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Panopticon in Poona: An Essay on Foucault and Colonialism

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When British rule began in western India in 1818, administrator Mountstuart Elphinstone used questionnaires to inquire into local "custom" and decided to build a panopticon prison in Poona. In light of Foucault's concept of panopticism, we can see Elphinstone's inquiry as a subtle exercise in knowledge and power. Yet more can be said of this colonial project if we turn from Foucault's analysis of European states to take colonies seriously as a historically specific polity form that specifies difference—here inferiorizing temporal difference—to govern. Thinking about Elphinstone, and Foucault, what might we learn about narratives of difference and historical trajectory?

Introduction

Foucault begins *Discipline and Punish* (1979) with a contrast between power over death versus power over life, instantiated by public executions versus prison timetables. He contrasts traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power with panopticism, a subtle, calculated technology and economy of subjection. The contrast is seen as part of a European historical trajectory, from the era of lords and kings to the rise of the modern state, politically dominated by the bourgeoisie, with its subtle, daily "systems of micropower" including prisons, schools, asylums, and factories. A very similar contrast concerning punishment appears in the musings of Mountstuart Elphinstone, sometime representative of the East India Company and Resident at the Court of the Peshwa in Pune, Maharashtra, West India.

Before British conquest in 1818, Maharashtra had been ruled by a line of Peshwas, Brahman administrators who (shogunlike) had displaced the local line of Rajas (heirs of the famous Shivaji). In 1818, Elphinstone became through British military conquest "Sole Commissioner for the Territories Conquered from the Paishwa."[1] In 1819, in the course of his first report to the East India Company in Bombay, entitled *Report on the Territories Conquered from the*

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Paishwa, Elphinstone reflected on moral and political philosophy and pragmatics. How was he to punish Marathas still resisting British rule? And how to establish an effective judicial system? In former days, he wrote, under the despotic rule of the Peshwa, punishment was by force of example. "Natives" were rewarded well and punished hard. The Peshwa had the guilty—and suspects—impaled, blown from guns, and trampled by elephants (Elphinstone 1884[1821]: 310, 326 ff.).

But, Elphinstone wrote, the English system relied upon different principles, "the force of justice" requiring inquiries, evidence, legal processes, and so forth, which he called "less revolting to humanity" (Elphinstone 1884[1821]: 328). Elphinstone longed to use some of the Peshwa's methods, because he believed they impressed the Marathas and others, and he looked for alternatives that would be no less impressive but unmistakably more civilized.[2]

For the Peshwa, it was power over death in public, violent, costly ritual; for the colonizing British, power over life, in judicial forms insisting on rights and regulations. Of course Foucault and Elphinstone differ on the moral valences of the contrast, and in this article I will insist, along with Foucault, on the sinister aspects of those practices that Elphinstone termed "less revolting to humanity." But I would like to begin here by posing a question about the similarity between Foucault's contrast and trajectory and Elphinstone's. Is Foucault correct that the modern European state and its discourse arises in a European historical trajectory from kingdoms to states, from power over death to power over life? Or is Foucault reading as real a European imagination of its own difference from its past and from the colonized other? Is he reading as real history a version of difference that arises and is made to seem real in the course of colonial projects like that of Mountstuart Elphinstone?

I will return to this question at the end of the article. Before then, I want to explore the ways in which Foucault's insights into the relationship of knowledge and power might *illuminate* our understanding of Elphinstone and his colonial project. Both Elphinstone and Foucault were very interested in Jeremy Bentham and panopticons.

What Foucault Can Tell Us about Elphinstone

Of course jails and trampling by elephants were not Elphinstone's only concern. His *Report* details his colonial project: the establishment first of military and then administrative control over the former territories of the Peshwa. The categories of the *Report* (Description of the Country, Sketch of the Maratta History, Revenue, Police and Criminal Justice, Civil Justice, and Appendices) align closely with his categories of inquiry into existing Maharashtrian institutions by means of a detailed questionnaire which he had his collectors fill out (see Elphinstone 1884[1821]). The categories of the inquiry and the resulting *Report* reveal to us a vision of governance—in the process of being established—by a turn-of-the-(19th-)century representative of the Honourable East India Company, as they took over one of the largest conquered territories in India. The goal of the company was "Revenue" (sometimes known as "The Reve-

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nue"). To achieve its maximization, Elphinstone aspired to "follow the success of (military) force with that of conciliation" (1884[1821]:368). Of his plan for governance, he wrote:

> It has this advantage, that it leaves unimpaired the institutions, the opinions, and the feelings that have hitherto kept the community together; and that as its fault is meddling too little, it may be gradually remedied by interfering when urgently required. An opposite plan, if it fails, fails entirely; and when it sinks the whole frame of the society sinks with it. [Elphinstone 1884(1821):368]

It is this Elphinstone of "conciliation," the Elphinstone of "little meddling," who is the Elphinstone of received scholarly wisdom. He has been lauded as a champion (albeit on the grounds of expediency) of Maharashtrian custom and institutions (e.g., Chocksey 1971:221–239). This is the Elphinstone of the questionnaire, who "circulate[d] a series of interrogatories to the Collectors and Political Agents for the purpose of obtaining a clear notion of the former customs and actual state of the Conquered Territories" (East India Company 1826, 4:207) and determined, where possible, to retain these customs. This Elphinstone is counted in the administrative lineage of Thomas Munro of Madras as opposed to the Cornwallis system in Bengal (see Ballhatchet 1957:32). In a received scholarly view (e.g., Ballhatchet 1957:35–37), Elphinstone's utilitarian interests, instantiated in the reading of Bentham, warred with his romantic desire to maintain Maratha institutions and ways of government. In a personal communication to Sir John Malcolm on January 27, 1819, Elphinstone himself is quoted as framing the dilemma:

> "Let me tell you," he wrote to (Sir John) Malcolm in 1819, "you are well off in having nothing to do but war & politics & that you will not know what difficulty is till you come to manage revenues and Adawlut [law courts] & to reconcile efficiency with economy & Maratha Maamool [custom] with Jeremy Bentham." [Ballhatchet 1957:36]

Rather than taking at face value this contradiction in Elphinstone's intentions and practices in the Deccan, I want to argue that this vision of the contradiction between Bentham and Maratha Mamool, between panopticon and custom, ignores the relationship between knowledge and power that Foucault reveals. I do not argue that Elphinstone was a pure devotee of Bentham, as this is clearly not the case. But the attitude, practice, technology, and discourse that Foucault (1977:195–228) calls *panopticism* is far broader in its embrace than the practice and theory of the utilitarians proper. And if we read Elphinstone's correspondence and his *Report* mindful of Foucault, then his texts and much of his colonial project seem paradigmatic instances of panopticism.

The panopticon that Foucault takes as his paradigm or emblem of a historically emergent technology and discourse was invented by Jeremy Bentham, the utilitarian political philosopher. Bentham imagined a prison (or factory or school or asylum) built with a central tower looking into discrete cells. The observer can see the cells' inmates, each in a well-illuminated cubicle, each, Fou-

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cault calls it, a tiny theater. The inmates can see the tower and know that they may be observed, "on stage," as it were, but they cannot know when the observer is there. Nonetheless, the inmate is always conscious of the potential surveillance and comes to exercise this surveillance on him or herself. Panopticism, for Foucault, is a disciplinary modality of power, peculiar to Europe from the 18th century on. In this time, the state turned from public, violent, exemplary forms of power of lords and kings to a subtle calculated technology of subjection.

> Historically the process by which the bourgeoisie became, in the course of the eighteenth century, the politically dominant class, was masked by the establishment of an explicit, coded and formally egalitarian juridical framework, made possible by the organization of a parliamentary, representative regime. But the development and generalization of disciplinary mechanisms constituted the other, dark side of these processes. The general, juridical form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle were supported by these tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms, by all those systems of micropower that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical which we call the disciplines. . . . The contract may have been regarded as the ideal foundation of law and political power; panopticism constituted the technique, universally widespread, of coercion. [Foucault 1977:222]

For Foucault, from the 18th century on in Europe, a particular system of power emerged to "order human multiplicity." In the "disciplines," in panopticism, he sees historically special criteria at work: an attempt to exercise power at the lowest possible cost, economically and politically; the necessity to fix and order human objects; the employment of "tiny everyday physical" mechanisms through which the state reached into the lives of people;[3] and the requirement to specify the normal and abnormal, lawful and criminal, sane and insane. "In sum" he envisions an attempt to increase both "the docility and the utility of all the elements in the system"—by which he presumably means people, the objects of the disciplines he describes (Foucault 1977:195 ff.).

In the case of Elphinstone in Maharashtra, the British official's attention to "custom" has been read as attention, in some form, to a local system of rights. But as much of the recent literature on "invention of tradition" has shown, attention to "custom" in colonial contexts has been an exercise of power. In every inquiry, the right of colonizer to authorize "custom" is invoked. The inquiry itself is the dark side of the process; it invokes and creates asymmetry and difference. The mode of knowing, the forms of inquiry themselves, constitute a colonial relationship. It is in this vein that we can reread, for example, Elphinstone's 128 queries on the system of Civil Justice in Maharashtra. The inquiry itself is now understood as a technique of power. The questionnaire turns the people of Maharashtra into objects of scrutiny, like inmates of a panopticon.

Similarly, a reading of Foucault illuminates Elphinstone's policies concerning the so-called criminal tribes as part of his attempt to know and order the population of Maharashtra. Foucault writes of the European insistence on binary oppositions of normal and abnormal, settled and unsettled, and sane and insane, and the European project of ordering its population, of controlling its gyp-

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sies, its migrants, and its poor, in jails, workhouses, and asylums. In Maharashtra, concerned to support settled plains cultivators and proper hierarchical authorities, Elphinstone and his collectors recoiled from hill- and forest-dwellers, migratory groups such as the Bhils (see Gordon 1985). Intense inquiry into the histories, motives, causes and effects of the "criminal tribes" created them, as did the separate treaties, separate inquiries, and separate housing that Elphinstone and his officials found they required in prisons. But the objectification of the "criminal tribes" was no aberrant, unique inquiry. Even as the colonial scrutiny created "criminal tribes" and constructed Maharashtran abnormality, the scrutiny took place in the service of defining and controlling the normal. Indeed the normal, the customary, the orderly, and the legitimate were scrutinized, constructed, and codified by Elphinstone and his collectors under the rubric of "preservation" of local customs and institutions.

My analysis of Elphinstone's inquiry into custom as panopticism has, as well, a concrete connection in Elphinstone's own words and practice. He built panopticons. His first mention of them appears in his 1819 *Report*, his chronicle of Maratha society, written for the purposes of rule, based on the questionnaire. He wrote:

> In cases where the judge, though not satisfied of the guilt of the prisoner is still less satisfied of his innocence, it seems imprudent to turn him loose to prey on Society, and yet it is difficult to say on what grounds to detain him: are we to award a less severe and more remedial punishment, or are we to declare the prisoner innocent but imprison him if he cannot give security. The former seems to strike at the foundations of justice, and the latter destroys the force of example; means might perhaps be found to manage the imprisonment of suspected persons in such a manner as to preserve the distinction between their treatment and that of convicts. Their place of confinement might be more like a work house than a prison. . . . A place might be constructed for their residence which might combine the plan so much recommended by Mr. Bentham, with the economical arrangement suggested in Bengal, a circular or octagon wall, with an open arcade or tiled Veranda to run all round the inside, deep enough to afford shelter and deep enough for concealment, this Veranda to be partitioned off into cells, with walls, and to be shut in with an iron grating or a deep ditch in front, to prevent the prisoners meeting in the open space in the middle. . . . In the centre should be a circular building for the Jailor, from which he might see into every cell . . . while he himself was concealed by blinds. [Elphinstone 1884[1821]:331–332]

Before he could build this panopticon in Pune, Elphinstone moved on to Bombay to become Governor of the Bombay Presidency. Nonetheless, he never forgot his plans. In 1822 he sent detailed plans for Pune's panopticon (he called it a "Gaol or House of Industry") to William Chaplin, his successor, who had it built (Peshwa Daftar file 48/2856);[4] Elphinstone had several panopticon prisons built in Bombay as well (Ballhatchet 1957:36).

Questionnaires and panopticons. Instantiation of his era, Elphinstone also had a somewhat nasty personal fascination with information and power. While Resident at the Court of the Peshwa, he set up networks of spies.[5] Later on, during a visit to the Portuguese territory of Goa, his attention in his private journal

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is not for the cathedrals that architecturally concretize the Portuguese colonial project. Instead, he wrote with fascination of his tour of the dungeons of the Inquisition, noting in particular a device with which jailers might listen to the conversations of prisoners without their being aware of the surveillance. But with Foucault in mind, it is clear that the parallelism of panopticon and questionnaire is no personal idiosyncracy of Elphinstone. The two are one, and are carried on in the British colonial project in India in the codifications of law, censuses, distracting, surveys of land and revenue, and the earnest publication of this information in maps, gazetteers, and so forth.

We could go on in this vein, extending Foucault's analysis to colonial history, finding the colonial world to be the "laboratory of modernity" (Rabinow 1989), as does Mitchell (1991), who shows the panopticism in the colonizing of Egypt whether carried out by Europeans or local elites borrowing from Europe. Yet others have cautioned that Foucault's analysis itself reinscribes the West as subject (e.g., Spivak 1988:18). Is something like this also happening in Elphinstone's own practice? A recreation, or simply a creation, of a British "civilization" through attributions and codifications of difference?

What (Thinking about) Elphinstone Can Tell Us about Foucault

Actually, here I want to consider what placing the colonial Elphinstone in the context of the history of Maharashtra—and of Indian nationalism—can tell us about Foucault. Is what we have here the beginning of a paternal indirect rule, from Peshwas having people trampled by elephants to "rule by reports"? Is it a history of a real difference of technologies of power? Or is it an *imagined* history of temporal, civilizational difference, imagined in a colonial project insistent on the creation of difference to establish power? Let me offer three brief notes toward this ongoing rethinking.

First, let us consider an appendix to Elphinstone's *Report on the Territories Conquered from the Paishwa.* The appendix describes a curiously familiar panopticist project. It describes an archive, kept for 88 years.

> In it were kept all accounts of the receipt and expenditure of the Revenues of the state, whether the realization from the Provinces or from whatever source, the expenses of Troops, Establishments, Enams ["landed rights"] and every other species of grant, gift and money transaction. . . . Besides the Records immediately connected with Revenue [were] . . . accounts of the Districts and villages, . . . of armies and establishments, . . . and the most important acts and events of their Government. [Macleod, in Elphinstone 1884[1821]:410–411]

The appendix was written by Elphinstone's assistant J. Macleod. The description is of the archives of the Peshwa. Panopticists extraordinaire, not an action or transaction—including, for example, marriage—seems to have taken place in Maharashtra without the bureaucracy of the Peshwa knowing and taxing. (Of course much more could and should be said about the project of the Peshwa rulers in their own terms, a topic about which others have more competence than I.) But here, I will simply note that Elphinstone's own records are

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housed in a colonial-era building that houses the Peshwa's records too. The building is called the Maharashtra State Archives. It is also called the Peshwa Dafter ("the Peshwa's Archives").

Here, all too briefly, I want to consider the contents and purposes of these archives. And this brings us to the question of "The Revenue." After all, most of the British East India Company's concern for knowledge grew from its interest in taxing, in locating surplus and obtaining it. Whether we are talking about the history of England or the history of India, there is a distinction to be drawn between two kinds of tax gathering and the sorts of knowledge/power they imply. In tax farming, the state delegates to some intermediary the rights to tax in exchange for assurance that a certain sum will be received. Especially if this happens at multiple levels, it is an inefficient system, particularly in contrast to a system in which the state directly taxes individuals. Of course the latter form requires that the state have information about populations, conceived of as populations. It requires, for example, statistics and censuses.

The first substantive *British Gazetteer of India* was compiled in 1820 (Cohn 1987a:232). But the British were not the first in India to gaze, statistically, through censuses while contemplating their revenue and how to improve it (see Bayly 1993). Perhaps the first such project was undertaken for the Moghul emperor Akbar in 1595, resulting in a five-volume compilation (see Moosvi 1987:3–4).[6] This Moghul censusing, however, coexisted with tax-farming. Akbar's census focused intensely on land-based taxation and did not include much detail about commerce, which was taxed through a variety of tax-farming arrangements. To take another example, the evidence for the 15th-century South Indian kingdom of Vijayanagara suggests that, even where demands were for cash rather than kind in both agriculture and trade, the collection was again contracted out (Stein 1989a:41–42). And as Pearson (1976:130–131) details, in the 17th century the merchants of Gujarat, the West-coast center of commercial capitalism, controlled and adjudicated their own commercial affairs and paid very low taxes. The taxes, tariffs, customs, and so forth, were assessed and collected by the leaders of each city's *mahajan* commercial association, who also passed on a lump sum to the landed military sovereigns. As John D. Kelly pointed out to me (personal communication), tax farming was being practiced in England, too,[7] at least in the crucial overseas trade revenue, until very late in the history we are considering. There is real irony, then, in the relation between taxation in England and in India. The East India Company, even while it began to "render India systematic" (cf. Ludden 1992:261), was still itself a barrier to the British crown, a monopoly concession standing between the English state and its Indian subjects. But now let us come back to Maharashtra, in the 18th century, and the Peshwa's information system.

Like the Moghuls, the Peshwa's administration maintained detailed records on land arrangements and agricultural tax payments, reaching down to the individual cultivator, "routinely recorded in village summaries produced yearly for the annual revenue settlement" (Preston 1988:80). They also, by the middle of the 18th century, kept elaborate census records on urban neighborhoods

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(*peths*), especially in the capital, Pune. These peths, the newer ones with preestablished boundaries, were in many cases devoted to specific functions, artisanal or commercial. Control of them was farmed to a Shete or Shete-Mahajan, who was responsible both to collect taxes and foster development of the neighborhood. But the Peshwa's state monitored these officials closely via the censuses, "detailed enumerations of houses, occupancy by castes, taxes paid (*gharpatti*—house tax; *gulalpatti*—possibly a tax for celebration of certain festivals such as the Holi and *Jhendepatti*—possibly professional tax), exemptions, amount of assessment and the amount collected" (Gokhale 1988:18). The Peshwa's information-gathering may have begun in order to keep a check on the tax gatherers to whom the power to tax had been "farmed." But to monitor those very intermediaries, the Peshwa needed, and created, a system of censusing that brought the inquiry of the state directly into the commercial and agricultural lives of individuals.[8] Elphinstone's archives are in many ways the continuant of this local project.[9] What then of Foucault's assumptions as to the *European* "modernity" of panopticism?

Second, how "modern" were the British of Elphinstone's day, anyway? Elphinstone's own questionnaire, administered via his collectors, was far more qualitative than quantitative. Following Ludden's (1992) highly informative study of information-gathering in India, we can locate Elphinstone's questionnaire as a fairly rudimentary exercise of panopticism in the face of what was to come. Ludden describes a transformation, historically in British information-gathering, from an initial "creolized form of colonial knowledge" (dependent on subordinate local intermediaries and informants, mixing statistics and survey with a "motley" collection of information locally furnished) to a centralized, efficient, standardized, scientific (in its own estimation) statistical system.[10] In these terms, Elphinstone definitely falls on the motley side of the spectrum. One instance is the attempt to estimate population via salt consumption. Promoted to the governorship in Bombay, Elphinstone, his successor in the Deccan (Chaplin), and the collectors carried on a correspondence concerning how best to establish the company's monopoly on salt. Part of the correspondence involves accounts of the customary forms of salt customs duties, and part involves an attempt to correlate population estimates (and thereby the demand for salt and the price the market would bear) via figures for salt consumption. Thus the amount of salt recently known to have been distributed in the Deccan was first divided by 10, one official having argued that the "average consumption of salt by a native is 10 pounds." This calculation was revised since "the Revenue Board at Madras assumes it at 12 pounds for each native," while later still in the correspondence a new calculation of 20 pounds of salt per "native" (figures from Fort St. George) were substituted (Peshwa Daftar file 51/3010).

Let me augment this discussion of the motley side of the new "civilization" with a couple of anecdotes from the journals of another official of the East India Company. In the early 1770s, George Patterson was in India as secretary to two representatives of the British government who were sent to investigate corruption in the East India Company. In his journals (see Nightingale 1985) he de-

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scribes a dispute between Crown officials and company officials as to whether the company's governor in Bombay had the right to fly the Union Jack. Worried by the military successes of Haidar Ali, the governor argued that *company* officials needed to fly the Union Jack, even in the presence of the king's ships, in order "to maintain their consequence among the Natives" (Nightingale 1985:41). Attributing the necessity of this practice to the "other" audience that they imagined required it, colonizers like the company's governor in Bombay in fact generated elaborate new kinds of rituals for rule.

> It was all the more important to maintain prestige by elevating [the] governor into a "prodigious great Man" with splendid titles and an impressive body of retainers. "He goes out in great state. A Company of Sepoy Guards, with Chubdars and the Union Flag carried before him. Trumpets Tom Toms &c." When the governor wanted to visit the hot springs in Maratha territory he made arrangements to take nearly a thousand attendants and two pieces of cannon with him. [Nightingale 1985:42]

Must we accept the notion that the Marathas, especially the Peshwa, really operated by such tawdry spectacles? Or was this commitment to power by spectacle actually British? We could then propose that these ritualists of flags and bath were throwbacks, fossils from an earlier Europe of costly, violent display. Is Elphinstone's lack of efficiency in his questionnaire indeed simply a sign of the beginnings of the European trajectory toward efficiency and science, soon to come to fruition? This saves a temporal trajectory, but note that rituals for rule would effloresce extraordinarily in the next centuries of the British Empire (see Cohn 1987b on British Durbars). What Durbars were more splendid than Curzon's and Hardinge's in 1903 and 1911? And the supreme British imperial display in the architecture of New Delhi is from the 1900s not the 1700s (see Irving 1981). At the very least, *spectacle* and *capillary action, ritual* and *panopticon,* coexist as technologies of power throughout the entire history of the colonial British.

Third, along with many other scholars of the making of history in colonial societies, I want to question the implication that knowledge must equal power. When information floods in to the jailor, high above in the panopticon prison, what does he do with it? Can it be controlled? Is it always useful? Are its implications even understood? Let us consider the example of a famous prisoner in Pune: Mahatma Gandhi, who was held in Yeravda gaol from May 1930 to January 1931 (Iyer 1986:601). Gandhi was not housed in Elphinstone's (really Chaplin's) panopticon. That prison building was replaced, we read in the *Bombay Gazetteer,* in the late 1800s. But, taking panopticism in its broader sense, Gandhi and the nationalist movement were the object of extraordinary scrutiny, in prison and out. The failure of that scrutiny is manifest. Clearly, the power of colonized people to articulate their own projects, to challenge colonial discourses, and to make their own histories constrains the projects of colonizers and—sometimes—remakes the panopticon into a constraint on its constructors.

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Gandhi deliberately publicized his plans, using media and even the surveillance of him to control and provoke the observers. A paradigmatic example was the Salt March, the month before he was imprisoned at Yeravda. His publically stated intent to make salt—to confront the monopoly that Elphinstone and colonial officials had established—sparked months of anticipation, requiring the British to exercise coercive power on his terms. Gandhi contested panopticism with a proliferating moral theatrics, theatrics that captivated his observers and ended by reflecting them back at themselves, in Gandhi's own light.

In conclusion, one way to resolve these problems raised by the panopticon in Pune, and the problem of the similarity between Elphinstone's political practice and Foucault's political theory, is to amend Foucault, to insist—as many scholars (e.g., Cohn and Dirks 1988) have—on the colonial dimension to the history of European panopticist discourse. In this model, we would insist that the history of European nations be read as a product of colonizing relations. The making of the European self happens not in Europe alone, but in relation to real and imagined others in the world, in the experience and creation of difference for purposes of control. There is much to recommend here. But what of the Peshwa Daftar, the archives begun not by Elphinstone but by the Brahman administrators of Maharashtra? Another way to resolve these problems is to postulate modernity as a universal, rather than a European, stage. In this model, the state bureaucracy of Peshwas, like that of the European states, rules through power over life, mobilizing a different form of power than those that preceded them. If we push this line of thinking, we might decide that chronologically much earlier rulers—Confucians in China, perhaps—become panopticists, and "modern." If we make this argument, we still might be able to save a version of Foucault's temporal trajectory, some sort of succession of stages. But do we want to? Luckily, we do not have to. For by reading Elphinstone culturally, as an exemplar of a British colonial project, we can understand the temporal trajectory to be one, culturally specific, form of creation and assertion of difference for rule. Implying a notion of progress and civilization that would in its late-19th-century fruition drive the British empire, it is historically and culturally particular.

And, to clarify, I would like to extend the analysis of particularity, cultural and historical, to my suggestion that the Peshwas were panopticists. Even if they were, we need not imagine that there is only one single form of panopticism. Rofel (1992) has persuasively argued that Chinese industrial disciplinary practices, which (if we expand from Foucault into a transnational definition of modernity) we imagine would be "modern" or "panopticist," are in fact polysemous, requiring also to be captured in historical and cultural specificity. Even if we find in the Peshwas' disciplinary practice strategies and elements that we would label panopticism, we also find differences. After all, did the Peshwa Brahmans envision and characterize their era of rule as an age of progress, science, and enlightenment as did European panopticists? Surely not. I suspect that it was still the Kali Yuga. Here, along with Franz Boas, I would like to recognize a kind of

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difference—cultural difference—that does not require temporal ranking of any sort.

But let us conclude with one of the most powerful critiques of this trajectory which can be read in the writings of the later prisoner in Pune.[11] Does not Gandhi's critique of British claims to civilization argue against this vision of world and trajectory? The story of a "modern" difference may turn out to be just another story (with powerful consequences)—in this case Elphinstone's, as well as Foucault's. With Gandhi, we need to be more skeptical regarding claims about "modern" difference and see in them simply the effective—but challengeable—self-flattery of another among the series of history's momentarily dominant and powerful cultural cohorts.

Notes

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1. On Elphinstone, see the colonial biography by Colebrook (1884) and more recent studies by Ballhatchet (1957), Choksey (1971), and Varma (1981). Texts by Elphinstone and other associated colonial documents have been compiled and published by Forrest (Elphinstone 1884[1821]) and more recently by Choksey (e.g., 1964). See also the four-volume *Selection of Papers from the Records at the East-India House Relating to the Revenue, Police, and Civil and Criminal Justice Under the Company's Government in India,* printed in 1820 and 1826, and Stein's (1989b:312 ff.) intriguing inquiry into why they were published. In the vein of critical scholarly interest in texts, contexts, objectification, discourse, and colonial history-making in South Asia, see also, for example, Cohn 1987c, Dirks 1987, the work of Guha and others in the Subaltern Studies series (e.g., Guha and Spivak 1988), Kelly 1991, and Nandy 1983; more specifically on British colonial information-gathering and records keeping, see Bayly 1993, Cohn 1987a, Dirks 1993, Ludden 1992, and Smith 1986.

2. Was not, Elphinstone wondered, the English system that "tried not to be revolting to humanity . . . better calculated for protecting the innocent from punishment and the guilty from undue severity than for securing the community by deterring crimes?" (Elphinstone 1884[1821]:327).

3. Elsewhere, Foucault has written of the "capillary form" of such power, "the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives. The eighteenth century invented, so to speak, a synoptic regime of

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power, a regime of its exercise *within* the social body, rather than *from above* it" (Foucault 1980:39, emphasis in original).

4. The Peshwa Dafter, or Maharashtra State Archives, of Pune, India, houses many of Elphinstone's papers from the years of his residency and commissionership, as well as papers of his collectors and the Deccan commissioners who succeeded him.

5. Of course, the Peshwa also had spies. For more on spying, organized by indigenous rulers and by agents of the company, see Bayly 1993.

6. The first volume concerned the "household" of the emperor, covering much of his functioning administration; the second, his military and civil administrations, the nobles, scholars and others in his service; the third, the land taxation apparatus, with chapters of statistics and annals on each province; and the fourth and fifth, sciences, religions, and culture, including Akbar's auspicious sayings (Moosvi 1987:3–4).

7. The same, in a generic sense. Tax farming arrangements varied widely, historically, in both England and India. Some were royal rewards, or perpetual endowments, while others were specifically negotiated contracts covering fixed places and times. In some cases the revenue owed to the state by the contractor was set; in other cases, not. In all cases, the state relied on an autonomous, profiting, and less-than-transparent intermediary authority to collect and deliver the revenue.

8. Note Bayly's (1993:23–24) brief discussion and conclusion that the Marathas "buil[t] their state from the bottom up."

9. See Preston 1988 for an account of British interpretation, use, and non-use of certain of the Peshwas' records.

10. Ludden sees Thomas Munro and Wiliam Jones as instantiations of the later approach, quoting Stein on Munro's application of "the political principle of destroying any and all intermediary authority between the company and the cultivator as the best assurance of the securing of control by the company over its new dominions" (Stein 1989:59–60, cited in Ludden 1992:256), the practice of what Foucault called the "capillary" form of power. Ludden argues (in tension with his conception of a "coexistence" of technologies of power) that there is an absolute difference between the European regimes in India in the data they required, and those of earlier Indian rulers. Here his analysis parallels Mitchell's (1991) assessment of the difference between "modern" and earlier Ottoman modes of rule in Egypt. While, of course, others are more qualified than I to investigate the records in Marathi and to assess far more convincingly the possibility that the Peshwa was a panopticist, or to reconsider the disciplinary and statistical modalities of the Ottoman empire, here I hope simply to ask the question: Should we not question any history that explicitly or implicitly groups the practices of others with Europe's earlier stages? If there is a difference, must it be conceived in the always at least implicitly temporalized categories of precolonial/colonial, traditional/modern, or non-Western/Western?

11. Here I draw upon readings of Gandhi's critique of colonialism's temporal and civilizational claims by Nandy (1983) and especially Kelly (1991).

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