WHAT CHINA and INDIA ONCE WERE



THE PASTS THAT MAY SHAPE THE GLOBAL FUTURE



Edited by SHELDON POLLOCK and BENJAMIN ELMAN

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Sheldon Pollock and Benjamin Elman



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Contents

Preface vii
Maps ix

Introduction
Benjamin Elman and Sheldon Pollock 1

PART I

I Life and Energy
Sumit Guha and Kenneth Pomeranz 27

II Conquest, Rulership, and the State
Pamela Crossley and Richard M. Eaton 63

III Gender Systems: The Exotic Asian and Other Fallacies
Beverly Bossler and Ruby Lal 93

PART II

IV Relating the Past: Writing (and Rewriting) History
Cynthia Brokaw and Allison Busch 127

V Sorting Out Babel: Literature and Its Changing Languages
Stephen Owen and Sheldon Pollock 165

PART III

VI Big Science: Classicism and Conquest
Benjamin Elman and Christopher Minkowski 199

VII Pilgrims in Search of Religion
Zvi Ben-Dor Benite and Richard H. Davis 232

VIII Art and Vision: Varieties of World Making
Molly Aitken and Eugene Wang 265

Afterword: The Act of Comparing (Both Sides, Now)
Dipesh Chakrabarty and Haun Saussy 310

Chronology 343
Chinese and Indian Terms 345
List of Contributors 347
Index 349

Preface and Acknowledgments

What China and India Once Were was from the first conceived as a book for the general educated reader. We have accordingly avoided the narrower scholarly controversies and dense footnoting that mark academic writing, and have tried as far as possible to eliminate the even denser jargon that often mars it. We have provided brief suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter where interested readers can find up-to-date guidance for pursuing particular questions; maps (general maps of China and India in the early modern era, and bearing the names of places cited in the chapters; and political maps illustrating Qing and Mughal expansion); a timeline of all kingdoms, dynasties, and the like referred to in the text; and a brief glossary of technical terms.

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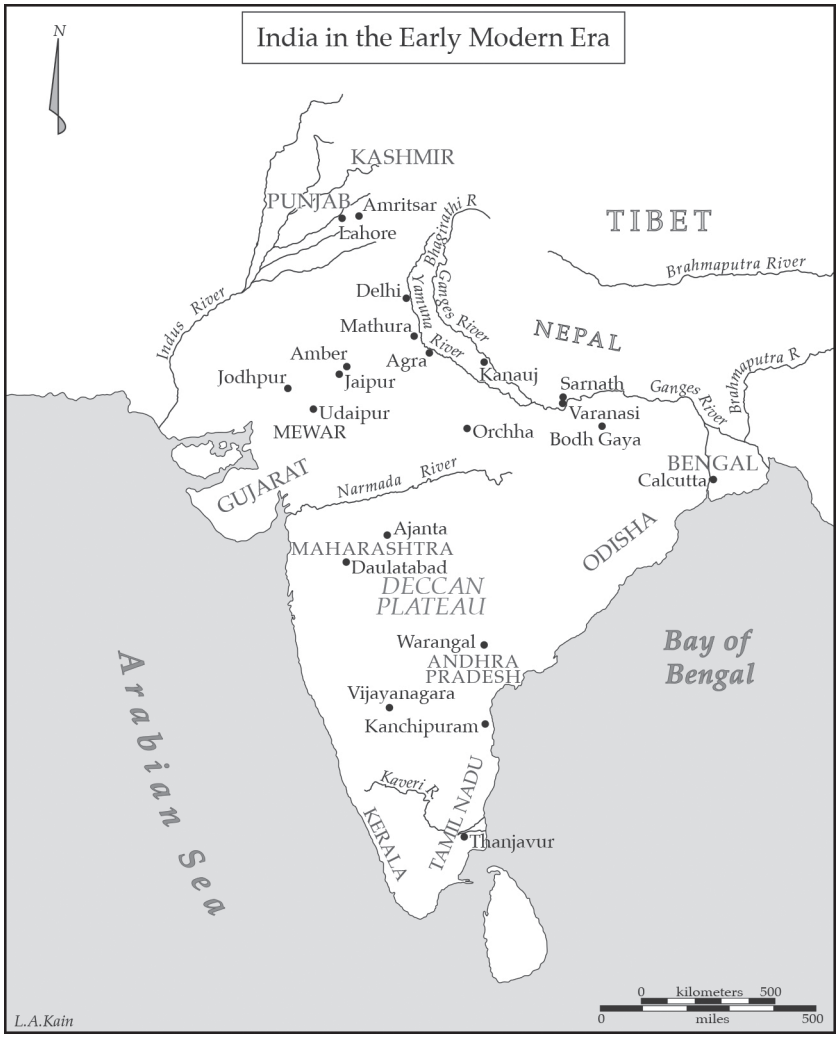
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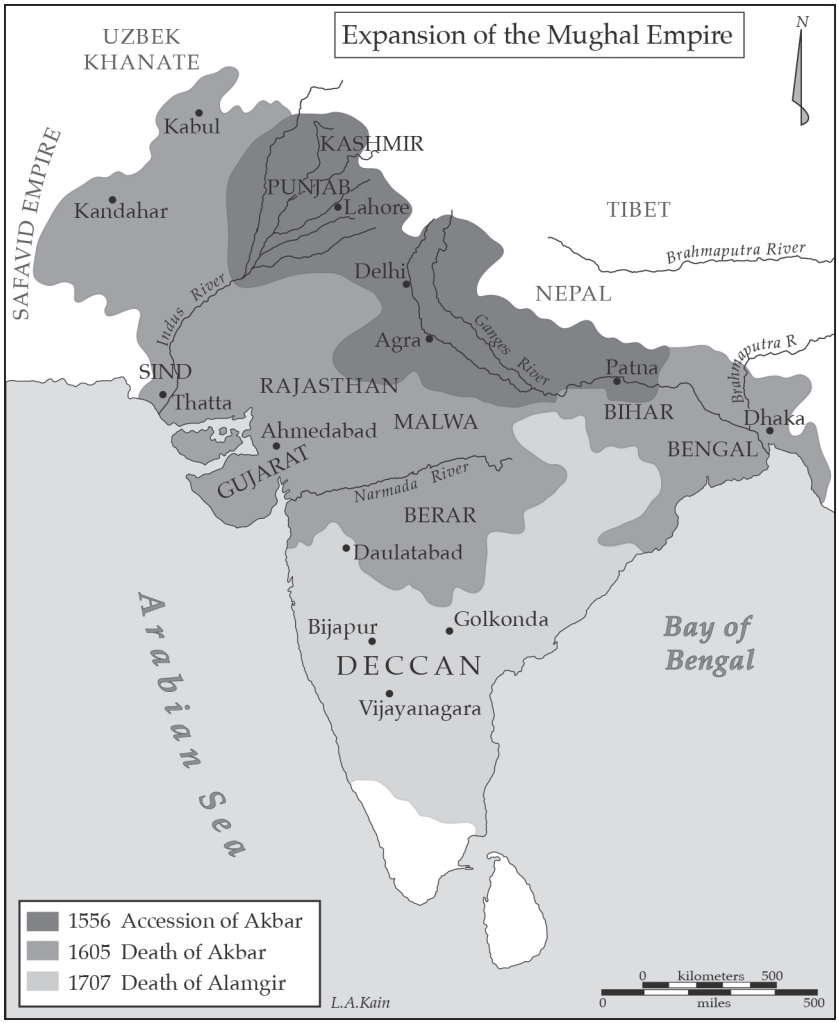
Benjamin Elman, Princeton

Sheldon Pollock, Columbia


China in the Early Modern Era
N
MONGOLIA
MANCHURIA
XINJIANG
(TURKISTAN)
LIAODONG
PENINSULA
Sea
of
Japan
Shenyang
Beijing
Bohai Sea
Yellow River
SHANXI
SHANDONG
Yellow
Sea
XINING
Xi'an
JIANGSU
Yangzi
Delta
TIBET
Nanjing
NEPAL
Lhasa
Chengdu
Hangzhou
East China
Sea
SICHUAN
River
Yangzi
YUNNAN
FUJIAN
Guangzhou
Pearl River
South China Sea
Bay of
Bengal
0 kilometers 500
0 miles 500
L.A.Kain


India in the Early Modern Era
N
KASHMIR
PUNJAB
Amritsar
Lahore
TIBET
Brahmaputra River
Bhagirathi R
Ganges River
Yamuna River
Indus River
Delhi
Mathura
NEPAL
Amber
Agra
Kanauj
Jodhpur
Jaipur
Sarnath
Ganges River
Brahmaputra R
Udaipur
Varanasi
MEWAR
Orchha
Bodh Gaya
BENGAL
Calcutta
GUJARAT
Narmada River
Ajanta
MAHARASHTRA
Daulatabad
ODISHA
DECCAN PLATEAU
Warangal
Bay of Bengal
ANDHRA PRADESH
Vijayanagara
Kanchipuram
Arabian Sea
Kaveri R
KERALA
TAMIL NADU
Thanjavur
0 kilometers 500
0 miles 500
L.A.Kain


Expansion of the Qing Empire
N
RUSSIA
Urga
Shenyang
Sea of Japan
Kashgar
Beijing
Yellow
Bohai Sea
KOREA
River
Yellow Sea
Xi'an
Hangzhou
East China Sea
Chengdu
River
Lhasa
Yangtze
INDIA
Before 1644
1644-1697
1698-1760
Guangzhou
Pearl River
South China Sea
MYANMAR
Bay of Bengal
VIETNAM
0 kilometers 500
0 miles 500
L.A.Kain


Expansion of the Mughal Empire
N
UZBEK KHANATE
SAFAVID EMPIRE
Kabul
KASHMIR
PUNJAB
Lahore
Kandahar
TIBET
Brahmaputra River
Delhi
NEPAL
Indus River
Ganges River
Agra
Brahmaputra R
SIND
Patna
Thatta
RAJASTHAN
BIHAR
Dhaka
Ahmedabad
MALWA
BENGAL
GUJARAT
Narmada River
BERAR
Daulatabad
Arabian Sea
Bijapur
Golkonda
Bay of Bengal
DECCAN
Vijayanagara
1556 Accession of Akbar
1605 Death of Akbar
1707 Death of Alamgir
L.A.Kain
0 kilometers 500
0 miles 500

WHAT CHINA AND INDIA ONCE WERE

Introduction

BENJAMIN ELMAN AND SHELDON POLLOCK

Open a recent newspaper and you are likely to read about some incident of Hindu-Muslim violence in India. You are also likely to have read that such incidents happen because Hindus and Muslims have hated each other for centuries. Or you may have learned that, on the contrary, these tensions are the result of the divide-and-rule strategy used by the British during the colonial period, or the mobilizing tactics of contemporary nationalist political parties. In the same way, many observers who reflect on the prevalence of Chinese manufactured goods on our store shelves would think that China has always had abundant and obedient, cheap labor, or that it has always learned from the West, has now adopted capitalism and industrial technology, and is beating us at our own game. People similarly assume that the many successful students from China and India enrolled in U.S. universities are either showing traditional reverence for education or just taking advantage of the opportunities our society offers, as immigrants have always done. The fabulous weddings and dowries of Indian brides and the lavish funerals of Chinese elites are either traditional expressions (of female subordination in the one case and ancestor worship in the other) or demonstrations of how Western consumerism has penetrated every aspect of Eastern life.

In all these cases, the stories are actually much messier than these facile accounts suggest. On the one hand, we are not encountering unchangeable and typically burdensome essences inherited from the hoary past. Yet,

on the other, not everything that really matters is a creation of the modern period and the transformative powers the West has exerted. On both sides we find truisms that are seriously misleading. Knowing something about the pasts of China and India can give us a better sense of which features have or have not been perpetuated. And thereby a better understanding of the present—not a definitive but a more textured and dynamic understanding—becomes possible, along with better practices. In addition, seeking knowledge of these pasts across the wide spectrum of activities and identities that made traditional life no less complex, if differently complex, than modern life is one way to increase the depth of that knowledge. And last, knowing them comparatively helps ensure that China and India recover their individuality and specificity, and do not fall victim to this or that large, equally facile explanatory account that usually winds up homogenizing all past societies ("Oriental despotism" in the nineteenth century, for example, and "modernization theory" in the twentieth).

These three ways of knowing frame the three aims of this book: (1) to explore the nature of Asian pasts so as to get a better grasp of Asian presents; (2) to establish a domain of inquiry broad enough to investigate both these sets of issues with some hope of adequacy; and (3) to directly compare non-European countries.

While all three objectives have presented challenges to the contributors of this book, there are some basic areas where we achieved clear consensus. While the past is not inevitably prologue, the present cannot come to exist or be understood without it. Making sense of its shaping influence across a wide arena of traditional life allows us to better understand its durability into the present. Understanding its particularities through comparison enables us to better grasp how contingent the present really is—to realize, in other words, that it is the product of enduring forces that might easily have worked out differently, and that may well do so in the future.

Why China and India?

The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Summit offered compelling evidence of what so many other global indicators, from stock market shifts to security threats to trends in popular culture, have long suggested to attentive observers: China and India have become decisive players in determining

the world's future. The commitment to cut carbon emissions that these two countries made will affect the fate of the planet in more fundamental ways than the actions of any other nation except the United States. And indeed, with the U.S. withdrawal from the accords in June 2017 and new evidence that both China and India appear to be on track to beat the targets they set in the UN agreement, it may even ensure the world has a future.

That the influence of China and India is on the rise is not news, of course. Their entry onto the world stage has been on the radar of politicians, business leaders, scholars, journalists, and others for several decades. And a substantial body of literature has been produced during this period testifying to the varied reactions—now welcoming, now anxious, almost always surprised if not bemused—to this historic development. What has not often been realized, let alone seriously examined, is the fact that this "entry" is actually a re-entry. Such an examination would need to ask what the two nations were like during the period of their first global domination some five or six centuries ago; how those older ways of life may have shaped their presents; and, perhaps most intriguingly, what comparison between the two can help us learn about each.

One simple explanation why these questions have not been systematically explored is that doing so is no easy task. The meaning of the past for the present, as just noted, is a general problem that haunts, or should haunt, every historian. Even the truth that there is no single "past" anywhere, let alone a past that works in a direct way on the present, often goes unacknowledged. Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, for example, recently asked "Why is China ahead of India?" He pinpoints contemporary India's low overall quality of education, poor health care, and skewed energy provision, among other subsidies, in saying that contemporary India has "failed to learn" the East Asian lesson. But are things that simple? Is any role in this "failure" to be assigned to, say, India's deep history of inequality? The 20 percent of India's population classified as untouchable/tribal has been part of the structure of Indian society for a long time, while evidence for some sort of meritocratic processes via civil examinations is available for China long before the modern era. Can we provide any good explanation for their present without reference to their past?

In addition, comparison between the two regions has never been the norm in scholarship. The deficit can in part be explained by the fact that,

to be convincing, comparison requires a level playing field—we must compare comparables—and careful consideration about how to level it reveals some hard conceptual puzzles, not only in the comparison between China and India but equally in the comparison of the two with the West. During the period roughly from 1250 to 1600, for example, China and India (along with Persia) were the global leaders in mathematical astronomy. Their complex calendrical systems were models for the Pax Mongolica centered on the Yuan dynasty (1280–1368) in Beijing and the Ilkhanate in Tabriz, as well as, later, Mughal India. Yet, Western scholars have routinely associated early modern discoveries in astronomy and mathematics with the "rise of the West" after the "age of Copernicus," 1500–1700. Such deep-seated preconceptions about the world can derail comparison even before it can begin.

Thus, our comparative historical aspirations are at once confronted by several hard, overarching questions. It is a challenge to understand not only how the pasts of China and India relate to their presents but also how to compare them directly with each other without the disrupting presence of Western standards and received views. And there are three additional problems: What do the terms "China" and "India" actually refer to, and how did these referents became the conceptually unified entities they are—whatever those entities (regions? civilizations? nations?) may be? Which parts of their millennial pasts count as relevant to their relationship to the present? How is direct comparison of non-Western traditions supposed even to start if we deprive ourselves of the supposedly stable categories—"state," "literature," "art," "religion," and the like—that the Western lexicon automatically would seem to provide?

What Is "China" and What Is "India"?

The countries, nations, regions, or civilizations—depending on how we define these apparently simple but actually complex terms—that we now identify by the names China and India have long and complicated histories. Any particular definition of either China or India is going to appear, to sharp historical eyes, to be dubious generalization, a freeze-frame, as it were, of a continuously running film of development and change. Yet, even while we acknowledge continuous change, certain constants of internal practices and external assessments still allow us to make use of these

categories with the same cautious confidence with which we employ the equally messy "Europe" (or, messier, "West").

"China": The Central Kingdom?

The China that resides in the minds of most of us as a coherent object of study is the "Central Kingdom"—the literal translation of *Zhongguo*, the Chinese name for "China"—an idea dating back to the idealized early empires of Qin and Han, circa 200 BCE to 200 CE. Of these two, the Han has been by far the most influential. It was long-lived; it committed legitimate governments in traditional China to public veneration of Confucius (551–479 BCE) and his ostensible social, ethical, and political ideals; and it bequeathed the name of the identity of the majority of the "Han" Chinese population today. Our imaginary view of unbroken Chinese unity is largely based on a formulaic rendering of Han history and culture. The righteousness of social hierarchy, the power of standardized language and ritual, and the social justice of a society that privileges agriculture and marginalizes commerce and technology have all become features of a distinct "China" that is neither entirely repudiated nor entirely justified by the richness of history.

Whereas "China" is not some confection of early modern lore but has a deeper, if ultimately elusive, conceptual history, we question a starting point that predetermines an idealized classical world asserting itself effortlessly in the hearts and minds of Han Chinese and their culturally diverse neighbors. For half its history, today's geographic China has been divided among states of Han Chinese and of Turkic, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Manchurian origin, all of which contributed to the economic and cultural development of what we recognize as China, yielding an unstable political environment of contending Han Chinese insiders and non-Han outsiders. The last dynasty, the Qing (1644–1912), rose from Manchurian roots to create a complex, cosmopolitan culture and expansive political boundaries that are the direct sources of modern China's world stature.

"India": A Not So New Nation

Independence in 1947 brought cataclysmic partition to the country that the British ruled for more than a century as "India," creating Pakistan in the

west and, in 1971, Bangladesh in the east. (Ceylon, later renamed Sri Lanka, attained independence in 1948.) The entrance of India and the rest into the post–World War II world order at the same time led some observers, deceived by the apparent timelessness of their own nations, to think of India as a new one. (E. M. Forster wrote, with mock incredulity, in 1924: "India a nation! What an apotheosis! . . . Waddling in at this hour of the world to take her seat!") But the idea of India, some sort of idea, is far older. Ancient Sanskrit geographies describe a "Clime of the Bharatas" (Bharatavarsha) that, while shading into fantasy around the edges, marks off a familiar South Asian space.

Greeks as early as Herodotus spoke of an *indikē* (*chōrē*), an "Indian" place or land (referring to the lands east of the Indus River); the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang (603–664) named it Indu; Arab traders and military adventurers some centuries later took to calling it Al-Hind (again referencing the Indus) and later Hindustan, the "Place of the Indians." Recognizable Indian forms of political organization and religious belief no doubt spread far from the South Asian landmass in the first millennium, creating the so-called Indianized states of Southeast Asia (including Thailand, Cambodia, and southern Vietnam) and carrying Buddhism as far west as Iran and into Central Asia, and, along with Hinduism, as far east as Java and Bali. Yet the Indian subcontinent itself was subject to imperial processes, such as those of the Mauryas (322–187 BCE), the Kushans (c. 30–230), the Guptas (320–550), and the Mughal (1526–1857), that largely hewed to its geographical boundaries and, in some measure at least, imposed or sought to impose integrating structures of rule across a population dramatically varied in languages, customs, and beliefs.

If Indian cultural practices and products spread far and wide, with Sanskrit poetry being written by Cambodian princes in Angkor in the tenth century and Indo-Persian poetry circulating as far as Istanbul in the seventeenth, the generative core was known to be a geocultural space largely coterminous with today's South Asia. Indeed, even though the phrase "South Asia" is a recent coinage, the region itself possesses some sort of coherence—an unfamiliar, prenational sort of coherence—that is far older.

Accordingly, when, the contributors to this book refer to "Chinese" or "Indian" art or literature or science, they do so with a lively awareness that, while the categories are certainly labile and are marked far more by diversity than by homogeneity, their referent is a recognizable and analytically meaningful one.

Ongoing archeological research in both regions takes human habitation and, to some degree, recognizable cultural patterns back to at least the third millennium BCE. It would take another book to explore the processes of unification and consolidation of the two regions and their long-term continuity as early agrarian, literate societies. Instead, our intention here has been to concentrate on what scholars now call, not without some hesitation, the "early modern" period, generally taken to comprise the three or four centuries before 1800. We admittedly lose sight of some important features by foreshortening our gaze. But what we lose in terms of scope we gain, we think, in terms of comprehensiveness.

That said, there is by no means universal agreement about the precise boundaries of this early modern period for either of the two regions, let alone that those boundaries are the same for both. The end point of the early modern is largely unproblematic, for around 1800 many processes were set in motion, especially in global commerce and industrialization, that would constitute the sharpest break with the past in the historical record of both countries and set them on a path toward ever greater convergence with the modern West.

In China, the Opium War (1839–42) epitomized the British empire's triumph over China via the shibboleth of "free" commerce, whereby English opium merchants traded for Chinese tea and thereby reversed the flow of Chinese silver back to India and Great Britain. The Manchu empire ended with the Republican revolution of 1911; Japan took advantage of China's reversal of fortune to invade and make China part of the Japanese empire by 1937. Final independence came with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. In India, 1800 marks the start in earnest of British colonialism, which would gain momentum through the century: Thanjavur (Tanjore, in south India) was taken by Lord Wellesley in 1776; Varanasi in the north was ceded to the British in 1803; in the west, the Peshwas of Maharashtra were defeated in the course of the following decade (1817–1818). The Indian Rebellion of 1857 led to the nation's formal incorporation into the British empire a year later, where it would remain until gaining independence in 1947.

What causes difficulty, then, is not the chronological end point of our study, which is well known, but the starting point we have chosen—"three or four centuries before 1800"—and the conceptual coherence of the "early

modernity" that underlies that choice. While many enduring features of the two regions long antedate even these older eras (and some contributors to the book begin their stories centuries earlier), it was during the early modern period that distinctive form was given to many patterns of polity, society, and culture that persisted until the coming of Western modernity. That said, the early modern era more strictly conceived (c. 1500–1800) has historical salience in both spheres, as recent scholarship has been increasingly able to demonstrate. It is characterized by important transformations that mark a new era while at the same time underscoring the durability of older civilizational features. The two regions saw comparable dramatic changes in trade, as they participated in what for the first time became a truly global system; in demography, with the tripling of China's population and the doubling of India's; in state formation, where large-scale imperial formations were consolidated; in urbanization, monetization, and elsewhere.

Early Modernity in the Ming-Qing Era

The Ming-Qing dynastic rule that marks the beginnings of the early modern period in China produced social, demographic, and economic pressures that placed new demands on the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) that the rulers, now Manchus, and government scholar-officials, still Han Chinese, had never faced before. These pressures include the just-mentioned rise, steep and unprecedented, in general population from about 1500 to 1700 (proportionally paralleling the rates of global population increase), despite severe episodes of prolonged disorder connected to the late Ming rural uprisings that made the Qing invasion possible; the recovery and dramatic expansion of the systems of internal transportation; an increase of arable land and efficiency in agricultural production, making possible larger urban populations and greater commercial specialization in the countryside; the displacement of much of the traditional elite (largely due to the Qing conquest) and promotion of a new ruling caste; greater engagement with regional and global societies through trade, travel, strategic rivalry, and conscious cultural relativity.

This latter infiltration refers to acknowledgment of European achievement in science, technology, architecture; legalization of Christian freedom to proselytize (before the middle eighteenth century), dissemination of

American "New World" and African crops, and attendant changes in foodways; customization of Chinese products to meet the specifications of foreign brokers; acceptance of innovative institutions of credit, security, and legal administration in response to growing commercial engagement with Korea, Britain, and France in particular; creation of a recognizably diplomatic treaty relationship with Russia. In addition, ancient ideals drawn from earlier times were already deemed unsatisfactory. Many Han literati realized that the institutions enshrined in the imperial system were not inviolate. To "accord with the new times" became the slogan of a generation of statecraft (*jingshi*) scholars who during the early nineteenth century sought pragmatic solutions to the myriad organizational and logistical breakdowns that seemed to come all at once. The Opium War and anti-Manchu Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) exacerbated such tensions. With hindsight, we know that Qing China, like Mughal India, was also on the eve of a confrontation with Western imperialism, which would unleash revolutionary forces at all levels of society.

Early Modernity in the Mughal Era

In India, a similar political transformation occurred with the founding of the Mughal Empire in 1526. Although the Delhi sultans had nourished an ideal of limitless political space, it was the Mughals who—like their Qing, Ottoman, Spanish, and Habsburg contemporaries—actually achieved the characteristically early modern institution of a large-scale "universal" empire. Proud of their descent from Timur (r. 1370–1405), founder of the Timurid Empire (1307–1526) in Central Asia and Persia, the Mughals emulated their famous ancestor, just as Timur himself had patterned his career of universal world conquest on the remarkable achievement of Chinggis Khan (1162–1227; r. 1206–1227). Regarding statecraft, scientific surveys of a country's resources and products, together with an increased use of skilled bureaucrats, were hallmarks of early modern states everywhere. And in India, it was the Mughals who first established standard units of measurement and maintained offices of meticulous record keepers and auditors, departing from the more haphazard methods of earlier regimes. Meanwhile, professional Hindu banking and clerical castes became prominent in their sprawling bureaucratic machine. By the end of the sixteenth century, their revenue and judicial administrations also exhibited an obsessive

preoccupation with order, the efficient management of time, and a spirit of rational self-control—all of them characteristics of early modernity.

Mughal India's early modern character, like China's, is also seen in its integration with an expanding global economy. Within just fifty years of the empire's launching, the descendants of Babur (r. 1526–1530), founder of the Mughal dynasty, had conquered the wealthy and commercially vibrant coastal province of Gujarat, and soon Bengal as well. Despite their roots in land-locked, seminomadic Inner Asia, the Mughals thereby joined a global network of maritime trafficking and commerce, with far-reaching consequences. Expanded cash crops (tea, coffee, opium, sugar, tobacco) and new food crops (potatoes, maize, chilies, tomatoes, etc.) transformed India's patterns of production and consumption, while the diffusion of gunpowder and cannon technology helped the Mughals consolidate their power across the flat Indo-Gangetic plain. Perhaps most important, by the early 1600s, Dutch and English trading companies had begun carrying vast quantities of New World silver to Mughal seaports in Gujarat and Bengal. Because India possessed hardly any silver mines of her own, minting this imported metal into coinage significantly monetized the Mughal economy, which in turn enhanced merchant wealth, eroded social barriers, and intensified land use, since mobile cash helped marshal labor to transform dense tracts of jungle into arable fields for cultivating food crops.

The Mughals also created the context for new and dynamic circulation, innovation, and experimentation in many areas of society, including the intellectual and artistic spheres. Mughal cultural life evinces a fascinating blend of Persian and more local styles. Emperor Akbar (1556–1605) is famous for his commitment to translating Sanskrit classics into Persian. He and his son Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) organized philosophical and religious debates at court and were avidly interested in Indian thought. The official political ethos of the day was "peace for all" (*sulh-i kull*), a guarantee that people of different religious backgrounds would be protected by the state. Persian literati and adventurers from around the globe found a congenial home in the cosmopolitan centers of the empire. Mughal painting offers an especially eloquent example of the new sensibilities. Here the world was embodied more tangibly than in any earlier Indian art form. Master painters in imperial ateliers studied European imagery and adopted techniques according to their own needs. Intuitive perspective and other methods, along with the extensive study of nature and individuation, made for a naturalism that

diverged from the Persian tradition from which it had directly descended, as well as from earlier Indic idealism.

Comparing the pasts of China and India is not, however, merely a question of finding parallels that qualify them for the title of "early modern." What we now consider early modern in European terms may have roots in the trading and textual worlds of East and South Asia. But before we consider what to compare, we need to ask why compare at all, and how.

The Logic of Comparison

Many scholars, especially in the last few decades, have sought to avoid comparison for various reasons, prominent among them the troubling historical origins, in colonial science, of "comparativism," or the systematic method of comparing. More recent times have seen a new interest in capturing what we might call processes of mutuality, where actual interactions of two cases produced exchanges and influences. This sort of "connected history" (sometimes called contingent, entangled, or crossed history) is usually offered as a corrective or even replacement for comparative study. While we acknowledge and try as far as possible to avoid the prejudices of colonial comparison, we have also avoided the connective history approach. China and India have interacted for two or more millennia in every domain from to art to literature, religion, and science, not to speak of the more concrete exchanges of trade and diplomacy, so much so that to try to separate these phenomena is to tear apart a real and densely woven fabric. But what we seek to capture here is not those connections and the ensuing emergence of particular material or cultural phenomena—their embryology, so to speak—but rather the nature of those phenomena when fully achieved—their physiology.

We are accordingly concerned less with whether or not Chinese painting influenced Indian painting or Indian literature Chinese literature. To know that the Chinese or Indians borrowed this or that cultural element from the other and preserved or changed them only adds to the basic problem of comparison, and does not fundamentally reconstitute it. What interests us is what the Chinese and the Indians did with a given political, social, or cultural form, not where those forms may have originated. One chapter, on science, does occasionally explore connection in addition to comparison,

but that procedure is dictated by the peculiar nature of the object of study: no boundary whether regional or civilizational, in the past or today, can bar the movement of science. While traditions of learning in the two worlds developed along their own lines, their history is in considerable part a history of how the learned classes and their patrons responded to the availability of new knowledge from elsewhere. This "elsewhere" in the early modern period was Central Asia, from which both China and India imported new astronomical knowledge.

If comparison is the paramount method of this book, we need to explain what it means, or what we believe it means, to think comparatively. From one rather abstract Western viewpoint going back to Immanuel Kant in the late eighteenth century and Georg Friedrich Hegel in the early nineteenth, it is clear that humans cannot *not* think comparatively, that comparison is fundamental to knowledge. The identity of any given thing is established by implicit comparison with what it is not. A person cannot be tall or beautiful or rich except by comparison with less fortunate others. Comparativism, however, as a formalized mode of systematic thought, is by no means fundamental or even in fact all that old. It is largely unknown in the world before the rise of early modern Europe and seems to have taken on a particular urgency as European colonialism encountered and sought to master, through systematic knowledge, many of those perceived, comparatively, as less fortunate others.

A crucial aspect of the colonial sort of comparativism is the defining status given to the European "standard" (the *secundum comparatum*, to use the technical term of Western rhetoric, to which *biaozhun* in Chinese and *upamāna* in Indic correspond), and the assertion that everything compared with it (the *primum comparandum*, Chinese *mofang*, "model to be emulated," Indic *upameya*, "thing-to-be-compared") was not just different but deviant and even deficient. This is most evident in the works of Hegel, some of whose stereotypes of China and India are taken up for study in several chapters in this book. Western–non-Western comparison, from Hegel until very recently, would typically and without hesitation—and usually without self-awareness—incorporate this basic aspect of inequality.

This history makes the direct comparison of non-Western entities here—we might call it cosmopolitan comparison—not only novel but also necessary. Such comparison, decentered from the West, hardly escapes all of the epistemological traps of the colonial sort. One obvious danger is—to use an overused term that nonetheless captures a real problem—the

essentialization of our objects of study. We have already alluded to worries about the "China" or "India" that we are comparing when, for example, we compare "Chinese painting" and "Indian painting," where at every point illegitimate generalization would seem to lurk. Yet in the many collective discussions among our contributors, all of them sensitive to the threat of essentialization, the coherence and analytical purchase of those geocultural terms were never called into question. All of us clearly believed, without feeling compelled to say so, that larger categories of life than the individual actor do exist and could be studied, and to do so carried no real threat of essentializing misrepresentation.

To be sure, these configurations of political, social, and cultural existence may now bear names in English cited earlier—"region," "area," "civilization," "nation," indeed "China" and "India"—that we may wish to contest whenever they are, as they often are, unhistorically treated. One might even argue that in the very selection of our cases a sort of "civilizationism," or the illegitimate generalization of a particular as a whole, is being smuggled in through the back door. What, after all, is the reason for choosing items for comparison if the one is not somehow marked as Chinese and the other as Indian, and to what do those descriptors in the end refer, if not some civilization, empire, nation, country, area?

For one thing, we saw that "China" and "India" are not modern constructs but old spaces created by long-lasting political, social, and cultural forces. We can affirm this while acknowledging that these spaces shifted over time in their boundedness—indeed, they were split by real internal division: just consider the many north/south divergences in both China and India, resulting from real, long-term processes of representation, circulation, language, governance, aesthetic taste, ideas of ultimate concern, and so on. For another, quite aside from our shared sensitivity to the historical processes that underlie collectivizing titles such as "China" and "India," none of the book's contributors ever hesitated to affirm that our different efforts were adding to some whole, that understanding any part—language or historiography or religion or ecology—required understanding it in relation to the other parts.

Even more challenging than addressing the problem of essentialization is making sense of the nature of the knowledge produced by the comparisons explored in this book, and what, if anything distinguishes them from standard comparative research. The goals of standard comparative research are generally held to be fourfold: heuristic, descriptive, analytical, and (let

us call it) estranging. Heuristic comparison aims toward generating new questions and problems: we ask whether something that occurred in case A might also have occurred in case B. With descriptive comparison, we aim to clarify case A by contrasting it with case B, something that alone enables us to identify case A's particularity. In this sense, as Kant and Hegel saw, comparison is a basic part of thinking. With analytical comparison, we seek to answer causal questions, to discover robust tendencies, to test hypotheses. The fourth aim is to introduce a certain distance from the paradigmatic nature of the comparatum (for example, the Homeric epic, which for Hegel was the standard of comparison for all epics everywhere), unsettling its self-evident nature, so that it becomes just one case among other possibilities, and hence "estranged."

Much of the comparative work done in the humanities today seems to be largely descriptive; much done in the social sciences, analytical; the heuristic is less explicitly cultivated, and the estranging is less often made an actual theme of inquiry. Many of these aims are evident in this book, but our dominant concern, whether implicitly or explicitly, has been with estrangement, if of a special kind. Not only does our sort of cosmopolitan comparison require that we actively try to bracket the Western objects—paintings, poems, power formations, whatever—that have functioned as the standards, in order to gain as undistorted a view as possible of the non-Western objects of comparison. But it also leaves us with objects that wind up estranging—sometimes profoundly estranging—each other.

The Knowledge Derived from Historical Comparison

What new knowledge, then, has this procedure actually enabled us to produce in the following chapters? We have found three different kinds. The first two concern categories and disciplines and turn out to be supplemental, not central, to our concerns. The third, which we can call simply the production of *difference*—the outcome of the estrangement just mentioned—has proven to be the heart of the matter. (Our chapter review follows these categories, and accordingly does not need to recapitulate their actual order in the book as presented in the table of contents.)

It is hardly surprising, first of all, that cosmopolitan comparison should explode our received conceptual categories for understanding the larger world, given that those categories originated in Western historical experience.

But this occurred so frequently in the course of our project that it seems to have been intensified by the act of comparison itself. A useful example is "religion." Confusion about what was and was not religion in China and India can be widely observed among the first European travelers, most prominently the Jesuits in China. The great diversity of spiritual practices in both regions was unlike anything they had previously encountered. For these visitors, "religion" was something that was supposed to have "clear doctrines, founding texts, and ecclesiastical institutions," as Zvi Ben-Dor Benite and Richard Davis put it in chapter 7.

A kind of comparative thinking was clearly operating here (the earliest works of European comparativism, in the first half of the eighteenth century, were in fact comparative religion), in which the European standard was deeply buried and never questioned. It brought not just definition and classification but differentiation and separation, with serious historical consequences in both worlds. In addition to having to confront (as most of the chapters do) long-standing popular and historiographical misconceptions of China and India—in the case of religion, "rational China" and "spiritual India" are always lurking in the background—Ben-Dor Benite and Davis show how cosmopolitan comparison enables us to see especially clearly how the new category produced the new totalities now called "Confucianism" and "Hinduism," and, equally important, prompted modern observers to misunderstand much that, historically, was never differentiated and separated to begin with.

It was equally predictable, to move to the second sort of new knowledge, that the degree of uniformity or variation across the two regions that has emerged from the kind of big comparison engaged in here—across diverse objects of study—should depend on the object of analysis, largely in relation to the degree of structure, process, or agency that characterizes it. But again, it has proven particularly important to confirm such uniformity/variation in two non-Western sites.

Deeper, structural determinations seem to have been at issue in producing uniform inequalities in gender relations, for example, in China and India, as Beverly Bossler and Ruby Lal show in chapter 3. The prominence and consequences of patrilocal residence (women always moved to the home of their husband's family); the correlation between status and control (the higher the status of women, the more stringent their confinement in China, the stricter the ban on widow remarriage in India); the control of women's bodies (foot binding in China, widow burning in India);

ingrained popular conceptions of the place of women in society; and, not least, the difficulty of using sources predominantly produced by men to grasp the real issues of concern to women—all these phenomena seem to be constant across the two regions, and to be largely unaffected by cultural particularity. Comparable too, in a more counterintuitive way, is the dynamism of gender relations: far from being fixed and abstract constructs imposed on men and women, they involved active negotiations among historical individuals. Even apparently restrictive gender regimes provided emotional rewards and allowed for autonomy of action in both places; individuals worked creatively within, or in defiance of, inherited prescriptions and constraints to construct meaningful lives. Comparison here serves not only to disrupt common stereotypes and deepen the understanding of Chinese and Indian societies but also to demonstrate the fluidity and historical contingency at the heart of the concepts of "gender" and "comparison" themselves.

Other structural determinants were at issue in producing comparable consequences in ecological and to some degree economic history. The process of energy harvesting, for example, followed similar patterns in both regions. As chapter 1 by Sumit Guha and Kenneth Pomeranz argues, China and India were both low energy-use societies, typically adapting to low energy supplies rather than boosting efforts to increase them—even when in the early modern period population tripled in China and doubled in India—and almost entirely restricted to the year's production of biomass. In other words, both regions were content to tolerate extraordinary levels of poverty.

Structures could obviously vary in the two regions, however, and produce different outcomes. The introduction of New World crops had highly disruptive consequences in overpopulated China and fewer in India, where tastes and patterns of consumption ensured continuity. Importantly, varying cultural factors had ecological consequences too. India preserved most of its original animal population into the early modern era, in particular its "charismatic megafauna," above all elephants, for which religious attitudes were responsible to a considerable degree (not all people ravage their environment as far as resource extraction permits). In China, most large animals became extremely rare, and the elephant vanished entirely. "While China's ecology had been engineered to support impressive numbers of one large mammal and its companions (e.g., hogs), this had been done by pushing almost all other large mammals to the margins."

The category of estrangement made possible by non-Western comparison, to turn to our third sort, will be of greater interest to the general reader than how comparison has caused us to rethink received categories like "religion" or to discover stable patterns of structural constraint. But it is also less straightforward to characterize in terms of knowledge. We can describe it as emerging from the mutual illumination of objects of analysis that can now be seen to be equally different: neither deficient nor deviant in the light of some standard regarded as perfect, and often radically different from one another. Comparison unencumbered by misapprehensions about the essential nature of things—what a poem or a painting or a power formation like empire really, invariantly, is—allows us to better capture the specificity of a given case, which can be seen only against the backdrop of a comparative partner.

Consider once again the problem of religion (chapter 7), and in particular the history of Buddhism. Buddhism in China had long been marked by a judgment of foreignness. Adherents of the pre-Buddhist religion known as Daoism sought not only to demonstrate their chronological priority to Buddhism but even to prove that Daoism was its source (most dramatically by promulgating legends of Laozi's travels to India and even his fathering the Buddha). By the mid-ninth century Buddhists came under direct attack and were suppressed by the Tang state in what is often referred to as the "Great Anti-Buddhist Persecution," entailing the destruction of temples and monasteries, the confiscation of property, and the exiling of monks.

Indian polities, by contrast, evince over centuries almost complete indifference to the regulation of religious communities (though not to patronizing them, sometimes unequally). Although Buddhism was the object of vigorous philosophical critique for a millennium or more beginning almost from the time of its founder (though never on the grounds of temporal priority), it continued to receive royal patronage in many regions, especially in the northeast (today's West Bengal and Bangladesh), well into the thirteenth century, before it faded under the joint pressures of external attacks by Central Asian power seekers and internal splits and assimilation to local religious forms.

Analogous to the nature and degree of religious management on the part of the polity is the highly differentiated status of historical memory, which emerges clearly in chapter 5 by Cynthia Brokaw and Allison Busch. However complicated it is to make sense of historical discourse in India—poetry,

not prose, was the vehicle of history, and the exemplary, not the factual, was its substance—every polity was concerned to define its place in historical memory in one way or another; the inscriptional record provides abundant evidence of this. Yet never did this concern remotely attain the political centrality visible in premodern China, where every imperial court from the seventh century onward had a History Office—and where things could get very serious very quickly.

When, for example, it came to the attention of the Kangxi emperor (r. 1662–1722), the second leader of the new Manchu dynasty, that a Chinese scholar had completed a history sympathetic to the antecedent Ming dynasty, "he had the text destroyed; its editor's corpse exhumed and burned; the family members of all the scholars who had participated in the work either executed or enslaved; the printers and purchasers of the work executed, together with any officials who had known of its publication and not reported it to the throne. A total of seventy people were put to death, and many others exiled." India saw nothing remotely similar; the closest case known to us is the reluctance on the part the chief of Akbar's translation bureau (c. 1600) to publish his *History of Akbar* in the emperor's lifetime, lest criticism of the ruler's religious reforms provoke his displeasure.

The capacity of comparison to produce deeply instructive differentiation is illustrated in chapter 4 on literature by Stephen Owen and Sheldon Pollock. Chinese lyric poems, like those of Du Fu (712–770), are usually located securely in time and place. Indian lyrics, like those of Amaru (sixth century? or seventh? or eighth?) seem as if they could have been written at almost any time or place in the vast world of Sanskrit. In both cases, these effects were intentionally sought, in conformity with radically different aesthetic standards. In China, poetry could not be understood without a detailed historical apparatus identifying the poet and when and where he wrote. In India, poetry could not be understood with a historical apparatus, since the poem was meant precisely to capture what exists beyond historical particularity. In China, Du Fu's poems were read in the same script, that of Chinese characters, everywhere the culture extended, but everywhere the language was spoken differently. In India, Sanskrit, the language of Amaru's poems, was spoken everywhere more or less similarly, but it was read everywhere in as many as twenty different scripts. In China, the unity of the written language, despite its several demotic versions, produced a unified literary culture. In India, that unity, to the degree it

exists, emerged out of a shared pool of narratives, motifs, allusions, and expressive techniques.

Few of these features of literary culture could manifest themselves, certainly not so dramatically, unless the Chinese and Indian cases were brought into comparison. And they could not have emerged as pure, mutually estranging differences, rather than deficiencies, unless compared directly with each other, intentionally distanced from the normative standard of Europe. Many of the same arguments can be made in the realm of art.

In the course of the second millennium in both China and India, landscape painting took a central place in visual culture. Molly Aitken and Eugene Wang in chapter 8 show that there was no single or essential "Asian" tradition of art, as the early twentieth-century pan-Asianist discourse on "haze" in painting tried to suggest. In China, landscape painting became a "self-sufficient" genre, but in a way that never occurred in India. The human element, for example, was largely irrelevant, whereas an unpeopled landscape was of no interest to the Indian artist. In China, landscape painting increasingly became the pursuit of literary elites who inhabited a wide range of social locations; in India, painting was always an artisanal practice, conducted at court, in which the artisan seems usually to have been indifferent to or sometimes even ignorant of the text (when there was a text) that he was illustrating.

Calligraphy was central to Chinese painting and entirely inconsequential in non-Islamicate India, the text often being just scrawled at the top of the picture. The Chinese landscape was an object of intellectual engagement and empiricist scrutiny, and yet haze was a core aesthetic value. The Indian landscape was an object of emotion and imagination, and yet clarity was a core aesthetic value. The relentless secularity of the one contrasts with the relentless spiritualization of the other, a polarity further reinforced by the stunning contrast between the cerebral, plain ink and spare surface in China and the sensual, richly colored and opulent surface in India.

Equally distinctive, if more foundational, is the character of the state in the early modern period, as chapter 2 by Pamela Crossley and Richard Eaton demonstrates. Both regions experienced what to today's historical eye appear to be strikingly comparable moments of political rupture, when power was seized by outsiders: in China, the beginning of the Qing conquest with the capture of Beijing by the Manchu Prince Dorgon in 1644; in India, the victory of the Central Asian Turk Babur over Ibrahim Lodi

in the first Battle of Panipat near Delhi in 1526 and the subsequent founding of the Mughal sultanate. But both the responses to these developments and the subsequent character of the regimes differed dramatically. Chinese intellectuals regarded the conquest by what they viewed as a barbarian people who could never in their view legitimately rule China as a profound humiliation that demanded analysis and explanation of what had gone wrong. (Scholars concluded that political autonomy had been lost because the true meaning of the classics had been lost.) In India, there is much evidence that local actors regarded Mughal overlordship as largely continuous with preceding forms of polity, and far less evidence that they saw it as a fundamental and unbridgeable break (which is not to say there was no resistance).

The sorts of governance that evolved in the two cases were equally divergent. Both had to find accommodation with local cultures not fully their own, and to synthesize multiple modalities of rule. But the styles of synthesis differed greatly. In the Qing we find comingling, with the parts preserved in combination; in the Mughal world we find mixture, with the parts disappearing in combination. To speak as some scholars do of an organic "composite" culture of Mughals may be something of an overstatement, but it still stands in contrast to the studied conglomeration of the Qing, who "ostensibly uttered simultaneous messages in three [official] languages, governed on the basis of three codes of legitimacy, and occupied the moral center of three civilizations simultaneously."

With regard to the social world broadly viewed, there is a notable distinction in the area of social advancement. Although in China elite families could perpetuate their standing over generations by the careful management of wealth, official status was not legally hereditary, and "rags to riches and back" in five generations was proverbial (as noted in chapter 3); in India, the place of the social group in the status hierarchy may have been movable a notch or two up or down the scale, but that place was always inherited. And the same contrast can be seen in the systems of recruitment and advancement in the two empires.

In the Chinese civil examination system during the Song and Ming, as Benjamin Elman and Christopher Minkowski remark in chapter 6, examinations were for the first time held in the provinces, prefectures, and counties and hence open to local people, not just court and capital elites. "The examination system produced millions of literates who, after repeated failures [only 5 percent succeeded], became doctors, Buddhist priests,

pettifoggers, teachers, notaries, merchants, and lineage managers, not to mention astronomers, mathematicians, printers, and publishers." By contrast, in the Indian *mansabdari* system (a graded hierarchy of officers appointed directly by the emperor), *mansabs*, or ranks, were only available to the nobility and gentry, and further strengthened it; elite status was therefore constantly being reproduced. Something consequential and long-term seems to have been manifesting itself in the two instances: a constant stimulation, however unintended it may have been, of meritocratic advancement in China; an uninterrupted reproduction of hereditary privilege in India.

With respect to territorial ambitions, very old limits of political geography seem to have constrained the Mughals, whereas the horizons of Qing expansionism at times appear limitless. In the most remarkable contrast of all we can juxtapose the fragmentation of power in the Indian case to the centralization—or at least the aspiration to centralization—in the case of China. Of a piece with this is the ideological control exercised by the Qing and the ideological laxity of the Mughals. In the Mughal world there is nothing comparable to the Chinese state's reclaiming of power, over the course of the eighteenth century, through what Crossley describes as "a torrent of literary inquisitions, prosecutions for corruption and factionalism, and a rewriting of seventeenth-century history aimed at discrediting some of the leading lineages of the civil government." But the most eloquent evidence of this contrast is also in some ways the simplest: the treatment of the calendar.

There are deep commonalities in the structures of production of systematic knowledge in China and India, such as the dominance of high languages with their transregional communicative capacity, the embeddedness of scientific specializations in kinship networks, the systematized nature of the world of learning, created in the Chinese case by the examination system and in India by an ancient system of Vedic learning, and, later, of Perso-Arabic classical culture. But how profound the contrast is between the role of the state in China in the social organization of knowledge and the "delegative and pluralistic forms" in India becomes clear in chapter 6 by Elman and Minkowski. In China, "the state declared a monopoly" on the subjects of astronomy and the calendar system, since calendrical uniformity across the empire was a core feature of the dynasty's political legitimacy and statecraft. For the Indians, divergent dating systems were always available. Even today, we find a wide range of traditional calendars still

current, "and calendar makers working in different traditions can decide that a major festival like Diwali should be celebrated on different days, or even in different months." Not only did China and India live in different temporalities, but India itself did.

We have so far explained why China and India have been chosen for this experiment in comparative history; what those terms refer to; what parts of their history are of interest to us here, and why; and the challenges especially when comparing two non-Western worlds directly, and the kinds of knowledge this can produce. What we have yet to explain is why we have chosen the themes we did, how these themes interrelate, and what has been left out.

The big comparison engaged in here has no built-in boundaries. Academic knowledge today begins in disciplinary sites, and that is where we began: with economy and ecology; government; gender, language, and literature; history, religion, science, and art. We could easily have added more such disciplinary topics: law, philosophy, music, and so on. To some degree our choices were entirely opportunistic: familiarity with people open to or actually working on China-India comparison, or already linked, by some elective affinity, with a colleague in the neighboring region. We do not doubt that the subjects chosen are core aspects of polity, society, and culture; at the same time we acknowledge that being necessary is not the same thing as being sufficient—even while recognizing that in the end no possible grouping of topics can be sufficient. We were also hostage, if happily so, to the topics that contributors were actually interested in exploring, rather than what they felt, from some preconceived Humean notion of the "national characters" of China and India, should be explored. So in the Chinese case there is more on literati learning and less on neo-Confucianism than might be expected, for example; in the Indian, less on caste, although aspects of both are touched on in the various chapters.

Two other features of the nature of discipline-based knowledge presented in this book merit brief comment. First, while the volume is self-evidently multidisciplinary, it was never our intention to conduct an experiment in interdisciplinarity. Individuals within their area may have come to the project already "inter," but that was entirely incidental. Second, and more unfortunately, but also perhaps inevitably, topics that fall into no particular disciplinary catchment area have been treated less directly than a

far more open-ended (and better financed) research project might have achieved.

Consider just the nature of archives, a topic fundamental to almost all the subjects treated here. Our contributors were constantly acknowledging the copiousness of the Chinese documentary sources and the relative poverty of the Indian. What accounts for such a striking disparity? One might argue that, as was the case in Absolutist Europe during the seventeenth century, where stunning amounts of data on the citizenry were collected and stored by anxious regimes (even despite periodic deficiencies in the availability of paper in revolutionary Paris, for example), the centralized Chinese state had an apparently insatiable appetite for information about its subjects. Nothing of the sort was felt in India until perhaps the eve of colonial rule (the quasi-absolutist Peshwa dynasty in late-eighteenth-century Maharashtra assembled an unusually large and detailed archive of social and political information). Just consider the fact that, from among the thousands of scholar families in seventeenth-century Varanasi, the capital of Hindu intellectual life, not a single personal document—diary, letter, or the like—survives, while tens of thousands of literary, philosophical, and religious manuscripts do (which rules out the environmental explanation).

Think also of the history of conceptual change, such questions as why the impact of the Jesuits was so great in China and so minor in India. Here is a problem even more complex than that of the archive, one whose ramifications to other aspects of the two societies are potentially large. Are such issues in any way related to other questions of technology? Why, for example, did China take to printing so eagerly and so early, and India actively reject it; why was paper so important in China whereas in India, indigenous materials for writing, birch bark and palm leaf, maintained their currency long after paper was introduced? Why—and here we overstate the case, but only a little—did it turn out that China today makes hardware and India software?

If we have not been able to directly address such themes in this book, we hope at least to have offered some pointers toward how they may be further developed. On the serious comparison of these two complex worlds, the implications of their differences, and the extent of the continuation of those differences into the present, ours is merely the first word, and most certainly not the last.

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