

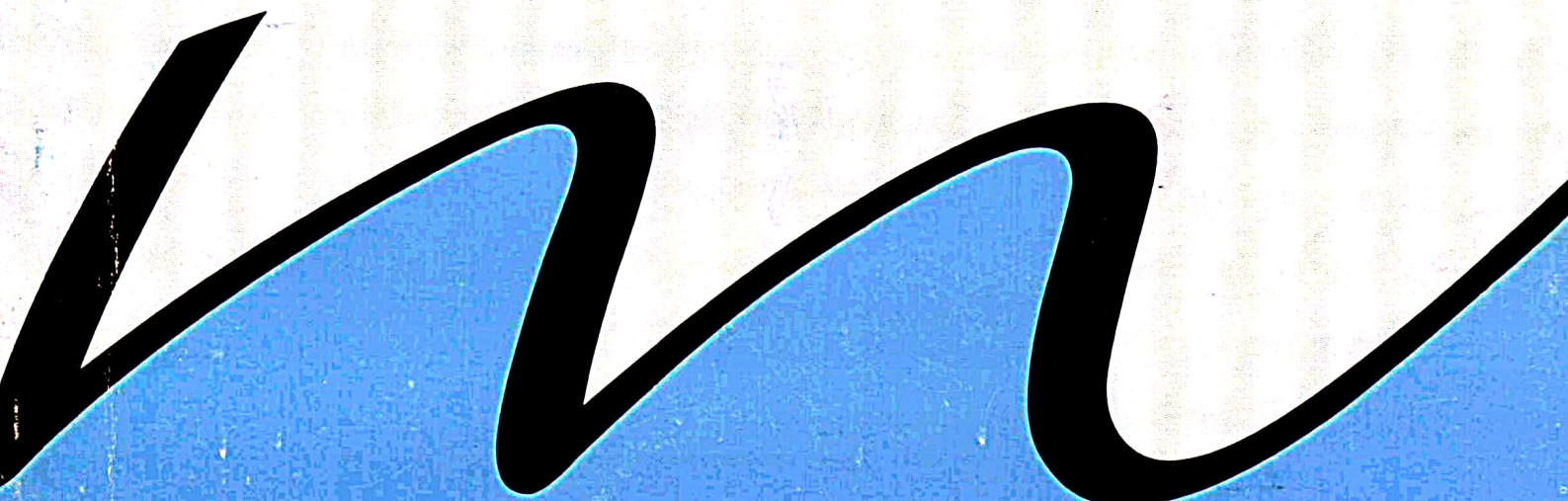
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Exploring History is a bi-annual publication of the Post-Graduate Department of History, Malda College. It is primarily a forum for the presentation of research studies on topics of interest to students of history, university and college teachers, research scholars, members of learned societies, and discriminating readers. Its contributors include scholars of repute, competent to write with authority on subjects of their choice as well as young promising scholars engaged in research and advanced study. *Exploring History* aims to reflect the considerable expansion and diversification that has occurred in historical research in India in recent years. The old preoccupation with political history has been integrated into a broader framework which places equal emphasis on social, economic and cultural history. *Exploring History* examines regional problems. The journal also publishes articles concerning Asian countries other than India.

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Notes from the Editor

This volume of the *Exploring History* contains six articles and one review article on diverse subjects of Indian History. The Environmental movements are an expression of the socio-ecological effects of narrowly conceived development based on short-term criteria of exploitation. The movements reveal how the resource-intensive demands of development have built-in ecological destruction and economic deprivation. Among the various ecology movements in India, the Chipko Movement is the most well-known. It began as a movement of the hill people in the northern Himalayan segment of Uttar Pradesh to save the forest resources from exploitation by contractors from outside. It later evolved into an ecological movement that aimed at the maintenance of the ecological stability of the major upland watersheds in India. The purpose of Niladri Chatterjee's paper is not to treat the Chipko movement as a *sui generis* but to situate it in the continuum of protest movements in this region. He argues that leaders like Chandi Prasad Bhatt or Sunderlal Bahuguna were indeed catalysts in the movement, but in the ultimate analysis the initiative belonged to the people, to many forgotten women and children who gathered up courage to defy what they perceived as unethical encroachment on their customary rights and privileges. An attempt has been made by Chatterjee to highlight a few defining characteristics of the Chipko experiment and their significance in the environmental history of modern India. The achievements of Chipko for the people of Garhwal, Chatterjee argues, might not have been as wholesome as was expected, but does not seem as futile as Haripriya Rangan would have us believe. Thus, viewed in retrospect, Chipko blazed the trail for environmental protest in contemporary India and also throughout the world.

The initial response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, Aaron Mulvany argues, was very much rooted in patterns and mechanisms established by the French during the colonial period of l'Établissement français de l'Inde. His paper seeks to examine

the mechanisms for disaster response put into place by the French administration at Pondicherry, drawing particular examples from the years 1832-1916. The mobilization of these strategies is then explored during the final years of French India in order to establish what mechanisms were left in place for the independent government of the Union Territory of Pondicherry. A full understanding of the initial response to the 2004 Asian tsunami in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, Mulvany thinks, is only possible once we come to recognize that it was rooted to strategies developed under the French colonial administration and allowed to ossify in the decades following Independence. Without policy input from Paris, the Pondicherry administration continued to mobilize crisis response strategies in ways that had proven to be at least moderately effective in the past. These same responses were adopted post-merger as more dominant concerns pressed on the new Union Territory. During the first decades of independence these mechanisms ossified into a standard operating procedure that remained largely unchanged even in light of large disasters that came to strike India in the last decades of the twentieth century. By the admission of contemporary administrators in the modern Union Territory of Pondicherry, disaster events that could have served as object lessons in how better to respond to disasters – Bhopal (1984), the Orissa super-cyclone (1999), the Bhuj earthquake (2001) – instead had little perceptible effect on how administrators in Pondicherry conceived of disaster management. Instead, contemporary administrators of the Union Territory harbored unexamined beliefs about former French policies. These beliefs proved to be fertile soil in which grew the policies that dominated the discourse of emergency response in the Union Territory of Pondicherry in the decades preceding the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

Swatahsiddha Sarkar's paper attempts to underscore the social history of migration in colonial Darjeeling hills. In the course of analysis, Sarkar has pinpointed the concerns which have transformed Darjeeling, a bushy uninhabitable tract of pre-colonial days, to emerge as one of the major hill stations in colonial India. In the process of its development the population strength of the region did increase at a phenomenal rate. But what is perhaps most significant is to note that neither the idea of 'hill station' was an Indian one nor even the rapidly developing city space at the hill top was erected for the 'natives'. The felt need of bodily comfort led the Britishers look for a suitable place (like Shimla) near Calcutta where they could take refuge during the hot summer days. Hence the significance of Darjeeling hills during the mid-nineteenth century (when Bengal was the hub of colonial power) can easily be deduced. Darjeeling was developed, Sarkar argues, not merely as a place within colonial India

but perhaps as a property of the Empire. This set up the tune of almost everything – the designing of landscape, house type, settlement pattern, vegetation, centres of education, recreation, trade and commerce and above all the inflow of population. It was a conscious colonial ploy that decided the social-cultural-political seclusion of Darjeeling hills from the undercurrents of the plains and also from the plainsmen. Accordingly the British encouraged not the people of Bengal or Indian mainland, in most cases they rather allured the people of Nepal to settle down in the hills in various capacities. Besides analyzing the population inflow of various communities, Sarkar has chiefly concentrated on the issue of Nepali migration in Darjeeling hills.

The article of Brundabana Mishra is an attempt to find out the process of Bhoi legitimacy over the kingdom of Khurda in the coastal part of Orissa in the 16th and 17th centuries. An analysis of two aspects has been done: what kind of relationship developed between the Bhoi and their Brahman state officials and the role of Royal Preceptor (*Rajguru*) and the Small Principalities (*Sasana*) with the state administration. To arrive at a definite historical conclusion, Mishra has not only consulted the only Sanskrit contemporary as well as authentic document of eighteenth century '*Katakarajavamsavali*', but also other sources like sixteenth century translated Persian work '*Akabarnama*', Oriya sources like *Madalapanji*, *Chamu Chitau* and British accounts are used adequately. Mishra has shown that the Bhoi followed an external or 'horizontal' process for legitimacy. Initially they struggled hard to legitimize themselves in their newly established kingdom of Khurda. Though they proclaimed themselves as the political successors of the imperial Gajapati, the people of Orissa did not acknowledge them as the real Gajapati kings of Orissa. To legitimize themselves as the kings of Khurda, they followed an inclusive policy of accommodating large sections of people within their political fold. They explicitly donated land to the Brahmans and continued an amiable relationship with all the feudatories of Orissa as the Gajapatis had once done.

Adivasi people known for their deep association with the forests are an economically active lot but nevertheless, they suffer disproportionately more from illiteracy, poverty and social exclusion. Moreover many forest belts in India are becoming centres of militancy and civil strife because of improper designing of development programmes. *Adivasi* women are additionally vulnerable to family alienation as well due to migration, exploitation in the labour market and social evils like polygamy, alcoholism and domestic violence. Historically wherever the State, its policy and its development strategies encroached into their rights and interests the results

have been rebellious, unrests or even political activism in their favour as is evident even currently in Eastern and Central India, i.e., Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. Debasree De's paper takes up the case of *adivasi* people in eastern India and explores their place in development, their livelihood and the nature of their integration in the forest based economy in modern times. De has discussed the newly implemented Forest Rights Act of 2006 and its lacunae.

The late 19th and early 20th century in Bengal is a period of industrialization. This process of industrialization, no doubt, started with the advent of jute industries all along the both sides of River Hooghly. With the emergence of industries and factories, the working-class emerged as a new class. Leaving their previous social set up, they tended to accommodate themselves with an industrial set up. Bulk of the industrial labour-force in the districts of Bengal was up-country migrants. The migrant workers had left their ancestral native villages to lead a new life in the urban area which was different from their traditional milieu. Partha Dutta has shown how the workers had adapted themselves to the changing pattern of industrial set up and to what extent were they satisfied or dissatisfied with their new position. Dutta has made an attempt to show how the specific nature of domination by the capitalists has determined the condition of jute mill hands in Bengal. His study focuses on the land-question and villagers' reaction, the women's participation and role of company for a new factory-culture, the system of labour control by the management and tools of labour control, and the mental world of the working class.

June 2012

Ashim Kumar Sarkar

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