problematic essentialisms. In the current climate, where state-endorsed Islamophobia poses an existential threat to Muslim communities in South Asia and casteist strains of Hindu nationalism destroy lives from Silicon Valley to Bangalore, academics and editors have a special responsibility to be mindful of the language we use.

Adrian Plau
Wellcome Collection, London, UK

MARK MCCLISH:
The History of the Arthaśāstra: Sovereignty and Sacred Law in Ancient India.
xvii, 274 pp. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019. $99.99. ISBN 978 110847 6904.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X21000215

Mark McClish's *The History of the Arthaśāstra: Sovereignty and Sacred Law in Ancient India* is simply the most interesting and provocative monograph on classical Indian political theory (*arthaśāstra*) yet written. The book redefines the tradition itself, definitively establishing its original autonomy vis-à-vis the ancillary discipline of legal theory, *dharmaśāstra*. A testimony to the power of patient, highly specialized philological work, this kind of fundamental re-evaluation proceeds from a passionate, long-term love affair with a single Sanskrit text; which spawns a vibrant conversation between traditional textual criticism and bold social and intellectual history. In its entertainment of both the smallest and largest questions – the dialectical entanglement of general and particular to which it here holds fast – philology reveals its inherent freedom from the positivism to which it is so often reduced. The cumulative effect is a major, paradigm-jolting contribution to the study of political science in premodern South Asia.

The *Arthaśāstra* attributed to Kauṭilya (traditionally identified as a minister of Candragupta Maurya, *c*. 325 BC), constitutes the uncontestable foundation of classical Indian political science, equally from an emic or etic point of view. Political science is itself often referred to by the name of this text, metonymically, but also literally, since it is considered either to contain or constitute the paradigm for everything. To analyse it is, in a meaningful sense, to analyse an entire tradition.

The argument begins from the identification of two major layers in this monumental text. An "ambivalence" internal to the extant *AŚ* on "the question of sovereign power and its limits", provokes a fundamental question about the relationship between politics (*artha*) and right (*dharma*) (p. 4). Is the political (*artha*) an autonomous domain with its own distinct telos? Or is it instead merely semi-autonomous, a means to the ultimate end of *dharma*? The *AŚ* says both. McClish's intervention presents these opposed statements as chronologically distinct moments in the text's composition. Drawing on exhaustive independent evidence – external intertextualities, internal inconsistencies, and countless other devilish details – the author contextualizes the *AŚ*'s stratigraphy. The evidence for this division is distinct from the conceptual and sociocultural incongruity it explains.

Layer 1 – which he christens "*Daṇḍanīti*" – was an independent treatise dating to the Śuṅga period or thereabouts, presenting the essentials of what we think of as the classical Indian statecraft tradition: a more or less realist exploration of strategy, tactics, alliances, modes of warfare, etc.; unburdened by religious considerations, except those instrumental to maintaining political stability and hegemony. This layer's character is emblematized for me by a fact which I have personally puzzled over: the *AŚ*'s discussion of philosophical inquiry (*ānvīkṣikī*) – integral to would-be kings' cultivation – identifies it with only three schools: *sāṃkhya*, *yoga*, and *lokāyata*. The last named "sensualist-materialist" school is not just non-Brahmanical, it is anti-Brahmanical. The former two arguably constitute the classical *darśana*s with the least organic connection to Brahmanism. The *Daṇḍanīti*-theory explains the enigma.

True to the this-worldliness of the sensualist-materialist (*lokāyata*) school it promotes, the *Daṇḍanīti*'s political theory was answerable to political, and not ethico-legal concerns: *artha* stood on its own legs without the crutches it would later take from *dharma*, and even *kāma*, traditions. Then, in the context of a "Brahmanical revival" marking the centuries following the turn of the millennium, the text was augmented and redacted. In what was itself probably an act of *Realpolitik*, the older tradition fused, more or less intact, with a new, overtly Brahmanical framework. The name – and in time, the legend – "Kauṭilya" was affixed to the fusion.

The yin-yang model of sovereignty and hieratic religion (*brahma kṣatreṇa saṃgatam*, *Mbh* 1.70.12) was both a cause and an effect of what happened to the *AŚ*. This *dharma*-infused *artha* paradigm was crystallized in the *rājadharma* chapter of Manu's canonical *Dharmaśāstra*, which itself likely influenced the *AŚ*'s second-layer redaction. And yet classical Indian political theory remained independent and defiantly true to its original concept, despite the unsteady *dharma* crown it came to wear.

The book is a tribute to this outcome's radical contingency. And like any great history, it leaves the reader astonished by what actually happened. The text's materiality takes centre-stage throughout and plays so many roles. The *AŚ* enacts a historical process.

The book is written for the scholar, though not exclusively the specialist, and I predict that it will enable a long overdue re-engagement with this tradition's subtleties on the part of social scientists and historians at large. Its discussion of major concepts is likewise accessible to the general reader who can dodge stray chips from the philologist's workshop by skipping the middle chapters, as the author graciously advises some readers. The book is aware of its own productive bipolarity, as much as that of the *AŚ*. Even if one skips to the conclusion, it is impossible to miss that the book's achievement is a product of neither empirical depth nor theorizing alone, but their dynamic interaction.

Stepping back, one must acknowledge the grand, ancient Indian tradition of *dharma*'s essential contradictoriness or irresolvable subtlety, most famously instantiated in the *Mahābhārata*. McClish's conclusion is not the only one possible, as he readily acknowledges. In later *artha* traditions such as Kāmandaki's *Nītisāra*, political realism is explicitly, self-reflexively theorized to serve *dharma* with exquisite comfort, a kind of *Realdharma* (which political scientist Stuart Gray finds integral even to the *AŚ*). A text's contradictions do not on their own require the assumption of multiple stages of non-contradictory intentionality. Yet McClish forces us to ask whether the seemingly comfortable contradiction might not in fact be a kind of compromise formation or rationalization, crowning a tradition once at odds with what it would become. Here is where the independent text-critical evidence is key. Its explanatory power is undeniable. Mark McClish has convinced at least

one reader that *artha* once stood far apart, before becoming re-acculturated at the Brahmanical court.

Jesse Ross Knutson
University of Hawaii, Manoa, USA

ROY S. FISCHEL:
Local States in an Imperial World: Identity, Society and Politics in the Early Modern Deccan.
x, 299 pp. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. ISBN 978 147443607 6.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X21000112

Roy Fischel's new monograph is a welcome addition to the growing literature on India's Deccan plateau. Rejecting an earlier convention of studying single dynasties, Fischel considers the entire northern half of the Deccan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, offering a comparative analysis of its principal sultanates, their respective theories of sovereignty, and their dominant political classes. After briefly sketching the history of the Bahmani sultanate (1347–*c*. 1500), the author turns to the five kingdoms that succeeded the Bahmanis in the early sixteenth century, and more particularly, the Nizam Shahi dynasty of Ahmadnagar, the ʿAdil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur, and the Qutb Shahi dynasty of Golkonda. These three sultanates grew to prominence after the Battle of Talikota (1565), in which a coalition of the northern sultanates crushed their powerful neighbour to the south, Vijayanagara, which had sprawled over the southern Deccan since the mid-fourteenth century.

Two themes, in particular, animate Fischel's analysis. One is the relationship between linguistic and political geography, a crucial issue being the location of the capitals of the three above-mentioned sultanates. Because Ahmadnagar and Golkonda were each nested within the core regions of a vernacular language, Marathi and Telugu respectively, these sultanates sank deeper roots in Deccani culture and consequently enjoyed greater internal stability. Clear down to its final conquest by the Mughal empire in 1687, Golkonda was supported by Brahmin clerks and Telugu martial classes, while the dynasty associated itself with a long-defunct but prestigious Telugu-speaking kingdom, the Kakatiyas (1163–1323). Similarly, although Ahmadnagar faced sustained Mughal pressure from as early as 1585, the sultanate managed to survive until 1636, when its territory was divided between Bijapur and the Mughals. This, argues Fischel, was because its principal strongholds were located in the core area of another vernacular language – Marathi. One of those forts, Devagiri, had been the capital of the Yadava dynasty (1175–1318), another long-defunct but prestigious regional state. Consequently, throughout its final fifty years the Nizam Shahi sultanate of Ahmadnagar was kept afloat, most prominently, by Marathi Brahmins and Maratha martial classes. A panegyric courtly poem written for the founder of the Maratha kingdom, Shivaji (d. 1680), characterized the Nizam Shahi sultan as pious, served by Maratha chieftains, and residing in the old Yadava capital of Devagiri (p. 220). By contrast, the capital of the ʿAdil Shahi sultans of Bijapur was located in a shatter zone distant from the core region of any of the Deccan's three vernacular tongues. Its rulers therefore presented themselves as non-vernacular kings of the whole Deccan, for which purpose they