

How 'Dynasty' Became a Modern Global Concept: Intellectual Histories of Sovereignty and Property

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Abstract:

This essay argues that the concept of 'dynasty' – nowadays associated especially with 'premodern' and non-Western societies – does not offer a value-neutral description for political forms. Rather, the modern concept of 'dynasty' has been a politically-motivated and highly ideologically-charged *modern* intellectual invention. This article focuses on select discourses from France, Germany, Britain, India, and Japan to explore how the concept, in its modern form, got globalized. For many advocates of a strong sovereign nation-state across the nineteenth and early twentieth century, 'dynasty' offered a pillar for imagining the 'national' past: the 'dynastic' past as a prehistory and/or backbone for national sovereignty. 'Dynasty' was used to imagine the nation-state as a primordial entity sealed by the continuity of birth and blood, indeed by the perpetuity of sovereignty. G. W. F. Hegel's references to 'dynasty', as well as Karl Marx's critique of Hegel, when juxtaposed with other modern discourses, show how 'dynasty' encoded a major point of intersection of sovereignty and big property, indeed the coming into self-consciousness of their mutual identification-in-difference in the age of capitalism. Imaginaries about 'dynasty' further reveal the contiguity between ideologies of national sovereignty and patriarchal authority, sharing the obsession with founding fathers and bloodlines. European colonialism helped globalize the concept of 'dynasty' in the non-European world, while building modern forms of sovereign statehood, maximising fiscal exploitation, and coercively 'pacifying' militant and rebellious populations. Colonial India offers an exemplar of ensuing debates, even pitting certain British administrator-scholars against the empire's monarchizing and dynasticizing programmes. By exploring these case studies, I argue that the globalization of the abstraction of 'dynasty' was ultimately bound to the globalization of capitalist-colonial infrastructures of production, circulation, and exploitation. Meanwhile, Indian peasant and 'tribal' populations brought to play alternate precolonial Indian-origin concepts of collective regality and lineage selfhood, expressed through terms like 'rajavamshi' and 'Kshatriya'. These concepts destabilized colonial and elitist constructions of sovereignty, and helped produce new notions and practices of democracy in modern India. The paper concludes that global intellectual history optics can help us problematize the constructions of power which underlie the processes of conceptual abstraction and globalization through which radically different political systems are coercively straitjacketed and rendered commensurable through a monolithic concept (like 'dynasty'). Global intellectual histories can expand radical political thought today by provincializing and deconstructing regnant Eurocentric political vocabularies and by recuperating subaltern imaginaries of collective and polyarchic power.

Keywords: global intellectual history; dynasty; monarchy; Hegel; Marx; capitalism; empire; British colonialism; subaltern; India

I. Introductory Remarks¹

This paper argues that, far from being a value-neutral description for political forms – nowadays associated especially with ‘premodern’ and non-Western societies – the modern concept of ‘dynasty’ has been a politically-motivated *modern* intellectual invention. By making this claim, I do not intend to ignore various historical manifestations of hereditary transmission of power. But I would argue that different societies have possessed vastly divergent structures of organizing political authority. Only relatively recently have these heterogenous forms been rendered commensurable through the conceptual abstraction of ‘dynasty’, understood as a line of rulers belonging to the same family. This essay focuses on the political, social, and economic stakes involved in the spread of the term on a planetary scale across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Only in this epoch did it become possible to think of ‘dynasty’ as a global abstraction, a concept that could be used to narrate the past and present of human societies across the world. ‘Dynasty’ became a cardinal signifier for imagining the stable perpetuation of sovereignty, the constant reproduction of power and property: at least for ruling classes.

For many advocates of a strong sovereign nation-state, whether in France, Germany, India or Japan, ‘dynasty’ offered a pillar for imagining the ‘national’ past: the ‘dynastic’ past as a prehistory and/or backbone for modern national sovereignty. ‘Dynasty’ became a dialectical prefiguration of the nation-to-come, as well as a political form to be overcome and transcended, albeit through transformative incorporation rather than absolute negation. ‘Dynasty’ offered a way to imagine the nation itself as a primordial entity sealed by the continuity of birth and blood, indeed by the perpetuity of sovereignty. In the extra-European world – British India is exemplary – colonial administrators monarchized and dynasticized political systems to create modern sovereign statehood, maximise fiscal exploitation, and coercively ‘pacify’ militant and rebellious populations.

I use the term ‘modern’ to refer to transformations occurring in the last few centuries. This includes phenomena such as the emergence of remarkably strong states with powerful centralized forms of political and military command and fiscal extraction – and relatedly, nation-state identities – as well as the consolidation of forms of property, production, and exchange, which can be understood (even if not entirely subsumed or homogenized) through the optics of ‘capitalism’. Second, I use the term ‘modern’ to refer to discursive positions which self-identified as modern. But, simultaneously, I reveal the problems underlying rigid constructions of premodern/modern binary. I analyse how socio-political forms and concepts of earlier epochs are continuously re-inscribed as much as transformed in later epochs.

This paper exposes the foundations of the conceptual invention of ‘dynasty’: the erection and globalization of the sovereign national and/or colonial state through subjugation of subalternized multitudes, construction of dominant racial-national identities, re-ordering of regimes of property and economic exploitation, and assertion of patriarchal power. I problematize a conventional narrative of world history which equates premodern/non-Western history with the dynastic order, and assumes that this long millennial phase is ultimately

replaced by modern-Western history, in the form of nationalism and democracy. These two seemingly antithetical models – dynasty and nation – are exposed as possessing a secret inner complicity. Further, and considering peasant voices from India, I argue that the dynasty-to-nation narrative suppresses alternate – more polyarchic – conceptions of power, lineage, and solidarity. However, in India, and undoubtedly elsewhere in the extra-European world too, these polyarchic conceptions retained traction well into the twentieth century, and have nourished democratic and revolutionary politics. The paper concludes that deconstructing ‘dynasty’ can ultimately help us excavate more heterogenous pasts and imagine more egalitarian futures.

II. ‘Fixity of the Dynasty’ and the Patriarchal Foundation of Nationalist Sovereignty: A View from Early Nineteenth-Century France

In late eighteenth-century France, the exact meaning of ‘dynasty’ was still unclear. Hence when the French philosopher Voltaire wrote in 1767 about ‘the ladies of the dynasty [Dinastie] of Mendés’,² he earned a sharp rebuke from the classicist Pierre-Henri Larcher that the term ‘dynasty’ [Dynastie] was never used in Greek or in French to refer to the states of the ‘dynast’ [Dynaste]. Larcher argued that in French, the term referred to ‘a succession of kings of the same family’ [une suite de Rois de la même famille].³ Voltaire retorted in 1774 that Larcher was ignorant. ‘Dynasty properly means power’ [Dynastie signifie proprement puissance]. Voltaire thus spoke of ‘the dynasty of Memphis’.⁴

By the 1830s, the concept of ‘dynasty’ had acquired a more fixed meaning. In the second volume of his *Histoire de France* (1833), the French historian Jules Michelet not only saw ‘dynasty’ as a hereditary succession of rulers, but also valorized the practice of the royal house of the Capets in France to allow succession only through men. This prevented states from being passed ‘from one dynasty to another’. For Michelet, ‘the feminine element’ was ‘the mobile element’, while ‘the male element’, since it did not come from outside, ‘remained the same, and with it the identity of spirit, the perpetuity of the traditions. This fixity of the dynasty [fixité de la dynastie] is one of the things that has most contributed to guarantee the unity, the personality of our mobile fatherland [patrie].’ The nation-state was structured here through the model of the patrilocal, patrilineal, and patriarchal household, in which the male element was seen as fixed and local, while the female element, the ‘outsider’ wife who had to move to her husband’s home, was seen as extraneous and deterritorialized. Michelet quoted the Swiss historian Sismondi (*Histoire des Français*, volume 5, 1823) about how every state could preserve an ‘indivisible sovereignty’ [souveraineté indivisible] and ‘a national chief’ [un chef national] if succession always happened through the eldest male. When succession happened through women, states faced the threat of loss of independence, as was the case when Frenchmen claimed the thrones of Spain and Naples.⁵

Heta Aali argues that in early nineteenth-century France, male nationalist intellectuals, including historians, sought to confine women to the private sphere of domesticity, and ensure that the public sphere remained a masculine arena. Hence they opposed the idea that queens could satisfactorily exercise public power, let alone inherit the throne or rule.⁶ Other scholars have traced the lineages of anti-queenship perspectives in ancien régime discussions, as well

as in the French Revolutionary tradition, particularly in the opposition to Queen Marie Antoinette.⁷ In Michelet's discourse, one sees not only the increasing historiographic importance of 'dynasty', but also the nexus between nationalism – the idea of a fatherland possessed of a personality, and guaranteed by perpetuity – and the patriarchal model of male power and succession, hinged on the inferiorization of women.

III. Sovereignty, Patriarchy, Property: Hegel and Marx on Dynasty

Meanwhile, in Germany, the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was explicitly theorizing about the relation between patriarchy and dynasty. In his *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right* (*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, 1820), Hegel observed:

One of the results of more recent history [eines der späteren Resultate der Geschichte] is the development of a monarchical constitution with succession to the throne firmly fixed on hereditary principles in accordance with primogeniture. With this development, monarchy has been brought back to the patriarchal principle [patriarchalischen Prinzip] in which it had its historical origin [...].⁸

Hegel differentiated these recent developments from medieval European and Ottoman-Islamic (see the reference to the 'pashas' below) societies:

The history of despotisms, as of the former, purely feudal, monarchies, is a tale of the vicissitudes of revolt, monarchical tyranny, civil war, the ruin of princes and of dynasties [Untergang fürstlicher Individuen und Dynastien], and, consequentially, the general devastation and overthrow of the state in both its internal and external affairs. This is all due to the fact that, in monarchies of that type, the division of the business of the state is purely mechanical, the various parts being merely handed over to pashas, vassals, etc.⁹

The modern monarch represented the sovereign centre of the polity, the ultimate locus of the decision, the 'I will' [Ich will].¹⁰ He embodied the personality and subjectivity of the state:

Sovereignty, at first simply the universal *thought* of this ideality, comes into *existence* only as subjectivity certain of itself, as the will's abstract and to that extent ungrounded self-determination in which finality of decision is rooted. This is the strictly individual aspect of the state, and in virtue of this alone is the state *one*. The truth of subjectivity, however, is attained only in a *subject*, and the truth of personality only in a *person* [Die Subjektivität aber ist in ihrer Wahrheit nur als Subjekt, die Persönlichkeit nur als Person] [...]. It is only as a *person*, the *monarch*, that the personality of the state is actual. [Die Persönlichkeit des Staates ist nur als eine Person, der Monarch, wirklich.]¹¹

Hence, for Hegel, the body of the monarch needed to be stably reproduced in order to perpetuate sovereignty itself:

If succession to the throne is rigidly determined, i.e. if it is natural [and hereditary], then faction is obviated when the throne falls vacant; this is one aspect of hereditary succession and it has long been rightly stressed as a point in its favour.¹²

In lectures delivered at Heidelberg University (1817-18), Hegel summarized:

The monarch, as the ultimate pinnacle of the subjectivity of certainty, must be made permanent as a result of natural succession [...]. If the dynasty dies out, the estates of the realm must see to it that a new dynasty ascends the throne without disturbances [...].¹³

To vigilantly maintain dynastic succession, was thus a mission to create and preserve the modern sovereign state. In *The Philosophy of History (Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte, 1822-31)*, Hegel observed:

At their apex we find a fixed and positive principle – the exclusive right of one family to the possession of the throne [eine ausschließende Familie als die regierende Dynastie existiert], and the hereditary succession of sovereigns further restricted by the law of primogeniture. This gives the State an immovable centre. The fact that Germany was an elective empire prevented its being consolidated into one state; and for the same reason Poland has vanished from the circle of independent states. The State must have a final decisive will: but if an individual is to be the final deciding power, he must be so in a direct and natural way, not as determined by choice and theoretic views, etc. [...] But the circumstance that the highest station in a monarchy is assigned to a family, seems to indicate that the sovereignty is the private property [Privateigentum] of that family. As such that sovereignty would seem to be divisible; but since the idea of division of power is opposed to the principle of the state, the rights of the monarch and his family required to be more strictly defined. Sovereign possession is not a peculium of the individual ruler, but is consigned to the dynastic family as a trust [...]. Thus, then, royal possession [fürstliche Eigentum] no longer denotes a kind of private property [Privateigentum], private possession of estates, demesnes, jurisdiction, etc., but has become a State-property [Staatseigentum] [...].¹⁴

Hegel's insistence on primogeniture and rigid dynastic succession was motivated by the fear of foreign invasion – of 'the sovereignty of the state' being 'enfeebled and lost', with the state being finally 'overthrown from without.'¹⁵ The weakness and demise of the Holy Roman Empire – and the related failure of Germany to consolidate into a modern nation-state – as well as the similar fate of Poland, and perhaps also the weakness of the Ottoman Empire in the face of European attacks, stood as warnings: counterpoised against a powerful hereditary monarchy like the Prussian state (Hegel's employer in Berlin).

In post-1815 Europe, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic spectres had not been quite exorcised. The Concert of Europe was based on an attempted balance of power between stable sovereign states. But there were enough murmurs of discontent against the restored, and only partially reformed, monarchic order which Hegel sought to rationalize. Further, and symptomatic of Europe's increasing (semi-)colonial engagement with Asia, Hegel criticized Arab, Seljuk, and Mongol 'dynasties' as short-lived political forms which could not guarantee peace and stability.¹⁶ 'Dynasty' was made ready here for a long historiographic career: to artificially render commensurable, while creating hierarchies between, very diverse socio-political formations, with the aim of fitting them into a Eurocentric world-historical optics.

If Hegel first created a binary between dynasty and private property, he ultimately overcame this contradiction by underlining their interdependence. He confessed that ‘the ruler’s private estates and domains’ were essential for maintaining the ‘splendor that radiates from the monarch, and the money he consequently expends on his court’. Sovereignty needed property – ‘in our day’, the ruler’s private property – to ensure that the monarch ‘outshines all his subjects in pomp’.¹⁷

Hegel also compared ‘the estate of landed property-owners’ with the monarch as being similarly destined to property and political office (preferably facilitated by primogeniture for the landowners too):

this estate is summoned and entitled to its *political* vocation by *birth* without the hazards of election. [...] while it mirrors in itself [...] the moment of monarchical power, it also shares the otherwise equal needs and rights of the other extreme [i.e. civil society] and hence it becomes a support at once of the throne and society.¹⁸

Hegel preferred clear lines of succession in case of property, especially landed property, and sovereignty. Hence he preferred primogeniture over looser structures of lineage, embodied in the Stamm, Haus, stirps, or gens.¹⁹ The logic of the dynastic state and the logic of the propertied order were tied together. The sovereign and the ruling classes had to be stably and perpetually reproduced through strictly-defined channels.

It is well-known that advocates of powerful and predatory (imperialist) capitalism have looked to strong sovereigns for backing in their quest to accumulate capital, organize and exploit labour, and find markets. ‘Dynasty’ marks a poignant moment in the sealing of the alliance between state sovereignty and the propertied order in the age of globally expanding capitalism. I argue that as the sovereign state model became globalized through various kinds of colonial and nationalist interventions, the concept of ‘dynasty’ also took shape as a modern world-historical category which (for many actors) was almost a sine qua non for the birth and perpetuation of the modern state. The globalized production and reproduction of the sovereign state was anchored in the production and inter-generational reproduction of large property and powerful propertied classes: a planetary order moulded by capitalism.

Karl Marx’s *Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right’* (*Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*, 1843) exposes these stakes. Birth and patrilineal succession anchored and perpetuated inequality through two linked channels, both equally contingent and irrational, i.e. (dynastic) state sovereignty and propertied inheritance:

The two moments are [a] the contingency of the will, caprice, and [b] the contingency of nature, birth; thus, His Majesty: Contingency. Contingency is thus the actual unity of the state.²⁰

[...] the natural bases of the state like birth (in the case of the prince) or private property (as in primogeniture), appear to be the highest, immediate Idea-become-man. [...].²¹

Whereas Hegel, influenced in part by the Prussian context of landholding aristocracy, sought political influence for the landowning class, Marx sought to undermine their hegemony in

Germany.²² After all, ‘this class will apply patriarchal laws to a non-patriarchal sphere, and will think and act in terms of child or father, master and servant, where the real questions are the political state and political citizenship.’²³ Reforms of the British House of Lords and the French Chamber of Peers (especially after the 1830 Revolution) inspired Marx to think about eroding the political influence of the landed aristocracy.²⁴

Deconstructing Hegel, Marx cast ‘the possession of land’ as ‘sovereign private property’ [der *Grundbesitz* als das *souveräne Privateigentum*]:²⁵ the necessary connection – positively for Hegel, negatively for Marx – between the hereditary monarchic (dynastic) order and the hereditary class of landowners, between the domain of sovereignty and the domain of property. Marx described ‘the Germans’ as ‘the mystics of sovereign private property’ [die *Mystiker* des *souveränen Privateigentums*].²⁶ He demystified the Hegelian state as an apparatus built for protecting the interests of the propertied classes:

Thus, at its highest point the political constitution is the constitution of private property. The highest political inclination is the inclination of private property. Primogeniture is merely the external appearance of the internal nature of the possession of land.²⁷

In the age of bourgeois ascendance, mixed with reformed monarchic and aristocratic authority, property recognizes itself here to be sovereignty, and sovereignty identifies itself as property. This self-consciousness marks the propertied classes and their apologists, as well as their enemies. Marx captured this moment through the phrase ‘die *souveräne Herrlichkeit des Privateigentums*’.²⁸ The English translation – unable to capture the sense of Herr/master stamped into ‘Herrlichkeit’ – renders this as ‘the sovereign splendor of private property’.²⁹

For Hegel, monarchy and dynasty represented the personality and permanence of the state. For Marx, primogeniture hinted at the personality and permanence of property: ‘Therefore in primogeniture landed property, exact private property, becomes an inalienable good, thus a substantive characteristic which constitutes the very private personality [eigenste Person] and universal essence of self-consciousness of the class of noble entailed estates, its personality as such [Persönlichkeit überhaupt] [...]’.³⁰ Later, further underlining the contiguity between sovereignty and property – the becoming-sovereign of property – Marx would add: ‘In calling the people his private property the [German] king merely expresses the fact that the owner of private property is king.’³¹

IV. Connecting Europe and North India: James Tod and Alfred Lyall on Rajput Polities

In the nineteenth century, Britain commanded the largest empire known in world history and was the economic powerhouse of global capitalism. David Cannadine’s classic *Ornamentalism* shows how the empire was based on constructing or intensifying local hierarchies of power, with monarchy, aristocracy, and land-ownership providing basic organizing principles. The colonial Indian model of the princely states provided the exemplar par excellence for engineering similar regimes across late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Malaya, Africa, and the Arab world.³² Analysing British discourses about India reveals the material stakes underlying the globalization of the concept of ‘dynasty’.

In India, Sanskritic and Islamic terms which are today translated as ‘dynasty’, traditionally possessed a wide range of meanings, moving from broad collectives – with thousands or even millions of potential members – to narrower structures of ruling lineage. Thus the Perso-Islamic term ‘khandan’ was used for Mughal rulers as well as for local lineages of humbler status.³³ The Sanskrit-origin ‘vamsha’/‘rajavamsha’ is used to translate ‘dynasty’ today in Bengali, Hindi, and most other Indian languages. Yet, this is a slippery translation. Vamsha, in Sanskrit, originally meant ‘the bamboo cane or any cane’, and acquired the meaning of ‘the line of a pedigree or genealogy (from its resemblance to the succession of joints in a bamboo)’. It has been used to refer to group identities of divergent width, which the nineteenth-century British Orientalist Monier Monier-Williams struggled to capture: ‘lineage, race, family, stock, [...] esp. a noble race, a dynasty of kings, a list of teachers &c.’³⁴ Monier-Williams translated the comparable Sanskritic term ‘kula’ as ‘a herd, troop, flock, assemblage, multitude, number, [...] a race, family, community, tribe, caste, set, company [...]’.³⁵

India’s riverine plains, hotbeds of agrarian state formation, have for centuries been bordered and criss-crossed by dense forests, grasslands, deserts, hills, and mountains. These harboured pastoral-nomadic, shifting cultivator, and forest-oriented communities which were often only loosely touched by state power. More generally, across the subcontinent, organized state-based and communitarian hierarchies coexisted with plural sinews of power and pathways of individual and collective autonomy and mobility. This explains why the concept of raj/raja-, as in ‘rajavamsha’ – though cognate with rex and Reich – has traditionally been deployed in India by a spectrum of social actors, not just by a sovereign monarch. Terms like ‘Rajput’ (literally, son of a raja) or ‘Kshatriya’ have been appropriated, since precolonial centuries, by broad collectives commanding land and manpower. These terms encoded warrior peasant and ‘tribal’ desire for social mobility. These actors frequently drew their ancestry from gods and kings.³⁶

Since the sixteenth century, Mughal emperors and collaborating Rajput rulers often sought to restrict regal power and identity, eclipsing the authority of wider kin groups and communities. This trajectory paralleled interventions by state-builders across early modern Eurasia, and was bolstered by shared frameworks of oceanic commerce and monetization, bureaucratization, and military technologies, especially gunpowder. However, from the late seventeenth century, peasant-led rebellions, like those of the Marathas, Sikhs, and Jats, caused the collapse of the Mughal empire. These rebellions re-dispersed vocabularies of rulership and lineage power.³⁷

For Europeans to conceptualize these regional agrarian polities through the optics of monarchy (‘rule of one’) or dynasty, often amounted to misrecognition. Voltaire was thus perspicacious when he observed about the Marathas in 1773:

They choose themselves a chief [chef] whom they do not obey except during war. And yet they obey him very badly, the Europeans have called king [ont appellé Roi] this captain of brigands; so much one lavishes this name.³⁸

James Tod, a Scottish-origin officer who had served as (the British) Political Agent to the Western Rajput States, also detected such misrecognition. Tod wanted to convince the British that they should rely on the Rajputs for military support and political collaboration. Indeed,

Rajput manpower became a mainstay of the colonial army: a subcontinental, and eventually global, pillar of imperial domination. Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han* (1829-32), published in London, emphasized the ties that connected Rajput rulers in northern India to the broader populace, enabling patriotic bonds to emerge.³⁹

Later, Hindu-Indian nationalists, reading Tod's account of the Rajputs as well as the Scottish-nationalist novels and poetry of Walter Scott, identified common strands in Scottish and Rajput/Indian narratives: especially patriotic resistance directed against 'foreign' rulers like the English (in Scotland) or Muslim monarchs (in India). Scott and Tod, and their Indian admirers, attributed this patriotic resistance to a social organization which coalesced around warrior clans and chiefs who inhabited castles and highlands, and were celebrated in bardic poetry. Indian nationalists were ultimately inspired by such narratives to rebel against British rule.⁴⁰

In Tod's own view, the British were damaging the Rajput warrior clan ethos through new 'monarchical principles' that supported rulers but disempowered the multitudes. He testified in 1832 before the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company (which reviewed Indian matters on the eve of the framing of the Charter Act of 1833):

Already have the evil effects of our alliances received practical illustration, in a variety of ways, in almost every state of Rajpootana. The first effect is the abolition of all those wholesome checks which restrained the passions of their princes; for, applying our own monarchical principles, we recognise only the immediate power with whom we treated, and whom we engage to support against all enemies, internal and external. Being thus freed from the fear of a re-action amongst his feudatory kinsmen, the prince may pursue the dictates of a blind revenge, assured that no neighbour prince dare give sanctuary to his victims; or, if an insatiate avarice prompt him to visit the merchant and cultivator with contributions or exorbitant taxes on their labour, the sufferers have not even emigration left as a refuge. Marwar and Jessulmer have powerfully exemplified this, our alliance having completely neutralized all the checks that avarice or tyranny had to fear from the hatred of their chiefs or subjects. The ancient balance of power, which often ended in the deposal or death of a tyrant, we have thus completely destroyed.

[...] we turned a deaf year to the remonstrance of the chief vassals of Marwar when expelled from their estates and country by their prince; and the minister of Jessulmer was allowed to pursue the plunder of his subjects with impunity; but no sooner does the Raja of Bikaner apply to the paramount power to put down disaffection, than the aid denied to his kindred chiefs and subjects is promised to the prince. It never occurs to us that rebellion may be justifiable; it is enough that tumult exists, and that it must be repressed.⁴¹

The British supported native rulers in exploiting cultivators and merchants, aiding them militarily and suppressing rebellions. In turn, they received an enormous share of the revenue extracted by the rulers, and their political support.⁴² Such support was necessary for expanding other spheres of colonial-capitalist exploitation, such as 'the British opium monopoly, and [...] the introduction of British goods and manufacturing processes into Rajasthan.'⁴³

In *Annals and Antiquities*, Tod looked back to a time when broad collectives had participated in the governance of Rajput polities, and checked such untrammelled exploitation. Tod interpreted the Rajput polities through European-origin models of feudalism as well as through the Scottish ‘clan’ model. To show how large groups claimed rulership, Tod used phrases like ‘thirty-six royal races’, translating ‘*Chatees Raj-cula*’,⁴⁴ or ‘the great races of Soorya and Chandra’,⁴⁵ as English equivalents of suryavamsha and chandravamsha. He noted that ‘the greater portion of the vassal chiefs, from the highest of the sixteen peers to the holders of a *chursa* of land, claim affinity in blood to the sovereign.’⁴⁶

Jat peasants were also placed within ‘the ancient catalogues of the thirty-six royal races of India’.⁴⁷ Tod compared the ‘Tatar hordes or German tribes, Caledonian clans, the Rajpoot Cula (race), or Jhareja Bhyad (brotherhood)’.⁴⁸ He found ‘the simplicity of republics’ among some ‘aboriginal races, living in a state of primeval and almost savage independence, owning no paramount power, paying no tribute’.⁴⁹ Ultimately, his account reveals a political economy where diffusion of shared lineage claims, rather than a monarchized sense of dynasty, facilitated control of land and manpower.

Half a century later, Alfred Lyall offered comparable arguments. In his book *Asiatic Studies* (1882), published in London, Lyall, then the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, suggested that in Muslim India, the ‘throne itself can hardly be said to have been hereditary, so often and so successfully was the inheritance disputed, and the dynasty changed.’⁵⁰ Scottish-origin Lyall felt that the Rajputs embodied ‘the pure clan by descent’, similar to ‘the remote forefathers of Highland chiefs now become Scottish dukes’. Politico-economic power rested in the clans, since for ‘leagues around the soil is possessed by his brothers, of the same stock with his own’.⁵¹

In this view, the clan organization was not confined to a narrow circle of well-defined Rajput families, but was a contested and open-ended social gradation.⁵² Lyall knew that the ‘Rajput’ category encompassed everything from ruling elites in Rajput principalities to ‘great cultivating communities’ where Rajputs had ‘lost tribal sovereignty’.⁵³ As regards the former:

Divine right in Rajputana exists only in the primitive sense of right by descent from a divinised ancestor, and this divinity does not yet hedge a king only, but includes whole families within its aureole. [...]

And in Asia hereditary succession actually means the succession to each vacancy of the ablest and most popular of the ruling dynasty or tribal family, the incompetent being rapidly eliminated as failures after short and sharp experiment. When no able man turns up for a dynastic vacancy, the dynasty collapses; but the tribal sovereignty stands on a much broader foundation, because the choice may range among half a dozen families, and the chance of finding a fit man is proportionately greater.⁵⁴

Lyall contrasted this ethos with the ‘modern spirit’ and ‘necessities of orderly administration’, which compelled the British ‘to conform to a strict principle of indefeasible hereditary right’.⁵⁵ The ‘tendency of modern officialism’ was ‘to strengthen the sovereign against the nobles.’

Unlike Hegel, Lyall saw ‘promise of free development’ in the politics of old Poland (which he compared to the Rajput politics), rather than a simple chaotic antithesis to dynastic succession. Hence he lamented its demise by Russian and Austrian hands.⁵⁶ Lyall felt that a ‘strict law of hereditary succession to petty Asiatic despotisms is not a very promising political innovation; it renders the Chief independent of personal qualifications, and makes him reckless of offending any one except only the British Government’.⁵⁷ He saw promises of liberty in clan politics, and regarded British policy to ‘make haste to help the Chief to break the power of his turbulent and reactionary nobles, in order that he may establish police and uniform administration over his whole territory’ as ‘shortsighted’.⁵⁸

Tod and Lyall thus emphasized the broad-based ‘clan’, ‘tribe’, or ‘race’ – translating *vamsha*, *kula*, and other Indian categories – as the proper locus for both sovereignty and control of agrarian property, under overall British hegemony. Hegel had looked forward to a modern sovereign state system and regime of (big) private property. In contrast, Tod and Lyall wrestled with negotiating British control over the layered social structures of India that had not yet been completely straitjacketed into a capitalist order of individual property (necessarily more favourable to elites than to proletarianized masses) and centralized state sovereignty. Simultaneously, they worried about the ill effects of colonial political-economic centralization.

V. British Colonialism and Dynastic Discourses in India

‘Dynasty’ ultimately became a cornerstone of British ideology in India: bolstered by the turn towards conservative authoritarianism in the decades following the Rebellion of 1857, and as part of the global turn characterized as ‘New Imperialism’. Thus, in December 1876, Viceroy Lord Lytton bestowed banners on Indian ‘Chiefs’, claiming that these were ‘a personal gift from Her Majesty the Queen’, and a reminder ‘not only of the close union between the Throne of England and your loyal and princely House, but also of the earnest desire of the Paramount Power to see your dynasty strong, prosperous, and permanent.’⁵⁹

These political fetishes reified the power of colonialism into objectified markers of sovereignty. They related the permanence of colonial sovereignty to the permanence of the native ‘dynasties’. Ownership of prestige objects manifested the nexus between sovereignty and family property. Lytton thus gifted medals to the chiefs, urging that the ‘heirloom’ should be ‘long kept [...] by your family’.⁶⁰

On 1 January 1877, at the high-point of the Imperial Assemblage in Delhi celebrating Queen Victoria’s assumption of the title of Empress of India, Lytton presented the British as inheriting the mantle of the ‘successive dynasties whose rule in India the power of the British Crown has been called by Providence to replace and improve’.⁶¹ The Indian Empire was ‘a glorious inheritance to be maintained and transmitted intact to Her [the Queen’s] descendants’.⁶² The logic of (colonial) sovereignty as a form of inherited property was transparent here.

Lytton also signalled that the British would in future look more towards Indian princes and landlords for collaborators, rather than towards the Western-educated Indian middle classes who were increasingly vocal against colonial rule. In his words, imperial administration

demanded ‘attributes not exclusively intellectual’. Rather, it needed ‘those who, by birth, rank, and hereditary influence’ were ‘natural leaders’ of the Indians.⁶³

Following Queen Victoria’s death in 1901, Viceroy Lord Curzon advocated for a memorial hall in Calcutta, again centre-staging ‘dynasty’. He juxtaposed ‘the foundation of the Moghul dynasty’ with ‘the world progress’ which ‘seems to have taken a definite leap forward’ from around the sixteenth century, as in England ‘with the Tudors, [...] in Persia with the Sefavi dynasty, in Japan with Iyeyasu.’ Hence the memorial hall would obtain records of ‘every dynasty from the Moghuls to the present day. These records would take the form of paintings, enamels, sculptures, manuscripts, and personal relics and belongings.’⁶⁴ ‘Dynasty’ materialized here through sovereign objects, embodying dead, but spectrally present, rulers.

Meanwhile, colonial historians like (the civil servant) Vincent Smith narrated Indian history as a history of successive dynasties. A ‘sound framework of dynastic annals must be provided before the story of Indian religion, literature, and art can be told aright.’⁶⁵ Smith emphasized ‘the dominant dynasties which, from time to time, have aspired to or attained paramount power’, since they were considered antecedents of the British.⁶⁶ He saw ‘hereditary succession [...] from father to son’ and ‘dynasty’ as India’s natural tradition, and therefore criticized constitutional reforms and democratic devolution of power to Indians in the 1910s.⁶⁷

Clearly, there is a colonial genealogy underlying present-day academic ‘common sense’ which homogenizes global history into a history of dynasties, and thus flattens heterogenous political systems into false resemblances. In India, the British further contributed to this by spreading codified norms of hereditary succession and male primogeniture with respect to rulership and big landed property. From Awadh⁶⁸ to Gujarat⁶⁹ and Bhopal,⁷⁰ such interventions aimed – not always with success, given local resistance – at strengthening male sovereigns and property owners at the cost of broader kin-groups and women, to stabilize a collaborator class of princes and landlords. Tripura exemplifies this trajectory.

VI. Dynasty, Rajavamsha, and Kshatriyahood in Tripura

State formation in precolonial Tripura – a hill kingdom at the north-eastern extremity of the Indian subcontinent – had been fostered by chieftains with roots in local communities of shifting cultivators. The power of rulers was traditionally circumscribed by semi-autonomous armed ‘tribal’ populations. The regional chronicle, *Rajamala*, narrated episodes of precolonial history, when rulers who robbed people of their lives and wealth, molested women, or claimed divine status were deposed by the people (*loka*, *praja*) and/or by the officers: the latter then instituted new rulers. Patrilineal succession was also interrupted by the rise of ‘new men’. Well into the nineteenth century, local ‘tribes’ played a key role in determining succession.⁷¹

Relatedly, the term ‘rajavamsha’ was not confined to a single royal ‘dynasty’, but encompassed multitudes. The British ethnographer H. H. Risley wrote: ‘The Maharajas of Hill Tipperah, who now put forward an untenable claim to be Rajputs, are believed to belong to the Afang and Jumatya septs, the members of which frequently call themselves Rajbansi [rajavamshi, ‘of the royal lineage’] by way of recalling their relationship to the royal family.’⁷² The Census of 1901 observed that the term Rajbansi referred to the ‘Tipara’ people and to Hindus who had

eaten with them and thereby lost their caste status.⁷³ The indigenous Communist leader Dasarath Deb recalled in his autobiography that Tripura's 'tribal people' (upajatira), and especially the Tripuris, regarded themselves, even in the mid-twentieth century, as 'descendants of the rulers of Tripura' and members 'of the ruler's community' (Tripurar rajader vamshadhar, rajar jat).⁷⁴

The British were exasperated by the autonomous local populations, especially following the Rebellion of 1857 when Tripuris and Kukis had opposed them. Further, the rulers of Tripura had hitherto not succeeded in revenue maximization, despite British efforts to tighten the fiscal screw. The rulers also owned extensive zamindari landed property in British India. So a powerful prince-landlord was essential for extracting revenue, rents, and cesses. Following a succession crisis in the 1890s-1900s, the British sought to impose male primogeniture. They disliked the way succession conflicts allowed armed local communities to augment their power. They thought that conflicts in neighbouring Manipur, climaxing in the anti-British rebellion of 1890–91, had been fostered by the absence of clear dynastic norms. The colonial response – instituting dynastic primogeniture to stabilise Manipur – was invoked as a precedent for Tripura. Further, the Salic Law was cited to exclude succession by or through women. This was ironic, given Queen Victoria's reign, as well as, in Tripura's own history, precedents of a reigning queen, Jahnava Devi (early 1780s), and the widowed queen Rani Sumitra's claim to the throne (1813). Queens consort had also exerted significant political influence in precolonial Tripura. Nevertheless, the British drew on analogies about transmission of property from father to son, to buttress hereditary patrilineal succession to rulership.⁷⁵ Viceroy Curzon summarized in 1902 that 'the principle of primogeniture [...] is accepted by the Government of India as the general law regulating succession'.⁷⁶ Ultimately, Tripura's rulers were allowed to nominate heirs, with male primogeniture however becoming the fall-back option.

Despite these changes, indigenous notions of collective regality persisted. The concept of Kshatriyahood offers a way of understanding this dynamics. The historian Romila Thapar interprets the Sanskrit word 'kshatra' as 'pouvoir au sens de souveraineté', power in the sense of sovereignty.⁷⁷ The root Indo-Iranian concept signified royal power.⁷⁸ In precolonial India, dominant peasant and pastoral communities claimed Kshatriya status to assert their authority. In modern India too, politically influential peasant and other labouring communities have claimed Kshatriya identity: examples include the Yadavs, Kurmis, Kushvahas, Jats, Patidars, Marathas, and Nadars. In Tripura, from 1929 onwards, the rulers engineered a Tripur Kshatriya community, encompassing the state's major indigenous populations: Puratan Tripura, Deshi Tripura, Noatia, Jamatia, and Riang. The ruler devolved electoral, political, and administrative powers to this Kshatriyaized populace: this paralleled constitutional reforms and devolution of powers in British India. In the 1940s, Tripur Kshatriyas demanded further democratization. Following India's independence in 1947 and the end of princely rule, indigenous activists like Dasarath Deb deployed the Tripur Kshatriya organization to nurture a Communist insurgency and party organization. They aimed at defending indigenous populations against the Indian state and the growing political and economic clout of high-caste Bengali elites. The Communists ultimately gained political hegemony in Tripura in later decades.⁷⁹

The Bengali politician Tarit Mohan Das Gupta summarizes this indigenous politics by noting that there had been ‘an unwritten constitution (alikhita samvidhan) centring on the ruler’ in Tripura, sealed by the ‘deep thread of kinship’ (gabhir atmiyatar sutra) which bound the ruler to the local populace.⁸⁰ Indigenous multitudes had for long seen themselves as sharing the same lineage as the ruler and having authority within the common body politic, rather than as subjects sharply differentiated from, and subordinated to, a monarchic dynasty. With the waning of princely rule, these structures, norms, and memories of collective and communitarian authority laid the basis for modern democratic and socialist politics in Tripura, as well as territorial ethno-nationalism and insurgency.⁸¹

VII. Being Rajavamshi: A Peasant History

‘Rajavamshi’ (literally, ‘those belonging to the royal lineage’) peasants of northern Bengal offer a comparable case of political assertion based on collective royal identity. Risley writes:

[...] the title Rajbansi serves much the same purpose for the lower strata of the Hindu population of Northern Bengal as the title Rajput does for the landholding classes of dubious origin all over India. [...] In spite of their pretensions to be Kshatriyas, the social status of the Rajbansi is still extremely low, and no well-known caste will take cooked food from their hands or smoke in their hookahs. [...] Most Rajbansis, however, are cultivating ryots with or without occupancy rights, some are landless day-labourers paid in cash or kind, and others hold their fields as *adhiars* or *métayers*, paying half the produce to their immediate landlord.⁸²

As peasant warriors fuelled state formation in late precolonial northern Bengal and Assam, they coalesced around the Rajavamshi identity. But in the colonial era, immigrant high-caste Hindu Bengalis used their command over Western forms of education and state power to deprive Rajavamshis of their traditional control over land and politics. In reaction, Rajavamshis demanded self-government from the British state for themselves and other subaltern and minority communities. Between the 1910s and 1930s, Rajavamshis collectivized Sanskritic vocabularies of kingship to claim sovereignty for the peasant community as a whole.⁸³

Upendranath Barman, citing the ancient Indian thesaurus *Amarakosha*, thus argued that another term for Kshatriya was raja (ruler). Hence a Rajavamshi was one born in a raja’s or Kshatriya’s lineage.⁸⁴ Jagat Mohan Devsimha Barman invoked the ancient Indian epic *Mahabharata* and suggested that Kshatriya, rajan, rajanya, and raja were synonymous words.⁸⁵ Kshetranath Simha observed that ‘another name for Kshatriya is rajan or raja’, from which the word Rajavamshi originated.⁸⁶ Rajavamshi peasants essentially claimed a collective kingly identity.

Panchanan Barma divinized the peasant Kshatriyas: ‘Kshatriyahood itself is God. [...] As in Godhood, so in Kshatriyahood, one uses one’s own power to create, protect, and lord over the world.’⁸⁷ Rajavamshis synthesized precolonial Indian beliefs about collective-communitarian rule with left-democratic arguments. They claimed that ploughing and herding of animals were kingly and divine activities, which nourished and protected society.⁸⁸

Across the interwar years, Rajavamshis built welfare institutions, businesses, and cooperative societies, and improved agriculture and animal husbandry, apart from gaining political representation and state benefits for peasants. Concerned about peasant debts and loss of land, they critiqued those who exploited the poor through their ownership of land and capital. They condemned the economic system whereby merchants and industrialists from afar extracted labour, raw materials, and semi-finished products from peasants, and sold back finished commodities at high prices. By the 1940s, Rajavamshi politics was imbued with Communism. Rajavamshis were a vanguard of the Tebhaga agrarian rebellion. Over the next decades, Rajavamshis – often in solidarity with other subaltern communities in northern Bengal – developed claims for territorial nationhood. To empower non-elite locals against high-caste Hindu Bengalis, they successively engineered the Hitasadhani, Uttar Khanda, Kamtapur, and Greater Cooch Behar territorial-separatist movements.⁸⁹ Claims for collective kingliness thus ultimately translated into a territorial subaltern nationalism.

VIII. Dynasty as Basis of Nationhood: A View from Japan

By the late nineteenth century, non-European elites were contributing to the globalization of ‘dynasty’ as a concept, often to erect national sovereignty regimes and to resist colonial aggression. Japan was a paradigm-setter, influencing elites across China, Korea, and Ethiopia.⁹⁰

Ito Hirobumi, a key maker of the Meiji Constitution of 1889, and Japan’s first Prime Minister, is exemplary. The English translation of his *Commentaries on the Constitution of the Empire of Japan* (1889) invoked ‘dynasty’ while interpreting Article I of the Constitution, ‘The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal.’ Ito observed: ‘this Article states the great principle of the Constitution of the country, and declares that the Empire of Japan shall, to the end of time, identify itself with the Imperial dynasty unbroken in lineage, and that the principle has never changed in the past, and will never change in the future, even to all eternity.’⁹¹

The ‘eternal dynasty’ ensured the permanence of the nation-state and of its sovereign will. Ito noted: ‘For unless the governmental powers of State all centre in the Head, which is the seat of the will of the State, it will be impossible to maintain the organic life of the State.’⁹² This sovereign will, as in Hegel, was constitutional rather than despotic: ‘The use of the Diet is to enable the Head of the State to perform his functions, and to keep the will of State in a well-disciplined, strong and healthy condition.’⁹³

Significantly, Ito visualized sovereignty as supreme property. While discussing Article XXVII of the Constitution, he underlined the ‘security of the right of property’, but placed this ‘under the powers of the State’ in case of matters such as building rules, mining laws, and forest regulations. But there was an even bigger stake:

In Europe, Grotius of Holland maintained in his treatise on International Law, that a Sovereign possesses the supreme right of property in the land under his rule. Recent writers on the law of nations follow this principle, only replacing the expression “supreme right of property” by the term “territorial sovereignty.”⁹⁴

The eternal dynasty possessed national sovereignty as a permanent inheritance: ‘The sovereign power of reigning over and of governing the State, is inherited by the Emperor from His Ancestors, and by Him bequeathed to His posterity.’⁹⁵ This had practical ownership ramifications during the Meiji Restoration. In 1871, ‘all the clans voluntarily offered to return their domains to the Emperor, and thus the ancient system of feudal domains was at last completely abolished.’⁹⁶ From this standpoint, the modern nation-state – predicated on the replacement of ‘feudal’ property by bourgeois regimes of individual private property within overarching state control – received economic form and putative permanence through the assertion of the monarch’s proprietorial sovereignty:

In Europe, this result was obtained in some cases by the overthrow of the despotic power of the feudal lords at the point of the bayonet, while in some cases the right of tenants to the land was redeemed for vast sums of money. In this country, the restoration of the land to the uniform administration and its subsequent bestowal upon the people have been smoothly accomplished by the voluntary abnegation of the different clans.⁹⁷

IX. Social Foundations of Dynastic-Nationalist Historiography

A global conceptual history of ‘dynasty’ thus reveals how the state was often interpreted through a logic of sovereign property, working especially for the propertied classes and through the logic of inheritance. In concrete social terms, nineteenth and early twentieth century historians were often closely connected to rulers and big landlords. I would argue that these historians used the ‘dynastic’ lens to insert and sublimate princely and big landlord authority and identity into modern statist/nationalist historiography. They ordered rulers into neat patrilineal successions, often converting disparate kinglists into genealogies, and vice versa.⁹⁸

Charlotte Backerra has recently shown how major nineteenth-century German-language historians like Leopold von Ranke and Alfred von Arneth were closely connected to princely courts, like those of the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs. Unsurprisingly, they gave a dynastic form to German nationalist historiography.⁹⁹ Frank Lorenz Müller similarly argues that Prussian monarchs and historians collaborated to centre-stage ‘dynasty’ at the heart of German historical consciousness.¹⁰⁰

Indian nationalist historians also foregrounded dynasties in ordering the national past.¹⁰¹ Like their German counterparts, they often received princely support. Shyamaldas, the late nineteenth-century historian who served in the Mewar court, thus authored the *Vir Vinod* (1886), ‘perhaps India’s first “modern” history in Hindi’.¹⁰² It is re-published today with the imprimatur of the Mewar princely lineage.¹⁰³ Gaurishanker Hirachand Ojha, another pioneer Hindi-language scholar, received Rajput princely support, and wrote histories of various Rajput polities across the early-mid twentieth century.¹⁰⁴ Jadunath Sarkar, the early-mid-twentieth century doyen of Mughal studies and of Ranke-inspired historiography in India, also extensively depended on princely and landed magnate archives.¹⁰⁵

The consolidation of capitalism did not, after all, always extinguish the power of old princely and landowning lineages. Rather, they often accumulated unprecedented wealth and visibility. They also became pivots of patriotic historiography. In England, as Rosemary Sweet observes,

the emergence of the antiquarian tradition since the eighteenth century was tied to landed power: ‘the substantive part of almost every county history was devoted to manorial histories: the descent of property, the genealogies of families and the illustrations of their seats.’¹⁰⁶ In nineteenth century Scotland, a leading figure was William Fraser who ‘gained [...] extensive commissions to produce volumes of documents from the muniment rooms of the leading Scottish aristocratic families’.¹⁰⁷ And Shaun Evans notes about historical consciousness in nineteenth century Wales: ‘It was a sense of ancestral patriotism – based on connections between lineage, land and concepts of lordship and leadership – which formed the core of the gentry’s expressions of Welsh identity [...]’.¹⁰⁸

Early capitalist British models of agrarian landlordism moulded the zamindari landlord system in colonial Bengal, via the Permanent Settlement of 1793. Zamindari genealogies in turn shaped patriotic historiography in colonial Bengal. The centring of the zamindari vamsha (lineage) in nationalist historiography is exemplified by a text like *Parichay* (Identity, 1917, 1937), authored by two members of the Ulpur Basu Raychaudhuri lineage who were zamindars in eastern Bengal since the 1630s. History emerged here as the identity of the master (manib) domesticating the labouring subject (praja), while expanding agrarian society in a frontier landscape of forests and wetlands. The text urged the lineage, in the name of ‘communitarian/national’ (jatiya) unity, to remain united while confronting peasant rebellions. Vamsha/ruling class solidarity, here as elsewhere, formed the nucleus of elite patriotism and nationhood.¹⁰⁹

X. General Observations

First Observation: The argument that world history can be narrated in terms of a radical transition from centuries (if not, millennia) of dynastic politics to a modern era of nation-states and democracies, is a simplistic myth.

Benedict Anderson’s influential book *Imagined Communities* (1983), suggests that premodern human beings could rarely operate politically outside a dynastic order, whereas modern human beings are different: ‘These days it is perhaps difficult to put oneself empathetically into a world in which the dynastic realm appeared for most men as the only imaginable ‘political’ system. For in fundamental ways ‘serious’ monarchy lies transverse to all modern conceptions of political life.’¹¹⁰ Anderson dismissed modern dynastic nationalism as a mere ‘conjuring-trick’ by ruling elites.¹¹¹

Jeroen Duindam’s book, *Dynasties: A Global History of Power, 1300-1800* (2016), argues similarly: ‘Throughout history, rule by a single male figure has predominated. [...] Chiefs, kings, and emperors reigned over most polities across the globe for the last 10,000 years. [...] In whichever way royal leaders actually emerged or represented their origins, the dynastic organisation of power lasted.’ Modernity, as in Anderson, is a rupture from this past. ‘Dynasty plays a marginal role in today’s world.’¹¹²

These narratives underplay the rich heterogeneity of political systems present in different societies in centuries past, many of which were non-monarchic in nature. They also obscure

the significance of hereditary authority in modern political, social, and economic life. Capitalist modernity has often entrenched and globalized hereditary power and sovereignty.

Second Observation: The history of the world has borne witness to a wide diversity of ways of organizing and transmitting power. It is misleading to club all or even most of them under a single conceptual monolith like 'dynasty', however capaciously the concept is defined. Many of these political forms, in the extra-European world as much as in Europe, managed power in polycentric ways, endowing broad collectives and communities with governmental authority. Many of these political forms have inspired and nourished modern democratic and socialist politics.

It is obviously misleading to bracket ancient political forms like non-monarchic Greek and Italian city-states or ancient Indian non-monarchic polities (often labelled by scholars as 'republics') within a category like dynastic polity. It is well known that modern European and Indian political imaginaries have been inspired by such classical political structures. But polycentric, or even (relatively) acephalous, polities have also characterized broader stretches of the world, as in highland Southeast Asia, large parts of Africa, precolonial Americas, and Aboriginal Australia. James Scott argues that such social forms – often sustained by 'hunter-gatherers, shifting cultivators, pastoralists, and independent horticulturalists' – have characterized human history for longer and wider stretches than centralized states, with the latter gaining global hegemony only from the 1600s. Thus 'the state can be said to dominate only the last two-tenths of one percent of our species' political life.'¹¹³

In this essay, as well as in my book,¹¹⁴ I have shown, with examples from Tripura and northern Bengal, how older modes of polycentric and collective/communitarian rulership and governance could not be completely erased in the age of ascendancy of sovereign states. Rather, they proved remarkably resilient, and ultimately foundational to the growth of modern democratic and socialist politics in India. Jelle Wouters argues comparably in his study of Naga democracy in northeastern India.¹¹⁵ Such scholarship unveils the subaltern, vernacular,¹¹⁶ and non-European roots of modern democratic-socialist politics.

When historians narrate the past as a history of omnipresent dynasties, they erase historical traces of subaltern autonomy. Duindam thus remarks: 'Why did ordinary people accept the dominion of dynasty and court? The most important answer undoubtedly is that it fitted their view of a harmonious social order, sanctioned by heaven and celebrated in collective ritual. More than the consequence of top-down propaganda or coercion, support for dynastic power was ingrained in a widely shared mentality present in all social settings.'¹¹⁷ In contrast, I argue that the dynastic construction of the political past and present was absolutely a creation of 'top-down propaganda' and 'coercion' launched by states and ruling classes. There was widespread and often successful resistance to such projects, mounted by subalternized populations.

Third Observation: I do not deny that diverse societies have been characterized by divergent ways of organizing the transmission of hereditary power, authority, and property. But I deny that these societies can thereby all be clubbed under the monolith of 'dynastic' polities.

More is obscured than revealed when different social forms, with divergent modes of production and exchange, cosmologies, and norms, are sheltered under a common umbrella of 'dynastic' polity. For example, Duindam's *Dynasties* focuses on the Mughal Empire while discussing India. Radically different political geographies, where kingships appear brittle and often absent, and 'monarchy' – the rule of one – seems a chimera, would become visible if the scales were changed: from the imperial to the regional and local, from Agra or Delhi to northeastern Indian highlands or nomadic Rajasthan.¹¹⁸

Fourth Observation: There is epistemological violence involved in trying to fit non-European concepts and social categories into the European-origin notion of 'dynasty'. Global intellectual historians should query as to what motivates projects of trying to artificially render commensurable – through the category of 'dynasty' – divergent socio-political forms. Behind the epistemological gaze of seeing dynasties everywhere lie historical projects of transforming political, economic, and social structures to ease capitalist-colonial domination. The globalization of the concept of 'dynasty' is linked to the globalization of capitalist-colonial modes of production, exchange, and exploitation.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines dynasty as 'a succession of rulers of the same line or family; a line of kings or princes.'¹¹⁹ In modern times, non-European political categories – like the Indian *vamsha/rajavamsha* or *kula* – are often translated as 'dynasty'. Yet, such translations involve bad faith. When millions of peasants claim to be *rajavamshi* or *Kshatriya*, or to belong to *kulas* descended from gods and kings, we are confronting ways of organizing rulership and social power that cannot be understood in terms of the 'dynastic' polity, despite the efforts of scholars. I have argued that colonial capitalism sought to revolutionize textures of governance in India, removing powerful forms of polycentric, collective, and communitarian rule, and accentuate forms of monarchic rulership. Often this involved the import of new norms of dynasty, sealed by male primogeniture. The British wanted to construct strong monarchies and dynasticize governance to maximise extraction of revenue, rents, and cesses, to open up spheres for colonial industry and commerce, and to suppress rebellious armed agrarian populations (who, as markers of their claim on sovereignty, asserted royal descent and status).

Thus the globalized circulation of the concept of 'dynasty' was driven by actors who wanted to maximize other circulations: fiscal (revenue, rents, cesses), industrial and commercial (extraction of raw materials and labour; creating markets for finished products), and military (mobility of armed forces to guarantee domination). That is, the globalized circulation of the concept depends on the production of deeper infrastructures of circulation. The globalization of the abstraction of 'dynasty' is bound to the globalization of capitalist-colonial modes of production and exchange.

Marx observed in 1857 in *Grundrisse*: 'The exchange value of a commodity, as a separate form of existence accompanying the commodity itself, is *money*; the form in which all commodities equate, compare, measure themselves; into which all commodities dissolve themselves; that which dissolves itself into all commodities; the universal equivalent.'¹²⁰ A concept like 'dynasty' functions analogously: different socio-political forms are dissolved, or rather, coercively straitjacketed, into it: not always successfully, given pervasive resistance.

In *Grundrisse*, Marx further compares the functioning of money with linguistic translation: ‘Ideas which have first to be translated out of their mother tongue into a foreign language in order to circulate, in order to become exchangeable, offer a somewhat better analogy; but the analogy then lies not in language, but in the foreignness of language.’¹²¹ Capitalist-colonial expansion seeks to erect similar exploitative forms everywhere. It subsumes, overrides, and rewrites the foreignness of earlier modes of production, exchange, and domination: and thus transforms social relations across the globe. Regionally specific concepts and categories – results of pre-capitalist regional power relations – are now ‘translated’ into a universal conceptual equivalent.

Such equivalence-making can also be found in earlier eras, just as the circulation of money is not unique to modernity. Medieval Europeans also conceptualized Asian regimes through European vocabularies of rulership.¹²² But, in the period of modern capitalist-colonial expansion, these processes gain an unprecedented globality. Rulerships across the whole planet can now be bracketed under a single concept, ‘dynasty’.

In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Marx speaks of ‘the commodity-owner’s cosmopolitanism’. ‘The commodity-owner realises that nationality “is but the guinea’s stamp,” since the same amount of gold that arrives in England in the shape of American eagles is turned into sovereigns, three days later circulates as napoleons in Paris and may be encountered as ducats in Venice a few weeks later.’¹²³ When the comparativist historian renders concepts emerging from different space-time zones as unproblematically translatable and exchangeable through the universal equivalent of ‘dynasty’, he or she demonstrates a similar indifference to historical specificity and incommensurability.

In contrast, Lydia Liu emphasizes ‘reconceptualizing translatability as a historical event’.¹²⁴ She underlines that ‘we need to investigate further how a particular sign or object is made into an equivalent of something else during the process of circulation and how, theoretically speaking, this act of translation articulates the condition of unequal exchange.’¹²⁵ Ann Stoler underscores the ‘relations of force’ underlying conceptual abstraction: ‘If stability is not an intrinsic feature of concepts, then one task must be to examine how their stability is achieved, how unequal things are abstracted into commensurabilities that fuel our confidence in those very concepts that then are relegated as common sense.’¹²⁶ A global concept-history of ‘dynasty’ helps us understand how colonial capitalism undergirds such commensurability-making.

Fifth Observation: In the modern world, the sovereign state – in nationalist and imperial guises – secures the rule of the propertied classes, and organizes fiscal extraction and general exploitation of the populace. To justify these tasks and negate other political possibilities, and thus to legitimate the omnipresent rule of the modern sovereign state, its theorists have also painted the historical past of humanity as comprising long-lasting, continuous, and omnipresent regimes of centralized sovereignty. Statist thinkers thus often identified ‘dynasties’ as the main motors of premodern politics, obscuring traces of non-monarchic, polycentric, and collectivist rule.

Nationalist thinkers like G. W. F. Hegel and Ito Hirobumi emphasized ‘dynastic’ narratives in order to give antiquity and permanence to the modern sovereign state. Administrators like Viceroy Lord Lytton, Viceroy Lord Curzon, and Vincent Smith quite as assiduously legitimated the foreign colonial regime by drawing its genealogies from supposedly millennia-old history of indigenous ‘dynasties’. Historians who described the past in dynastic terms were often intimately associated with princely and big landlord elites. Princely, aristocratic, and landlord lineage archives were gradually expropriated from (what the modern statist vision labelled as) the ‘private’ domain and brought into the ambit of the ‘public’, guarded by the state and accessible to scholars. The resulting historiography centred elite authority, property, and identity in national consciousness.¹²⁷

Sixth Observation: Politics – premodern regimes as well as modern sovereign states – create identities to discriminate between insiders and outsiders while transmitting political rights, landed and other forms of economic power, and social prestige. However fixated historians are in differentiating dynastic politics from nation-states, there is a common logic underlying and uniting them: the inheritance of sovereignty by the right of blood and filiation. If we keep this common logic in mind, we shall understand why monarchic spectres and genealogies haunt modern nationalisms. We shall also understand why nationalist and democratic political forms have often been imagined through vocabularies of family and lineage.

Discussing Nazi Germany, David Wengrow remarks that ‘the fascist form of imperialism that followed the [Weimar] Republic extended the old dynastic obsession with bloodlines and heredity to the body politic at large.’¹²⁸ More philosophically, Jacques Derrida compares the ‘modern political theology of monarchic sovereignty’ with ‘the unavowed political theology – itself just as phallogocentric, phallo-paterno-filio-fraterno-ipsocentric – of the sovereignty of the people, that is, of democratic sovereignty.’ What unites the two logics is ‘a long cycle of political theology that is at once paternalistic and patriarchal, and thus masculine, in the filiation father-son-brother.’¹²⁹

A common grammar structures the dynastic logic of father-to-son transmission of power, the nationalist logic of parent-to-child transmission of citizenship and all attendant claims on sovereignty and rights, and the logic of property which equally moves through parent-to-child (historically, often in more restricted, patrilineal: father-to-son) transmission. Marx’s critical comparison between dynastic sovereignty and the logic of property transmission resonates with Derrida’s deconstruction of the supposed difference between dynastic sovereignty and nationalist sovereignty. The logic of ‘phallic sovereignty’¹³⁰ – in monarchic and national-democratic forms – is a twin of the logic of propertied inheritance.

The logic of dynasty, as that of nationalism, is fixated on ancestors. The father of a dynasty is doubled in the father of the nation. The founding moment of authority, the arche, is often a man, a primal father from whom begins sovereignty and political identity. Indeed, many societies across the world, across centuries, have conceived of particular individuals – generally male, sometimes sacred or divine – as founders of lineage and ethnic groups. In medieval Europe, Brutus was thus seen as the legendary ancestor of the Britons, and Rollo as

the founding father of the Norman people.¹³¹ In India, lineages have claimed descent from Surya (the sun god), Chandra (the moon god), the god Shiva, and the kings Raghu and Rama.¹³²

Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, centralized state formation intensified across Eurasia. State-building was nourished by oceanic commerce, monetization, revolutions in military technology and organization, and growth of bureaucratic and fiscal apparatuses. Simultaneously, ruling groups promoted patriotic identities centred on allegiance to regional rulers, lineages, and polities. Arguably, ethnic identities intensified across Eurasia, from Europe to India and Japan. Modern nationalisms often drew upon, but also significantly transformed, these older ideologies.¹³³

Nationalisms today continue to valorize specific rulers as founders or icons of national sovereignty: Emperor Jimmu in Japan; Ashoka, Akbar, or Shivaji in India; Amir Timur in Uzbekistan; King Arthur in England; Robert the Bruce in Scotland. Monarchic spectres recur in contemporary nationalisms, often as a foil for strongman leaderships.¹³⁴ While justifying Hindu nationalist armed processions, an Indian politician thus recently claimed about the legendary god-king Rama: ‘Ram iss desh ke purwaj hain’ [Rama is the ancestor of this country], and that he was a ‘rajneetik purush aur raja’ [political man and king].¹³⁵ Derrida comments about ‘the return of national-populisms’ that ‘the founding story they tell themselves’ involve the ‘apparitions of *revenants*. The founder of the spirit of a people, one could show, always has the figure of a *revenant-survivant*, a ghost-survivor.’¹³⁶

As socialism wanes in China, a hyper-nationalist Chinese state emphasizes the writing of Qing dynastic history.¹³⁷ Meanwhile, contemporary Vietnamese state discourse brands ‘the Hùng Kings’ as ‘the founding fathers of the nation’.¹³⁸ It celebrates ‘the Ngô, Đinh and Anterior Lê dynasties (second half of the 10th century)’ for ‘building the ever developing nation of Đại Việt (Great Viet).’¹³⁹ The socialist logic of revolution is overwritten here by the nationalist logic of genealogy.

Discourses about royal and divine filiation need not always be conservative. The discussion on Rajavamsis and Tripura’s indigenous population in this essay, as well as Lucia Michelutti’s comparative study of northern India and Venezuela, reveal how subaltern actors can adroitly use such discourses to subalternize sovereignty and democratize political society.¹⁴⁰

Seventh Observation: A global intellectual history of ‘dynasty’ helps us observe the contiguity between sovereignty and property in the age of expansionist capitalism and bourgeois ascendance. Between sovereignty and property, there now exists an identity-in-difference, or, to use the Sanskrit term, achintyabhedabheda, unthinkable-difference-and-nondifference. The two are seen as both different and not-different. ‘Dynasty’ represents, like the company, one manifestation of the personification of property and capital: one point in a broader spectrum of corporate sovereignty.

To give the state ‘an immovable centre’, Hegel sought to restrict monarchic succession to a single family or dynasty. But this made sovereignty appear as ‘the private property [Privateigentum] of that family’. He stepped back from this, as it would render sovereignty, like ordinary property, divisible. Instead, he declared ‘royal possession [fürstliche Eigentum]’

to be ‘State-property [Staatseigenthum]’.¹⁴¹ Dynastic sovereignty was interpreted here through the notion of princely property or state property. Similarly, Ito Hirobumi cast ‘territorial sovereignty’ as the ‘supreme right of property’. He used this lens to explain Japan’s transition from ‘feudal’ property relations to modern private property, supervised by the monarchic state.¹⁴² Marx, critically reading Hegel, also regarded property and sovereignty as conjoined entities, indexed by the phrase ‘sovereign private property’.¹⁴³

‘Dynasty’ thus hints at the self-consciousness of property as sovereignty. One may find in earlier centuries too conceptual clusters, like the Sanskrit term ‘artha’ and the Latin ‘dominium’, which reveal the contiguity between political authority and economic power. With the growth of capitalism, conservative as well as critical actors continued to explore the nexus between sovereignty and property. Indeed, bourgeois-capitalist classes have sought to continually overcome the boundaries between sovereignty and property in order to translate their economic prowess into state authority.

However, mythologies created by bourgeois revolutions have also sought to differentiate sovereignty from property, the political from the economic. They argue that – whatever be the situation of inequality in case of property – when it comes to the political sphere, hereditary sovereignty (‘dynasty’) has been largely replaced by popular sovereignty (‘nation’ or ‘democracy’). This ignores the extent to which hereditary transmission of social authority, property, as well as civic rights and identities structures political power in societies across the planet today, consolidating massive inequalities across various classes and world regions.

Simultaneously, critical thinkers like Marx have unmasked sovereignty as ownership, as the collective exploitative will of dominant socio-economic classes. Property is exposed as the scaffold of all political mastery and subjection. Modern political discourses thus reveal a structural ambiguity: confessing in some cases, and denying or mystifying in others, the conflation between sovereignty and property which continues to characterise the present world.

Now, Jules Michelet saw in the ‘fixity of the dynasty’ via patrilineal succession the guarantee for ‘the personality of our mobile fatherland.’¹⁴⁴ Hegel anchored ‘the personality of the state’ in the monarch and dynastic continuity.¹⁴⁵ In his *Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right’* (1843), Marx saw primogeniture as encoding ‘the very private personality [eigenste Person] and universal essence of self-consciousness of the class of noble entailed estates, its personality as such’.¹⁴⁶ Later, in the Preface (1867) to the first edition of *Capital (Das Kapital)*, Marx observed: ‘But individuals are dealt with here only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, the bearers [Träger] of particular class-relations and interests.’¹⁴⁷ To extend Marx’s way of thinking, the personifications of the fatherland (Michelet) or of the state (Hegel) by the dynasty actually express personifications of concrete social relations (for Marx, especially class relations).

Grammars of personification have also enabled the expansion of capitalism. As Mark Neocleous notes, the widespread emergence of the company as an artificial person, facilitated, for example, by transformations in British law during the long nineteenth century, represented a paradigmatic moment of such personification.¹⁴⁸ There is not much distance between these

‘economic’ personifications and ‘political’ personifications per se, that is, the state or nation as an artificial person (the Hobbesian Leviathan, Mother India...).

Company-states like the English East India Company and the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) reveal the contiguities between the logic of sovereignty and the logic of corporate company authority in fuelling capitalist-colonial expansion. As Philip Stern theorizes, they exemplify modern corporate sovereignty. Like kingly ‘dynasties’, they also operated through kinship networks.¹⁴⁹ The dynastic state, agrarian-aristocratic landed estates, and corporations (mercantile and otherwise) were ultimately varied manifestations of personified property relations. Such personifications – in the spectrum where sovereignty and property are contiguous and conjuncted – manifest the organized will of elites to accumulate and harness wealth, power, and status, while dominating, exploiting, and rendering productive human and non-human beings.

Unsurprisingly, contemporary culture glamourizes the rulership of capitalist families by using the term ‘business dynasties’, and through popular television series like *Dynasty* (1981-1989, 2017-present). The historian David Landes also celebrates family firms as ‘dynasties’. He notes that ‘the great majority of the world’s enterprises today are family firms. In the European Union, family firms make up 60-90 percent of businesses [...]. In the United States in the mid-1990s, more than 90 percent of firms were family units’.¹⁵⁰ Simultaneously, royal lineages behave like corporations in exercising economic power and coercion: as Faisal Devji argues about modern Arab monarchies.¹⁵¹ The British royal family is called ‘The Firm’, exemplifying the intertwining of royal and corporate authority and brand charisma.¹⁵²

Like ‘dynasties’ and nation-states, merchant lineages too need constituent moments, bloodlines, and founding fathers of sovereignty. In northern India, the legendary king Agrasen [see image] represents one such ancestor for contemporary business families, embodying the merchant as sovereign. Northern Indian merchant lineages routinely draw descent from kings and claim Kshatriya/Rajput ancestry.¹⁵³

Revealingly, in northern India, the same word, *gaddi*, is traditionally used for both thrones of kings and seats of merchants, denoting the divinized seat of command. Taking a cue from Ernst Kantorowicz’s study of medieval and early modern Europe, Adrian Mayer has argued that the royal *gaddi* in India represented the perpetuity of the state.¹⁵⁴ Arguably, the mercantile *gaddi* embodies the perpetual corporate presence and authority of the mercantile firm: a mark of the permanence and continuous inheritance of capital.

XI. Conclusion

The modern world of nation-states does not embody a radical rupture from a dynastic past of hereditary power. Nation-states often re-inscribe older forms of hereditary identity and hierarchy, sharing with ‘dynasties’ the focus on transmission of rights and sovereignty by blood. The logic of nation-state sovereignty is not so far apart from that of ‘dynastic’ sovereignty. Nation-states also secure hereditary political and social authority, with their bordered regimes differentiating insiders and outsiders, and protecting the power and predation of ruling classes. The ‘modern’ capitalist world – however much some scholars might

differentiate it from a ‘premodern’ past of hereditary authority – in fact continues to be characterized by inter-generational transfer of status, power, and property; radical hereditary inequality differentiating different classes and geographic regions; and the political influence of propertied ruling classes.¹⁵⁵ Modern frameworks of capitalist law and order probably even give such hereditary power and property a stability, security, and longevity which they would not have enjoyed in earlier epochs in many parts of the world.

If it is deceptive to think that the ‘modern’ world is intrinsically democratic, and thus stands in sharp contrast to a ‘premodern’ past which is intrinsically inegalitarian and undemocratic, it is equally deceptive to believe that centuries and social formations distant from us have been universally dominated by hereditary authority and inequality. Where hereditary power has existed, it has always been in tension with other forms of political action. Different societies, in different parts of the world, have often in the historical past practised various forms of polycentric politics, where a large spectrum of actors and collectives exercised political power. India demonstrates how such forms of polycentric and collective politics often survived into the twentieth century, providing the social basis for new forms of democracy. Intellectual historians have long neglected the study of these social and political formations. When they have turned to older societies in search of resources for thinking about democracy, classical Greece and Rome have monopolized discussions far more than non-European societies. This needs to change today, if we are to deepen democratic politics globally, by forming solidarities with political actors – such as peasants in the non-European world – for whom these older resources of polycentric and collective action continue to have deep valence.

Hence we need to diversify our conceptual lexicons, instead of remaining prisoners of hegemonic concepts such as ‘modern’, or even terms like ‘democracy’ (if the latter is understood as a singular Eurocentric intellectual and political tradition: Plato to John Stuart Mill, so to say). Intellectual historians can carry out militancy against Eurocentrism and elitism in the realm of concepts. Concepts are not things; they are embodied dialectics of social relations. Concepts are fractures ineradicably open to revolutionary transformation. For global intellectual historians, the excitement lies in understanding these dialectics by working through a planetary gaze, rather than through methodologically provincialist lenses.

Deconstructing concept-histories of terms like ‘dynasty’, ‘nation’, ‘kula’, and ‘rajavamsha’ constitutes a small part of a broader strategy. By reading the past against the grain, we can recover those polycentric and collectivist forms and imaginaries of social organization which can help us today to build new solidarities, and to fight against hereditary power, inequality, and exploitation. Democracy as a movement that perpetually opens out, that makes autonomy possible by piercing through heteronomous constraints, refuses incarceration as/into a singular idea or lineal genealogy, European or otherwise. It is all the more important, therefore, for global intellectual historians to recover multiple sites of revolutionary thought and militancy. To write a history of the past is a call to arms for the present.

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² Voltaire, *La Défense*, 19.

³ Larcher, *Réponse*, 37.

⁴ Voltaire, "Le Taureau Blanc," 296.

⁵ Michelet, *Histoire de France*, 302-303, citing Sismondi, *Histoire des Français*, 189-190.

⁶ Aali, "Constructing Queenship."

⁷ Hunt, *Family Romance*; Goodman, ed. *Marie-Antoinette*; Crawford, "Constructing Evil Foreign Queens."

⁸ Hegel, *Grundlinien*, 236; Hegel, *Outlines*, 276.

⁹ Hegel, *Grundlinien*, 236; Hegel, *Outlines*, 277.

¹⁰ Hegel, *Grundlinien*, 228; Hegel, *Outlines*, 267.

¹¹ Hegel, *Grundlinien*, 228-229; Hegel, *Outlines*, 267.

¹² Hegel, *Outlines*, 273.

¹³ Hegel, *Lectures*, 294.

¹⁴ Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, 514-515; Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 427-428.

¹⁵ Hegel, *Outlines*, 274.

¹⁶ Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, 434-436; Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 358-360.

¹⁷ Hegel, *Lectures*, 252.

¹⁸ Hegel, *Outlines*, 293.

¹⁹ Hegel, *Grundlinien*, 151-153, 250; Hegel, *Outlines*, 176-179, 293.

²⁰ Marx, *Critique*, 35.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

²² Yeomans, "Perspectives without Privileges"; Boyd, "Hegel's Concept"; Joseph O' Malley, 'Editor's Introduction', in Marx, *Critique*, xxv-xxvi.

²³ Marx, *Critique*, 95.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

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- ²⁵ Ibid., 99; Marx, *Zur Kritik*.
- ²⁶ Marx, *Critique*, 108; Marx, *Zur Kritik*.
- ²⁷ Marx, *Critique*, 99.
- ²⁸ Marx, *Zur Kritik*.
- ²⁹ Marx, *Critique*, 99.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 101; Marx, *Zur Kritik*. Marx cites, with irony, Hegel, *Grundlinien*, 68.
- ³¹ Marx, *Critique*, 142.
- ³² Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*.
- ³³ Lal, *Domesticity*; Priya Atwal's article in this special issue.
- ³⁴ Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 910.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 294.
- ³⁶ Chattopadhyaya, *Making*; Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*; Sinha, ed. *Tribal Politics*; Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*; Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, chapter 4.
- ³⁷ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 25-29, 41-46, 52-55, 93-94.
- ³⁸ Voltaire, *Fragments*, 55.
- ³⁹ Peabody, "Tod's Rajast'han"; Freitag, *Serving Empire*; D'Souza, *Knowledge*; Rudolph and Rudolph, *Romanticism's Child*; Banerjee, *The Mortal God*. See also: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/history/events/sahistseminar/24jan2012-on-the-origins-of-indian-nationalism.html>.
- ⁴⁰ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 185-186. The writings of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Romesh Chunder Dutt exemplify these Scottish-Rajput intersections in nineteenth-century Indian nationalism, mediated through readings of Scott, Tod, and (in Dutt's case) travels in Scotland.
- ⁴¹ Tod, Letter, 131-132.
- ⁴² Freitag, *Serving Empire*, 54-59, 86-88.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 96.
- ⁴⁴ Tod, *Annals*, vol. 1, 81.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 20.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 131.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 106.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 130.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 10.
- ⁵⁰ Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, 290.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 153-154.
- ⁵² Ibid., 156-171.
- ⁵³ Ibid., 199.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 203-204.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 203-204.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 224.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 204.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 225.
- ⁵⁹ Government of India, *Gazette, January 13*, Part I.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Curzon, *Lord Curzon in India*, 533.
- ⁶⁵ Smith, *Early History*, 2.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 5-6.
- ⁶⁷ Smith, *Indian Constitutional Reform*; quotes from 19.
- ⁶⁸ Jassal, "Primogeniture in Awadh".
- ⁶⁹ McLeod, *Sovereignty, Power, Control*.
- ⁷⁰ Khan, *The Begums of Bhopal*.
- ⁷¹ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 130-132, 298-299.
- ⁷² Risley, *Tribes and Castes*, vol. 2, 324.
- ⁷³ Government of India, *Census of Bengal, 1901*, Administrative Volume, Chapter I, Appendix I, xlix.
- ⁷⁴ Deb, *Mukti Parishader Itikatha*, 38.
- ⁷⁵ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 132-140.

- ⁷⁶ Lord Curzon, Note of 29.8.02, in Foreign Department, Government of India, Internal-A, Proceedings, March 1903, Nos. 46-57, 3.
- ⁷⁷ Thapar, "Légitimation Politique et Filiation," 784.
- ⁷⁸ Benveniste, *Le Vocabulaire*, vol. 2, 18-20.
- ⁷⁹ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 292-312.
- ⁸⁰ Das Gupta, *Tripuray Svadhinata Sangramer Smriti*, 74.
- ⁸¹ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 307-312.
- ⁸² Risley, *Tribes and Castes*, vol. 1, 491, 499.
- ⁸³ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 313-321.
- ⁸⁴ Barman, *Rajavamshi Kshatriya Jatir Itihasa*, 50.
- ⁸⁵ Barman, *Kshatriya Rajavamshi Kula Kaumudi*, 34-36.
- ⁸⁶ Simha, *Panchanan Barmar Jivani*, 95.
- ⁸⁷ Samiti, *Ashtadash Varshik Adhiveshan*, 23-24.
- ⁸⁸ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 321-330.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 324-335.
- ⁹⁰ See the essays by Egas Moniz Bandeira and Sara Marzagora in this special issue.
- ⁹¹ Ito, *Commentaries*, 2-3.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 10.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.
- ⁹⁸ Henige, *Chronology*, 71.
- ⁹⁹ Backerra, "Losing Monarchs."
- ¹⁰⁰ Müller, "The Prince".
- ¹⁰¹ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 192, 271.
- ¹⁰² Rudolph and Rudolph, *Romanticism's Child*, 107.
- ¹⁰³ Shyamaldas, *Virvinod*, vol. 1.
- ¹⁰⁴ Goyal, *Historians and Historiography*, 20-31.
- ¹⁰⁵ Chakrabarty, *The Calling of History*.
- ¹⁰⁶ Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 37.
- ¹⁰⁷ Cameron, "'Offensive to National Sentiment'?", 86.
- ¹⁰⁸ Evans, "Inventing the Bosworth Tradition", 252.
- ¹⁰⁹ Raychaudhuri and Raychaudhuri, "Parichay". On peasant revolts, see 410-415.
- ¹¹⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 19.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 86, 111.
- ¹¹² Duindam, *Dynasties*, 1-3.
- ¹¹³ Scott, *Against the Grain*, 14; Scott, *The Art*.
- ¹¹⁴ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*.
- ¹¹⁵ Wouters, "Polythetic Democracy"; Wouters, "Nagas".
- ¹¹⁶ Michelutti, *The Vernacularisation of Democracy*.
- ¹¹⁷ Duindam, *Dynasties*, 294.
- ¹¹⁸ Kothiyal, *Nomadic Narratives*.
- ¹¹⁹ Oxford English Dictionary, "dynasty, n."
- ¹²⁰ Marx, *Grundrisse*.
- ¹²¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹²² Jones, Mauntel, and Oschema, eds. "A World of Empires".
- ¹²³ Marx, *Critique of Political Economy*.
- ¹²⁴ Liu, "The Question of Meaning-Value", 15.
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.
- ¹²⁶ Stoler, *Duress*, 17-18.
- ¹²⁷ Müller, "Archives and History"; Chakrabarty, *The Calling of History*.
- ¹²⁸ Wengrow, *What makes Civilization?*, 126.
- ¹²⁹ Derrida, *Rogues*, 17.
- ¹³⁰ Derrida, *Beast and Sovereign*, vol. 1, 223; Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 192-201.
- ¹³¹ Sønnesyn, "Rise of the Normans".

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- ¹³² For a monumental primary source, compiling such origin accounts, see Singh, *Report Mardumshumari Raj Marwar*. Also Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, Chapter 4.
- ¹³³ Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*; Paramore, *Ideology and Christianity*.
- ¹³⁴ Banerjee, *The Mortal God*; Banerjee, Backerra, and Sarti, eds. *Transnational Histories*; Banerjee, "Spectral Sovereigns".
- ¹³⁵ Scroll.in, <https://scroll.in/latest/873266/west-bengal-one-dead-at-least-8-injured-in-clashes-during-ram-navami-celebrations>, accessed 19.03.2019.
- ¹³⁶ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 182.
- ¹³⁷ Crossley, "Xi's China".
- ¹³⁸ Phạm, ed. *National Museum of Vietnamese History*, 8.
- ¹³⁹ Ibid., 12-13.
- ¹⁴⁰ Michelutti, "Sons of Krishna".
- ¹⁴¹ See section III above.
- ¹⁴² See section VII above.
- ¹⁴³ See section III above.
- ¹⁴⁴ See section II above.
- ¹⁴⁵ See section III above.
- ¹⁴⁶ See section III above.
- ¹⁴⁷ Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 92; Marx, *Das Kapital*, Bd. I.
- ¹⁴⁸ Neocleous, "Staging Power".
- ¹⁴⁹ Stern, *The Company-State*; Adams, *The Familial State*; Veevers, "Early Modern Colonial State".
- ¹⁵⁰ Landes, *Dynasties*, xi.
- ¹⁵¹ Devji, "Jamal Khashoggi".
- ¹⁵² Balmer, "Scrutinising the British Monarchy", 45.
- ¹⁵³ Babb, *Alchemies of Violence*.
- ¹⁵⁴ Mayer, "The King's Two Thrones"; Taknet, *The Marwari Heritage*, 47-52.
- ¹⁵⁵ Piketty, *Capital*.