



The Imperial Monetary System of Mughal India by John F. Richards

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"Women as Artists in Contemporary India," by Tapati Guha-Thakurta, on the topic "from Women in Indian art to Indian women artists," offers a survey of the main artists shown at the Exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi in 1987. It gives useful footnotes and examples of paintings. Nabaneeta Dev Sen, in "Sister in Sorrow: Contemporary Indian Women's Re-telling of the Rama Tale," gives the Ramayana's histories on Sita, originally in Sanskrit, in four other main Indian languages. Sen makes no mention of modern (and abundant) Western scholarship either on the folkloric treatment of women, or on Sita herself, nor does she supply endnotes or references. The essay by Vina Mazumdar and Indu Agnihotri, "The Women's Movement in India: Emergence of a New Perspective," draws attention to the current phase of the feminist movement, with its shifts in priorities and strategies.

An important point to take into consideration, which is immediately evident just reading the bibliographies or the list of endnotes in the papers, is that Western scholarship on Indian women is neglected. If it is an editorial choice to write for a large public, this public includes Western readers. The lack of Western scholarship either reflects the recent Indian "scholar-xenophobia" or it should not have been present, especially in this book where issues of Indian women are issues common to women in most of the world.

Moreover, at times when an author is reported, the quotation is incomplete. Authors should have always given footnotes or bibliographies, in order to allow the reader to make an exact evaluation of the data, and to go on with further readings.

With a careful criticism in some of the papers, and though the level of the papers is not even, this book is a useful source of information for college students and general readers who want to know more about Indian women's contemporary issues.

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The Imperial Monetary System of Mughal India. Edited by JOHN F. RICHARDS.
New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. viii, 382 pp. \$17.95 (paper).

The essays collected in this paperback reprint of the original hardcover edition published in 1987 have their origin in papers prepared for a conference held in 1981 at Duke University. The aim of the conference had been to bring together scholars from three specialized but until then not well-interconnected fields of Mughal economic history, numismatics, and long distance trade. Seven of the participating scholars had agreed to revise and amplify their contributions into longer essays which, supplemented with an introduction by the editor, served for a long time not only as a useful source of specialized information on technical aspects and intricacies of the Mughal monetary system but also as an inspiration for new research initiatives in this complex topic. In the 1980s this was a truly path-breaking book.

The first introductory essay by John S. Deyell describes basic features of the Mughal monetary system as it emerged in the course of Akbar's reforms in the second half of the sixteenth century and traces the fate of local pre-Mughal currencies in the newly conquered territories. Marie H. Martin's study on metrological and monetary aspects of Akbar's financial reform constitutes a solid foundation for quantitative and statistical approaches toward problems of monetization, influx of precious metals, and development of the Mughal silver coin stock generally.

Stephen Blake contributes a stimulating study on the structure of monetary exchange in the three northern Mughal provinces of Agra, Delhi, and Lahore based on a reconstruction of hierarchies of central places—nodal points which determined the direction and volume of silver streams flowing through the Mughal domains. The main problem Blake had to face was a lack of detailed, local information on the marketing centers even in the central parts of the empire, otherwise relatively well represented in the written sources. Inevitably, this led him to more or less educated guesses and bold approximations: e.g., for the estimation of the relative share the so-called standard and intermediate marketing centers in north India in 1600, respective percentages for China in 1800 (area and time known in greater detail to contemporary historians) have been used. The amounts of money that flowed through this hierarchical structure has been reconstructed on the basis of revenue figures given by Abul Fazl. The result is a coherent but rather general model describing *probable* shape and working of the system.

Irfan Habib in his article on the trimetallic character of the Mughal monetary system points out that any questions concerning possible effects of massive imports of silver on the general price level should concern the period after c. 1614; only then did the newly arriving silver fully replace copper as the principal monetary metal in north India. Habib thus identifies an important factor that must have strongly influenced prices measured in terms of silver during crucial periods of Mughal state formation.

Om Prakash contributes a brief but informative study of the relationship of the foreign merchants of the East India Companies and mints in north and south India in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. It is particularly the detailed description of the working of Rajmahal mint at the close of the seventeenth century with data on wages, mint charges, and minting costs which is of special interest to historians using quantitative methods and extrapolations.

John F. Richards has written a fine study on official revenues and money flows in Khandesh, a small province in the Deccan, which underwent in the first half of the seventeenth century a process of gradual integration into the Mughal administrative and fiscal structures. The author's suggestion that Mughal revenue demands probably did speed up the process of monetization of the regional economy is particularly significant in the context of recent theories attempting to minimize the role of the state in the formation of premodern Indian economy.

Frank Perlin's extended essay entitled "Money-use in Late Pre-colonial India and the International Trade in Currency Media" takes more than one third of the book (fully 141 pages). It is—like most other works of this author—stimulating, provocative, wide-ranging, and stylistically complex. His main focus is on the western Deccan under the Maratha rule rather than on the Mughal monetary system itself.

Significant contributions to the economic history of the Mughal empire and its integration into wider contexts of global economic developments have been made since the publication of this volume in 1987; unfortunately, few of them have been devoted to the more specialized topic of the Mughal currency system. One has to agree with the editor that historians seem to show little interest in numismatics understood as a tool for economic history. For those who are interested, however, this book still contains a lot of useful information, data, and incentives for further research. The decision of the publisher to include it in the relatively cheap and accessible Oxford India Paperback series has to be welcomed.

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