

History Speaks Many Languages

An interview with Sanjay Subrahmanyam

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History cannot be written as if nations had always been around, and as if men had not found countless ways to ignore their frontiers. Historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam invite his peers to make use of the riches that lie in the multilingual archives of humanity to reveal connections that were once relevant to huge areas of the world.

A polyglot and an historian, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has placed at the center of his research connections between sources and historiographies in different languages (Persian, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, Portuguese, English, Spanish, German, French, Italian and Dutch). He gracefully submitted to a French and English interview, the Gallic part of which can be accessed on *La Vie des Idées*. Answers to the same questions turned out to be largely complementary. We invite our readers to read both interviews as a whole.

Books and Ideas: What are you working on right now?

Sanjay Subrahmanyam: Right now I am working on a set of French materials from the 17th century – a very curious business. As you possibly know, I taught here at the EHESS in Paris,

from 1995 to 2002 and even 2004, as I spent the last two of those years between Oxford and Paris. At that time, I did work to some extent on French sources, at the Archives nationales and the Bibliothèque nationale. But it struck me at some point that, although I had already looked in some depth at other European sources, I had never gone beyond a very initial take on French materials. I was then in the committee of a student at UCLA, Susan Mokhberi, who was working on the embassy sent by the Safavid ruler of Iran to the court of Louis XIV in the early 18th century. I started reading these sources with her, and realized that I understood these sources differently than she did because I had a quite different take on the Eurasian history of the period. As I was looking to take a year of sabbatical, I decided to write a project for a Guggenheim fellowship on French sources – which would also help me at a personal level because my wife, Caroline Ford, is an historian of France. This may sound like a very aleatory way of going about things. But behind it, there is a set of problems that have long interested me: how does one go back to write a history of Orientalism which is not the history of British colonial Orientalism, but something that existed before that?

When you do this kind of research, there are very obvious names you encounter, like that of François Bernier, who came from the Anjou region of France. Although there has been a certain amount of work done on Bernier, including a recent reedition of some of his writings, there is a set of questions concerning him that nobody has really broached. And behind him there is a bunch of people that nobody has touched at all in three hundred years! The person I am focusing on right now is François le Gouz de la Boullaye, a gentleman who, like Bernier, was of Angevin extraction and who arrived in India in the 1640s, returned to France, and then went back and died in India in 1668 or so. What I want to do with these French sources is to cross them with the Dutch and English sources on the French, so as to give them more depth. Eventually, I am interested in looking at how the French looked at the Mughals and the Mughals looked at the French – there are very few direct sources, but implicitly one can understand a certain number of things.

The Facets of an Individual

Let me go back to François Bernier. He was a doctor trained at the famous Faculty of Medicine of Montpellier, and a philosopher very close to Gassendi: he wrote an *Abrégé* of his philosophy and was there when Gassendi died. As such, he was read by Locke, and his influence can be felt from Montesquieu all the way through to Marx. Bernier was even a key thinker in the construction of the figure of the oriental despot and eventually of the Asiatic mode of production. Bernier went to India and spent quite a long time there (between 1656 and 1668). Several of his writings were published not long after his return. But there are also very interesting materials that remained unpublished at the time. In one of these texts, he gives more or less confidential advice to Colbert, Minister of Finances to Louis XIV, on the functioning of the French East India Company. Peter Burke has written on Bernier and given what I think is a rather gilded view of who he is:¹ the Bernier you see in the unpublished material is very different from the high and mighty philosopher of his *Letters*. Bernier was actually very Machiavellian, even crudely political to an incredible extent.

I'll give you an example. There was a pirate called Hugo who showed up in the 1660s in the Indian Ocean and attacked ships carrying pilgrims to Mecca. This man was eventually captured in the Red Sea, his goods seized, and he was sent back to Europe. Colbert wanted to employ him. Bernier advises him there. It is very interesting how he approaches this. He does not discourage Colbert. He says: "Wait a little bit of time until people have forgotten who this pirate is. Go on insisting that he is not French but Dutch. And when people have moved on, you'll be able to bring this character back into play." And there is plenty of like advice in Bernier's lesser-known writings on India, including a strategy regarding misleading the Mughals on the extent and nature of French power in Europe. Overall, you see a very curious conception of politics that can nuance the view of how someone like Bernier functions – and he does so at two or three levels: ethnographic; as a student of comparative religion; as a distinctly Machiavellian actor.

¹ Peter Burke, "The Philosopher as Traveller: Bernier's Orient," in Jaś Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés (eds.), *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, London, Reaktion Books, 1999, pp. 124-137.

Books and Ideas: As an historian, you have often resorted to biographies and biographical vignettes...

Sanjay Subrahmanyam: Many historians have used individual trajectories, within very different contexts. My book on Vasco da Gama² is not a biography in the normal sense of the term. There is a classical-type biography in French by Geneviève Bouchon,³ and French publishers, when approached for a translation of my own work, which had come out in English before hers, thought it would be redundant. But the two books are very different. Rather than only following the individual, I go back and forth between large contextual questions and Gama's individual trajectory, on which sources are very silent. Gama does not write or talk much, so there is no way of entering his subjectivity, which is often the goal of the writer of biographies. It's simply impossible. And of course plenty of historians are confronted by these problems. Think of *The Cheese and the Worms*⁴ and microhistorians, or even people who do not think of themselves as microhistorians, like Linda Colley, who wrote a book specifically about a kidnapped woman in the 18th century,⁵ because of her interest in gender and the circulation of people in the modern world.

My own interest in large questions certainly comes from my background in the social sciences and my strong training in economics at the Delhi School of Economics. Social and cultural anthropology were huge there: M. N. Srinivas, André Béteille, Veena Das were the major figures of that milieu at the time, in the 1970s. In a way, I didn't have to come to Paris: Paris and 'French theory' were already in Delhi. I have always tried to move between this level and a more individual-centered approach. At a basic level, it is the classic question of how deterministic you make your history, how much people are prisoners of context or active agents. What you need to do is constantly move between these levels of analysis. I did this from my very

² Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

³ Geneviève Bouchon, *Vasco de Gama*, Paris, Fayard, 1997.

⁴ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

⁵ Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History*, London, Harper Press, 2007.

first book on. For instance, in *The Political Economy of Commerce*,⁶ which came out of my dissertation, I proposed the concept of portfolio capitalist. The only way that I was able to convince people that this concept was an interesting way to look at the development of a certain type of commercial capitalism was to track these capitalists, look at what resources they worked with and how they manipulated them. I wrote an entire chapter based on individual trajectories. Even at that time, in 1987-1988, I was not into a very deterministic economic history. I really was never like some of my teachers who counted up ships and bills of lading, drew graphs and ran regressions – and also taught me how to do those things.

Why this difference from the start? One of my good friends, someone with whom I have had very interesting conversations over the years, Partha Chatterjee, was trained as a classic political scientist in Rochester, to work on game theory and the arms race. Now, one of the recent books that he wrote is entitled *A Princely Impostor*,⁷ about the so-called Kumar of Bhawal case. It takes place in India in the early 20th century: a prince dies of syphilis, but there comes this religious mendicant, a *sannyasi*, who claims he is the prince and is believed by the family. How does someone trained in political theory wind up studying this Martin Guerre story? Generally, I think that even Indian economists who stuck to economics have always had a more humanistic take on their discipline than many of their non-Indian colleagues. There is some kind of a cultural component there. I am thinking here of people like my former teacher and friend Kaushik Basu. Perhaps Indian social scientists are also more prone than others to mix in their literary interests with their social scientific approach – now, of course, I am not saying here that in India there is no distinction between fiction and non-fiction.

⁶ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500-1650*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

⁷ Partha Chatterjee, *A Princely Impostor?: The Strange and Universal History of the Kumar of Bhawal*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 2002.

Historians and Their Readers, Historians Among Themselves

Books and Ideas: Is this humanistic approach grounded in a different relationship with Indian readers?

Sanjay Subrahmanyam: Most historians in India, I think, do not write with a target audience in mind, much less so than in France for example, where a history book that does reasonably well can easily sell 5,000 copies. It's impossible in India – you write for ten people. I have never myself written with a large public or student audience in mind, except for *The Portuguese Empire in Asia*,⁸ which is somewhat close to a textbook. Even there, knowing that the book was never going to be used in India, I was addressing a much larger, worldwide audience. I think that for most of my colleagues in India, the student audience just happens – or not. They don't write with it in mind.

It is also true that in India, authority counts for much more than, say, in the U.S. In America, seminar students are going to question you in a way that Indian students won't necessarily. But there is also a much greater tendency to conformity in the U.S., where you need to write like everybody writes. And there is a constant desire to classify you – and this is not just an intellectual thing, but clearly a marketing strategy, like you would put out any other product in a supermarket. In a refereed article, you are often invited to cite “ten important books or articles” on the subject at the outset. But they are either often implicitly present in the argument, or irrelevant to it – so why cite them? It's just a matter of doffing your hat to those authors – three of whom are probably your referees anyway. If this sort of pressure – what I think of as academic food processing – did not exist, we might have a lot more creative work, and a greater desire to play with both form and content in history writing.

Books and Ideas: A considerable body of your work deals with connections between empires, spheres of trade, etc. You have also stressed that it implies redefining the objects of historical inquiry. What kind of historical objects emerges from paying attention to connections?

⁸ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History*, London and New York, Longman, 1993.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam: I belong to a generation which was not the generation of Indian Independence. This is the generation of Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty. All of them were born more or less in 1947, the year of Indian Independence, or 1948. All are “Midnight’s Children.” Even my close collaborator Muzaffar Alam was born in 1947. They had already done a certain amount of the work of taking the inherited nationalist frame, which was the dominant frame of Indian history, and critiquing it. What is actually paradoxical is that, having critiqued it as a theoretical project, they still remained more or less prisoners of it, in terms of their own monographic production. None of them thought that it was interesting for instance to even write an article about some aspect of Southeast Asia or West Asia. They always write about India, or India in relation to the West. They are also completely dominated by the whole colonial encounter, which is understandable given their generation. This is for them a framing problem for all historical enquiries. Having the good fortune of coming a generation or half a generation after them, I could take some of this for granted. By the time I was doing my thesis, Partha Chatterjee’s famous book more or less existed;⁹ Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* was out.¹⁰ For me it was pretty obvious that the nationalist frame was not the appropriate one.

But once you have done the theoretical critique of colonialism and of nationalist discourse, what are you going to construct as your objects? That is my real problem. When I seek connected histories, it is always in a particular context. If somebody is doing connected histories fifty years from now, it will be a very different context. It may be that by then the kinds of objects that we have established in my generation have become old and tired and are no longer interesting; people may want to make other connected histories. It is really a way of trying to constantly break the moulds of historical objects.

The difficulty is that if you go to an Indian history department, sixty-eight out of seventy people who are there may work on India. There are usually two people who teach survey courses

⁹ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1986.

¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983.

on European history or maybe, in the older generation, on Soviet history or Russian history because they had a link there of some kind. Nobody in an Indian history department normally does research on something else, even if they can teach by using the usual textbooks. They will take Peter Burke's compendia on new trends in European social history and teach European social history out of that. But most of them would never dream of going to an archive which is not an Indian or a British one. Since I work on the pre-colonial period, it is even more obvious to me that the relationship between Britain and India cannot be my framing relationship for all questions or most questions I ask. Take the example of Burmese history. In India practically nobody ever thinks that it is worthwhile to do Burmese history. Yet the history of northern Burma is very closely linked to the history of parts of Eastern India, Bangladesh and Northeastern India. There is a whole sphere of circulation and state-formation. But with the exception of maybe two or three largely literary scholars in Bengal, it is not something that people would do. And how many people in India work on Southeast Asia, which is just down the road for us?

In India and I think here also in France, the national and the nationalistic historiography is still the dominant historiography. There will always be a dominant historiography. It has never been my concern to propose what is going to be the dominant paradigm. I think of this much more as *Oppositionswissenschaft*, a term that the early modern intellectual historian Peter Miller gave me. It is conceived to challenge and go against the grain, not in a negative sense and not in a mere sense of saying "here are your theoretical errors," but to propose other concrete projects, to implement them and tell people, "here is another project, tell me what is wrong with this and why some other people cannot work in this style?" Of course people will tell you that there are fifty thousand practical reasons for which it cannot be done. It is very difficult to learn languages, it is very difficult for people in India to go and access these archives. When I was teaching in Portugal in the late eighties, I used to tell students that, for some of the questions concerning the Portuguese empire, one really has to go to Dutch archives. They would say "Dutch, what kind of a language is that? Who in their senses can learn Dutch?"

The millenarian conjuncture of the 16th century was an example I took of how one can look at connections and see a hidden object emerge.¹¹ Unfortunately, in the debate that followed, some people took it very literally and focused on the example rather than the broader question. I chose that example because I thought it was an unexpected one. If I had written about silver circulation, people would have told me that Pierre Vilar had done that kind of things many years ago. Then it also becomes a very material history, a history of prices and money. I wanted to take something, which was much more of a political and cultural phenomenon, in order to show how you can actually play with it.

Entangled Worlds and Intersections

Books and Ideas: Your research mainly deals with South India, the Mughal Empire and early modern Europe or, as you put it, “early modern Eurasia.” People in France are familiar with Serge Gruzinski’s work on the entangled worlds of the Catholic Monarchy. Can you tell us about recent works of a similar vein that focus on other political and cultural entities?

Sanjay Subrahmanyam: It is true that I have worked on South India, the Mughal Empire and early modern Europe, but with Muzaffar Alam for instance, I have also worked on Central Asia, Iran and Southeast Asia. I am also fairly well clued-up on Ottoman history, even though I do not actually work in the Ottoman archives. I teach Ottoman history and I use Ottoman history a lot, even in my examples, essentially with translated materials. Have a look at the examples of people circulating that are to be found in my most recent book, *Three Ways to be Alien*:¹² one of them is an Englishman who ends up in Spain, but spends a lot of his life in the East and the Mediterranean, the Ottoman Empire and Iran. When I say Eurasia, I try to take it seriously within the limits of my competence in terms of archives. I sometimes get people to help me; I sometimes work closely with people.

¹¹ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Sixteenth-Century Millenarianism from the Tagus to the Ganges,” *From the Tagus to the Ganges: Explorations in Connected History*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2004, chapter 5.

¹² Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to Be Alien: Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World*, Waltham, Brandeis University Press, 2011.

Serge Gruzinski and I had a seminar together at the EHESS, which was called Amérique-Asie. Nathan Wachtel and others also took part in it, but Serge and I were the main motors behind it. In a way, he took it in a different direction from me, using more Iberian sources on Asia. That is what his last three books, including the one he has just finished, *L'Aigle et le Dragon*, are trying to do.¹³ I have never got into the Latin American materials that much directly, though I have written a couple of articles that touch on this question. I have also recently done some work with Anthony Pagden on the relationship between the British Empire, the Spanish and the Portuguese Empire.¹⁴

The difference between what I am doing and what Serge is doing may also lie in the fact that I am a bit more eclectic than he is, in my framework, and in the questions I choose. Serge has tended to take it more in a direction of thinking of this as a problem of empire. He is interested in the circulation of texts and images within these empires and their peripheries. Empire is present in my work, but it is not always the dominant scheme within which I am working. I am also interested in histories which do not take place at the level of empire or are not articulated through it. A large part of South Indian history is not imperial at all. The Mughals, for example, were there for a relatively short time. *Symbols of Substance*, which I wrote with David Shulman and Velcheru Narayana Rao, deals with very small states.¹⁵ Empire is not the question to which I am responding all the time. Neither am I trying to replace the nation with the empire as the paradigm within which one does history. I am much more interested in the intersection. This may also derive from the fact that I am coming out of the Indian Ocean world, whereas Gruzinski is coming out of the American world, where after 1500 you have these two massive facts of political life, first the Spanish Empire and then the British Empire. The Indian Ocean is a much messier place, even until the end of the 18th century. How much of the Indian Ocean does

¹³ See for example Serge Gruzinski, *L'Aigle et le Dragon: Démesure européenne et mondialisation au XVI^e siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 2012.

¹⁴ Anthony Pagden and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Roots and Branches: Ibero-British Threads across Overseas Empires," in Per Adriano Prosperi, Vol. 2: *L'Europa divisa e i Nuovi Mondi*, Massimo Donattini, Giuseppe Marcocci and Stefania Pastore (eds.), Pisa, Edizioni della Normale, 2011, pp. 279-301.

¹⁵ Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka-period Tamil Nadu*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992.

the British Empire really control even in 1800? We thus have different tastes, preferences and objects, even though it all emerged from the same conversation.

What I would like people to do with it is to cross objects and archives, which one conventionally did not do. Some people have taken this on. A student of mine at UCLA, who has just started out his thesis, wants to work on the zone between Gujarat and the Persian Gulf: that is Gujarat, and then you have the whole of the Gwadar, Makran, the Baluchistan area and heading all the way through Oman, Masqat into the Persian Gulf. The historiography always keeps Gujarat separate as an object from the Persian Gulf. But we know that these are real spheres of circulation. And there is a whole set of questions which can be asked in relation to them: formation of small states, like the origins of the sultanate of Masqat and Oman in the seventeenth century; piracy and corsair activity in this area; religious circulation between these two sides and so on. That is a kind of connected history project which he is doing, but it is probably going to be a long haul for him, because he is trying to read materials in Persian and Arabic on the one hand and Dutch and French on the other, in order to see what he can do with all this for the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

One can also mention the “entangled empires” types of projects, which I also find interesting. John Elliott wrote a book comparing the British and the Spanish Empires in the Atlantic.¹⁶ People like Eliga Gould have looked at South Carolina, Florida and the Caribbean in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, which is a world between the Spanish, the English colonists and the French. If you go to the historiography, what you will often get is either big macro-histories of the Atlantic, where people will list each empire and deal with it, or separate histories. You get the French in the Caribbean, the English in the Caribbean; there is a whole South Carolina historiography; for the late 17th-18th centuries there is still a Spanish Caribbean or whatever historiography. But if you take these objects together, you see interactions of a type that you did not see before. Some people think it has something to do with the thing called ‘connected histories,’ some do not. The name does not matter that much to me.

¹⁶ John Huxtable Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830*, New Haven, London, Yale University Press, 2006.

Books and Ideas: The examples you gave all point to the early modern era. Does that mean that a connected approach cannot be of help for later historical periods?

Sanjay Subrahmanyam: It is true, studies which privilege this kind of interactions deal mostly with the early modern period. It is for two reasons. One is probably that more early modern historians read Serge Gruzinski or me than late modern historians. Furthermore, the hold of national history is much stronger when you cross 1800, which raises the issue of the constituted archives and habits. People will also tell you very frankly (and this is a chicken and egg problem) that there are no jobs, which are defined like this in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the earlier period, at least in the English-speaking world, many jobs are now defined in a way that would allow you to place yourself without people telling you “Do you really do this or that?” Carlo Ginzburg was my colleague at UCLA. Upon his departure, some people tried to make an argument that since he had left, we needed an Italian historian. Is that really how you define Ginzburg? Is that what he has become, just an historian of Italy? That reflex is too often there.

But some people are starting to think differently with regard to the 19th and 20th centuries. They are often historians of questions such as diasporas and mercantile networks, or sometimes people who are looking at certain kinds of intellectual history where you get the possibility of seeing things across normal boundaries. One can think of the conference on Italy and India, which was organized recently in Paris: its project was to make a kind of a connected history of two nationalist movements, which are not often examined as connected.¹⁷ Medievalists might eventually think that there is something to be done with it. But they have their own problems, which again deal with the nature of sources and the issue of the technical skills needed to read them.

¹⁷ “Italy and India: Intellectual Connections and the Circulation of Political Models in the 19th-20th Centuries”, conference organized by Tiziana Leucci and Claude Markovits (Paris, EHESS, December 2, 2011).

Against Received Wisdoms

Books and Ideas: *Textures of Time* is a book you co-authored with Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman.¹⁸ It puts forward theses concerning genre and texture that enable you to identify diverse historiographical traditions in pre-colonial South India, but are also meant to bear upon history-writing in general. This book has entailed a rich set of reactions in the field of Indian historiography. To what extent have its methodological proposals gone beyond the framework of Indian history?

Sanjay Subrahmanyam: The book has certainly had some reaction in Indian history. I believe someone is putting out a special number next year of the *Indian Economic and Social History Review* where people are trying to rethink Indo-Persian historiography in relation to our book. A forum was published in *History and Theory*.¹⁹ It was a debate where some differences were exposed. Still it was dealing mainly with Indian materials. It was a bit disappointing that they did not also ask a non-Indianist to comment on it. When the book came out, Southeast Asianists were interested in it; even someone like François Hartog was quite interested in it and supported its translation into French at much the same time that he was working on ‘regimes of historicity’. But the problem was that people who came from some historiographical traditions were comfortably sitting on a received wisdom, which said that there was no fundamental historiographical problem to be solved and that all the received categories were stable. For example someone who writes on Arabic historiography has a whole tradition, which starts almost from the early centuries of Islam. There is a received wisdom on European historiography as well. Therefore a book which questions some of the categories and tries to offer new tools in order to redefine some of the boundaries is not something which immediately appeals to people who feel that this problem has been solved a long time ago.

If there is an interest outside India, I imagine it will come from regions where the issues are not so clear. It could be Southeast Asia or Africa, but also interestingly Persian historiography,

¹⁸ Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India, 1600-1800*, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001.

¹⁹ *History and Theory*, 46-3, 2007, pp. 366-427. The articles are by Sheldon Pollock, Christopher Chekuri and Rama Mantena, with a response by Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam.

which is not as secure in its self-perception as Arabic historiography. The issue of African historiography is a complicated one. The problem of Ethiopia or that of Mali is not the problem of Great Zimbabwe; there is also a line of influence there of Arabic-language historiography. A whole debate went on there, which began with Jan Vansina's writings on oral tradition. However, in spite of the obvious differences between the African and Indian experiences, a lot of it became about how history is this object which was imported from the West along with colonization. This is the cliché, which we have had for at least two hundred years. If people want to re-examine this question, I think that going to some of the ideas developed in *Textures of Time* could be useful to them. Unfortunately, this book has currently become too much mired in an Indian set of problems. We were expecting older-fashioned historians to react and say, "This is not serious, this is not historiography, we know what historiography is, it is Gibbon and his Indian epigones, and so on." But it was also depressing to see that many Indologists actually rejected it, given that they are invested in the idea that there is no *shastra* (theoretical texts, set of normative rules) of history. Moreover they do not like to read Indian vernacular languages, in which languages most of our examples are. For them, anything worth saying in India must have been said in Sanskrit.

I am actually a bit disappointed with the reactions to both books I have written with Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman. We took a lot of risks in *Symbols of Substance* (1992). For the three of us — a literary scholar and folklorist, who has worked on oral literatures for a long part of his life, a classical Indologist specializing in religious studies, and an historian who comes out of economic history — to get together and write a book in the first place was taking a big risk. We wanted to work on South India, because all the historiography at the time was focused on North India. People sometimes put *Textures of Time* on reading lists now both in India and outside, but it has not made the impact we had hoped for it. Maybe we did not pose the problems in the right way, or clearly enough. As Americans would put it, perhaps our after-sales service was not good enough. If I had been a certain type of historian in an American university, I would have given ten talks about the book after it was published, showed up with piles of it and sold it at a discount to people in the audience! But perhaps it is still too early to say what the real impact of these books will be. At any rate, we certainly enjoyed working on them and writing them — which is more than half the story.

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