

Knowledge production and Pedagogy in Colonial India: Missionaries, Orientalists, and Reformers in Institutional Contexts

Veranstalter: German Historical Institute London; School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

Datum, Ort: 13.11.2008-15.11.2008, London

Bericht von: Indra Sengupta, Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin, Deutsches Historisches Institut London

One of the more salient shifts in the study of colonial societies, and indeed studies of the British Empire more generally, in the last two decades has been a new analytical focus on knowledge and knowledge production.¹ The 'paradigm shift' in the field was inaugurated by Edward Said's widely influential study *Orientalism*² (1978), which analysed European representations of the Orient as integral elements of wider programmes of imperial domination. Said's work produced a generation of scholarship on orientalist knowledge, but perhaps nowhere was the study of colonial knowledge more fruitfully received than in South Asian studies. Inspired by Said, anthropologists and historians largely associated with the University of Chicago produced extended critiques of the discipline of Indology³, and of the great surveys and other information gathering projects of the colonial state.⁴ From the mid 1990s, however, new lines of research have addressed the wider intellectual contextualisation (both in the colony and metropole) of 'orientalist' knowledge⁵, as well as a deeper exploration of the careers of colonial scholars and particularly their relations with indigenous 'informants' and cultural 'intermediaries'.⁶ They have

intensively engaged with the question of agency of indigenous informants and interlocutors, and thus examined knowledge as a fractured, dialogically produced, potentially open-ended and socially unstable constellation of ideas and practices.

The conference jointly organised by GHIL and SOAS sought to take stock of this new research and both probe and extend the existing questions around knowledge production in colonial South Asia. The papers engaged intensively with the complexity of knowledge production and the wider field of pedagogy in colonial India and focused specifically on certain key questions: the conceptual, methodological and stylistic differences between various strands of colonial scholarship and their relationship with pedagogical realities; the diverse terrain of knowledge production and pedagogy, ranging from the institutional to the informal, thereby calling into question the earlier conceptualisation of the monolithic nature of colonial knowledge; the diverse and constantly negotiated relationships between different institutional settings, that is, the potentially diverse relations between schools, museums, and centres of higher learning; the importance of Indian elites in the production and pedagogic implementation of this knowledge about India; the complex question of indigenous agency in the production and dissemination of knowledge in colonial India; an intensive and critical examination of what specifically constituted the sphere of pedagogy and education, and how precisely it disseminated and reproduced knowledge; asymmetries between discourse and policy; and the varied, fractured and negotiated conditions of reception of colonial knowledge both in India and the metropole.

The conference consisted of eight panels and one keynote lecture. Following the welcome address by Andreas Gestrich, Director GHIL, the academic sessions got underway.

The first panel, called 'Missionaries, Knowledge and Education', was chaired by Avril Powell and addressed the relationship between missionary pedagogy and 'hegemonic' colonial knowledge. HEIKE LIEBAU (Berlin) focused on the work of a printing press in Vepery/Madras which was established by the English East India Company with the help of German Protestant missionaries. She

¹ Tony Ballantyne, *Colonial Knowledge*, in: Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire. Themes and Perspectives*, Oxford 2008, pp. 177-98.

² Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London 1995.

³ Ronald Inden, *Orientalist Constructions of India*, in: *Modern Asian Studies* 20 (1986), pp. 401-446.

⁴ Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford 1987; Bernhard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, Princeton 1996; Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, Princeton 2001.

⁵ Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's the History of British India and Orientalism*, Oxford 1992; John Mackenzie, *History, Theory and the Arts*, Manchester 1995.

⁶ Eugene F. Irschick, *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India 1795-1895*, Berkeley 1994; C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information. Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India 1780-1870*, Cambridge 1996; Phillip B. Wagoner, *Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge*, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and*

History 43 (October 2003), pp. 783-786; Michael S. Dodson, *Re-presented for the Pandits: James Ballantyne, „useful knowledge“, and Sanskrit scholarship in Benares College during the mid-nineteenth century*, in: *Modern Asian Studies* 36 (2002), pp. 257-98.

drew attention to the role of networks which included both European and Indian agents with their own particular interests, who nevertheless were largely dependent on each other. KAREN VALLGÅRDA (Copenhagen) spoke of the hegemonising project of an 'alien' pedagogy based on strict codes of conduct in a school run by the Danish Missionary Society in colonial South India. HELGE WENDT (Mannheim) referred to the variegated nature of knowledge produced 'on the spot' by missionaries.

The second panel was called 'Framing Words and Objects' and was chaired by Daud Ali. The presenters concentrated on the diversity of aims and intended audience, and the essentially 'conflicted' nature of knowledge produced even within the framework of colonial pedagogical institutions. KATE TELTSCHER (Roehampton) in her paper on the mutual engagement, and the convergences and divergences between the Anglo-Indian work of lexicography, the Hobson-Jobson and the New English Dictionary, dwelt on the importance of the Hobson-Jobson for the compilers of the NED. She highlighted at the same time the 'open and inclusive' character and 'playful irreverence' of a text constructed in the colonial 'periphery', which nevertheless acquired an international circulation along trade routes. ANNE-JULIE ETTER (Paris) drew attention to the conflicts between scholars and antiquarians from the colonial establishment on the one hand and colonial policy-makers on the other, in deciding on a policy of monument preservation in early colonial India. GEOFFREY ODDIE (Sydney) spoke of the divergent aims and intended audiences between missionary museums in London, displaying objects of (usually religious) art of India in London and missionaries 'in the field', who actually collected these objects. He referred to the specific compulsion of missionary museums in the metropole to educate the English working classes about the morally uplifting effects of Christianity by holding up to them the relics of a „degenerate“ religion (Hinduism).

The Friday morning session began with the panel 'Producing Space, making History', which was chaired by Indra Sengupta, and took as its framework knowledge production for the construction of place and (historical) time. All the papers highlighted the role of indigenous agency in the production of a new kind of knowledge which was based on the scientific principles of disciplinary knowledge that was being produced in Europe at

the time and introduced to India through colonial rule. The speakers emphasised the power of indigenous agency while engaging with European science, but also referred to its limitations. MICHAEL S. DODSON (Bloomington/Indiana) spoke of the discourse of decline in relation to urban landscapes of North India (Jaunpur), which was often perceived as a metaphor of 'Muslim decline', but how architectural decline was used in very constructive ways by Muslim elites to ask for government grants for the preservation of historic buildings and thereby assert their identity as a group. PETER GOTTSCHALK's (Connecticut) paper used the case study of a village in Bihar (Chainpur) to engage with the rising influence of 'scientism' in the production and dissemination of colonial knowledge in institutional settings such as learned societies, surveys, museums and schools. CHITRALEKHA ZUTSHI (Virginia) focused on the princely state of Kashmir, where knowledge of the region was the product of the efforts of colonial Indologists, Brahmin scholars (pandits) of the region, and the indigenous rulers who wanted to produce a regional history and geography for strengthening a particular kind of Kashmiri identity that would serve their own interests. DAVID LEYVELD (New Jersey) examined the increasing adoption of positivist historiographical approaches in two editions of Syed Ahmad Khan's work on the Qutb Minar, the *Asar Al Sanadid*; at the same time, Leyveld stressed the difficulty of trying to strait-jacket the work by pointing out the ways in which it defies the structures of colonial historiography.

The following two sessions were dedicated to the theme 'Debates on Knowledge and Pedagogy'. The first of these was chaired by Markus Daechsel and consisted of two papers on pedagogical theory. CATRIONA ELLIS (Edinburgh) spoke of the debates on pedagogy in colonial Madras in the 1930s. IQBAL SINGH SEVEA'S (Singapore) paper focused on the North Indian Muslim discourse on national education and national development by focusing on the prominent public figure Muhammad Iqbal. The second part of the session was chaired by Siobhan Lambert-Hurley. ALAN M. GUENTHER (Caronport) returned to the text and, by engaging with Syed Mahmood's *History of English Education in India*, tried to place Syed Mahmood as a key figure in promoting dialogically produced knowledge in a colonial context. S. AKBAR ZAIDI'S (Cambridge) paper explored the practice and operation of indigenous agency by examining the

notion of *zillat* or (self-imposed) state of decline among the middle-ranking North Indian Muslim intelligentsia in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The keynote lecture, called 'What's in a (proper) name? Authorship, nomenclature and individuals in the Linguistic Survey of India, 1894-1928', was delivered by JAVED MAJEED (London). Majeed emphasised the notion of high imperial anxiety in the classificatory project of the Linguistic Survey of India and argued that, burdened by its own relentless classificatory logic, the survey virtually imploded on itself, thus giving the lie to the stability and power that is associated with hegemonic projects of colonial knowledge production in Said's analytical framework.

The final day's session was held at SOAS and started off with a panel on 'Schooling Sensibilities', which was chaired by Francis Robinson. In her paper on the pedagogy of emotions, MARGRIT PERNAU (Berlin) dwelt on the conceptual histories of civility and *tahzib ul akhlaq* and the entanglement of these histories in colonial Delhi in the nineteenth century. BHAVANI RAMAN (Princeton) focused on the *Tinnai* schools in colonial South India to challenge the widespread notion in colonial educational policy about the inability of Indians to learn in any other way than by rote and thus, their inability to imbibe meaningful learning. She showed how rote learning in these schools was practised for the cultivation of the senses and to teach mental and physical discipline.

Of the two papers in the section 'Pedagogy in Practice: textbooks and curriculum', chaired by Talat Ahmed, AMRITA SHODHAN (London) spoke of the relationship between colonial knowledge, legal action, reformist activity and education by examining school textbooks in early colonial Gujarat. VIKAS GUPTA (Delhi) dwelt on the fractured nature of colonial knowledge as created and disseminated in textbooks by arguing that this was due, on the one hand, to the reluctance of the colonial government to impose Western knowledge on indigenous knowledge systems; on the other, it was the result of the participation of the Indian elites and Christian Missionaries with their own respective agendas in the production of curricular knowledge.

The final panel 'Reformers and Institutions', chaired by Anshu Malhotra, included two biographical studies by JEFFREY DIAMOND (Charleston) and GAIL MINAULT (Austin/Texas), both

of which engaged with the role of individuals who were potentially 'outsiders' to the colonial educational system in India. The papers dwelt on their involvement in the production and dissemination of colonial knowledge in both institutional and extra-institutional contexts.

The range and variety of the papers presented was an indication of the complexity of new research and new research questions in the field of colonial knowledge. By opening up lines of inquiry, such as the role of indigenous agency, the social practice of pedagogy and by questioning the notion of a stable system of knowledge, produced entirely within structures of colonial power, the papers made a substantial contribution to a newer, more critical engagement with Saidian analytical categories than was the case in the first nearly two decades of scholarship on colonial knowledge. Publication of the papers is planned.

Conference Overview:

Panel 1: Missionaries, Knowledge and Education (Chair: Avril Powell)

Heike Liebau, Mission, Company and Government printing presses in 18th century South India

Karen Vallgård, Adam's Escape. Danish Missionary Ideology and Power in the Boarding School in Melpattambakkam 1863-1874

Helge Wendt, Knowledge Production „on the Spot“: Missionaries and their Educational Programs in Colonial India

Panel 2: Framing words and objects (Chair: Daud Ali)

Kate Teltscher, Hobson-Jobson and the OED

Anne-Julie Etter, Antiquarian knowledge, museums and preservation of the Indian monuments at the turn of the 19th century

Geoffrey Oddie, Missions and Museums: Hindu Gods and Other Abominations

Panel 3: Producing Space, making History (Chair: Indra Sengupta)

Michael S. Dodson, The Muslim City in Decline: Visions of Jaunpur in the Nineteenth Century

Peter Gottschalk, Promoting Scientism: Institutions for Gathering and Disseminating Knowledge in British Bihar

Chitrakha Zutshi, *Rajatarangini* and the Making

of Colonial Historical Knowledge in Kashmir

David Lelyveld, *The Qutb Minar in Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Āsār al-Sanādīd*

Panel 4: Debates on Knowledge and Pedagogy 1
(Chair: Markus Daechsel)

Catriona Ellis, Policeman or creator? A study of pedagogical theories in the Madras Presidency, 1930s

Iqbal Singh Sevea, *Schooling the Muslim: Debates over Muslim education in late colonial India*

Panel 5: Debates on Knowledge and Pedagogy 2
(Chair: Siobhan Lambert-Hurley)

Alan M. Guenther, Syed Mahmood and his *History of English Education in India*

S.A. Zaidi, *Ilm ya taleem?* (Knowledge or education?) Contested practices countering *zillat*: Muslims in north India, c. 1860-1900

Keynote lecture:

Javed Majeed, What's in a (proper) name? Authorship, nomenclature and individuals in the Linguistic Survey of India, 1894-1928

Panel 6: Pedagogy in Practice: Schooling sensibilities (Chair: Francis Robinson)

Margrit Pernau, Teaching emotions. Victorian values and *sharafat* in 19th century Delhi

Bhavani Raman, Learning recollection in the Tinnai School in Nineteenth-century South India

Panel 7: Pedagogy in Practice: textbooks and curriculum (Chair: Talat Ahmed)

Amrita Shodhan, The understanding of caste and Hinduism in early nineteenth century Gujarat as reflected in judicial practice, reformist writings and school textbooks

Vikas Gupta, The Paradox of Curricular Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century: Pundits, Molvis, Missionaries and the Raj

Panel 8: Reformers and Institutions (Chair: Anshu Malhotra)

Jeffrey M. Diamond, The Orientalist-Indian Literati Relationship in the Northwest: G.W. Leitner, Muhammad Hussain Azad and the Contestation of Knowledge in Colonial Lahore

Gail Minault, Aloys Sprenger: German Orienta-

lism's 'Gift' to Delhi College

Tagungsbericht *Knowledge production and Pedagogy in Colonial India: Missionaries, Orientalists, and Reformers in Institutional Contexts*. 13.11.2008-15.11.2008, London. In: H-Soz-u-Kult 07.03.2009.