'Opinion' and 'Violence':
Whiteness, Empire and State-Formation in Colonial India

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Joseph Sramek. 2011. *Gender, Morality, and Race in Company India*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 266 pp., ISBN: 9780230116931, £ 64.00.

Elizabeth Kolsky. 2010. *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 266 pp., ISBN: 9781107404137, € 39,99.

Fischer-Tiné, Harald. 2009. *Low and Licentious Europeans: Race, Class and White Subalternity in Colonial India*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 437 pp., ISBN: 9788125037019, € 51,95.

Satoshi Mizutani. 2011. *The Meaning of White: Race, Class, and the 'Domiciled Community' in British India 1858-1930*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 256 pp., ISBN: 9780199697700, £ 60.00.

Introduction

In my previous essay on debates surrounding the theme of continuity and change in Indian historiography on the eighteenth-century transition to colonialism – that appeared in an earlier volume of this journal – we closely followed the recent interventions made in the field of the ideological premises of colonial rule and the ways they influenced (or not) the administrative functioning of the (East India) Company state (Sinha 2012: 416-40). This essay, which is of the nature of critical engagement with another set of recent writings, takes up two important themes related to this field. First, it looks at British opinion (largely about themselves) and, second, at violence. It does so through the lens of white community in British India. Both themes are

crucial for understanding the processes of colonial state-formation and the ways in which the fissures that often laid within the moral, material and cultural world of the 'whites' in India were cemented, or at least, tried to be.

Both themes are explored through a close analysis of two recent monographs – Joseph Sramek's *Gender, Morality, and Race* (Sramek 2011) and Elizabeth Kolsky's *Colonial Justice in British India* (Kolsky 2010) – dealing with opinion and violence respectively. In the last few years some other seminal contributions have come out that posit a fundamental question to the nature of colonial power when seen through the prism of its heterogeneous white community. Therefore, the essay starts with a historiographical engagement with the theme, the scope and strengths of these new works, and their limitations.

The invocation of the phrase 'continuity and change' in academic writing on the colonial period of Indian history is instantly taken to mean one of the following: either the continuity of ideologies, institutions and practices from the immediate pre-colonial period into the colonial or to the continuity of the latter albeit almost two hundred years later with the handing off of the baton of rule from colonial to national governments of India and Pakistan in 1947. In both cases, the framework of continuity and change is used to explore what happened in the temporal zones of 'transition', first in the 1760s from the 'native' to the British, and second in the 1940s, from the British back to the natives. Seen in this way, this very framework is reduced to juxtaposing the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised.

Most of the works that promise to revisit the historiography of early colonial rule, especially of administrative ideologies and governance tread along a few highly interesting but conventional themes. The period of Warren Hastings' administrative experiments, the 1770 famine, revenue systems, trade monopolies and its abuses, the 'new constitution' of Cornwallis, the Permanent Settlement, and Sati are some of the usual suspects. For long, economic and cultural accounts of British colonialism in India around these themes are organised along the juxtaposition between the coloniser and the colonised.

A long glance at some of the major debates around the themes of imperialism, nationalism and later on subalternism (between 1960s and 80s), however, rather oddly suggests that under different ideological strokes, the category of the colonised was often dis-aggregated in historiography to make sense of the colonial history. Indian 'compradors and collaborators' of the 'Cambridge school' did not

go down too well with the Marxist modes of history writing (not to mention the Marxist-nationalist umbrage) but the latter had their own dogmatic category of either the class or the undifferentiated nation. The new radical wave of subalternism re-arranged the chessboard of colonised Indian society into privileged elites and dispossessed sub-alterns, quite literally into blocks or 'domains'.

Much of this disaggregation, however, should not be confused with the questioning of the juxtaposition itself; this started happening increasingly from mid-nineties onwards. A rather 'perverse' outcome of the Saidian framework of literary analysis for Indian colonial history was the realisation of the instability of social and racial identities.[1] This meant that the fixity of racialised premises of the identities of the coloniser and colonised came under scanner (Ann Laura Stoler's 1989 essay can now be regarded as ground-shifting, cf. Stoler 1989). Subsequently, the edited volume of Ann Stoler and Fredrick Cooper, *Tensions of Empire* (Stoler & Cooper 1997) attained a canonical status. Homi Bhabha's essay on mimicry included in this collection but independently appearing before that can also be seen as a catalyst (Bhabha 1994). Stoler's profound impact through her various writings are generously acknowledged by authors of two recent monographs on whiteness and poor whites, Harald Fischer-Tiné, "Low and Licentious" (Fischer-Tiné 2009: 12-3) and Satoshi Mizutani, *The Meaning of White* (Mizutani 2011: 3-7).

With great merit, the exploration of tension and anxiety within the asymmetrical power relationship between the coloniser and the colonised was suggested to be done by treating the metropole and the colony as part of the "single analytic field" (Stoler & Cooper 1997: 4). This new approach manifested itself in production of rich and textured accounts of colonial encounters that redefined the study of imperialism and colonialism and laid grounds for the emergence of, what we may now call, a sub-discipline of 'new imperial history'. Cultural and literary studies dominated over economic. The unstable identities of the coloniser and the colonised were studied in great detail through literary productions of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Studies based on travel literature are of special significance here. Two highly influential works on this theme are Mary Louise Pratt (1992) *Imperial Eyes* and Nigel Leask (1992) *British Romantic Writers and the East*. In the field of Indian colonial literary analysis, an opaque but influential writing from this period is Sara Suleri's (1992) *The Rhetoric of English India*.

As it appears to the present reviewer, this framework was then subsequently deployed in unravelling the more immediate colonial situation in India, wherein anxiety informed the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised even in the quotidian practices of administration. Jon Wilson's *Domination by Strangers* is a recent example of this in which anxiety plays an important role in fostering an indifferent attitude in colonial rulers (Wilson 2008). Anxiety both emotively and institutionally structured relationships: one, at the inter-racial relationship between Europeans or – to be more precise – British and the natives, and two, the intra-racial relationship, that is, within the white British society in India. Anxiety pervaded both normative moral and administrative attributes of colonial governance. Amongst others, money, women, racial prestige, class and domesticity were some of the aspects that created a lot of anxiety amongst Britons and between them and natives, and our historiography has just begun to move into exploring the contours of some of them. (cf. Ghosh 2006; Peter Robb's three recent monographs using the diaries of Richard Blechynden is a great addition to this strand of research on early colonialism). It is important here to flag up the point that the focus on anxiety does not mean the absence of brutality or violence; on contrary, most of the works covered in this essay point to the presence of overt violence.

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By making the boundary between the metropolis and the colony unmarked, moving and shifting, one great success this scholarship has achieved is in raising a fundamental question on the motive of colonialism. To borrow words from a reviewer of the Stoler and Cooper volume, the approach made "unclear who the target populations of colonialism were" (Genova 1999: 154). This may seem overdrawn considering Said's forceful words that structures of anxiety and suspicion and narcissism do not take away the fundamental point that whiteness commands a kind of default power in the global South (Said 1998: 84). However, the implication of this framework that paralleled similar revisions in the questioning of other binaries, most importantly of the centre and periphery wherein the uni-linear transfer or diffusion of technology or ideology from the metropolis to the colony was severely challenged, was manifold. The colonial hegemony was built upon (subordinated) native agency; the different sites and institutions of administration and rule such as police, courts, army, hospitals, communication, law and not least science were locations where different ideas and practices came into a dialogue. Dialogues do not mean dilution of power – in many instances, they are sites and

facilitators through which both power is consolidated and resisted at the same time.[2]

After more than two decades now, the idea that the coloniser and the colonised don't remain frozen in time, that their boundaries spill over on to each other, and that their perceived spatial 'habitus' (the metropole and the colony respectively) are not tied in uni-directional ways, appears old and exhausted. One must, however, remember that in the South Asian case when Suleri presented a powerful critique of the established binaries under the impulse of the literary turn and colonial discourse analysis, she also laid bare a potential to prise open the category of the coloniser itself. As Vinay Lal pointed out, "debates purportedly about colonialism, about 'us' and 'them' were often masking other concerns" (Lal 1995: 255). One of these concerns was related to moral and economic conduct of the whites in the colony as tied to the process of imperial class formation within the whites. On Suleri's insistence on showing Edmund Burke as complicit as Warren Hastings in making India an object of colonisation, Lal rightly remarks that

> Burke was evidently more concerned, for example, about the effect of the ill-begotten riches of Hastings and other nabobs on English politics, the diminishing influence of the aristocracy, and the consequences of the entry of plebeians into the political life of England than he was about the political future or cultural life of India. (ibid.: 255)

The basic idea here is to underscore the point that the politics of colonialism and imperialism had multiple constituents to address, and that the colonial society of whites was not a monolithic or a homogenous entity (Arnold 1979; cf. Arnold 1979a). It remained divided along the lines of profession (civil and military), rank (covenanted and non-covenanted), prestige and occupation (public and private/official and non-official), class (gentlemanly and 'low and licentious'), gender (memsahibs and 'barrack wives'/European prostitutes) and location (presidency and mofussil). Whiteness and Europeaness were constructed and performed through the politics of race, class, gender, law and domicile. They were therefore also open to challenges and fractures. The discourse of civilising mission built upon the white man's burden towards the natives therefore had, what Fischer-Tiné has called, an internal logic, too. This internal civilising mission was directed towards "the unruly, highly mobile and often violent 'white subalterns'" (Fischer-Tiné 2009: 261).

Whiteness came to be threatened from many angles – from the 'white subalterns' association to crime to that of their domiciled status, from their practising overt violence to the creation of 'mixed race' (known as Eurasians and later as Anglo-Indians). Mizutani sums it up eloquently: "Such complex interlays of racist and class-chauvinist worldviews – both of which were simultaneously gendered – were at the very heart of the colonial construction of whiteness" (Mizutani 2011: 4-5). On the specific point of domiciliary – although it is important to underscore how the domicile status between metropolis and colony constituted the grammar of difference amongst whites along the imperial setting, which Mizutani has beautifully and convincingly explored – it is important to recognise how within the colonial space itself the spatial dichotomy between the presidency towns and mofussil stations shaped the attitudes of one white against the other.

Many writers and officials residing in India in the nineteenth century reflected on this. In a series of letters written to his wife in the 1840s, Frederick Augustus Barnard Glover of the Bengal civil establishment, ridiculed the European lifestyle of Calcutta in which, he alleged, the gentlemen talk 'shop' and the ladies 'scandal'. Referring to the ditch that was made to save Calcutta from Maratha raids, which subsequently became the *de jure* boundary between English establishment and native habitations, he called Calcuttians 'Ditchers' (Sen 2006: 545, seemingly the term was widely in use before Glover penned his letters). Glover's purpose in using this term was to make clear that he preferred mofussil life over European community in Calcutta. Rounding off his views on Calcutta, he said,

> I have now I think said all I can about Calcutta – I wish I could speak some in its praise – but I have no other feeling for it than that of Supreme disgust – and it must be a fat appointment indeed which will induce me to venture again amongst the Ditchers. (Glover: Mss Eur B 371, f 1-3)

Another observer described the social life of British community as 'melancholy gabble' in which "the rich look proud, dull and supercilious; the poor meek, dejected and obsequious" ("The Contrast; or, Opinions on India": 538). The examples could be multiplied. Mofussil indeed was the place which was described as an interior and an exile, and hence the sojourning British strangers were received by the stationed families as intimate friends but chances of bonding with friends back from home and organising an 'Eton dinner' or a

Haileybury chummery symbolised a class- and rank-defined sociability. (Very interesting anecdotes and insights on British community peppers the details given in *Life in the Mofussil* 1878).

Whiteness was a political issue, not just a cultural one, since the beginning of the colonial rule in India. The extent to which diverse groups of the white community (officials, planters, missionaries and so on) had the freedom to own land, labour and other resources, the freedom to freely preach the dissenting religion, and the freedom of press were widely discussed in the high-politics of British colonialism and imperialism. Some of them were disaffected and this disaffection was part of the political process of control the Company tried to establish over them (Marshall 1990). Planters (both of indigo and tea) were notoriously famous for their use of violence. They might not have been seen by British officialdom as men of gentlemanly propensities but since they were men of enterprise and capital, they were both patronised and disciplined by the state actors.

In contrast, the perceived role of poor whites – soldiers, sailors, pensioners, loafers, convicts, prostitutes and other such groups – and of domiciled Europeans and Eurasians (mixed-race) in demeaning the native respect which the colonial rule in its self-assessment constantly needed to maintain, was equally significant in this period. There was a progressive increase in number of this class (poor whites, domiciled, Eurasians and the white working class) from the early to late colonial period (as shown by various authors including Arnold, Fischer-Tiné and Mizutani) but as far as the attitude towards them was concerned, David Arnold has aptly summed it up: "The administration's animus towards any threatened 'influx' of poor whites remained as strong under the Crown [post-1857] as it had under the Company" (Arnold 1983: 148).

The Hastings impeachment attained the status of 'imperial scandal' and its fallouts on state-formation under the governorship of Cornwallis and Wellesley is a fairly well-known story; the many differences that existed within the white colonialists of the British empire nonetheless is a theme that was only marginally explored earlier and which has only very recently made a return into South Asian historiography. Some of the earlier writings, notably of Kenneth Ballhatchet, Peter Marshall and David Arnold, were seminal and continue to be so (Ballhatchet 1980; Marshall 1990, 1997; Arnold 1979, 1983). In particular, their writings on imperial attitudes, nature of British society, white colonisation, urban differentiation, and the

intersecting role of race, sex and class, which appeared at a time when most of their contemporaries were heavily invested in exploring the extent of native collaboration and mercantile networks that sustained colonial political economy, are laudable. They can be seen as fore-runners to many of the themes picked up by a host of current scholars whose works are dealt with in this review. For instance, Ballhatchet's engagement with the colonial state's policies on sexual excesses of and control over lower class military men or of white prostitutes threat-ening the moral boundary of white racial superiority, or Arnold's focus on paupers, vagrants and poor whites are exactly the themes (amongst others) covered by Fischer-Tiné, of course, in much greater detail (Fischer-Tiné 2009).

Incidentally, some of the themes that needed better exploration unfortunately remain only sketchily presented in this set of new accounts. Most prominently, a dense history of poor whites in the early colonial period (1760s-1850s) is still missing in spite of Arnold's comment that appeared more than thirty years ago, which suggested that the colonial rule's attitude towards these poor whites hardened at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. (Arnold 1983: 140; cf. Arnold 1979, for extensive discussion on early colonial period but mostly on orphanages. When it came to soldiers and vagrants, Arnold too concentrated on the second half of the nineteenth century).

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This temporal approach partly makes sense for certain groups such as soldiers because the Company administrators both in India and in England were of the view that those discharged from the duty should be sent back home. The hold of the Company in tightly regulating the presence of private Europeans with chances of some of them becoming vagrants started weakening from the 1830s. The institutional and legal mechanisms to deal with poor whites – the setting up of workhouses, penitentiaries, vagrancy acts – all came about from the mid-nineteenth century. Apart from demographic shift, Fischer-Tiné also identifies an ideological shift post-1857. This was in the nature of white colonialists turning from 'nabob' to 'pucca sahib' that marked a growing distance between the coloniser and the colonised, and effectively, also within colonisers (whites) (Fischer-Tiné 2009: 139-41).[3] Mizutani's reasoning is not very different; he too regards 1857 as the turning point in the course of imperial prestige that hardened along racial and class lines.[4]

Yet, we need to ask, does this mean that the poor white question was marginal in the earlier period? I suppose none of these authors

would claim so but their work is patchily silent on this. Does a numerical shift justify historical (in)attention? From the accounts we have currently at hand, it seems unjustified. The racial genesis of policies for organising relief for European/Eurasian and Indian destitute, for instance, was well marked in the early colonial period (Arnold 2008: 120-1). Kolsky's moving account of violence and tyranny perpetrated by unruly non-officials which not only comprised of 'brutal planters' but also of "European thieves, vagrants, and vagabonds [who] were a steady presence in early colonial Bengal, both in the port town of Calcutta and upcountry" reminds that in spite of numerical shift whiteness and its multi-sited construction was at the heart of the early colonial state-formation (Kolsky 2010: 52, 27-68).

The contention that the transformation from 'nabob' to 'pucca sahib' happened in the wake of the 1857 event is misleading. Recent convincing accounts have shown that distancing between the ruler and the ruled as part of the "bureaucratisation of the administrative apparatus" happened much earlier, somewhere in the decades of the 1780s and 90s (phrase taken from Fischer-Tiné 2009: 140; cf. Sinha 2012). Even for soldiers, Fischer-Tiné's own work suggests a considerable degree of contemporary administrative concern towards barrack life both in terms of violence and sexual practices (Arnold 1979: 110; cf. Fischer-Tiné 2009: 246-54). It then comes as a surprise to read him apologetically justifying the focus of his book, which is largely on the post-Mutiny period and offering the research on early colonial period as a suggestion to future researchers (to be fair to him, he does sketchily incorporate cases and examples from the earlier period; a systematic exploration is nonetheless missing) (Fischer-Tiné 2009: 376).

Mizutani's work is self-admittedly not as much on poor whites as it is on domiciled Europeans and Eurasians. This leads him to justify his focus on the post-1857 period. There is again a demographic value to this argument: the number of soldiers was on the rise; semi-skilled and skilled workers usually from working class families of northern England was a new feature, and the political nature of 'Eurasian Question' took shape in the second half of the nineteenth century (Mizutani 2011: 7, 18-9). However, the historiographical merit in focussing on the second half of the nineteenth century is less convincing in his case. Numbers aside, the 'whites going native' phenomenon which characterised the early colonial period in terms of mixed-race domesticity that in the first instance led to the creation of Eurasian community is extremely crucial to the subsequent de-

velopment of colonial attitude. By 1791, Sen contends, a whole set of measures were passed prohibiting the appointment of "miscegenated offspring" of Company servants to civil and military posts (Sen 2006: 541). The anxiety and violence that marred such domesticities and public enterprises as explored by Ghosh and Kolsky respectively do demand some effort to bridge this conventional temporal divide created by the 1857 Rebellion (Ghosh 2004, 2006; cf. Kolsky 2010).

Finally, the combined accounts of Fischer-Tiné and Mizutani (and earlier writings of Arnold) interestingly make it clear that 'white subalternity' or 'poor whiteness' was as much a *construction* arising out of the constant delineation of imperial class and race boundaries as it was a dynamic *process* based on inner mobility between groups comprising of domiciled Europeans, poor whites and Eurasians. An imaginary life-course of a low class soldier coming to India serves to show this. On his retirement or even before that, let's assume, he joined the railways as a gunner or mechanic, and perhaps due to drunkenness got dismissed, became a destitute, convict or a loafer and hence a part of the pool of 'poor white'. Alternatively, he could have got married hypothetically to a mixed-race girl, started a family, and his son, who would have remained domiciled in India, continued the generational profession of working on the same railways. (cf. Arnold 1979: 118-9, for multiple trajectories of becoming destitute by members of different professional groups within the category of poor whites).

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Seen through imaginary cases of both individual and generational life-cycles, the boundary between domiciled European and Eurasian was highly porous; it also shows that the passage between 'domiciled European and Eurasians' on the one hand and 'white subalterns' on the other was not fixed. This is also broadly Mizutani's contention as well, that is, that pauperisation and marriages between the domiciled and Eurasians broke down the rigid brackets of identities. In spite of this porous flow, the question that arises here is: what were the legal, administrative and social bases of these identities and categories, and did they come into conflict with each other? Unlike poor whites, the domiciled and Eurasians were classified under the Act of 1870 as 'Natives of India' (Mizutani 2011: 65). This is a legal category which distinguished them from poor whites in terms of not being subject to repatriation (ibid: 76). However, under the 'Warrant of Precedence' issued by the Simla government they were placed at the bottom of the European community (Mizutani 2011: 66, annoyingly he does not give the date). Did this create a conflict with their legal classification as

'natives'? Further on, the Indian census of 1921 defined (not classified) the domiciled occupying a "peculiar position in the Indian social organisation" (Mizutani 2011: 68). The 'domiciled' also at times appear to be an enumerative category to make better sense of policies that the state implemented targeting them. This social ambiguity, flexibility and peculiarity (whichever way we characterise it) stands in conflict, if not contrast, to the fixed legal identity.

The question of legal identity of Britons in late eighteenth century India was in itself, as Sen has called, vexatious (Sen 2006). Different nationalities and sub-nationalities of the British Empire made any clear demarcation difficult. Broadly, territoriality (born in the territory of the British Empire and owing allegiance to the King) and blood (descent) defined legal subjecthood. Sen is more interested in charting the history of the 'natives' – what happened to those who were at least living within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in Calcutta. However, a more pressing question requires an answer: where did the domiciles fall into this debate in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century? Were they treated as British subjects in the beginning and subsequently accorded the legal status of 'natives' or they were legally 'natives' right from the beginning? The silence on the part of Mizutani leaves us with a big blank in our understanding. Mizutani's work does not give this reviewer any idea of how the legal, administrative, enumerative and social bases of identity formation interacted with each other, and how they changed over time.

There are, however, differences also between the older set of writings and recent accounts we have been dealing with. The foremost question is what kind of whites were/are generally talked about? Some of the earlier works, which Lal's comments above are symptomatic of, showed how the figure of the 'nabob', a colonial official returning home with riches, created anxiety in the late eighteenth-century British society and politics. In the metropolitan setting, this became an issue of class – nabobs potentially threatening the aristocratic order of British society. In the imperial/colonial setting, this became a matter of administration; apart from Burke's fine rhetoric on linking ideals of governance to ideals of mankind, for the majority of contemporary observers, the issue was quotidian rather than philosophical. It related to the moral and material corruption which the Company was plagued with. Hence, the form of anxiety was administrative.

In contrast, recent works, particularly those of Fischer-Tiné and Mizutani, show how the poor whites, beggars, loafers, convicts,

prostitutes, and Eurasians of the colony were at the centre of creating a moral crater within colonialism and imperialism that ideally was programmed to abide by the elite-made rules of race and class. Here, the extent of crises that the rule felt – morally and legally – was far more complex and widespread than the narrow confines of administration. Poor whites and Eurasians were not just 'administrative' problems; they were in the heart of internally jeopardising the project of colonialism.

The second point of departure for the new scholarship, therefore, rests in its potential to signal a change in the framework of analysis. In contradistinction to Ballhatchet's work, which in the words of Thomas Metcalf provided "a fascinating glimpse of a world hardly known" but lacked methodological novelty, the new scholarship of Fischer-Tiné, Mizutani and Kolsky theoretically binds the history of a motley of marginal white to the history of colonialism and imperialism in a much integral way (Metcalf 1982: 755, one can say that his prognosis that these marginal whites should be seen as central to the conception of colonial order has come true). The multi-sited construction of whiteness (gender, class, race, law and domicile), the performance of that whiteness (through anxiety, distance-making and violence), and the constant moral, legal and administrative dilemma it created for the rule are now simply unavoidable if one wishes to understand the nature of colonialism in India and of imperialism in general.

Third, although much in these accounts is still shrouded along the older lines of analysis that studied colonial policies (most strikingly in Mizutani's work) there is, however, a glimpse of the social history of lower order of Europeans emerging in these works (most notably in Fischer-Tiné). Methodologically, these works are setting themselves apart from the overt grip of the postcolonial/postmodern turn, which in Fischer-Tiné's words have "(unwillingly) contributed to the longevity of some imperial myths" (Fischer-Tiné 2009: 371, 182-5). The South Asian history writing is reeling under the retreat of the social, and perhaps, these accounts in their modest ways can help conceptualise the social in newer ways (a dated but still valid piece is by Parthasarathi 2003).

Empire of 'opinion'

Turning to a detailed engagement with some of these works, I begin with Josef Sramek's work for three reasons. First, it temporally fills the gap outlined above; the book focuses on the period between 1765 and

1858 and argues that a lot of changes assigned to the formation of the British Raj or the Crown period (post-1857) have antecedents in the Company period. Second, although the book does not deal with 'poor whites', the way it presents anxiety, prestige and opinion-making as centrally situated in the making of colonial rule is crucial for our purposes of understanding the general nature of the rule and its ambiguous disdain towards its own racially-same but class-wise different groups and individuals. Striking is the feature that it was not only 'poor whites' that became the source of anxiety and subsequent control but also the Company officials (both civil and military). The anxieties were of the moral imperial order. To quote Sramek: "[…] imperial officials also worried about Britons' misbehaviour in India because it stood to bring into possible disrepute British colonialism's very moral legitimacy as well as threaten Indian loyalty" (Sramek 2011: 3). Third, in spite of colonialism being presented here as a system of governance and difference between the rulers and the ruled, the imperial moral dilemma and its attempted resolution does not let the work slip into the conventional account based on the coloniser-colonised juxtaposition outlined above.

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The empire in India, Sramek contends, was an "empire of opinion". Display of moral authority, racial prestige and honour were crucial, so much so that, according to the author, this created a rhetoric of which the British themselves became the victim. This claim is rather awkwardly left unexplained. In order to show that anxiety and arrogance were part of the same structure and ideology of rule, Sramek sets on to trace the "colonial beginnings" from 1600. Pushing the beginning of colonialism to that date may raise some eyebrows, but as far as the strategies that were adopted to regulate the zone of conduct are concerned, it is worth summarising his arguments (Sramek 2011: 18-20). The Company had devised three ways: first, by informally letting its officials make profit in the country trade while retaining the monopoly over the more lucrative Asian-European trade; second, by introducing the covenant system in 1674 that bound the employees to protect the Company from any future loss; and third, and in the author's view the most important, by continuing to rely on the Mughal polity thus constraining private British greed.

This overview of the pre-1757 period provides some pre-history to the imperial moral dilemma; albeit not necessarily dealing with white paupers it goes a little further into providing a *longue dureé* perspective, something Fischer-Tiné alludes to (cf. Fischer-Tiné 2009: 376). Equally important is how a legal instrument – covenant – was

used to build a network of trust through which the "private greed" of the Company officials was thought to be regulated. It was therefore not just a matter between public/official and private/non-official; the moral dilemma that engulfed imperial rule dissected the individual into his public role and private greed, the latter requiring control and reform. The covenant system remained important throughout the nineteenth century even for hiring workers employed on the railways. The legal mechanisms that developed in the course of the nineteenth century should therefore be contextualised in this changing relationship between law, trust and greed. Opinion making and prestige preservation remained important vis-á-vis natives and lower class Europeans. The self-isolatory sites of prestige preservation were housing, bungalows, clubs and hill stations; the alleged sources of degeneration were climate, miscegenation, schools, domestic servants, and alcohol. These were physical and material factors: the real issue at stake was "a blend of the imperialist politics of race and the bourgeois politics of class" (Mizutani 2011: 45, cf. 14-47).

To return to the late eighteenth century, the story of financial irony, that is, the insolvency of the Company amidst some of its top officials getting richer, and the subsequent intervention of the British parliament is too well known to be recounted here. Sramek's account, however, forces us to rethink the issues of trust and greed, a theme, which at the risk of sounding pedantic, needs closer attention from historians working on this period. The network of trust on the one hand and greed for profit on the other were not mutually opposed all through the seventeenth and much of the eighteenth century. One is left wishing to know more about the practices through which trust was ensured and enacted in this period and even later on. What role did whiteness play in building that trust – and which meaning of whiteness worked in which period? While we focus rightfully on aspects of law and other political institutions and structures to understand state-formation, aspects such as greed, trust, and friendships are currently scarcely explored. An 'enmeshed' history of encounters, intrigues, jealousies, conspiracies, confrontations, negotiations and settlements, between different economic and political powers and individuals of the time could be one way of doing this.

Unlike 1857, or even the 1820s, the decade of 1790s is now being seen as the point that sharply realigned the attitude of the colonial rulers. The administrative reforms under Cornwallis' governorship, leading amongst others to measures of control for private greed and abuse on part of the Company officials were even privately approved

of in letters exchanged between friends. Francis Skelly, lieutenant-general and later major of the 74th Highland Regiment, wrote from Calcutta to his friend in London in 1789:

> We know not here who will succeed Ld Cornwallis as Governor of India. I look towards the change with some uneasiness. I should be sorry to see his laboures [sic] destroyed by an unworthy successor – For, high as we now stand in the opinions of the Eastern powers, the command of a knave, a fool, or a madman would soon overthrow the lofty and glittering Edifice we have raised. (Skelly: part 4: 9, Mss Eur D 877)

Whiteness demanded the control of greed. Even higher officials like Skelly were in debt either to creditors in London including tailors and shoemakers or to banias and shroffs in India. His letters, for instance, are peppered with money talk, savings, wishes to be promoted to fat jobs, and not returning home without eight to ten thousand pounds. The hope of becoming rich in the east rode on the back of older networks of trust; the reformist agenda seems to have had started questioning it though. To turn to Skelly once again, in a letter written to the same friend in 1792, he said:

> My uncle trusts much in Ld. Cornwallis's power, and will, to save me – and seems to expect to hear soon of my being placed in some lucrative situation where a fortune may be acquired in a few years – but of such situations there are no more in India – nor can they, as formerly, be created – unless Lord Cornwallis should condescend to act contrary to the wholesome laws as established for the good of this country. (ibid.: 75)

These details together with Sramek's account add a layer to the meaning of whiteness explored by others. They show how the boundary of trust and dependence between the whites and natives and amongst whites was defined through regulative means which were precisely meant to make whiteness appear superior and fit for performing colonial rule. This superiority was based on cultivated and enforced social and economic distancing. In the 1760s and 1770s, the Company directors prohibited employees from lending or borrowing money to and from Indian princes (Sramek 2011: 21-2). The regulation of cultural and moral boundaries along the institution of credit that could possibly have had political spillover in terms of securing administrative influence is of great significance here. Recently, Bhavani Raman has beautifully brought this out in her study of scribal groups in the Madras presidency (Raman 2012: Ch. 1). She shows how the different arenas of culture, economy and politics were

tied to each other in the late eighteenth century, and how policing one of them meant regulating the other two.

Apart from financial corruption in connivance with natives, drunkenness and illicit sexual behaviour were seen as important breaches in moral authority. This is where, according to Sramek, the moral prestige of whiteness demanded its racialised/colonised victim (Sramek 2011: 31). In the early twentieth century British seamen were said to have become the victims of the "Wily Oriental" (Fischer-Tiné 2009: 280); more than a century ago, young English lads coming to India were thought of in the same way, that is, as being in danger of becoming victims of corrupt and depraved natives. As it often happens in history, things exactly don't roll out the way the masters (of events or narratives) choose. Administrative reforms notwithstanding, India continued to be seen as a place to make quick money. What does this popular imperial perception tell us about the "empire of opinion"? The workhouse system introduced for 'white underdogs' did not accomplish the results envisioned (Fischer-Tiné 2009: 181); the educational programme in "European schools" did not prove effective in solving the "Eurasian Question" (Mizutani 2011: 135).

Similarly, the young recruits coming to India in the early nineteenth century did not give up treating the east as a source of making quick personal gains. Robert Grenville Wallace after spending some years in India in the early nineteenth century observed that young cadets arriving in India often lived in the state of luxury and intemperance. They suffered, he alleged, from "a rage of display" (Wallace 1824: 367). The reason behind going to the colony to become rich, and that too quickly was not premised merely upon the idea of "native corruptibility". It had a much broader imperial context depending upon the ties of family and regions where these young men came from and the way empire instilled aspirations for individual gains. It was a product of mercantile antecedents of the Company. If due to strangeness and loneliness the colony was seen as an exile it was also sometimes seen as an abode of happiness, pleasure and enrichment, even if only momentarily. Can we then posit a situation wherein opinions about empire were not only multiple but contradictory?

The causal link between normative regulations of colonial and imperial morality and the everyday administrative practices were often tenuous. This is evident from Sramek's admission of "a far messier reality of Company officials who continued to engage in pecuniary

relationships with their Indian subordinates, much as British nabobs had done fifty years earlier" (Sramek 2011: 42; a little later he once again admits that British officials did not often live up to the high expectations placed on them, 50; and finally on the mismatch between colonial reality and colonial rhetoric, 63).

This fissure between intended outcomes of the policies and the actual reality is interesting for our discussion. Works on poor whites have argued that the elites of the white community created a hegemonic discourse of moral crises and adopted mechanisms to either make lower class Europeans conform to the values associated with whiteness or, if not possible, to simply hide them in workhouses and prisons (Fischer-Tiné 2009: 183). There is room for some resistance on the part of poor whites in Fischer'Tiné's thesis but I would argue that a more modified picture emerges in Mizutani's handling of the domiciled and Eurasians. In his work one sees how persistent the state and other stakeholders such as the missionaries were to include them into the mainstream through different schemes of training, agricultural resettlements, schools and charity, and emigration on a rather, if we may say so, positive than punitive level. Inclusion went hand in hand with exclusionary mechanisms (Mizutani 2011: Ch. 2-5). On an abstracted level, the question arises how to integrate the other fissure, that of elites not conforming to moral/racial prestige, into our narratives of imperial opinion making and whiteness. In these works the 'elite whites' appear to be very homogenous and if 'moral deviance' was the factor that defined whiteness then deviances of elites and subalterns need to be explored as part of the "single analytic field" (Stoler & Cooper 1997: 4; a recent attempt in this direction is Carrington 2013).

In his diary, Hawkins Francis James, a Bengal civil servant from 1827-55, struggled between many pulls and pushes; between just-ifying his liking for his home and yet enjoying being a new man; his joy for pecuniary independence in the colony as well as acquiring means to help his family back at home. It would be a little harsh to narrow down this polyphony of emotions – from subjectivity to fortune making – just to matters of opinion and management because in an interesting yet intriguing way Sramek contends that by the 1810s-20s, the misbehaviour of the British official in India was not seen as indicative of any moral vacuum but was just a public image problem (Sramek 2011: 66).

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Now, as the works of Arnold, Fischer-Tiné, Mizutani and Kolsky have shown, the moral dilemma remained a persistent problem all through colonial rule. We need to know then: did the earlier dilemma associated with both elites and subalterns of the whites now just get confined to the latter; or, parallel to natives being blamed for individual colonial excesses in the earlier period, was there a similar process of enforced and constructed social differentiation in the second half of the nineteenth century that, apart from demographic factors, made the issue of 'low Europeans' explosive? Carrington does suggest that there was often an attempt from senior ruling members to put the blame of white violence on the "lowest rung of European officialdom" (Carrington 2013: 815; 792-3, cf. Bailkin 2006: 487, Bailkin also makes such a claim in a more definite way). A similar trend also existed in the metropole where the elite violence was not perceived as a social problem (Bailkin 2006: 468).

Different white working groups came to India. Apart from planters who often created moral and legal problems, sailors and railway engine drivers were also notorious for visiting prostitutes, drunkenness, violence, and pauperism. I believe that the question of morality was never reduced to the mere problem of image management; depending on how people related to it, of course, it changed its meanings. It is here that a dialogue needs to be created between scholars working on elite and subaltern whites to locate the changing meaning of whiteness in the changing nature of this interaction. Peter Robb's view – that the misconduct by elites, either through degeneration or not, sharpened the construction of the identity of poor whites – is a valuable hint for a future line of inquiry (Robb 2013: 122).

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One final point, which serves as an entry point to the second part of this essay is the relationship between the moral virtuousness which the British claimed and strived to maintain and the physical violence they practised. The constant political intrigues and wars throughout the Indian subcontinent, in which the EIC directly participated between 1757 and 1818 and again in the 1840s, need to be situated within the contemporary understanding of morality that the English claimed to possess and display. Sramek fails to provide a conceptual framework to understand how the British claim to superior morality and their violence worked together. Hastings' line of defence during his impeachment, that a certain degree of arbitrariness was indispensable for ruling India, is a perfect example of the uncomfortable relationship between Edmund Burke's idea of higher morality and the India-based

colonial officials' desire or need to acquire what they understood as Indian practices (which included violence).

Empire of violence

Like Sramek, Elizabeth Kolsky's book *Justice in British India* (Kolsky 2010) is also on the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised but by choosing the theme of white violence she cuts open the uneasy relationship between whiteness and state institutions. The major arguments of her book are the following: first, everyday physical violence was an intrinsic feature of imperial rule; second, it was central to the working of the empire and the formation of the colonial state in India; and third, law was the most crucial force that legitimised this violence. In this regard, this book is as much about that part of the legal history of colonial India that dealt with violence and justice as about the brutal violence that marked the history of colonialism, a theme which surprisingly had not been systematically explored until Kolsky's book arrived. The vivid re-telling of different case-histories of violence (from everyday beating to rape and murder), imprisonment and acquittal reminds us that violence and its institutional accomplices were part and parcel of colonial rule. Reading Kolsky one can appreciate that the centrality of the 'image-making' exercise that colonialism dovetailed into had a very material basis to it; this was the physical violence – aided by law and race – practised in the everyday life of colonialism, and the worry that this violence produced.

It was precisely the intersection of display of whiteness and the violence committed in the public that made white violence a moral and administrative issue (Bailkin 2006: 470). It also adds to the point made above that it was not only poor whites that unnerved the empire; the violence perpetrated by non-poor whites (the non-officials or privates) equally posed itself "to the colonial authorities as serious sources of social and political unrest" (Mizutani 2011a: 206). In this sense, Kolsky's work when read together with Fischer-Tiné and Mizutani offers us to see violence, and the moral dilemma it created for whiteness (as a performative discourse) and the administrative functioning of the state, as part of the "single analytic field" cutting across the poor and non-poor whites.

In the other works discussed so far, the role of law appears in a very specific way; it appears as a part of institutional and regulative mechanisms that the colonial state devised to contain, control and hide poor whites. Fischer-Tiné's lengthy discussion of Vagrancy Acts is a

case in point. The near absence of law in Mizutani's account is disappointing (cf. Robb 2013: 123). Kolsky on the other hand reframes the legal culture of colonialism into one central analytical framework that then relates to different types of colonial encounters, either race or class based. Most importantly, violence does not appear to be an aberration but a quotidian practice. The history of the ways in which the containment of that violence worked is therefore integral to its not remaining an aberration, and hence a subversion of the rule of law by those very who claimed to establish it. There was a constant shift in the techniques of control over white violence: from a system of license in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to that of co-dification in the middle and late decades of the nineteenth century. Sometimes the containment was willingly partial because of the nexus of law, race and capital, as Kolsky reasons to be the case in Assam tea plantations. The law was willingly reluctant to redress the violence committed over coolies' bodies.

Let us use her Assam example to reflect upon the relationship between exceptionality and universality of violence and law. There is no denying that at least rhetorically the colonial state upheld the universality of law. As Douglas M. Peers in his review of Kolsky's book has pointed out, there was no tacit acceptance or approval of violence by the state. Kolsky's own work shows how the state machinery was troubled by the consequences of violence (Peers 2011: 439). However, excessive white violence remained ubiquitous. The question arises how to address and understand this anomaly? In the case of Assam, she argues that the tea plantation economy based upon immigration and penal contract system rendered it exceptional (Kolsky 2010: 148-57). In her words, Assam was marginal, the fringe of the empire, "beyond the pale of justice" and not least "a frontier zone" (ibid.: 146). Yet the choice of this 'exceptional' place to study an 'everyday' phenomenon (white violence) is puzzling. In her defence, she argues that "the problem of white violence on tea plantations offers a vivid example of how violence simultaneously menaced and maintained the empire" (ibid.: 146–7).

But if violence was a quotidian practice as forcefully argued in the beginning of the book (Kolsky 2010: 4, 10), then why present it through the logic (and at sites) of exceptionality and marginality? Penal contract system in its essence was not only practised on tea plantations. Throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth century a variety of labouring groups worked under the regulative mechanism that criminalised the 'breach of contract'. By rendering Assam and its

political economy that promoted violence exceptional, Kolsky in my view has undermined her own thesis of the centrality of violence in colonial quotidian practices. Her argument can be turned around to contend that since the space was exceptional, the political economy of a particular commodity was exceptional, and therefore the applicability of the law also needed to be exceptional (hence, more power to planters to practice violence towards coolies). In fact, her exceptionality argument precisely reverberates with what the planters were demanding from the state – unrestrained freedom to control labour.

On the face of it, Kolsky is doing something similar to what Fischer-Tiné and Mizutani have done, namely, to show that the socially marginal whites within the colonial whites, who exposed the class bias of the white ruling elites, had all the potential to threaten the stability of the colonial rule. This threat was not only because of their destitute/poor/vagrant/convict/prostitute status, which would set a wrong example of whiteness in the eyes of natives, but also crucially because be they marginal, they were also prone to commit brutal violence on the natives. There are differences though. Kolsky's planters can't be put in the same bracket as poor whites. Also, as Bailkin has perceptively pointed out, soldiers bore a distinctive relationship to officialdom and hence their bracketing with 'non officials' is highly problematic (Bailkin 2010: 910).

However, the combined strength of these works is that both the presence and the actions (violence, vagrancy, begging, prostitution etc.) of these groups had direct fallout on the legal and ideological premises of the rule. Therefore, in Kolsky's terms, they constituted the "third face of colonialism", an "in-between" group (ibid.: 5), who "blurred the purportedly neat line dividing the colonizers and colonized" (ibid.: 4). Because of this in-between status they threatened imperial stability from within.

Similar to our above discussion on exceptionality and universality, the present reviewer finds problem not in the argument about their in-between status but in the way Kolsky tries to paddle two sets of arguments to present a steady account. However, as an aside it must be said that planters and violence-perpetrating soldiers appear more as 'unruly colonisers/whites' rather than as an 'in-between group'. They are not like Mizutani's domiciled Europeans or Eurasians who had a much more ambivalent position: legally they were natives of India but racially Europeans or of (mixed) European descent. They are also not even completely like Fischer-Tiné's poor whites because planters

were seen as men of enterprise and capital and it was precisely of this nature that they became a powerful lobby to contest the ideological (and some would say rhetorical) equality embedded in colonial legal doctrines.

However, to return to the issue of violence: if actions of the marginal whites, people on fringes, in-betweens, and so on were threatening the imperial stability then why should we recognise their acts as *representative* of imperial ideology as Kolsky asks us to do? Was imperial ideology consciously self-destructive? Or, is she encouraging us to think about imperial ideology as a forked tongue, as an intrinsic dual split that tried to stabilise and destabilise itself at the same time? Her proposition that violence menaced and maintained the empire at the same time suggests the latter. I feel there is some slippage here in conflating 'imperial ideology' with 'colonial predicaments'. We can definitely 'radicalise' our notion of colonial state and ideology by arguing that the state had heterogeneous locations of power and multiple centres of resistance that did not often synchronise with each other; and the ideological premises of the state were also intrinsically fractured and contradictory. But this is apparently not what Kolsky is arguing.

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The way she is trying to reconcile exceptionality and universality with the fringe and the centre leaves us with certain questions. For instance, if the white violence was an inevitable accompaniment of the imperial form of power, and hence, by extension of colonial state-formation, what is the relationship between the *centrality* of the workings of the empire that aided violence and the *marginality* of the social groups that perpetrated such violence (to repeat, she accords them the status of "social and physical fringes of the empire")? Is it sufficient to say that violence from the margin propelled the law making machinery in the centre – and that, this is what connects centrality and marginality?

Again, if violence was the quotidian practice of colonialism then why do we need to address it through an 'in-between' group or the third face of colonialism? After all, everyday violence in terms of flogging and beating was practised even by the elite official class both in public offices and their households. The punkah wallah is a legendary figure of colonial literary and administrative archives whose primary work seems to be receiving flying boots from the sahibs than swinging the punkah rope! A boot here and a kick there to these servants were prescribed if for nothing else than just as a strategy to remind them of

their place. There were servants kept to beat other servants (Carrington 2013: 785). The issue here is that violence itself was of different types, or at least for the sake of the argument, say, of two: ordinary and exceptional. Bailkin's has raised a very pertinent set of questions on this issue which is worth repeating:

> In particular, one wonders about the relationship between the violence of the everyday and the state-sponsored forms of violence that were equally integral to colonial rule. What, precisely, was the connection (or disjunction) between ordinary and exceptional violence? Between the violence of the "wrong sort" of Europeans and the violence of the state itself? (Bailkin 2010: 910)

The above questions are framed around the categories of 'exceptional' and 'ordinary' with the implication that state-sponsored violence by default was exceptional. I imagine that the state's nexus in the plantation violence is what Bailkin has in mind when she calls it exceptional. Carrington uses the phrases "institutionalised" and "random individual" violence (Carrington 2013: 793). We can heuristically make use of such categories but historically any rigid classification would prove unproductive because it can be easily shown, for instance, how the regulative mechanism of the state, whether in Europe, the USA, Latin-American states or in the colonial annexes of imperial powers, legitimised 'everyday/ordinary' violence. The core issue, therefore, is not to search for new categorisations but to realise that if we take 'violence' as the fundamental category of our analysis then we do need to disaggregate its varieties, delineate its typologies, and then account for different social, legal, and private 'regimes' in which they operated. In fact, 'white violence', that is, violence understood as perpetrated by racially white people was itself a new category of the early twentieth century. The colonial archives before this period did not categorise violence according to race but according to offense (Bailkin 2006: 470).

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Kolsky's incisive account on legal developments helps to get an idea of her line of reasoning. According to her, there were two faces of law and justice in colonial India: one, the idealist, universalist claim that everyone including natives and Britons were equal before the law; and second, a practical colonialism-inflected functioning of the law that granted privileges and exemptions to the whites. There is no point in losing steam over determining whether it was the law or the whiteness (racial sameness) that created what Fischer-Tiné has eloquently called "racial dividends"; the takeaway point is that class and race were

instrumentally structured by legal parameters (selective exemptions) under colonialism. These exemptions worked both for marginal groups and elites of the whites. White convicts got better treatment in comparison to natives (Fischer-Tiné 2009).

The Ilbert Bill controversy of the late 1870s on the jurisdiction of Indian judges over British defendants on the other hand shows that a range of white classes – from civil servants to planters to that of memsahibs – were opposed to the enshrined racial equality in the bill. So, although one can critically appreciate Kolsky attempt in trying to balance the relationship between exceptionality and everyday and between marginal and central by exposing the two-faced working of the law, in my view she could have taken violence itself as the central category, exposing its multiple characteristics – racial, colonial, and social (the violence of non-whites elites on non-whites poor is marginal or absent in her work). The multiple sites and locations of the violence together with their ways of operating (for instance, from informal to institutional) would give us a picture of how at times whiteness had united itself by glossing over its intrinsic class and domiciliary divisions, and how at others it remained immanently contestatory. In adopting this approach, I feel, Assam would not have become externalised as it currently does in her account. The intriguing part is that Kolsky is aware that "in some ways whiteness was monolithic" (Kolsky 2010: 11). She further explains,

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> Whiteness was certainly experienced as monolithic by colonial India's beaten and battered coolies and punkhawallahs – what difference did it make to them that the white planter and soldier and magistrate were not of the same class? (Kolsky 2010: 11, cf. ibid.: 4, 10, 12, 16, 24, for other formulations suggesting the monolithicity of whiteness)

This is an extremely valid point; violence does not need to be just accounted for through the systems of law and justice but also through how it was felt, perceived and resisted. But I wonder why Kolsky puts a contradictory disclaimer a page before, claiming that her book is not about "how Britons viewed their empire or how the empire was viewed by Indians" (Kolsky 2010: 10). Once again, her unexplained contradictory remarks undermine the centrality of her own thesis.

The nexus between whiteness and law in the field of state-formation comes out clearly in Kolsky's account of the codification of law, first, through the Code of Criminal Procedure, and second, of the Indian Evidence Act (Kolsky 2010: Ch. 2-3), which makes it clear how the

idealist legal equality was defeated in the face of mounting pressure to secure privileges and exemptions.

The creation of Indian medical jurisprudence, the use of cultural logic to understand dispositions, customs and prejudices of the people amongst whom investigation was to be pursued, and the medico-ethnographic premises of the diseased and the weak Indian body, shows how white crime was not just a matter of pure moral and political concern but was part of the way the cultural and ethnic parameters were used to sanction legal exemptions. In other words, white crime laid bare the inherent tension between the universalism and particularism of colonial ideologies (cf. Robb 1995: 3-10, 30, pointing out this dichotomy in itself is no historiographical novelty).

The universalistic aspirations remained defeated or at least compromised because race and racial affinity based on whiteness overcame all other considerations related to the ideas of equality, rank, class and so on. In other words, although law is the central category in Kolsky's account to understand the failure of the universalist ideology of legal equality, in practice it was the simple historical factor of race and 'racial dividends' that divided the coloniser and the colonised. The binary of colonial difference was, therefore, reiterated due to white violence rather than being challenged by their in-between practitioners. It was this racial affinity that prevailed over the official wisdom in formulating legal equality and also perhaps over the capacity of the state to enforce it. The colonial state monopolised (or wished to do so) the use of violence, as all modern states do, and hence the subsequent history of white violence was the history of a nebulous tension between the state's authority and racial affinity.

Also, so far the historiographical implication of the argument related to double-faced nature of law is concerned, there remains some obscurity. Colonial law, according to Kolsky, shielded or protected white violence but also failed to curtail it. In other words, there was the regime of lawlessness as well as the complicity of the law. On the one hand, she argues that disorder, lawlessness and the absence of law was at the heart of the colonial project itself; on the other she makes a case for law being the most reliable and consistent accomplice of violence. Both seem to be correct but they both point to two different historiographical trajectories (and there has been a lot of 'argumentative bloodshed' between the two!): if lawlessness defined coloniality, then one can argue that the colonial state was weak, incompetent and/or even disinterested to inflict the 'rule of law'.

Lawlessness and disorder flowed from the limitations and feebleness of the state in controlling the white fringe elements. However, if we have to argue that law wilfully helped perpetrate violence and shielded private whites because racial affinity overruled the ideological commitment to equality, then we may be pursuing the exact opposite line of argument, that is, the colonial state was capable, committed and strong enough to wilfully discard its otherwise ideologically privileged stance of equality.

We may finally turn towards drawing out a broader temporal picture in order to understand the changing relationship between violence and state-formation. What changed from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century? Violence seems to have remained ubiquitous but laws kept on propping up. It seems that the period from the mid-nineteenth century became crucial in certain ways: first, simply at the level of demography (there were more whites of all shades and classes in India). By the end of the nineteenth century, nearly half of the 150,000 Europeans in India could have fallen under the category of "poor European" (Arnold 1979a: 455). Second, the legal and institutional mechanisms to control crime and to discipline and reform criminals (and other unruly groups) multiplied; third, there was a greater politicisation of certain issues related to this class, most notably, the Eurasian Question; and fourth, the nationalist critique of colonialism emerged in this period, which made use of the gap between idealism and pragmatism of colonial law.

Kolsky's account makes a pertinent distinction between the reach of justice and severity of punishment at this temporal scale. According to her, in the late eighteenth century violent whites escaped justice because of the feebleness of the law but those who were convicted were meted out harsh punishment (incarceration, deportation and even execution). In contrast, hundred years later the European British subjects skilfully managed to secure their acquittals or significantly reduce their charges. The legal regime, in other words, was not feeble but lenient (Kolsky 2010: 189-90). Bailkin (2006: 463) makes the same point.

The biggest collective achievement of this new body of scholarship is to force us to rethink imperial formation not just through its mainstream ideologies and actors but through people on the margins and their actions. Secondly, it tells us that white violence was not a hidden script of the colonial literary and administrative archives; it was very much written about, and debated in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. The need therefore, as Bailkin eloquently puts it, is to "defamiliarise" ourselves with this violence to better understand its legal and social constructs (Bailkin 2006).

Endnotes

[1] I call it 'perverse' because Edward Said's *Orientalism* became the foundational text for postmodern 'moods' and colonial discourse analysis but he himself never became part of that school of history writing or cultural analysis. His take on post-colonialism can be gauged from his statement: "First of all, I don't think colonialism is over, really. I don't know what they [post-colonialists] are really talking about." (Said 1998: 82).

[2] My use of the 'dialogue framework' therefore is sensitive to the power relations. It is the fear of this obliteration that prompts Sarkar to advise to better avoid the idea of a dialogue. (Sarkar 2014: 23).

[3] Nabob (derived from nawab, meaning ruler/master) was the pejorative term used in the British social and political culture for those who returned from India after amassing riches. The term almost meant someone who is morally debauched. In contrast, pucca sahib was one who was morally righteous and a non-corrupt administrator, someone who was an ideal blend of being a gentleman and an administrator.

[4] See an insightful review by Amelia Bonea of Mizutani's book, *The Meaning of White: Race, Class, and the 'Domiciled Community' in British India 1858-1930*, (review no. 1317) http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1317, [retrieved 16.12.2014].

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