

A Critical Theory of Subalternity: Rethinking Class in Indian Historiography¹

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In the early 1980s, a small group of Marxist scholars influenced by Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* introduced "subaltern" as a new analytic category within modern Indian historiography.² The scholars, led by Ranajit Guha, were dissatisfied with the interpretations of India's nationalist movement, which had long neglected "the politics of the people", or the subaltern classes, in the making of the Indian nation.³ For Guha, this historiography had been dominated by an elitism of colonialists, bourgeois nationalists, and even orthodox Marxists, who had signally failed to take into account "the contributions made by the people *on their own*, that is, *independently of the elite*".⁴ Guha argued that the vast historiography of the Freedom Movement of the nineteenth and twentieth century was "un-historical", "blinkered", and "one-sided" because it primarily focused on the domain of elite politics while silencing and refusing to interpret subaltern pasts.⁵ He further explained that elitist historiography was narrow and partial as a direct consequence of a commitment by scholars to a particular "class outlook" which privileged the ideas, activities, and politics of the British colonizers and dominant groups in Indian society. Guha founded the Subaltern Studies project in collaboration with Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman, and Gyanendra Pandey with the specific aim of providing a corrective to the historiography by "combating elitism" in academic research and writings.⁶ Starting in 1982, the collective began publishing thick, detailed essays in a series called *Subaltern Studies* in which the subaltern classes were at the center of history writing.

In the "Preface" to the first volume of *Subaltern Studies*, Guha explained that the term "subaltern" would be used by the authors in the series as a "general attribute of subordination in South Asian society".⁷ However, Guha was not simply interested in examining questions of subordination in a classical Marxist framework defined by the logic of capital. Instead, he argued that the subaltern condition could be based on caste, age, gender, office, or any other way, including, but not limited to class.⁸ Guha further stated that he was centrally interested in interpreting the culture that informed subalternity, while also addressing concerns about history, politics, economics, and sociology. Needless to say, this was a departure from Gramsci's own writings on the subaltern classes in his "Notes on Italian History", which, according to Guha, had directly influenced the founding of his project. Gramsci had used "subaltern" in his writings as a substitute for "proletariat" while in prison in the 1930s to avoid government censors who wanted to prevent Gramsci's political writings from entering the public sphere. But Guha and his collaborators were not interested in simply applying Gramsci's own definition of the term subaltern or his interpretations of subaltern history within their

own scholarly work.⁹ Instead, the Subaltern Studies collective sought to construct a critical theory of subalternity that was initially inspired by Gramscian Marxism and then reconfigured to interpret and analyze South Asian history and society beyond the parameters which could have been anticipated by Gramsci himself.

Guha argued that the politics of subaltern classes in colonial India did not exhibit the characteristics of the rural groups described by Gramsci. Specifically, he disagreed with one of Gramsci's central claims that "subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up".¹⁰ Guha stated that the domain of subaltern politics was *autonomous* from elite politics: that is, "it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter"¹¹ He claimed that subaltern politics tended to be violent because subaltern classes were forced to resist the conditions of elite domination and extra-economic coercion in their everyday lives. Yet, Guha explained that factors of domination and coercion were not simply based or determined by the class dynamics in Indian society. He pointed out that British colonialism had left an "uneven" impact on economic and social developments in India, therefore, it was necessary to understand how different sections of society were affected from "area to area". Within Indian historiography the emphasis on understanding politics on the basis of class structures had obscured the fact that one group which was dominant in one region or locality of India, was actually dominated in another. Guha claimed that by moving away from an analysis of politics from an all-India level focusing on class dynamics, it was necessary for the historian to understand the heterogeneity and ambiguity in within society and sort out these tensions "on the basis of a close and judicious reading of evidence".¹² For Guha, the broader framework which he outlined provided a new direction for new enquiry. In the early volumes of *Subaltern Studies* and in Guha's own masterful study of rural revolts in *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, there were echoes of the Marxian themes of class struggle and class conflict to describe subaltern political mobilization, but the turn towards a cultural analysis of the subaltern condition was already present.¹³

Guha and his fellow collaborators had supplanted the analytics of class from a classical Marxist framework in favor of a critical subalternity. Guha had been dissatisfied with the unreflexive, techno-economic determinism of a Marxian orthodoxy that had dominated Indian historiography.¹⁴ His initial turn towards Gramsci and the assertion of a subaltern perspective into history writing was a way to rethink the nature of class-based analysis in the making of the Indian nation.¹⁵ Further Guha's own writings exemplified a further engagement with theorists like Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Roland Barthes. However, it should be remembered that Guha did not want to abandon the idea of class altogether, but argued that it was one of several factors for historians to consider when analyzing the subaltern condition. Guha's intervention provided an opportunity for the Marxists scholars associated with the project, and beyond, to write

new political histories of colonial India without having to abandon the traditions of historical materialism. In fact, it could be argued that from the onset of the Subaltern Studies project, the contours of post-Marxism were already demarcated in the early writings of Guha and fellow Subalternists.

While there was general agreement with Guha's arguments in founding the Subaltern Studies project, individual scholars who formed the collective often diverged in their own respective writings when it came to interpreting the subaltern condition. In fact, the plurality of theories and methodologies were not only celebrated as central to the project, but they were thought to be necessary in understanding the diverse nature of subaltern politics in India which had thus far not been considered in the historiography. A commitment to the social history tradition of writing "history from below" certainly loomed large in the scholarship of several Subalternists, but others were hinting towards cultural history where the ideas of Gramsci and Marx were integrated with Foucault and Derrida.

Class Analysis in Early Subaltern Studies

For David Hardiman, a class analysis of agrarian society in western India helped to explain the emergence and participation of peasants in the nationalist movement.¹⁶ Hardiman's detailed local study of Kheda district in Gujarat helped to illustrate the ways in which the "middle peasantry" was the vanguard of agrarian nationalism. Influenced by the writings of Eric R. Wolf and the middle peasant thesis, Hardiman explained that middle peasants, unlike poor peasants, rich peasants or the landed elite, were politically the most radical sections of rural society.¹⁷ He was committed to illustrating that the middle peasants functioned *autonomously*—in the spirit argued by Guha—and harnessed the support for the nationalist movement by influencing others in the locality. Hardiman's argument was a fundamental break from the historiography of the region, which had argued that rich peasants or elites were responsible for directing the ideas, sentiments, and politics associated with nationalism in Gujarat. For Hardiman, the middle-peasants constituted the subaltern classes. While Hardiman's argument appeared to be determined by the material conditions of peasants who could be classified as "middle peasants", he qualified his claims by stating that the caste and kinship ties within the peasantry were equally important factors to understanding political mobilization in the locality. After all, not all middle peasants became nationalists, only those who belonged to a particular caste in Kheda district. The convergence of class and caste in Hardiman's writings served as an important contribution to the understanding of nationalist politics, but, equally, it illustrated an approach to writing about subaltern classes, as it was no longer necessary for scholars to have to choose between class or caste analysis to understand politics. An integrative subaltern history provided an alternative because it encouraged a complex understanding of dominance and subordination in all forms.

Hardiman was the only Subalternist to explicitly engage with the ideas of peasant differentiation to explain agrarian politics. Partha Chatterjee, on the other hand, provided a further break within Subaltern Studies by linking Marxian social theory with Foucaultian notions of power to argue for “community” as the primary organizing principle for political mobilization.¹⁸ Chatterjee’s intervention began with an analysis of Robert Brenner’s seminal writings on the transition from feudalism to capitalism in England and Europe.¹⁹ Brenner had argued that the transition debates within the historiography were based on forms of techno-economic determinism. He illustrated that the transition to capitalism was explained by three primary factors: the impact of external trade on feudalism; a rent crisis that caused sharp decreases in agricultural productivity; or a demographic decline in the feudal mode of production. In each case, Brenner pointed out that the development of a capitalist mode of production from a feudal one was determined by the technical superiority of the former over the latter. Yet, for Brenner, what was crucially missing from the transition debate was an understanding of the process of class struggle. Through a comparative study of England, western Europe, and eastern Europe, Brenner was able to show how there was no historically specific pattern of economic development. He argued that there was an element of “indeterminacy” even within Europe and the question of transition was contingent on the nature of the political form of class struggle. In fact, Brenner demonstrated that in each particular case that formed his study, the direction of economic development could be explained by the “differential evolution of lord-peasant class relations which lay behind the differential outcomes of class conflicts in the European regions”.²⁰ It may be argued that the reason Chatterjee was interested in engaging with the Brenner debate as part of his own writings on Subaltern Studies had much to do with Brenner’s political resolution to the transition question.²¹

Chatterjee began by providing a typology of three modes of power—communal, feudal, and bourgeois—to explain the “differential evolution” of social relations in India’s countryside. (It should be noted that Chatterjee’s turn towards an analysis of “modes of power” marked a shift away from locating questions of transition within a framework of “modes of production”, which had long dominated Indian historiography.) He suggested that all three modes of power could have coexisted with one another within a given state form in colonial India as a direct result of British colonial policies, which impacted different parts of the agrarian economy *differently*. Ultimately, Chatterjee was interested in examining class relations (and class conflicts) within each mode of power as a way to demonstrate that even within India there was indeterminacy in the transition to capitalism. Yet, for Chatterjee, it was necessary to move away from a strictly Marxian framework of class analysis by arguing for “community” as an organizing principle for collective action within each mode of power. Chatterjee maintained that the term community was not without its own problems as it had “no determinate

form”, and “consisted of contradictory and ambiguous aspects”, but it was necessary within his framework to navigate between the modes of power.²² However, it is also possible to locate such a shift away from a Marxian analysis of class which informed the Subaltern Studies project. Further, Chatterjee was perhaps the first Subalternist to engage with the writings of Michel Foucault as a way to understand the capitalist mode of power within the Indian context.²³ Chatterjee was especially interested in Foucault’s analysis of the “capillary forms of power” within modern society, which “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives”.²⁴ Yet, Chatterjee pointed out that the indeterminacy of the transition of capitalist development meant that it was not only plausible, but also likely that the characteristics of one or more mode of power coexisted with the capitalist one. He argued that such circumstances not only allowed the ruling classes to exercise their domination within a capitalist mode of power in the form described by Foucault, but the ruling classes could also rely on the persistence of other modes of power as well. Chatterjee’s theoretical opus suggests that an understanding of the modes of power in Indian history helped to explain how elites dominated, but equally it provided a complex background to the diverse ways in which subaltern classes contributed to the making and dismantling of the modes of power and explained the complexity of the transition question within colonial India.

While the early writings of the Subalternists primarily focused on political mobilization in the countryside, analyses of the working-class politics also figured within Subaltern Studies. Guha had initially included a brief commentary on the relationship between the working-class and subaltern politics in colonial India by stating that “the working-class was still not sufficiently mature in the objective conditions of its social being and in the consciousness as a class-for-itself, nor was it firmly allied yet with the peasantry”.²⁵ For Guha, working-class politics were too “fragmented”, “sectional”, and “local” to develop into something larger in scale, like a “national liberation movement”.²⁶ However, the writings of Dipesh Chakrabarty offered the most extensive contribution within the Subaltern Studies project towards a “rethinking of working-class history”.²⁷ Chakrabarty argued that while a Marxian political economy provided powerful explanations for working-class history in India, his central concerns about the “particular logic of culture” or “consciousness” simply could not be explained by political economy alone.²⁸ In fact, he claimed that “culture is the ‘unthought’ of Indian Marxism”.²⁹ Chakrabarty began his writings on the jute-mill workers of Bengal under British rule by arguing that inscribed within Marx’s category of “capital” there is an assumption regarding “culture” that had been thus far ignored in writing labor history in India. For Chakrabarty, the turn towards a cultural analysis was a fundamental departure from what he characterized as the “economism” of Indian liberal and Marxist historiography. But more importantly, it allowed Chakrabarty to

reconfigure the problematic of writing about the working class within a cultural background of Bengal specifically, and a larger colonial context, more generally. Chakrabarty claimed that by bringing the question of culture to the forefront of analysis of the working class provided a historically specific understanding of the everyday functions of power and authority, as well as a critical assessment of the “quotidian experience” of workers.

Chakrabarty argued that the persistence of “pre-capitalist” social relations within a capitalist mode of power created historically specific conditions for the emergence of a working-class culture in Bengal, which even Marx did not anticipate. According to Chakrabarty, the jute mill workers were largely migrant peasants from neighboring regions of northern and eastern India and they were situated within “a pre-capitalist, inegalitarian culture marked by strong primordial loyalties of community, language, religion, caste, and kinship”.³⁰ For Chakrabarty, it was this specific culture which helped to explain the nature of political mobilization among jute mill workers, which was not possible by only considering class dynamics. Political economic explanations provided important insights into the development of the working class, but they also assumed that the jute mill workers would necessarily ascribe to characteristics of a working class consciousness found in the writings of Marx and others whose work was situated within the broader European context. Again, Chakrabarty was not interested in abandoning class analysis altogether, but turned towards a cultural analysis of jute mill workers as a way to provide an important intervention to understanding the historical specificity of workers’ politics that were informed by a “pre-capitalist” culture. By underscoring the point that the multiple modes of power existed side-by-side with capitalism in colonial India, it was also necessary to consider the multiple ways in which workers’ “primordial loyalties” contributed to the making of the subaltern condition.

In the “Preface” of *Subaltern Studies IV*, Ranajit Guha pointed out that *Subaltern Studies* was originally conceived as a three-volume series.³¹ The publication of the series would continue, Guha explained, due to the wide interest it had generated among South Asianists. In addition to including writings by the members of the Subaltern Studies collective, scholars who shared Guha’s intellectual and political commitment of challenging “elitist paradigms” in history writing also began publishing essays in the series. The contributions of Hardiman, Chatterjee, and Chakrabarty provided three approaches to rethinking class in Indian historiography as part of the Subaltern Studies project. These writings were perhaps the most explicit engagements on the subject and represented the types of theoretical and methodological shifts that were taking place in the early years within Subaltern Studies. But it should be emphasized that these writings were certainly not the only contributions on the subject. In fact, it could be argued that every essay within each volume of the series provided further understanding of the subaltern condition: some analyzed class dynamics explicitly, while others placed greater

emphasis on caste, religion, and other considerations. The convergence of writing social history with cultural history became a notable feature of the project in the early years.

Class Analysis at the Margins: Internal Shifts within Subaltern Studies

Despite the growing attention the Subaltern Studies project had generated in providing interventions in history writing, challenging elitist historiography remained central to Guha's research agenda. But more specifically, he made the following claim: "serious scholars...who have lived too long with well-rehearsed ideas and methodologies, find it disturbing that so many new questions should be addressed to problems which were supposed to have been studied, solved and closed. It is equally, if not more, disturbing that we often ask questions without answering them, for that violates the catechismal conventions held sacred in academic teaching and learning".³² Although Guha maintained his self-described combative stance towards an academy dominated by elitist historiography, which had ignored questions of subalternity, internal divisions within the project were emerging. It was becoming apparent that Subaltern Studies would cease to be only a historiographical project uncovering the contribution of the subaltern classes as subjects in the making of the Indian nation as defined by Guha in his opening manifesto published in *Subaltern Studies I* — "On Some Aspects of Historiography of Colonial India". The first three volumes of the series were primarily devoted to historical concerns outlined by Guha, albeit following divergent methods and theories to understanding the subaltern condition. While the convergence of social history with cultural history was celebrated by some Subalternists, others had become more skeptical of the project's foundations within the discipline of history.³³ It was argued that the project could not sustain itself through further studies of the forms of peasant consciousness and political mobilizations to understand the subaltern condition in colonial India. After all, Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* had covered some one hundred rebellions and revolts and the essays in the first three volumes of Subaltern Studies provided an analysis of additional cases of subaltern politics. The internal shift away from the discipline of history towards literary theory, cultural criticism, feminist theory, and postcolonial theory into Subaltern Studies provided alternate ways of conceptualizing subalternity; although, well beyond the project's Gramscian Marxist origins. Partha Chatterjee identified the internal shift within the Subaltern Studies project as a "post-structuralist moment".³⁴ *Subaltern Studies IV* pointed towards new directions for the project which were taken up in later volumes. Needless to say, class analysis was pushed further into the margins within the project (although not completely abandoned) as Subaltern Studies took on more post-Marxist forms.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak provided the clearest articulation of this shift in arguing that the methods and practices the Subalternists had taken up in their writ-

ings about the subaltern condition was in fact “closer to deconstruction”.³⁵ Spivak’s detailed analysis of the *Subaltern Studies* series in her essay “Deconstructing Historiography” suggests that questions of language and meaning were central to the ways in which Guha and other scholars had defined subalternity. Although the theoretical approach taken by the early Subalternists was situated within the discipline of history, Spivak explained that the challenge to elitist historiography was in itself a form of “discursive-field displacement”.³⁶ She pointed out that the Subalternists had actually taken a deconstructive approach in their project without formally articulating it as deconstructive. But Spivak’s analysis did not stop here: for her it was pertinent to deconstruct the Subalternists’ mode of deconstruction as a way to prevent both the “objectification” of the subaltern and the “control” of the subaltern subject through the construction of historical knowledge about subalternity.³⁷ In the process of deconstructing the Subalternist historiography, Spivak issued the most trenchant internal critique of the project’s conceptualization of the subaltern: namely, the failure to conceptualize the subjectivity of the subaltern woman.³⁸ She states: “The group is scrupulous in its consideration towards women. They record moments when men and women are joined in struggle from gender or class discrimination. But I think they overlook how important the concept-metaphor woman is to the functioning of their discourse”.³⁹ For a project founded on the idea of recovering the subaltern as a subject in the making of history, Spivak considered the absence of investigating the subjectivity or subject-positioning of women as exemplifying “indifference”. (Guha, of course, had identified gender as one form of subordination in South Asian society, but the contributors for the most part had not taken up gender analysis in their writings.) Spivak further concluded that there was a methodological problem within Subaltern Studies as a historiographical project in which it was impossible to “retrieve colonized women’s subject position” when the subaltern woman had no subject position to begin with in the primary sources used to write the histories by the Subalternists. In other words, subaltern history was confronted with its own limits. Although Spivak provided a deconstructive approach in her analysis of the project, a spirit of Marx remained embedded in her articulation for the future direction of Subaltern Studies. She argued: “it is well known that, for reasons of collusion between pre-existing structures of patriarchy and transnational capitalism, it is the urban sub-proletarian female who is the paradigmatic subject of the current configuration of the International Division of Labour”.⁴⁰ Spivak later provided a disquisition on this topic developing the idea of the “new subaltern”.

Chatterjee further pointed to new directions within Subaltern Studies. He noted that what was necessary at the start of the project was to “break down the totalizing claims of a nationalist historiography”.⁴¹ By highlighting the differentiation within the political realm in Indian society, between the elite and subaltern domains, the Subalternists had not only demonstrated the limitations within the

traditions of history writing on nationalism, but offered diverse ways of investigating the subjectivity of the subaltern condition in colonial India. Yet, what remained unresolved within the Subalternist framework, according to Chatterjee, was to explain the nature of society when the domain of subaltern politics began to parallel or adapt to the more bureaucratic and institutional form of elite politics in the twentieth century.⁴² For Chatterjee, the first stage of the Subaltern Studies project had fulfilled its objectives in tracking a history when the domains of elite and subaltern politics were distinct, separate, and autonomous. The purpose for the next stage of the project was different. He states: “Now the task is to trace in their mutually conditioned historicities the specific forms that have appeared, on the one hand, in the domain defined by the hegemonic project of nationalist modernity, and on the other, in the numerous fragmented resistances to that normalizing project”.⁴³ Because the political realms for elites and subalterns were now understood as “mutually conditioned” within the framework of the making of the Indian nation, Chatterjee’s work paved the way for expanding the scope of inquiry within Subaltern Studies to include the study of elite practices and discourses as part of the resistance to nationalism and modernity. This was certainly an important transition: Chatterjee largely shifted his focus towards the middle-classes and their discourses in Bengal in eastern India. In many ways Chatterjee was building upon Guha’s initial manifesto to the project by raising important empirical concerns about the changing nature of both elite and subaltern politics during “high” nationalism, but also pointing to alternate methods now necessary to understanding subalternity.⁴⁴

The articulation of Subaltern Studies as a postcolonial project, first expressed by Edward Said in his “Foreward” to *Selected Subaltern Studies*, marked yet another internal shift.⁴⁵ Subaltern Studies was not longer considered only an “intervention in South Asian historiography”, but developed into, as argued by Gyan Prakash, a “vigorous postcolonial critique”.⁴⁶ What this meant specifically was an acknowledgement of the repudiation of the search for a structure of political consciousness that explained the nature of the subaltern condition, and an acceptance that the turn to an analysis of discourses would provide a “re-formulation” of the idea of subalternity as an “effect of discursive systems”.⁴⁷ The subaltern was not an autonomous subject outside the domain of elites, as initially proposed at the start of the project, but was now understood as constructed by dominant discourses produced by elites. For Prakash, this did not mean that subalterns altogether “disappear into the [labyrinth] of discourse but appear in its interstices”.⁴⁸ In fact, according to Prakash, even at the onset of the project, the subaltern was always located in this liminal space within the text—the historical text, the archival text, the colonial official’s text. Peasant rebels, for example, not only resisted the structures of power and domination through modes of violence, such as arson or looting, but they put pressure on discursive systems. It was explained that this pressure not only led to the subjugation of subalterns through force and coercion, but

it was also responsible for the “fragmentation of the record of subalternity”.⁴⁹ Prakash argued that it was the textual representation of a “fragmented” and “discontinuous” subalternity that demanded a strategic shift within Subaltern Studies which could analyze and interpret “the emergence and displacement of subaltern agency in dominant discourses”.⁵⁰

The articulation of Subaltern Studies as a postcolonial project also involved the “re-thinking” and “re-working” of forms of knowledge linked to colonialism and western domination. What was at stake was challenging and resisting the meta-narratives that placed Europe at the center of history making and history writing. It was argued that inscribed within nationalist and Marxist histories of India was the “persistence of colonialist knowledge”.⁵¹ Of course, both nationalist and Marxist writings contested colonialism—this was not in question—but what mattered was that the analyses remained Eurocentric and based on what were described as “foundational myths”—“History as the march of Man, of Reason, Progress, Modes-of-Production”.⁵² For Dipesh Chakrabarty, for example, the problem confronting the Subalternists and other scholars of non-Western, third-world histories was that their histories reflected positions of subalternity in relation to the normative history of Europe.⁵³ (The “Europe” in question was an imagined Europe, a hyper-real Europe which had come to represent the universal ideals of all “History”.) It was the “history” that was produced as a discourse in which Europe remained the central referent—explicitly or implicitly—which had assumed a dominant presence of all historical knowledge. The question of how this knowledge was to be “provincialized” became a central problematic within Subaltern Studies.⁵⁴ This was an epistemological, if not ontological, issue that was raised, with the acknowledgement that perhaps there was no resolution: after all, how could the idea of “Europe” be made provincial in the postcolonial scholar’s mind once its existence as a dominant discourse was already known?

The internal changes within the project had become pronounced. The convergence of Subaltern Studies with postcolonial studies promoted the idea of a search for the postcolonial scholar’s self-consciousness in the writing of historical discourses, while moving away from studying structures of peasant consciousness in the making of history. Indian history as a discourse was now described as “subaltern” to the dominant discourse of history, or “Europe’s History”.⁵⁵ The Subalternists were identified as “intellectually insurrectionary”⁵⁶ scholars who provided “insurgent readings”,⁵⁷ replacing the insurgent peasants who had led insurrections. Moreover, the entire discipline of history was implicated as part of a dominant discourse anchored in “Europe”. In effect, there was no possible escape within the discipline of history. Even the early phase of Subaltern Studies was scrutinized to show how the Subalternists themselves had adopted the normative ideas of “Europe” within their own writings on the subaltern classes in colonial India. What remained possible for Subaltern Studies, Prakash concluded, was the opportunity provided by a postcolonial critique—“a critique of discourses author-

ized by Western domination”.⁵⁸

Marx’s own understanding of historical materialism was now questioned within the framework of a postcolonial critique. Marx’s writings were situated within a framework of “Eurocentrism” and “Orientalism” due to his articulation that India had a “changeless past”—a past he claimed which had no history, that is, until British colonization brought India into “History”. It was argued that central to Marx’s ideas was a belief that all histories could be known through the universal category of “capital”. Chakrabarty explains: “All past histories are now to be known (theoretically, that is) from the vantage point of this category, that is in terms of their differences from it”.⁵⁹ Since India’s introduction to the logic of capitalism (and therefore History) was late, if not delayed, it would necessarily be “less-than” or inferior to the universalized definition of capitalist development (and History): that is, the capitalism (and the History) of “Europe”. Further, it was argued that within the historical discourses produced by Marx or his followers was a belief that discussions of global capitalist development and History were synonymous, especially in the narratives around modes-of-production. India would never be able to live up to the universal category of capital, as its development would always remain incomplete, especially in comparison with “Europe”. In addition, its history would necessarily reflect that only through colonialism did India come to understand History and capitalism. But Chakrabarty had an alternate proposal that required an understanding of the heterogeneity and historical differences within the universal ideals. He states: “[This] allows us to make room, in Marx’s own analytic of capital, for the politics of human belonging and diversity. It gives us a ground on which to situate our thoughts about the multiple ways of being human and their relationship to the global logic of capital”.⁶⁰ This did not mean abandoning the universal ideals (which was an impossibility), but rather arguing that there were a plurality of ways in which human beings related to capital. Chakrabarty’s turn towards affective histories, influenced by Heideggerian life-worlds, provided one method away from analytical histories situated within a Marxian framework, while simultaneously challenging the universal ideals. It was the disruption of the meta-narrative of capital that was of primary importance here, which was achieved by arguing for the historical differences within the universal concept of capital. For Chakrabarty, this critique provided new opportunities to rethink and reformulate a past that understood the universal category of capital, while simultaneously searching for new possibilities that exemplified differences within a normative understanding of capital.

For Prakash, the purpose of such an intervention was not to abandon Marxism altogether, but to “extricate class analysis from its nineteenth century heritage, acknowledging that its critique of capitalism was both enabled and disabled by its historicity as a European discourse”.⁶¹ India’s past was not a European past; in fact, India’s past was not even an “Indian” past: it was a past that simply could not be reduced within any analytic which magnified its deficiency within

History, nor could it be classified within an analytic which amounted to a form of “homogenization of irreducible difference”.⁶² It was argued that class-based analysis provided categories from the dominant discourse of History and reflected that India’s classes would never match up to their European counterparts. In addition, class-based analysis had the potential to reduce differences within society leading to discourses in which caste, gender, religion, and ethnicity were subsumed within class. The question of how one could write a class-based analysis within a postcolonial framework remained unanswered. Meta-narratives were subject to further disruptions as part of the postcolonial turn within Subaltern Studies. The future of the project’s relationship with historical materialism remained ambiguous at best.

Late Subaltern Studies: Marking New Terrains

Nearly every volume of the series following *Subaltern Studies IV* included analyses of gender and sexuality; in fact, the essays in *Subaltern Studies IX* and *XI* were primarily devoted to understanding the relationship between gender and the subaltern condition. Thematically, the essays were no longer just about subalternity in India and included analyses on related themes in Southern Africa, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Fiji and Ireland. The essays in the series expanded their temporal coverage beyond colonial India to address contemporary concerns. Stream-of-consciousness poetry, literary analysis, anthropology, political theory, and feminist theory all became central to the project, which had long been focused on history writing. As David Hardiman had noted, the Subaltern Studies collective maintained that “the lack of any clear “subaltern theory” was a strength rather than a weakness”.⁶³ For others, like Prakash, the idea of not having to choose between historical materialism and post-structuralism was a positive attribute of the project.⁶⁴ On the whole, the members of the collective resisted the idea of issuing another manifesto to formally note the shifts within later Subaltern Studies or map a terrain for future enquiry.

Guha’s own later contributions to the project reflected the internal shift as well, especially in his writings on the existence of a woman’s domain within subaltern patriarchy.⁶⁵ More generally, Guha had advocated that those interested in questions of subalternity should alter their methods of inquiry by “hearing the small voices of history” as a way to further challenge the dominant statist discourses.⁶⁶ Guha proposed turning to oral traditions as a way to write about women and their experiences in colonial and postcolonial India for the next stage of the project. He argued that by making such a methodological shift within Subaltern Studies, new opportunities for further study would immediately become apparent. Perhaps such a statement was an acknowledgement of the silences within the project and a claim for theoretical and methodological openness on subaltern themes that remained to be written. On this note, Guha argued that what was actually

needed was “the voice of a defiant subalternity committed to writing its own history”.⁶⁷

Kancha Illaih provided such an intervention in *Subaltern Studies IX*. Illaih began with a historiographical critique: “Mainstream historiography has done nothing to incorporate the Dalitbahujan perspective in the writing of Indian history: *Subaltern Studies* is no exception to this”.⁶⁸ Illaih noted the failure of the Subaltern Studies project to actively engage in the political and cultural concerns of Dalits—literally meaning oppressed—or the former “untouchables” in Indian society. For a project concerned with understand subordination in Indian society, the omission of the ways in which caste power functioned to alienate Dalits was enormous. This is not to say that questions of caste were not addressed throughout the pages of the series, but for Illaih it was the absence of any analysis on Dalits specifically which was a fundamental problem. He argued that this was not surprising considering that all traditions of history writing in India had neglected to include Dalits as subjects of history. Illaih’s resolution was to issue a call for fellow Dalits to write their own history: “our history is a book of blank pages to fill with whatever letters—language—we wish to write...as we would wish to write”.⁶⁹ For Illaih this meant constructing narratives which highlighted the “productive labor” of Dalits in the making of Indian society over a period of three millennia. Illaih located the caste oppression confronting Dalits as part of the larger processes of discrimination that existed on an international scale and were based on race, class and gender. Yet, Illaih’s was not a project locating the labor question within a Marxian analysis or any materialist framework. Although Illaih had established a connection between caste and class, his primary concern in discussing oppression was to argue that Dalits, like black Africans, had historically faced racial discrimination by white, upper-caste, racist elites.⁷⁰ Illaih took a combative positioning in writing that Dalit consciousness and identity had been formed by racial oppression, which took the guise of caste discrimination. Class analysis was certainly mentioned in Illaih’s argument, but it did not occupy a central role in explaining Dalit subordination or the subaltern condition. However, the introduction of Illaih’s “Dalitbahujan alternative” as a theory of race offered a new direction to conceptualizing a critical subalternity.

To the credit of the Subaltern Studies project, discussion and debate on the ways in which the category of the subaltern was defined was welcomed; in fact, such dialogue was central to the idea of a critical theory of subalternity. There was no official consensus on the issue and individual Subalternists maintained divergent positions within the project. The internal plurality was encouraged and celebrated. For example, Guha’s later writings within the series continued to identify the “subaltern” as subordinated and marginalized within Indian society—the peasant woman, the aboriginal, the rural poor—in consonance with his original conceptualization of the subaltern condition. As noted earlier, others within the project had expanded and reformulated the category for empirical, theoretical, and

methodological reasons. There is no denying that the Subalternists were open to accepting public scrutiny and trenchant criticism, especially when it came to the silences in the construction of their own histories, narratives, and theories to understanding the subaltern condition. The internal critiques about the lacunae in the project have consistently led to fundamental rethinking within Subaltern Studies, whether that concerns gender, race or religion. *Subaltern Studies XII*, the latest volume in the series published in 2005, has focused on the analyses of Dalits and Muslims as part of the subaltern condition—a first for the series.⁷¹

Yet, what remains unresolved within the project is the relationship between Subaltern Studies and the discipline of history, and by extension the place of historical materialism. Some scholars within the project would offer that there need not be any resolution at this point. Some might argue that all histories should be understood as some derivative of History; the origin of the discipline is not only Eurocentric, but it is linked to the discursive aspects of colonial power. Subaltern Studies as a historiographical project has long ended; it is now a postcolonial project that has moved beyond the discipline of history. Others might even propose that history can remain within an ambivalent liminal space within the project. Yet, in the midst of these debates, Shahid Amin exemplified the necessity of writing history as part of the Subaltern Studies project.⁷² The reception of Amin's *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992* has largely celebrated the book as a postcolonial critique of the discipline of history, however, I would argue that the work is first and foremost situated within the discipline of history.⁷³ By Amin's own admission, he is engaged in a project in which history remains at the center, not at the periphery. It is not a denunciation of the discipline of history, as argued by many postcolonial scholars. In fact, it can be argued that the book is a defense of history within Subaltern Studies that is informed by a wide-range of debates around the question of where to locate the discipline of history within Subaltern Studies. Amin's commitment to writing history should not be lost because he is able to dismantle meta-narratives of nationalist historiography by tracing a multiplicity of narratives about the events surrounding Chauri Chaura over the twentieth century. Nor should it be viewed only as a work of deconstruction or discourse analysis.⁷⁴ My purpose of raising Amin's work here is to suggest that there are many possibilities within the discipline of history, and Subaltern Studies more generally, that are simply lost when what is argued is that all histories are really derivative of History. Or that all that remains is within the Subaltern Studies project is to establish further postcolonial critiques of Western discourses.⁷⁵ Certainly this is not the case.

Yet, despite such possibilities, the polemic against the discipline of history has continued, as demonstrated in the "Preface" of *Subaltern Studies X*. The following statement is quoted at length to illustrate this point:

This volume represents Subaltern Studies' longstanding commitment to

highlight subaltern themes in South-Asian history. In recent years, this has meant not only publishing articles on historical practices of subaltern groups, but also pressing our inquiries into subalternity beyond conventional boundaries. Thus, we have expanded our critical focus to include elite texts and practices, our interests have ranged beyond the discipline of history, and we have tackled issues of contemporary politics and politics of knowledge. These moves have not pleased our critics who wish to place the subaltern firmly within a clearly-defined domain. They look unkindly at our audacity to subject elite practices to critical scrutiny, and object to our straying beyond the strictly defined disciplinary practices of history. On our part, however, we have always conceived the presence and pressure of subalternity to extend beyond subaltern groups; nothing—not elite practices, state policies, academic disciplines, literary texts, archival sources, language—was exempt from effects of subalternity. In keeping with this conception, recent volumes have sought to expand our inquiry, exploring new directions and tackling fresh issues.⁷⁶

Earlier critiques about the discipline of history by Subalternists were made independently of the series, but now this was an official declaration. On the one hand, the project had come full circle. Elite writings, elite discourses, and elite practices which had come under great scrutiny when Subaltern Studies was conceptualized were now declared as part of the understanding of subalternity itself. On the other hand, it could be argued that the statement marked the formal end of Subaltern Studies as a historiographical project. Although internal discussions about the limits of history writing were evident very early on in the project, a disciplinary plurality was always central to the project's inquiry of the subaltern condition. The situation within the project had fundamentally shifted—to use the Subalternists own words—“beyond conventional boundaries”, “beyond the discipline of history”.⁷⁷ It was a clear indication that most of the contributors to the series were no longer interested in writing Marxist histories or any type of history. Of course, there is no reason to expect that over a period of three decades, the scholarship would continue to be situated in a particular set of debates. The longevity of the project can be explained, in part, by its ability to expand its own theoretical and methodological approaches to the understanding of subalternity, but clearly no longer within a Gramscian or Marxist framework. Yet, in recent years the project has also reached an intellectual impasse leading some within Subaltern Studies question its future. It remains to be seen where the project will go next.

The Future of Class Analysis within Subaltern Studies

Does this mean that a class-based analysis will no longer figure as essential to a

critical theory of subalternity within Subaltern Studies? The answer is probably yes. However, there are still traces within the scholarship that suggest new directions and possibilities for further class analysis. Spivak and Chatterjee, in their own respective approaches—deconstructive, post-structuralist, post-Marxist or otherwise—have called attention to another major silence in the project concerning a Subalternist critique of the impact of twenty-first century forms of imperialism and globalization on the subaltern classes.⁷⁸ Furthermore, in the post-9/11 era, like all historical eras, it is the marginalized, the subordinate, and the poor who are bearing the burdens of history. Certainly some will argue that such inquiries into the subaltern condition can best be dealt with by examining the contributions of elites and their discourses. Others will point out that the hegemony of nationalism and capitalism make it impossible to now write about subaltern subjects. But the political exigency of today demands the necessity for a return to a class-based analysis for understanding of the impact of a new mode of power associated with late-capitalism, and the historical contributions of the people—men and women—who continue to demand for a better world. Let me be clear: I am not proposing a return to an early Subaltern Studies, but to rethinking what possibilities remain within the non-deterministic traditions of historical materialism in the writing of subaltern histories. Perhaps the time has now come to fill this crucial void, if not by those scholars who find the postcolonial critique antithetical to class-analysis, then by those committed to constructing a critical theory of subalternity within historical materialism.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this article was published in German as 'Eine kritische Theorie der Subalternität: Überlegungen zur Verwendung des Klassenbegriffs in der indischen Geschichtsschreibung', in *WerkstattGeschichte* 41 (2006), 5-23. I thank Marc Buggeln, Geoff Eley, Tom Mertes, Hans Medick, Robert Moeller, Bina Parekh and Vijay Prasad for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article. I appreciate the extensive comments given by the two anonymous reviewers of *Left History*. Special thanks to the editorial board of *WerkstattGeschichte* for granting me permission to publish this article in English.
2. See Vinayak Chaturvedi, "Introduction," *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London: Verso, 2000), vii-xix, for a discussion on the origins of the project. (Hereafter, *MSSP*) Also, see Ranajit Guha, "Introduction," *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), ix-xxii; Dipesh Chakrabarty, "A Small History of Subaltern Studies," *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3-19; David Ludden, ed., *Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical History, Contested Meaning and the Globalization of South Asia* (London: Anthem, 2002).
3. Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," in Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3. (Hereafter, *Subaltern Studies* will be identified as *SS* followed by the volume number.)
4. *Ibid.* (Italics in original.)

5. Ibid., 4.
6. Guha, "Preface," in *SS I*, vii. The collective expanded to include Dipesh Chakrabarty and Gautam Bhadra in 1983; Sumit Sarkar in 1984; and Sudipta Kaviraj, Shail Mayaram, M.S.S Pandian, Gyan Prakash, Ajay Skaria, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Susie Tharu in 1996. Sumit Sarkar was the only member of the collective who left the project by 1994.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. See David Arnold, "Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 11, no. 4 (1984), 155-177.
10. Guha cites Gramsci in the "Preface", *SS I*, vii. For the original reference, see Antonio Gramsci, "History of the Subaltern Classes: Methodological Criteria," in Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds. and trans., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 55.
11. Guha, "Historiography," *SS I*, 4. (Italics in original.)
12. Guha, "A note on the terms 'elite', 'people', 'subaltern', etc.," *SS I*, 8.
13. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford, 1983).
14. It is worth noting that specific authors and texts within the Indian Marxist tradition were never identified within Guha's critique.
15. A substantial critical literature on Subaltern Studies quickly developed in India questioning Guha's interpretations of nationalist historiography and the methodological shift of turning towards a critical subalternity away from a classical Marxist framework. The most significant discussions appeared in the pages of *Social Scientist*, a journal associated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist). For a list of articles from *Social Scientist*, see Chaturvedi, *MSSP*, p. xvii, fn. 35. Further critiques appeared in numerous journals in North America, Europe, and Australia. However, for the purposes of this paper, it should be pointed out that there was little consensus by scholars critical of the project whether the contributors to Subaltern Studies were actually committed to a class-based analysis considering the varied theories and methods that were taken up, or if the project was even compatible with traditions of historical materialism in light of the shift towards cultural analysis. The reviews, essays, articles, and books that have been written on the subject over the past three decades are too numerous to list here. The following are select critiques of Subaltern Studies and are included here for illustrative purposes only; in no way do these represent a complete range of interpretations on Subaltern Studies: C.A. Bayly, "Rallying Around the Subaltern," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 16, no. 1 (1988): 110-120; Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, "The Making of the Working Class: E.P. Thompson and Indian History," *History Workshop Journal*, 42 (1997): 177-196; Fredrick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking African History," *American Historical Review*, 99, no. 5 (1994): 1516-1545; Florencia Mallon, "The Promise and Dilemmas of Subaltern Studies," *American Historical Review*, 99, no. 5 (1994): 1491-1515; Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and the Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia," *Modern Asian Studies*, 22, no. 1 (1988): 189-224; Sumit Sarkar, "The Decline in the Subaltern in *Subaltern Studies*," in *Writing Social History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996): 82-108. For readings published between 1982-1999, see "Select Bibliography," *MSSP*, 341-349.
16. David Hardiman, "The Indian Faction: A Political Theory Examined," in Guha, ed., *SS I*, 198-232; David Hardiman, *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat: Khabda District, 1917-1934* (Delhi:

Oxford University Press, 1981).

17. See Eric R. Wolf, "On Peasant Rebellions", in Theodor Shanin, ed., *Peasants and Peasant Societies: Selected Readings* (London: Blackwell, 1971), 264-74; Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971).

18. Partha Chatterjee, "More on Modes of Power and the Peasantry," in Ranajit Guha, ed., *SS II* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 311-349. Also, see Partha Chatterjee, "Agrarian Relations and Communalism in Bengal, 1926-1935," Guha, ed., *SS I*, 9-38.

19. See T.H. Aston and C.H.E. Philipin, *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), especially Robert Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe," 10-63.

20. Robert Brenner, "Dobb on the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 2, no. 2 (1978): 129. Also cited in Chatterjee, "More on Modes," 313.

21. Chatterjee, "More on Modes," 315.

22. Chatterjee provides these comments in a later version of "More on Modes," in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 352.

23. For a further interpretation of Foucault's ideas in Subaltern Studies, see David Arnold, "Touching the Body: Perspectives on the Indian Plague, 1896-1900," in Ranajit Guha, ed., *SS V* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 55-90.

24. Chatterjee, "Modes of Power," 348.

25. Guha, "Historiography," 6.

26. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

27. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Conditions for Knowledge of Working-Class Conditions: Employers, Government and the Jute Workers of Calcutta, 1890-1940," in Guha, ed., *SS II* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 259-310; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890-1940* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

28. Chakrabarty, *Rethinking*, xii.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Chakrabarty, "Conditions," 264-65.

31. Ranajit Guha, "Preface," in Ranajit Guha, ed., *SS IV* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), vii.

32. *Ibid.*

33. See David Hardiman, "Subaltern Studies at Crossroads," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21, no. 7 (1986): 288-90; Partha Chatterjee, "In conversation with Anuradha Dingwaney Needham," *Interventions*, 1, no. 3 (1999): 413-25; Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Marx after Marxism: A Subaltern Historian's Perspective," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28, no. 22 (1993): 1094-6.

34. Chatterjee, "In conversation," 416. Also cited in Chaturvedi, *MSSP*, xi.

35. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," Ranajit Guha, ed., *SS IV* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 332.

36. *Ibid.*, 336.

37. *Ibid.*, 336-37.

38. In addition to the contribution to *SS IV*, Spivak further addressed these concerns in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London: MacMillan, 1988), 3-32.

39. Spivak, "Deconstructing," 356.
40. Ibid., 360.
41. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 13.
42. Ibid., 12-13.
43. Ibid., 13.
44. For further discussion of Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its Fragments*, see Vinayak Chaturvedi, *Peasant Pasts: History and Memory in Western India* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2007).
45. Edward Said, "Foreward," in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ranajit Guha, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), v.
46. Gyan Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism," *American Historical Review*, 99, no. 5 (1994): 1476.
47. Ibid., 1480.
48. Ibid., 1482.
49. Ibid., 1483.
50. Ibid.
51. Gyan Prakash, "Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography," *Social Text*, 31/32 (1992), 9.
52. Ibid., 11.
53. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" *Representations*, 37 (1992): 1-26.
54. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
55. Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality," 1.
56. Said, "Forward," v.
57. Gyan Prakash, "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32, no. 2 (1990): 400.
58. Prakash, "Subaltern Studies," 1490.
59. Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality," 3.
60. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 67.
61. Prakash, "Postcolonial," 15.
62. Ibid.
63. Hardiman, "Subaltern Studies at Crossroads," 290. Also cited in Chaturvedi, *MSSP*, xi.
64. See Prakash, "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories", 383-408; Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook, "After Orientalism: Culture, Criticism and Politics in the Third World," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34, no. 1 (1992): 141-167; Gyan Prakash, "Can the Subaltern Ride? A Reply to O'Hanlon and Washbrook," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34, no. 1 (1992): 168-84.
65. Spivak articulates this point in the revised version of "Deconstructing Historiography," *Selected Subaltern Studies*, 26, fn. 25. See Ranajit Guha, "Chandra's Death," in Ranajit Guha, ed., *SS V* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 135-165.
66. Ranajit Guha, "The Small Voice of History," Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds., *SS IX* (Delhi, 1996), 1-12.
67. Ibid., 12.
68. Kancha Illaiah, "Productive Labour, Consciousness and History: The Dalitbahujan Alternative," *SS IX*, 165-200. Also, see Illaiah's *Why I am not a Hindu: A critique of Sudra*

Philosophy (Calcutta: Samya, 1996).

69. Illaih, "Productive Labour," 166.

70. *Ibid.*, 169.

71. Shail Mayaram, M.S.S. Pandian and Ajay Skaria, eds., *SS XII: Muslims, Dalits, and the Fabrications of History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

72. See Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1996). Of course, others attached to the project continue to write histories as well.

73. See Amin's "Prologue," in *Event, Metaphor, Memory*. The following terms appear twenty times within a span of six pages: history, historical writing, and historical fieldwork.

74. A large group of peasants burned down a police station and killed several policemen in the north Indian town of Chauri Chaura on 4 February 1922 at the height of the Non-cooperation Movement led by M.K. Gandhi. The peasants claimed that they committed these acts of violence for Gandhi. However, upon learning about the events in Chauri Chaura, Gandhi cancelled all nationalist activities for a period of time claiming that peasants did not have an understanding about his message.

75. For further critiques on these lines, see Sarkar, "Decline of the Subaltern"; Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (1994): 328-356; Aijaz Ahmad, "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality," *Race & Class*, 36, no. 3 (1995): 1-20.

76. "Preface," in Gautam Bhadra, Gyan Prakash, and Susie Tharu, eds., *SS X* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), v.

77. *SS X* was the last volume in the series to have *Writings on South Asian History and Society* as a subtitle. (Of course, *SS VIII* was dedicated to Ranajit Guha and its subtitle was *Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha*.)

78. Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The New Subaltern: A silent interview," in *MSSP*, 324-40.

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