

debates that became transformed in India. Rather, scholars now may search for how such debates did not begin only with European intrusions into India, but form a part of a global intellectual history that includes, but is not fundamentally shaped by, the “European” component of this history. Adcock’s book represents a powerful step in that direction.

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Vinita Damodaran, Anna Winterbottom and Alan Lester, eds. *The East India Company and The Natural World*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 320 pp. ISBN: 9781137427267. \$105.00.

This volume contains eleven essays that explore the impact on the natural world of the global networks of transfer and exchange that the English East India Company created, fostered and extended. The work also shows the maturing of environmental history as a branch of academic study: its focus is more on understanding the East India Company as a medium for analysing various aspects of environmental history (that range from climate to the restructuring of landscapes) rather than painting a picture of a pristine golden age of untouched nature ravaged by the advent of globalising forces, which the majority of earlier works in this field concentrate on. The claim to the multi-disciplinary tenor of the essays made by Alan Lester in the introduction is maintained throughout the work (which covers topics such as “plant colonialism”, the history of famines in eighteenth century Bengal and the building of new biological and landscape connections between India and New Zealand during the nineteenth century. The volume brings together an interesting group of scholars making it an interesting read, so one gets to read about the prospects of “imperial careering” by officials such as Robert Wight and its relevance to the acquisition of global scientific knowledge in writings by a practicing plant taxonomist (i.e., H.J. Noltie) and, a few essays later, about the complexities and intricacies in the naming, classification and contextualisation of *Rafflesia* in botanical science by a historian (Timothy P. Barnard). All the contributors to this book have been, more or less, successful in employing a “networked approach” and have done a commendable job in gleaning out the multiple layers of interaction between the English East India Company and diverse components of the natural world including rivers, climate, the floral and faunal systems, humans, tribes and environmental disasters. The question of scale that the editors attempt to re-formulate, especially of the Indian Ocean as a scalar unit, remains more elusive. Further elaboration, either in the introduction or the afterword, on such questions and their problematics may have added more clarity.

In the first essay, Deepak Kumar engages with the botanical explorations of the English East Company and tries to problematise the growth of botany against the backdrop of imperialism. Some of the insights that he puts forth, such as the argument to not completely discard the core-periphery framework and the question as to who sets the terms and conditions for collaboration and cooperation in forging networks of knowledge, can not only take environmental history but also new imperial history in new directions. Any work that is truly multi-disciplinary is susceptible to the challenge of unevenness in terms of the scope and depth of the research involved and the present work is no exception.

Anna Winterbottom discusses the study of botany at Madras and its significance in imperial politics and “the international web of contacts” from 1680–1720 in a more comprehensive and detailed manner, while Jeymalar Kathirithamby-Wells gives a more generalized account of the interaction of Malay-Indonesian medicine and European botanical knowledge and the various trajectories of the interaction over three phases. While the task of reconstructing the history of plant prospecting from the ancient times to the early twentieth century is an arduous task, the conflation of Hindu, Indian and Brahmanic categories could have been avoided especially in the premodern context. H.J. Noltie’s essay serves, more or less, as a biographical account of Robert Wight as an actor in European botanical networks. It does not explore any other aspect of the actor or his network, but the essay does bring to the table a new, albeit a narrow, perspective—the experience of field research over taxonomic classification based on dried specimens. The author has unfortunately made the mistake of referring to the language of the people of Kerala or the Ezhava tradition as Malayali instead of Malayalam in endnote number 18 on page 78, which is ironic as the whole essay deals directly with the intricacies of taxonomy.

Vinita Damodaran’s study of the famines in eighteenth-century Bengal sheds light on the impact of the English India Company not only on the environs but also the people who inhabited it. It is in her comparison of the Chotanagpur plateau (where divergent subsistence strategies were employed and into which colonialism reached later and more gradually than the predominantly agricultural Bengal lowland) that the correlation between the Company and the ecological world becomes most coherent. George Adamson advocates for the potential of private diaries of EIC officials in the reconstruction of historical climate through his chapter; despite a compelling argument for the utilisation of a novel source, the variability and unreliability of the samples still leave many methodological questions unanswered. Rohan D’Souza’s exemplary investigation of the English East India Company’s hydraulic interventions aimed at tapping the rivers of Bengal as a specific type of economic resource also reveals the inter-connectedness of prevailing conceptions of science and colonial projects even though it is felt that a discussion of the conditions prior to the advent of the Company on the scene would have added depth to the discussion. Timothy P. Barnard’s lucid study of the imperial imagination on *Rafflesia* discloses the nuances and intricacies of the politics of imperial science and the part played by backstage actors in the evolution of the discipline.

The inclusion of Geoff Quilley’s study of eighteenth century British practices of visualisation of Southeast Asia offers a fresh perspective in environmental studies and brings out the significant role of visual culture in connecting the world of scientific investigation to the practice of developing a “proper set of views” (169) and, subsequently, in the self-promotion of Company officials. James Beattie’s chapter on India-New Zealand connections and “the role of informal imperial networks in colonial environmental modification” (221), especially through the agency of settlers in restructuring the landscape, is one of the most well argued essays in the book. It is also one of the few essays that examine the transfer of fauna in the imperial webs in detail in a volume dominated by studies of historical botany. A.T. Grove uses early modern accounts to reconstruct the environmental history of St. Helena and its pertinence in the history of colonisation and is largely successful in his endeavour to cull out the history of climatic variability in the island and the Company’s response to it. However, whether St. Helena really serves as a microcosm of the Company world, as the title suggests, is a question left unanswered.

Printed on “paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustainable forest resources”, the book uses a very reader friendly font and format, even though the pictures could have been of higher resolution. Overall, the book will be a valuable read not only for those who specialise in environmental history but also for anyone who is generally engaged with the study of or interested in the history of European expansion/globalisation/contraction of the world and the multifarious webs of actors, agents, contacts and engagements it generated.

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Julie E. Hughes. *Animal Kingdoms: Hunting, the Environment and Power in the Indian Princely States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. 304 pp. ISBN: 9780674072800. \$49.95.

Hunting is an activity as old as humankind, but it is relatively under-explored in the monographic literature of South Asia. Julie Hughes has made a significant contribution to this scant literature with an examination of hunting practices in the Rajput states in north-central India. Specifically, the book focuses on the states of Orchha (in present day Madhya Pradesh), Mewar (in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) and Bikaner (in Rajasthan). She successfully creates a cohesive narrative from these diverse states that examines local power in the context of the late colonial British state. Hughes argues that, in the context of colonialism, Rajput princes maintained or adapted hunting practices to connect with their military past, assert territorial rights and underline their status as rulers. She elucidates Rajput practices and how they acted as both an acquiescence and a protest to British colonialism.

This book is not a micro-history in that it focuses on a number of individuals over a broad geographic and chronological range, but Hughes uses a similar methodology by providing fine detail to weave a rich tapestry of the practices and political ambitions of the Rajput princes. Her careful examination of hunting diaries treat the reader to rich descriptions of hunts and specific quantities of the animals bagged. More than due diligence is given to tigers, the most charismatic of prey, but attention is also given to less explored game like antelopes, deer, pigs and birds. We learn that Thakur Laxman Singh of Sargahdah (r. 1912–1929) mail-ordered “breeches in the popular Jodphur fashion and others cut from “Shekari Sunproof” fabric, hunting coats in tweed, and imitation leather boots with rope soles to provide a quiet step and good traction” (246). These details are not just noise, but rather are used to demonstrate the investment that these individuals had in maintaining traditional hunting practices and how they expressed them in the face of modernity. This narrative is, in places, enhanced by adept analysis of visual materials like paintings and photographs.

Organized thematically, the introduction sets the stage by defining the “princely ecology”. This term is apparently intended to represent the lack of the “divide between people and wilderness” because “Indian princes were symbolically as well as literally rooted in the forest, their very legitimacy and physical substance nourished on its fruit and meat” (5). The first three chapters examine Orchha, Mewar and Bikaner, respectively. Although little comparative analysis is provided in the text, the intent is clearly to provide three examples of different responses to hunting, environment and colonialism. The next two chapters are comparative in construction.