

the collection), while Vivienne Lo and Sylvia Schroer outline the classical textual understandings of the concept of *xie* (the “deviant airs” of the essay title), and bring out the attempted excising of its demonic associations by the modern Chinese state and its formulation in western practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

This work will stand as a valuable corollary to studies of specific medical traditions located in a nation and will be of interest to all those whose work is concerned with regions and cultures that cross modern nation-state boundaries. While seemingly rather slim, at just 150 pages of text, conciseness is here a virtue and the additional notes contain much that is of interest. Accessible and stimulating, it may be recommended to both specialists and students.

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**J Lourdasamy,** *Science and national consciousness in Bengal 1870–1930*, New Perspectives in South Asian History, no. 8, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2004, pp. xii, 259, Rs 550.00 (hardback 81-250-2674-6).

Over the last few years, the history of science in India has been explored through a wide range of issues. This has been in association with an equally varied and dynamic interest in empire and science. The present book is a timely addition to this growing literature. The central proposition in Dr Lourdasamy’s study of four individuals from early-twentieth-century Bengal is that their engagement with western science was not a nativistic project of identifying an exclusive “Indian” science, but was a “confident” and “positive” engagement with a universal modern science. The book provides a long and well written account of the political and intellectual setting for these men and their ideas. The first protagonist, or “interlocutor” as the author designates him, is Dr Mahendralal Sircar, a prominent practitioner of homeopathy in Calcutta and the founder of the Indian

Association for the Cultivation of Science (1876). Sircar established the institution to promote scientific research among Indians, a project which fed into the emerging nationalist movement of the day. The physicist Jagadish Chandra Bose, Lourdasamy argues, sought to infuse elements of Indian culture into western science from a conviction that science was a “global heritage” (p. 141). The chemist P C Ray, who not only contributed to modern chemistry but also wrote the *History of Hindu chemistry* and established the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works (1893), contributed to the best of metropolitan science while relating to the illiterate mass at home. The last protagonist is Asutosh Mookerjee, an educationist, a judge of the Calcutta High Court and Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, who, according to the author, successfully combined in his work elements of the Swadeshi movement, Indian culture and university and science education.

The work falls largely within a diffusionist framework highlighting the agency of Indian scientists in their pragmatic and selective adoption of western science and enmeshing it with the nationalist ideology. The problem with this book is that it lacks a critical engagement with the ideas of the scientists. It is largely a descriptive account of the individuals’ lives and careers and thus leads to a reiteration of their propositions rather than a critique of it. We are not informed what shaped their ideas about either western science or Indian culture and nationhood. Moreover, the different projects discussed seem to merge seamlessly into an unfolding of a progressive and grand narrative of nationalist science in modern India.

To give one glaring example of where crucial nuances and fissures are overlooked, Lourdasamy sees the project of Mookerjee, the last protagonist in his study, as a simple progression from that of the first, Sircar (pp. 230–1). But the fact is that they had very different motivations. While Mookerjee was the foremost proponent of university education, Sircar had serious reservations about it. Science was a *moral* force to Sircar in his search for nationhood (often interchangeable with manhood) and the attainment of it had to be

achieved through its practice and “cultivation” (a term that figures so centrally in the name of his institution) and not just by classroom teaching. Sircar insisted that universities produced students “merely to learn parrot-like what other nations are teaching” (*Annual Report*, Indian Association of the Cultivation of Science, 1898, p. 16). When a proposal came in 1893 to affiliate the IACS to Calcutta University, all its members except Father Lafont opposed it as a “degradation” of the prestige of the Association (*Annual Report*, Indian Association of the Cultivation of Science, 1900, p. 17).

The main proposition of the book, that the Indian nationalist scientists’ works were not deviant practices from mainstream modern science but essentially conformed to its universality, relates to the crucial issue of science and universality which needed more discussion. The argument does not accompany an exploration of the meaning of this universality. What is also disconcerting in such an avowedly historical work (proposing on several occasions not to “inject” present concerns into its depiction of the past, pp. 22, 33, 104 and 232) is that it provides no indication that universalization and globalization of modern science has indeed undergone a historical *process* in which scientists like the ones discussed here have had their roles to play.

The merits of the book lie in its careful and detailed depiction of the lives and works of these individuals. It shows the significant roles these men played in shaping the scientific orientation of modern India.

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**Susanne M Klausen,** *Race, maternity, and the politics of birth control in South Africa, 1910–39*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. xix, 221, £45.00 (hardback 1-4039-3452-5).

In South Africa “population control” is commonly associated with the racist policies pursued by the Nationalist Party during the

apartheid years between the 1960s and 1980s. Such ideas, however, pre-date the apartheid regime. As Klausen points out in her engaging and scholarly book, ideas of population control and the provision of contraception in South Africa can be traced back to the efforts of middle-class social reformers in the 1930s, supported by the Department of Public Health, to combat the fertility of poor whites. Much of the work of these reformers was driven by fears about the decline of the young nation, the degeneration of the white race and concerns about the stability of the family in the light of rising maternal mortality.

As Klausen shows, South African birth control activists in the 1930s were divided between two different ideological camps. The first group, primarily made up of male professionals, was inspired by eugenicist ideals. Their aim was to curb the fertility of the supposedly biologically inferior poor whites and feeble-minded. In the aftershock of the Great Depression, poor whites became a key social concern and focus for fears about the future of white society. The eugenicists believed that controlling the birth of “unfit” whites would not only strengthen the white race, but also reduce the middle-class taxes subsidizing the survival of poor whites. In contrast, the second group of birth control activists, mostly maternal feminists, sought to improve maternal and infant health and welfare among South African women of all races. Inspired and supported by Marie Stopes back in England, these campaigners thought contraception would help mothers space their families and thereby stabilize the family and strengthen the nation state.

Using records from birth control clinics in Johannesburg and Cape Town, Klausen skilfully shows how the different ideologies affected the types of contraceptive services provided. Established by eugenicist-inspired birth control activists, the Johannesburg clinic hosted contraceptive services for white women only. The clinic itself limited the choice of contraception to the diaphragm and hired only male doctors. The clinic in Cape Town, however, set up by maternal feminists, deployed female doctors and offered a wide range of contraceptive