

the turn of the nineteenth century, were processes coterminous in metropole and colony—occurring as both emerged from the disparate web of sovereignties that characterised the early modern period.¹⁹ To view the history of colonialism in India as primarily a lesson about the contemporary relevance of state regulation is thus to miss this nuance, and to overlook how aspects of the modern state regularly developed first in India, then were exported back to Britain.

Equally, a convincing argument could be made that the nationalisation of the East India Company was driven less by metropolitan actors, and more by a crisis of legitimacy precipitated by the growth of public cultures and civil society *within* South Asia.²⁰ Company officials developed a wide array of idiosyncratic ideologies and collective identities during the first half of the nineteenth century, frequently contradicting the official policy of both Parliament and the Court of Directors, and eventually undermining the rationale behind the Company's continued existence.²¹ The passages of Dalrymple's book that weave Anglo-French rivalry into the narrative use a remarkable collection of French-language sources that highlight this complexity: in one, the Frenchman Michel Raymond—a mercenary general employed by the Nizam of Hyderabad—is seen coordinating the politics of Mughal successor-states according to French national interests, passionately declaring how he was "ready to sacrifice all" and thereby "prove the zeal for my country which animates me".²² Although Dalrymple does recognise how, in the British case, the relationship between Company and Parliament "grew steadily more symbiotic...until eventually it turned into something we might today call a public-private partnership", statements like Raymond's point to a more complicated situation.²³ Early-modern identities, rooted in loyalties to a number of overlapping 'corporate bodies', make it extremely difficult to align eighteenth-century history with contemporary understandings of the relationship between state and corporation.

All the same, there is no doubt that this book is a masterpiece of popular history. Long passages of primary material are expertly marshalled into compelling order, then allowed to speak for themselves. Other passages are deeply emotive. Perhaps most importantly, though, by telling the East India Company's 'relentless rise' as a gripping page-turner, Dalrymple has provided a balanced account of imperial British history at a time when jingoistic misconceptions of the Nation's former empire are widespread and instrumentalised.

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THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY'S SILK ENTERPRISE IN BENGAL, 1750–1850: ECONOMY, EMPIRE AND BUSINESS. By KAROLINA HUTKOVÁ. pp. 275. Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2019
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The English East India Company's Silk Enterprise in Bengal evolved from the author's PhD dissertation submitted to the University of Warwick in 2015. In this monograph, Karolina Hutková makes an

¹⁹Wilson, (2008).

²⁰Bayly, C. A., *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire*, (Cambridge, 2011).

²¹Young, Tom, *Art in India's 'Age of Reform'*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2019.

²²Dalrymple, (2019), p.341.

²³*Ibid.*, p.xxvii.

important contribution to the literature on the English East India Company (hereinafter, 'the Company') as well as the deindustrialisation debate in nineteenth-century India. The contribution also extends into business history. The key framework of this book is British political economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This period in Britain witnessed the shift from mercantilism to *laissez-faire*, and the author scrutinises its effects on the Company's business in Bengal.

This volume is composed of seven substantial chapters with the introduction and conclusion chapters. Chapter 1 offers a brief overview of the stages of silk production and outlines a global history of the silk industry until the nineteenth century, with special reference to its key technologies and India. Chapter 2 places the Company's raw silk trade from Bengal within a broader context of British imperial history. It shows that attempts to produce raw silk for the British market had already been made in other parts of the empire such as North America before the raw silk project in Bengal. Then, the chapter narrows the focus to the Company's interest in Bengal raw silk. In the second half of the eighteenth century, this item of trade became one of the important goods exported from Bengal to Britain to transfer revenues raised through the Diwani.

While the import of Bengal raw silk into Britain was supported by low duties, the quality of the raw silk was unfortunately inferior to that of other world producers such as China. Hence, in order to enlarge the market for this product, the Company invested in the improvement of raw silk in Bengal. Chapter 3 discusses the procurement systems of raw silk in Bengal around 1750, showing their institutional problems such as the Company's lack of enforcement, which did not result in the improvement of silk quality. Chapter 4 illustrates the transfer of the Piedmontese methods of silk reeling to Bengal. While this new technology led to the quantitative expansion of raw silk production in Bengal, the quality shortcomings of the silk were not resolved. Hutková applies the concept of principal-agent problem to analyse the insufficient improvement in silk quality, pointing out that the procurement system still failed to give incentives to raw silk producers and lacked penalties. In Chapter 5, the author directs our attention to the paradox that despite adverse challenges, the Company made profits from its raw silk production venture in Bengal. This was attributed to low labour costs and cheap cocoons.

The abolition of the Company's monopoly to trade with India (1813) opened Indian trade to British private firms. However, they had no interest in silk, and the raw silk trade from Bengal to Britain declined hugely in the nineteenth century. Chapter 6 attributes the decline of the Bengal silk trade to their limited capital and lack of knowledge about the global silk trade and mode of silk production. Such limitations reveal the large role played by the Company in Bengal silk manufacturing. This finding indicates that the decline in raw silk production in Bengal was an unexpected result of the shift in British political economy to the *laissez-faire* policy that worked against the Company. As Chapter 7 demonstrates, the *laissez-faire* policy also influenced the British silk industry. Competition with foreign silk textiles made large producers switch to lower-quality silk products leading to an expansion in the demand for raw silk of coarser variety. Bengal raw silk was a part of the British silk industry in the first half of the nineteenth century.

One strength of *The English East India Company's Silk Enterprise* is well documented. With the Company's correspondence available at the India Office Records and Private Papers of the British Library (in particular, IOR/E/1 and IOR/E/4), Hutková sheds light on the role of the Company as a manufacturer, rather than a trading company or a ruler of India. Likewise, considering that raw silk production in India and its linkage with the British silk industry has been under represented in the literature compared with studies on cotton, it is clear that Hutková's research advanced the frontiers of research of the textile history.

While Hutková deftly discusses the production side of the commodity chain of raw silk production, I would like to know about the end part of the chain as well: who consumed the final products in

Britain and abroad? Examining consumption would enrich the story. In addition, raw silk production in Bengal is well discussed, reflecting the Company's interest. Yet silk weaving in India receives little attention in this book. This imbalance makes a reader wonder whether silk weaving in Bengal also declined in the first half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, I would like the concluding chapter to be even bolder. The chapter could have included directions for future investigation and implications for research into the related fields of research.

Nonetheless, *The English East India Company's Silk Enterprise* is undoubtedly a welcome addition to our knowledge of early-modern global history. Furthermore, the cover image is breathtakingly beautiful!

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ISLAMIC INSCRIPTIONS OF FERGHANA AND SEMIRECHYE: ARABIC-WRITTEN MONUMENTS OF THE 11TH – 17TH CENTURIES FROM KYRGYZSTAN. By VLADIMIR N. NASTICH. pp. 434. Saint Petersburg, Russia. Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Studies, The Herzen State Pedagogical University, 2019. doi:[10.1017/S1356186320000309](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186320000309)

Within mountain ranges cut through by major rivers, the Ferghana and Semirechye valleys of Kyrgyzstan have witnessed many cultural and political changes. From the eleventh century through to the seventeenth, the region was tossed to and fro amongst the great empires of the Qarākhānids, Mongols, Timurids, Shaybanids and others. Remarkably, it retains some permanent vestiges of this past; but, they have not been adequately explored. Vladimir Nastich has undertaken this task however in the volume under review. He has recorded and organised epigraphic material from architectural sites, tombstones and even single rocks, an effort that has taken him almost half a century. It has been intricate and revealing work. The inscriptions have special interest because even though the areas are on the border of several large ethnic and language groups, most inscriptions are in Arabic. The dominant occurrence of that language may surprise one since Arabs never reached these valleys; but the religion of Islam did, which brought the language and script. Therefore, buildings or tombstones extolling local rulers or religious scholars are prominent in the region. Nastich notes that epigraphic monuments have a number of advantages over manuscripts since they have not been edited and many have precise dates as well as locations. Conversely, the information is limited and there is no recognised common system so far developed, to analyze writing styles and word use in various areas and chronological periods. At the end, he proposes several approaches to constructing such methods. As a result, he hopes this volume will lead to an expanded use of monumental epigraphy from medieval Kyrgyzstan and other parts of Central Asia.

After reviewing works on Arabic epigraphy and excavations and research on medieval monuments in Kyrgyzstan undertaken in the last two hundred years, the author presents in Chapter 2 exciting material for dating four architectural masterpieces. The first of these is the tomb attributed to Shaykh Fazl with legends that have eluded confident reading. The mausoleum is located in the middle of the country towards the west near Gulistan. He decodes inscriptions on the friezes of the interior and the medallions in the upper corners of the building with transcription into modern Arabic letters. Clear photographs are included