

distortions also contributed to scale economies and technological learning? Why is it that capacity expansion led to overproduction in HCI but not in the steel industry? Today Korea's main steelmaker is ranked number two in the world, a result that would not have been possible without sustained investment in large projects.

Notwithstanding these omissions, understandable in the context of discipline-based scholarly investigation, Rhee's book is a good addition to a large body of literature that uses the institutional setting to explain economic outcomes.

ANTHONY P. D'COSTA
National University of Singapore

SOUTH ASIA

The Science of Empire: Scientific Knowledge, Civilization, and Colonial Rule in India.
By ZAHEER BABER. Albany: State University of New York, 1996. x,
298 pp. \$71.50 (cloth); \$23.95 (paper).

This is an uneven book, promising in places but disappointing in the end. The title and introductory material suggest more than is actually delivered, which amounts to a good discussion of some theoretical and historical issues (not all of which directly pertain to imperialism) and a less impressive survey of very familiar material drawn mostly from existing scholarship on the heyday of empire.

The book opens with a clear examination of current debates among sociologists of science regarding the nature of scientific knowledge. The author's own approach is apparently moderate constructivism, with an emphasis on the social construction of science in "an explicitly institutional and historical dimension" (p. 7). By this Baber seems to mean that "Western science" (a term never defined here) is in some important way a product of the imperial experience, i.e., the growth of Western knowledge of the natural world reflects in part the specific needs and institutions, as well as the opportunities for human agency, called forth by empire.

The next two chapters contain a helpful overview of the scientific and technological achievements of the precolonial era in South Asia. Baber points out how early scientific and technological advances were related to religious requirements (as in the need for geometrical and astronomical precision to construct altars and to determine the timing of rituals). The author also convincingly argues that in the immediate pre-British period, Indian technologies in areas such as textiles, mining, and irrigation demonstrated considerable sophistication and innovation, as well as compatibility with social needs. The self-serving nature of the imperialist argument that before the arrival of the Europeans India was deficient in scientific understanding and technologically stagnant is thus nicely exposed.

The heart of the book, however, will be unlikely to satisfy those familiar with modern South Asian history. The chapter tracing the origins of British rule, for example, surveys existing scholarship on the subject without any serious discussion of the possible connections between empire and technology, other than brief mention of the technologies associated with the rise of the British textile industry. Unlike Donald Headrick in *The Tools of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981),

Baber apparently sees empire-building and scientific/technological enterprise as autonomous fields of endeavor.

Baber is more comfortable in the ensuing chapters, where the relationship between science and the expansion and consolidation of colonial rule is examined. Baber's argument is that something called "modern" or "Western" science was brought to South Asia largely by amateur scientists enjoying at first only grudging official support; it was later institutionalized by British authorities who found it useful for political purposes; and, finally, these imperial efforts furthered the rise of the scientific project in the metropolis. These points are made by examining the activities of the Asiatic Society, the education controversy of the 1830s, the public works projects of Dalhousie, late nineteenth-century agricultural research in the wake of famine, and Curzon's creation of a Board of Scientific Advice. Baber's survey of these familiar developments is solid, though not particularly innovative, and occasional oddities creep in, such as the claim that Rammohun Roy and H. H. Wilson were really arguing for the same kind of scientific education in the 1820s (pp. 196–98). The argument that imperial needs opened up new vistas for exploration of the natural world, thus strengthening and expanding the scientific impulse back in Europe, is useful. Less remarkable is the general observation that nineteenth-century officials justified the British Raj on the grounds of imparting the supposed fruits of Western civilization to India.

The concluding sections on Indian responses are the least satisfying of all. While the views of Roy, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, and a few others are discussed, the claim early on that anglicized elites sought to use "existing colonial structures," including Western scientific education, "to further consolidate and legitimize their status" (p. 8) is never fully explored in the book. Nor is Nehru's vision of a secular, scientific, and technologically advanced India really addressed. And while Gandhi's antimodernist vision is invoked (largely through the changing views of the scientist P. C. Ray), readers are left to decide for themselves how to interpret Gandhi in regard to the intriguing themes of this book, especially the relationship between technology and society in precolonial India and the ideology of science advanced by British authorities.

LYNN ZASTOUPIL
Rhodes College

The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia: Essays on Education, Religion, History, and Politics. Edited by NIGEL CROOK. SOAS Studies on South Asia: Understandings and Perspectives. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. x, 336 pp. \$29.95 (cloth).

This volume of thirteen essays covers a very wide and necessarily patchy terrain. It inaugurates a new SOAS series on South Asia: each volume will elucidate a "term or concept" with a critical introduction and a set of case studies. In the present instance, the editor and his contributors make no claims to provide or endorse a unitary theory of how knowledge is transmitted, nor a particular South Asian "model," nor a comprehensive survey of the various contexts in which such transmission takes place. Rather the collection offers disparate examples of the control and dissemination of empowering information in religious communities, schools and colleges, and other institutional sites. Understandably stymied by the task of synthesizing these in his