



Catherine Pickett. *Bibliography of the East India Company: Books, Pamphlets and Other Material Printed Between 1600 and 1785*

Catherine Pickett. *Bibliography of the East India Company: Books, Pamphlets and Other Material Printed Between 1600 and 1785*. London: The British Library, 2011. xvi, 304 p. ISBN 9780712358446. £50.00 (hardback).

The product of several decades of painstaking research, this magnificent bibliography contains details of over 1500 printed works relating to the East India Company, between its formation in 1600 and 1785, when the passing of Pitt's India Act (1784) bought the organisation more firmly under Parliamentary control. This comprehensive, detailed and informative collection is of immense value, both as a reference tool and as an important scholarly work in its own right, and is sure to prove a boon to those whose research and teaching interests pertain to commercial and colonial expansion in India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The works included range from narratives of the East India Company's first voyages in the early seventeenth century, to the public, political and commercial interventions regarding the nature, role and future of the Company that characterised debates over the "India Question" in the late eighteenth century. Key developments in the intervening decades are charted through official and unofficial publications, some printed at the behest of the Company itself, others produced independently by its supporters and detractors alike.

Types of material inventoried include official publications, parliamentary debates, speeches at East India House, travel narratives, histories, books, pamphlets, tracts and petitions — indeed the only major type of printed material omitted are articles, letters and editorials in newspapers and periodicals. These, though important, are simply too voluminous to be included in a work of this kind. The works included have been penned by Company officials, "old India hands," independent merchants, and social commentators in Britain and India. It is an Anglo-centric view of the Company, enumerating works written primarily by Britons, and mostly in English. Indeed, as Pickett herself acknowledges, there is a relative "paucity of material relating directly to India" (viii), because the focus of many of the writers included was on the impact of the East India Company's activities at home, rather than on conditions on the subcontinent. That said, those interested in early colonial India will still find plenty to get their teeth into in its coverage of topics ranging from the East India Company's treatment of local Indian rulers, to its trade monopolies and interests, to its administration of justice and the governance of the three Presidencies. Key moments in the story of the East India Company's transition from commercial enterprise to territorial power, such as the Black Hole



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of Calcutta or the Anglo-Mysore Wars, are recorded, but so too are the less sensational but equally important developments in colonial knowledge and strategies of rule epitomised by the mapping of the subcontinent, or the acquisition of “oriental” languages.

Each entry contains publication details, a brief description of contents and, where appropriate, some editorial explanation. The reader is guided through the bibliographic entries, arranged chronologically, by concise and helpful commentary that contextualises the information provided by offering an overview of the important events and key developments of the relevant year. As Hugh Bowen points out in his preface, the arrangement and presentation of the material elevates the work above a “functional finding aid” (vi) and enables scholars to use it to “analyse the changing nature of the East India Company as well as the alterations that occurred to its position in English/British public life” (vi). In all then, this extensive compilation represents both an impressive work of scholarship, a treasure trove for the serious researcher and a key reference tool for those interested in the East India Company and its relationship to both Britain and India more generally.

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