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Legg, Stephen. *Prostitution and the Ends of Empire: Scale, Governmentalities, and Interwar India*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.

Prostitution and the Ends of Empire is an impressive monograph written by a geographer, Stephen Legg, who has undertaken an archival project of significant historical and theoretical importance. Legg skillfully engages with public health reports, published works of sexology and psychoanalysis, newsletters from public associations, personal correspondence from health reformers, legal documents, and both local (Indian) and international periodicals – documents he has collected from archives and libraries throughout Europe and South Asia. Combined with an impressive foundational knowledge of South Asian history and Hindu texts (see especially the author’s discussion of the social meaning of the SITA, or Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, which shares a name with a highly symbolic Hindu goddess, p. 96), and a theoretical intervention into the use of Michel Foucault in the writing of colonial and postcolonial scholarship, Legg has penned a work sure to be of great interest to scholars across multiple disciplines.

The book is based on the premise that there was a major shift in the regulation and social acceptance of prostitutes in urban centers in interwar India¹ that moved from managing prostitutes and others associated with sex work by placing them in segregated areas in marginal zones of urban areas to undertaking international campaigns for the outright suppression and abolition of sex work. Legg once again turns to Delhi, an urban space that he explored in detail in his earlier book *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi’s Urban Governmentalities* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), to explore the many layers, or scales, of government and international humanitarian intervention into the lives of sex workers in the waning years of the British Empire. This shift highlights the question of sex, with the ways in which certain bodies could and could not share an intimate space being of issue at multiple levels. Multiple perspectives played a role in precipitating this shift – from “neighbors” concerned about the crime supposedly associated with a red light district to international organizations and women’s rights reformers, who thought the act of selling sex should be abolished, primarily as a public health concern as well as an issue that concerned the morality of the women in question. Legg shows that despite the well-known fact that the biggest public problem surrounding the red light district was the clientele, who often disturbed near-by homes, the international attention that focused on abolishing prostitution centered their arguments on the need to regulate prostitutes.

Legg shows that in Delhi (compared primarily to Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, and Madras), the primary issue around prostitution for the local government was the question of safety. “Crime in general was predicted to increase, especially the abuse of cocaine and liquor; the ‘free use of knives’ was predicted, as was general *goondalism* (hooliganism)” (p. 70). Legg misses a chance here to make a connection to the contemporaneous Goonda Law, which, in many ways similar to the spatial regulation of prostitutes, worked to expel individuals, almost exclusively men, who did not have a permanent address or family within the city walls by naming them a certain type of vagabond. It would be interesting to look at these gendered spatial

¹ Interwar refers to the time between the two world wars, roughly 1919 to 1938. Scholars estimate that over 1 million Indian sepoy (soldiers) were sent to fight alongside British soldiers during the First World War, a contribution to the war effort that many Indian nationalists used to justify their calls for self-rule and the dissolution of the British Empire in South Asia. This time period in India is characterized by movements for national sovereignty, most notably led by M.K. Gandhi, along with an intense interest from British reformers in solving the ‘social ills’ of the subcontinent.

laws in tandem, to see all sides of the enactment of regulations that meant to force all people within city limits to live in heteronormative family units.

Prostitution and the Ends of Empire is written in the shadow of Michel Foucault, whose work underlies the analytical frame for this project. While Foucault's theorizations of governmentality and biopolitics have influenced many scholars of colonial and postcolonial history, Foucault himself was often myopic when it came to understanding the role of European power in the world. Legg acknowledges the limits of utilizing Foucault to understand colonial bodies and the intimate sites of colonization, but argues that pushing beyond Foucault's "Eurocentric blind spots" will not only widen our understanding of colonial history but will also provide new tools with which to critically engage the idea of governmentality (p. 4). Legg desires to expand on Foucault's argument that all people should be skeptical of claims regarding "natural order" by emphasizing the need to explore the overlapping layers of the Empire and its aftermath, a history complicated in this time period by the multi-headed forces of pro-imperial sentiment, anti-colonial agitation, colonial and post-colonial nationalism, and numerous other political strains of consciousness that exploded into public life globally in the early 20th century.

Legg argues persuasively that prostitutes were at once brought into the legal code while being abandoned by the state through various state and non-state organizations that desired to save either the women or the people near the women who were vulnerable to the immorality of their livelihoods. Throughout the book, readers are shown how the political (or "civic") consciousness of sex workers in Delhi came into being at the same time that they were being spatially excluded from the city through legal zoning, leading to what Legg terms "civil abandonment." At one point, the author notes that one of the biggest causes of disenfranchising female prostitutes in this era in India was a combination of Gandhi's attention to self-discipline and abstinence, a worldview that held no space for sex work, and social bodies like the All India Women's Congress, which treated "prostitutes as objects, not subjects" (p. 101). While Legg's argument seems entirely valid, the particular subjectivities of the prostitutes in question also seem to go unexplored in this work. For instance, the book opens with the dramatic death of a young woman in Rangoon, and the scandalous deaths of several other young women are peppered through the text, but as Legg himself writes, in the case of a young woman named Taibai, who came to attention in 1917 in Bombay, the woman in question "remains a mostly silent subaltern" in the archive (119). It is clear that Legg is concerned with the position of the silent subaltern, but he hasn't succeeded here in uncovering her.

For a book largely unconcerned with individual characters, Meliscent Shepherd emerges as the anti-hero of the narrative. Shepherd, a British agitator for the abolition of prostitution, worked for the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene (AMSH), and Legg devotes a significant amount of space to the AMSH papers, archived at the Women's Library in London. Chapter Three is devoted to a complex and critical reading of Shepherd and the AMSH that highlights the racial politics involved in colonial public health campaigns that operated on local, national, and international scales. Given that Shepherd certainly had a ready platform for her views and ambitions, it is not surprising that Legg relies on her to tell this story, though one wonders if this really differs much from the Eurocentric worldviews of others – like Foucault – that Legg critiques throughout the text. Of course, it's not possible to construct voices that do not exist in the archive, but the focus on Shepherd's story in relation to the statistics that shape our understanding of the thousands of sex workers that are the stated subjects of the book comes across as rather unbalanced.

The strengths of this book, which include a wealth of archival material, a unique and important analysis that sees people and institutions as multi-scalar and in flux, and the expansion of the discussion of prostitution under the Raj – or ruler – in this time period to include global networks outweigh the various silences any scholar of the colonial world knows sometimes overwhelm any project based in the colonial archive. The work of Meliscent Shepherd, and the networks that she traversed, show us how much mobility and influence a white British woman in India had in this time period, an important addition to the historiography of white women reformers in India that has been explored by scholars such as Antoinette Burton and Kumari Jayawardena. An innovation of this book is to look at the specific history of a place from a global perspective while taking into account the disjointed nature of what many have portrayed as unified space (the space, for example, of “India”). Legg questions the notion of a unified spatial consciousness by exploring networks and scale, showing that understanding the spatial and temporal links between “local” spaces within the colonies and international networks of humanitarian organizations and state/imperial offices needs a much more rigorous and defined method of analysis than “comparison” (p. 11). Thus, Legg employs what he terms a “spatial genealogy” of urban prostitution in early twentieth-century South Asia by exploring the intricately woven threads of bodies, power, knowledge, security, and the forces and discourse of liberalism. The fabric Legg weaves is indeed rich, and accessible to many different readerships, all of which will benefit from the important work undertaken here.

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