. 28 figures. Bibliography. £66.00 hbk. £24.00 pbk.
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Arash Khazeni's new study, *The City and the Wilderness*, is a rich, lush, and arguably verdant, study of the complicated geo-cultural space that existed between Mughal India and Southeast Asia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The bulk of modern scholarship dedicated to intercultural interaction regarding the Mughal world has been westward-looking – Iran, Central Asia, the Indian Ocean and of course Europe. However, Khazeni has made a very successful case here for historians of the Mughal empire, as well as those scholars who are keen to posit a 'Persianate world', to consider the depth and scope of observation and

exchange that was happening between India and the lands of Burma, Siam and Malaysia. In doing so, Khazeni gives us new modes of analysis – ecological, environmental, ecumenical – in our ongoing endeavours to bring meaning to a period when the cosmologies and notions of sovereignty for native polities like the Mughals of India and the Konbaung of Burma were changing and under threat of erasure by the forerunning English East India Company (EIC) and the British Empire.

The City and the Wilderness accomplishes much, but I would argue that one of its most novel contributions is how it focuses on the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century scribal world of the Indo-Persian *munshi* and how they were directly involved in the accumulation of vernacular knowledge about those lands that were part of the ‘Mughal meridian’. This meridian reflected ‘a still lasting imperial repertoire; an Indo-Persian imperium and cultural world which continued to shape inter-Asian connections and exchanges in the early colonial period’ (p. 9). The rich narrative of this encounter and observation is set against the greater symbolic binomial of *abad va bi-abad* – ‘urbane culture and wilderness’ – which shapes so much of medieval and early modern Islamic sensibilities and their expression in various genres: poetry, mystical thought and political philosophy to name a few. Fascinatingly, however, in the context of Burma and Siam, conceptions of universal sovereignty were consistently framed through language of forest, fauna and sylvan fecundity. Indo-Persian travellers, information-gatherers and administrators – often in the employ of the EIC – thus formed a triangulation of sorts between universal sovereignty, Buddhism and the deep forested hinterland of Southeast Asia.

We are introduced to this world in Part 1 (‘Indian Ocean wonders’), which is essentially dedicated to Indo-Persian travelogues written in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; these accounts narrated – to varying degrees of scope and accuracy – the people, customs and commodities of the littoral and hinterland landscapes of Southeast Asia. What is so interesting here is how these Indo-Persian authors took existing genres like geography, travel-writing and ‘wonders and marvels’ (*aja’ib va ghara’ib*) literature, which had been developed in centuries-past by Arab and Persian authors, and shaped them accordingly to these new environs and their indigenous epistemologies. Khazeni analyses a number of travellers and their accounts of different Southeast Asian spaces, from Burma proper and the Maldives to the Indo-Malay islands and the Malay Archipelago itself. Not surprisingly, these chapters are a bit uneven in that they are profiling discrete sources which are very different from one another. For instance, Mirza I’tisam al-Din, who was a personal *munshi* to Captain Archibald Swinton (a major EIC envoy to the Mughal court and ancestor to the actress, Tilda Swinton), produced an account of his journey to Britain, the *Shigarfnama-yi Wilayat*, of which only a small fraction discusses things such as the famous (and lucrative) cowrie shells of the Maldives. This stands next to an author like Mirza Abu Talib, who had also served the EIC and produced two texts of note, his travelogue of the journey from India to England, the *Kitab-e masir-e Talibi*, and a universal history, the *Lubb al-siyar va jahan numa*, of which a chapter describes Hindustan as comprising the countries (*mulk*) to the south-east, namely Burma, Thailand and the Malay Archipelago.

The Persian travelogue section lays to some extent the groundwork for the main thrust of *City and Wilderness*, namely Part 2, which is entitled 'Mughal meridian'. Thus far, Khazeni's treatment of Indo-Persian notions of Southeast Asia comprises a bricolage of fanciful notions, observations and brief notices by Persian cosmographers and travel-writers. The structure of 'Mughal meridian' moves more decisively into the analogical construct of city and wilderness with chapters entitled 'Immortal city' (3), 'Forest worlds' (4), and 'In the wilderness of Pali' (5). Intriguingly, each of these chapters is built around the textual and artistic output of specific individuals – a noted Orientalist administrator (Michael Symes), an Indian draughtsman and illustrator (Singey Bey) and a Mughal-trained EIC *munshi* (Shah Aziz Bukhari Qalandari) – to reflect the hybridic nature of how the EIC engaged the forested, Buddhist landscape of Burma. The thematic importance here of variegation is clear, and Khazeni presents adroitly a body of enticing accounts in these chapters.

The City and the Wilderness is successful on a number of fronts. First, it re-introduces and profiles the notion of a vibrant and eastward-facing Persianate world that was profoundly changed in the nineteenth century with the eclipse of the Mughal empire and the rise of the EIC. This point is evocatively underscored in the Introduction where Khazeni's opening sentences tell the tale of the tragic Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar II, his exile to Rangoon and his pauper death and burial in 1862. Second, this book recognizes and highlights the hybridic epistemology that was emerging in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; eschewing simplified reductions of Orientalist vs. local systems of knowledge, Khazeni talks of an amalgamative discursive world where Indian and British scholars borrowed and adapted routinely from one another's traditions. Third, this is a study that champions – successfully I would argue – the theoretical promise of approaching historical landscapes through a combination of methodologies: literary, environmental, hermeneutic, to name a few. Wonderfully written, and imaginatively structured, *The City and the Wilderness* has effectively redrawn the scholarly landscape dedicated to late Mughal India and the surrounding Indian Ocean.

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James H. Murphy, *The Politics of Dublin Corporation 1840–1900: From Reform to Expansion*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2020. 224pp. €45.00 hbk.

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Meticulously researched, densely written and handsomely produced, Murphy's book is an excellent addition to existing literature in the field of local government. Much of this prevailing historiography uses the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, as a starting point, often ignoring the period covered by Murphy, i.e. from the Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Act, 1840, to the end of the century. The