

比较研究与印度学 (2021.3.18)

Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*

Wolters, O. W. *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*

This material is wholly novel to me though I picked up fragments, in particular the schism between O.W. Wolters and George Cœdès. I read in Victor Lieberman's *Strange Parallels Volume 1* of the 'externalist' historiography written in the first half of the 20th Century and the embrace of a 'law of Southeast Asian inertia: unless acted upon by external forces, native societies remained at rest' ¹. A sense of a corollary 'law of South Indian inertia' emerged in Trautmann's account whereby the 'Orientalism of the Calcutta establishment constructed a homogenized picture of the ancient constitution of India that generalized from Bengal to all of India, but was in fact wrong for Madras.' Trautmann notes the presence of a complexion geography in early Indian works, in Rajasekhara's *Kavya-mimamsa*, according to which the people of northern India are *gaura*, 'fair', those of eastern India are *syama*, 'dusky, of the south are *krsna*, 'dark, and of the west are *pandu*, 'pale, yellowish-white', while the Middle Country is a mixture of *Gaura*, *syama* and *krsna*. I was curious in particular to how the northern/southern cleavage mapped onto Trautmann's analysis of the 'racial theory of Indian civilisation', the theory that emerged among British Orientalists in the 19th Century that India's civilisation was produced by the clash and subsequent mixture of light-skinned civilising invaders (the Aryans) and dark-skinned barbarian aborigines (often identified as Dravidians).

Trautmann notes the emergence of the New Orientalist school of British scholars in newly conquered Bengal who in 1784 formed the Asiatic Society at Calcutta. He notes how Indians were not inert objects of study for the new Orientalism but the teachers of Sanskrit to the first British Sanskritists. They participated in the "dialogic construction" (Irschick 1994) of the new Orientalism. Trautmann quotes the Bengali scholar Tapan Raychaudhuri's *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (1988): 'Max Müller's scholarly theories concerning the common origin of all Indo-Aryan [i.e., Indo-European] races based on his linguistic studies were received with incredible enthusiasm. The belief that the white masters were not very distant cousins of their brown Aryan subjects provided a much needed salve to the wounded ego of the dependent elite. A spate of Aryanism was unleashed.'

I was curious as to the psychological dimensions of colonialism, elements that Frantz Fanon would bring to the surface in the 1950s; the imbrication of religious ideas into 18th Century scholarship (e.g. the Mosaic narrative of creation, flood, confusion of tongues, and dispersal of the nations as its point of origin) and the sense of the psychological rupture at the time in the identification of the unexpected connection of Sanskrit and its descendants with Persian and the languages of Europe, producing as Trautmann suggests, a revolutionary new view of "race". Trautmann further traces slippages in the Aryan idea, for British Sanskritists, Aryanism, imbricated in a pacifying logic of colonial management was constructed as a source of kinship (Aryans = Indians + Europeans), for other writers Aryanism came to occupy a relation with Hindu exceptionalism and Hindu expansion as in S. R. Rao's (1982) Aryan interpretation of the Indus Civilization materials. Trautmann further notes how in Sri Lanka, the Aryan/Dravidian difference has been assimilated to the Sinhala/Tamil and Buddhist/Hindu differences, themselves deeply politicized, with tragic consequences, opening up a

¹ In the Introduction to Cœdès's 1964 *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, he writes glowingly of how the expansion of Indian civilization "to those countries and islands of the Orient where Chinese civilization, with strikingly similar aspirations, seemed to arrive ahead of it," is one of the outstanding events in the history of the world, one which has determined the destiny of a good portion of mankind. "Mother of wisdom," writes Sylvain Lévi, "India gave her mythology to her neighbors who went to teach it to the whole world. Mother of law and philosophy, she gave to three-quarters of Asia a god, a religion, a doctrine, an art. She carried her sacred language, her literature, her institutions into Indonesia, to the limits of the known world, and from there they spread back to Madagascar and perhaps to the coast of Africa, where the present flow of Indian immigrants seems to follow the faint traces of the past."

broader contention on the psychological durability of racial science and the imbrication of race in latitude and north/south cleavages of equatorwardness and Europewardness. Trautmann also addresses the scholarship of Edward Said, writing shortly after the publication of *Orientalism*, he writes: 'Is the Orientalist Proust's academic dry old stick, pursuing an obscure subject that no one cares about? Or is the Orientalist Said's intellectual spearhead of Western imperialism?'

In her review of O.W. Wolters's 1982 essay, Laura Junker notes how Wolters took care not to talk in pan-Southeast Asian generalities, but instead emphasised that it was how these foreign models were "localized" (i.e. integrated into local cultures and given local "meaning") that provides the bridge between work on "local" culture history and broader issues of regional scale. Wolters writes, 'historians, when they contemplate the shape of Southeast Asian history, tend to seize on general maritime features and the diverse terrain - upland, inland, agrarian and coastal - rather than on specific evidence of cultural diversity reflected in historical materials. Wolters notes in Coedes work his suggestion that 'the study of Farther India' provides 'very valuable documentation that cannot help but further our knowledge of ancient India, and that the subject's importance 'lies above all in the observation of the impact of Indian civilisation on the primitive civilisations.' Wolters counters the idea of Southeast Asian cultures and societies as 'primitive' and argues the elipsis in studying 'Farther India' without first seeking to understand and trace the cultural diversity, complexity and difference of its subregions.

Again there are psychological dimensions in Wolters. He argues against the passive image of Southeast Asian rulers and the monocausal image of Indianization, there were multiple other flows of ideas. (I was not aware before reading the sources this week of the strength of historical connections between India and Southeast Asia. Though I had studied a course on 'Contemporary India' in my BA, the sense was very much a focus on the modern nation state of India rather than on Greater India and on sociological lenses rather than transoceanic. Wolters writes, 'whether in the form of improved Sri Lankan editions of the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism, Muslim modernism from the Middle East or the teachings of Spenserian Darwinism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Southeast Asian elite would, I believe, be alert to new possibilities for updating older statements of universal validity. I suggest that the elite always took modernity urbanely in its stride [...] with a present-minded outlook which permitted the elite not only to expect the continuous flow of foreign merchandise but also to absorb the mondial perspectives of the continuously arriving Indian literature and sustain intellectually curious and outward-looking habits of mind for all time.' As an example Wolters looks at the Javanese appropriation of the Sanskrit word *Santosa* to a non-Indian meaning.

Later in the essay, Wolters explores a mosaic-like or chimeric image of the flow of Indian materials. 'Indian materials tended to be fractured and restated and therefore drained of their original significance by a process which I shall refer to as 'localisation'. The materials be they words, books or artifacts, had to be localised in different ways before they could fit into various local complexes of religious, social and political systems and belong to new cultural wholes. Only when this had happened would the fragments make sense in their new ambiances.' I was curious how this tied into Wolters's analysis of the 'single ocean' and whether Coedes's project in the early 20th Century suffered from being written before the thought of Eduoard Glissant and other Caribbean writers in the 1950s and 1960s challenging the conception of oceans as neutral domains toward a poetics of relation, tidalectics and difference.