

FORUM:
TEXTURES OF TIME

1.

PRETEXTURES OF TIME

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ABSTRACT

Textures of Time is a rich and challenging book that raises a host of important and hard questions about historical narrative, form, and style; the sociology of texts; and the core problem of ascertaining historical truth. Two that pertain to the book's main claims are of special interest to nonspecialist readers: Is register or style—"texture"—necessarily and everywhere diagnostic of "history"? Does a new kind of "historical consciousness" emerge in south India beginning in the sixteenth century, indeed as a sign of an Indian early modernity? *Textures* is not the first book to argue that historical discourse is constitutively marked by a peculiar style, but the claim is beset by difficulties that scholars since Barthes have detailed. Rather than textures of time—accounts of what really happened in history—what these works offer us may be only pretextures of time, textualized forms of a human experience that make claims about its degrees and types of truth through representations of various states of temporality. Instead of assessing, then, whether these works are history or something else like "myth," we might ask whether they invite us to transcend this very dichotomy, to try, that is, to make sense of historical forms of consciousness rather than to identify forms of historical consciousness. As for modernity, nothing in south Indian historiography from 1500–1800 remotely compares to the conceptual revolution of Europe. But why should we expect the newness of the early modern world to have been experienced the same way everywhere? Modernity across Asia may have shown simultaneity without symmetry. Should this asymmetry turn out to reveal continuity and not rupture, however, no need to lament the fact. There is no shame in premodernity.

Textures of Time is a rich, sophisticated, and challenging book, written by three of the most creative, and creatively synergistic, minds now at work in Indian studies: Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman, both literary scholars, and the economic historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam.¹ The work raises a host of important and hard questions about historical narrative, form, and style; the sociology of texts; and the core problem of ascertaining historical truth—not only in premodern India but, as they explicitly affirm, everywhere.

1. Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600–1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001). Parenthetical page references are to this book. All diacritics have been omitted.

I. UNHISTORICAL INDIA?

In a way no other monograph has done, *Textures* confronts a remarkably tenacious misconception about the truth status of Indian narratives of the past. It would be facile to ascribe this misconception to European Orientalism since it is only a subset of far more widespread confusion regarding the multiple modes in which historical truth can be conveyed—indeed, the confusion is found among precolonial thinkers in southern Asia itself, ranging from Alberuni in the early eleventh century to Firishtah in the seventeenth. Yet it was the European moderns who defended their ignorance with the greatest learning. A benchmark is Kant, who in his curiously unc cosmopolitan vision of a cosmopolitan history asserted that it was only in Greek history that “all other earlier or contemporary histories are preserved or at least authenticated” (since only an “educated public” can authenticate history, and such publics were found only in the enlightened nations of the West).² It is astonishing, not to say dispiriting, to observe how even contemporary historians of history such as Michel de Certeau continue to contrast the historical plenitude of the West with the deficiency of India, where “the march of time no more needs to be certified by distances taken from various ‘points’ than a position needs to establish itself by being sectioned off from ‘heresies.’”³ Recently the contrast, in this particular form a chestnut of colonial ideology, has been refurbished by a postcolonial indigenism that turns canard into compliment by arguing that history is Western and alien to what is quaintly called “the authentic Indian conception of things.” It is this last position that seems to have been the *casus belli* of *Textures of Time* (xi).⁴

Based on bravura archival research and sure command of multiple and often very difficult premodern Indian languages, *Textures* is packed with information about a score of texts from southern India from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century that will be entirely new even to specialist readers. The book’s most lasting contribution may be these wonderful stories themselves. This is largely the work of Narayana Rao, who for the past several decades—and with an impressive acceleration of pace in recent years—has been continuing his marvelous excavation of what is perhaps the richest literary lode of vernacular India, the story literature of Andhra Pradesh. Who can forget the tale of the wife of Virakumbhini Maharaja of Vasavalli, who, in order to become pregnant, “balanced herself upside down on a mustard seed strategically placed atop a series of seven needles, end to end, stuck in a pumpkin on the top of one of the sharpest of the Deccan

2. “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,” in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 52 and n. A sampling of the millennium-long discourse on India’s historiographical failings is offered in Sheldon Pollock, “Mimamsa and the Problem of History in Traditional India,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109:3 (1989), 603; some of this is repeated but also supplemented in Roy W. Perrett, “History, Time, and Knowledge in Ancient India,” *History and Theory* 38:3 (1999), 308-311.

3. Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 4 (he strikes out twice here). One could also refer to Paul Veyne, *Writing History* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), who has the same narrow European conception of “history,” though a larger appreciation of the capacities of the “Indian soul” (80, cf. 292-293).

4. See Ashis Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” *History and Theory* 34:2 (1995), 44-66.

rocks,” and who then is told by Lord Rama to pluck a banana from a tree nearby and eat it—whereupon, lo and behold, she became pregnant (103).

Almost as important as these remarkable textual offerings are the sensitive and historically astute readings that accompany them, and the inspiring lessons we are taught in how to take such texts seriously, how to try—and the attempt is often laborious—to understand the logic of their authors and not dismiss them out of hand, the way monologists such as Hegel have done, as men “incapable of the prosaic circumspection of the intellect,” mere *geistige Pflanzennaturen* marked by “fantastical untruth” and of necessity deficient in the “prose of history.”⁵ In addition to, or rather interwoven with, intellectual history is rich social history, especially concerning what the authors consider a new, or newly ascendant, class of bureaucrats or literati known in Telugu as the *karanam*, to whom we owe the historical discourse that forms *Textures*’ subject matter.

Part of what makes this book so remarkable is its archival, philological, and purely historiographical method, of which it everywhere offers evidence of a masterful command; a style of scholarship the likes of which, given the impoverishment of premodern studies everywhere but especially in India, we are almost certain never to see again. In addition, compelling new information and ideas are offered about the Telugu Nayaka kingdoms of Tanjavur and Madurai, their “state-making and political maneuvering”; about the French presence in early colonial South India; about contrasting Maratha and Persian views of events of the time. For students of history-and-theory, the work’s importance—and challenge—lies in its central argument about the nature of historical writing itself, especially the uses of the past in the hands of early modern writers outside the West, and it is toward this argument that the greater part of my remarks accordingly will be directed.

Although “a basic claim of this book is that historiography had established a significant place for itself in the South Asian ecology of genres by the later medieval centuries” (136), it is not the authors’ main brief to substantiate this claim, though in fact it has never been demonstrated with the conceptual and analytical sophistication it merits (a lacuna that has some bearing on the principal thesis of *Textures*). Their actual brief is a bolder hypothesis, that “the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries in South India saw the emergence of a new and specific historical awareness” (136), a new species of discourse, driven by a “powerful shift in historical awareness in a particular historical moment” (19). The key questions here are how this awareness can be identified, and where it was located. The first will occupy much of the rest of this essay. The second can be more briefly addressed, and should be addressed first since the social characteristics of the bearers of this consciousness are said to stamp the historical style itself.

This new historical awareness is attributed to a “middle-range” group of scholar-bureaucrats that the authors see emerging in the early sixteenth century. Like the *munshis* or secretary-scribes well known from the Islamicate sphere, the *karanams* controlled writing, accounts-keeping, but also policy-making (for which, however, the evidence, strictly speaking, is sparse), and offer something of

5. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, vol. 3 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 397 (transl. M. Knox, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975], 2: 1095).

an analogue to the literati of late imperial China, though in a disunified imperial formation. The class came into being long after the founding of the Vijayanagara kingdom (1340) and endured long after its breakup (1565). The *karanams* typically had no royal patrons, exhibited a greater openness and less “suspicion” than other traditional Indian intellectuals about the authority to produce history, and paid particular attention to the selection, ordering, and evaluation of events. The last factor “is implied in the presentation and signature of the author, who is named . . . and takes responsibility for what he reports” (95-96).

Central to the overall argument is the new historical style of the *karanam* authors. They wrote in prose and used writing as a medium “not merely for preservation or recording but also for communication—perhaps for the first time in the history of southern India” (20). They deployed a new factual idiom, with a new interest in numbers, proper names, and eventful anchorage; “factuality has become a value in itself” (125, 136). Yet this is historiography that tells us nothing about the sources of its history: their sifting of evidence and all the other historiographical work takes place offstage, to ensure the aesthetic nature of the whole. The *karanams* are represented as having a different conception of human action, volunteerist rather than fate-driven (122). Accordingly, texts are no longer populated by character types, which we’re told had generally been the case in earlier Indian historical texts, but rather by individual actors; no longer do we find a naïve acceptance of the hero but a new skepticism along with a heightened role of human agency. Increasingly we can observe an impulse for sophisticated causal analysis (129).

The crucial literary manifestation of this new historical consciousness, and what enables us to recognize it, is something the authors call “texture.” Whereas history may be written in multiple modes, there exists a real and singular historical register, as distinct from any other register, that can be recognized in all the *karanam* writing, and inerrantly recognized, thanks to the presence of texture. The new style is offered as an analytic alternative to the older Indological insistence on genre (254): the historical texture incorporates (rather than replaces) various genres and is comprised in no single one. “The texture is direct, unadorned, straightforward. A matter-of-fact tone . . .” (99); it “always provides a strong assertion about the nature of articulated truth . . . the truth has its own characteristic consistency, integrity, and range” (254).

Let me try to illustrate some of these ideas, and *Textures*’ style of analysis and its general argument, with reference to the *Kumara-ramuni-katha* (KRK), a Telugu *karanam* history from Andhra, which opens with the story of Virakumbhini’s queen cited above. Despite the general claim about the individuality of the *karanam* historians, who are supposed to name and locate themselves in space and time, the text is anonymous (elsewhere *Textures* speaks of *karanam* texts as the product of “a collective culture carried by self-effacing individual authors”). Moreover, the work is known only from an oral performance (if undoubtedly one shaped by a written text) from which it was recorded in the nineteenth century. Thematically it is a complex narrative combining a range of traditional story motifs and facticity effects. Two sons, Kumara (“Prince”) Rama and Polika (“Replica”) Rama, are born to the king, the first to the dexterous queen

we have already met, the second to a maidservant who ate the leftover banana peel. Both boys have supernatural powers, and much of the story is devoted to an account of their picaresque adventures, especially Polika Rama's thievery, which convinces his father the king to put him to death (he is instead imprisoned in a subterranean cage). Kumara Rama goes on a tour of the neighboring kingdoms—he flies through the sky, as he will fly later in the story on a magic horse to the eastern and northern seas—and attempts to appropriate the taxes of their rulers, including the celebrated Prataparudra, king of Warangal, r. 1295–1323 (my dates; the *karanam* supplies none), that were earmarked for the Delhi Padshah (he is unnamed; Muhammad Shah Tughluq is presumably meant, though his regnal dates are 1325–51). This leads to a conflict with the sultan, and the two brothers are slain in battle against the sultan's general, despite the fact that (or perhaps because) the monkey deity Hanuman had come and wiped away their fates from their foreheads. As their bodies are carried on a palanquin to heaven, the general observes the miracle and later reports it. The Padshah, in an act of contrition, awards Vasavalli as a *jagir*, or military estate, to Virakumbhini Maharaja.

Understanding what is “history” here, as the authors seek to understand it, is no simple matter. The account is mixed with various other narrative elements in a manner that seems, to use a Sanskrit image, less like sesame with mustard seeds than like milk with water. The historical referents uncovered, here as throughout the book, will not be easy even for a student of medieval south Indian history to follow, and are complicated still further by the anachronistic and allegorical mode of consciousness through which they are filtered.

First, KRK is a *karanam* text because of its “attention to details, statistics, a level of everyday, experiential facticity” (111). The “mythic” elements in the story should not be contrasted with history, through a “misleading” opposition between the two; instead, mythic modes are “integrated into the telling of the past.” The style of “reporting” within that mythic framework (the KRK “sustains factual argument with a mythic narrative framework”) is “very clear to anyone who listens carefully to the text”; in fact, though, it can only be recognized by a “sensitive Telugu-speaking listener” (10). Why these various motifs and elements are blended the way they are is never made entirely clear. What we are able to perceive, however, is a certain “evolving historical awareness” that comprises “highly perceptive insights into the workings of a new political system” (112). This system resists easy characterization in part because of the complex layering of the historical situation itself. If I understand correctly, the KRK in some measure is offering a vision of a Beda (hunter) polity, rather than a pastoralist or peasant formation (where the main role would have been played in the former case by Prataparudra, and in the latter by Krishadevaraya, the sixteenth-century Vijayanagara emperor). More prominently, however, the text is offering a picture of Vijayanagara's state-formation, “in which institutional innovation is noted and symbolically embodied in the epitomizing figure of a hero split into two complementary halves” (102). At the same time, the presence of Prataparudra harkens back to the pre-Vijayanagara world of Kampili, where the Kakatiya king is needed “to legitimate a shift in political culture and to provide continuity” (101).

Last, the text is confirming the polity's place within the pan-Indian system, since the king rules as *jagirdar* by consent of the sultan in Delhi (113).

This brief example should suffice to show that, while the world of texts and the world itself that *Textures* is confronting can be bewilderingly intricate, the book strives consistently to make sense of this world, offering historically astute and insightful arguments about and readings of premodern Indian texts and society. Some of these raise questions that are of concern only to Indianists and can be simply be registered here as such: What, for example, really is new about the *karanams* (and on what evidence are they said to emerge when they do)? In what ways do they differ from the *kayasthas*, a group of great historical depth and spatial dispersion in India, both as a class and as bearers of a form of culture? What historically grounds the book's focus here on literacy as if it were some entirely new practice? The authors stress the increased use of paper, palm leaves, and copper plates for public purposes, and the beginning of private, individual ownership of books recorded on palm leaf and paper (regarding the KRK they remark on the awareness of literacy where "even the physical artifact of a written book figures prominently" [112]), though literacy and recording and the public use of copper plates and ownership of manuscript books have a far deeper history. What may really be at issue here is the diffusion of vernacular literacy, but this too was a pan-South Asia phenomenon in the period from about 1000 CE onward.

Of more general interest are the two problems pertaining to the book's main claims. Is register or style—"texture"—necessarily diagnostic of "history"? Is there a new kind of "historical consciousness" that can be detected, indeed as a sign of an Indian early modernity?

The first question forces us to reopen a set of issues—including the place of narrativity and modes of representation in historical writing, and the question of historical truth—that preoccupied earlier scholars, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. The bibliography on all this is vast; the journal *History and Theory* itself was spawned by these debates and has contributed powerfully to them. I myself am not entirely persuaded that these issues are worth reopening at this point, but they are unavoidable if we are to address the book's main thesis with the seriousness it deserves. The second question requires confronting two very hard problems, one concerning beginnings, the other modernity. Those who believe in beginnings—unlike say Marc Bloch, who spoke of the *idole* or even *démon des origines*, the *obsession embryogénique*—know the risk: they are always haunted by the presence of an absent forerunner. As for modernity, those who think of it as a purely European phenomenon (or, worse, who believe with Bruno Latour that we have never been modern at all) will throw up their hands in despair.

II. FACTUAL, FICTIONAL, TEXTURAL

The big mistakes scholars have made in the past, according to *Textures*, are either to confuse history—"texts that were clearly historical in intention, tone and content"—with things that are not history, or to take everything that refers to the past as history: "Only the erosion of an entire sensibility, with its naturally available protocols of reading, can explain the failure to identify history when it is pres-

ent and to distinguish it from the non-historical. In many cases a single sentence suffices to make the categorical distinction.” “A native speaker who hears or reads the historian’s text immediately identifies it as such” thanks to features of its texture that “clarify and define, in unmistakable ways, the author’s intention. ‘This,’ [the native speakers] say, ‘is and can only be history’” (253).

These are strong assertions just for Indian intellectual history, though in fact they are offered as universal: textural analysis “applies to modern, Western historians as well” (253), and presumably elsewhere. The questions they provoke are many and awkward. When authorial intention has been pounded into dust for more than half a century, is it still so easy to find it? (And do they mean individual authorial intention, or something more commonly shared by the *karanams*? If the latter, this would need to be defined separately.) When protocols of reading in their entirety are culturally and historically constituted—including and especially the reading protocols of the authors of *Textures*, which are completely constituted by modern historical discourse—can they still be said to be “naturally available” like some bodily function? Can we so readily justify the sovereign certitude that what we today might think is a “fact” construes perfectly with what people in sixteenth-century south India thought was a fact, and what we think is myth they must have thought was myth? Can the meaning of texts be so singular and completely transparent (the reader of the *Raya-vacakamu* certainly knows that “*the point is clearly the demonstration of the minister’s absolute and deserved pre-eminence*” [125]), when the plurality of textual meaning at any given moment and a fortiori its changeability over time has, like intentionality, been the object of endless discussion these past decades?

Perhaps, since historians rarely heal themselves—rarely historicize their own reading—it is unsurprising that there is no acknowledgment here of the role of the interpreters’ present in their interpretation of the past. That past is available altogether unmediated. But no less historically constituted are notions such as testimony, the miraculous or mythic, typicality, and truth itself. For a history of history the first-order question to ask is not whether a miraculous element, say, betrays the untruthfulness of a legend in some absolute, transhistorical way, but whether it betrayed its untruthfulness for the authors and audiences of the texts in question. Our history of their history may discover a logic we may no longer understand, if we are open to it (as Kant and Hegel were not). Indeed, the further removed in time and space from us a text is, the more suspicious we should be at the absence of such a discovery.

Consider, further, the concept of “native speaker,” the absolutely authoritative reader, to whom unhesitating appeal is made throughout the book. On the one hand, many Indians have been native speakers of multiple languages; on the other, some languages have relatively few native speakers. New Persian was used from Burma to Istanbul for the writing of *tarikhs*, a genre English-using scholars typically translate as “history,” yet it has been estimated that perhaps upwards of three-quarters of those who wrote in Persian were non-native speakers—including the authors of the *tarikhs* that are treated as “history” in *Textures*. None of the three authors of the book is a native speaker of Marathi, but this did not prohibit

them from finding the true history embedded in the Marathi *bakhar* texts. Then too, how many native speakers of sixteenth-century Telugu still exist?

The feature of which native speakers are said to have an intuitive grasp is the distinction between historical and nonhistorical elements in a text about the past, and the contention on which the entire theoretical weight of the book rests is that this distinction is stylistically determined. *Textures* is not in fact the first to make this argument. Though never using the word, Eric Auerbach had something similar in mind in a passage from *Mimesis* that is worth extended quotation:

Homer remains within the legendary with all his material, whereas the material of the Old Testament comes closer and closer to history as the narrative proceeds; in the stories of David the historical report predominates. Here too, much that is legendary still remains, as for example the story of David and Goliath; but much—and the most essential—consists in things which the narrators knew from their own experience or from firsthand testimony. Now the difference between legend and history is in most cases easily perceived by a reasonably experienced reader. It is a difficult matter, requiring careful historical and philological training, to distinguish the true from the synthetic or the biased in a historical presentation, but it is easy to separate the historical from the legendary in general. Their structure is different. Even where the legendary does not immediately betray itself by elements of the miraculous, by the repetition of well-known standard motives, typical patterns and themes, through neglect of clear details of time and place, and the like, it is generally quickly recognizable by its composition.⁶

But with this the similarity stops and the rest is in direct contradiction with *Textures*. The “composition” or style that for Auerbach (who likewise requires linguistically privileged competence—but in this case fortunately no native speakers of Homeric Greek or Biblical Hebrew, only careful philologists) characterizes the legendary is narrative *simplicity*: all friction, everything unresolved and uncertain, is deleted; the historical narrative, by contrast—here mirroring the historical consciousness of the agents—proceeds far more contradictorily and confusedly.⁷

But let us assume that the Indian reality is different and there the historical is a register of language that is simple, direct, unadorned, factual. The closer we get to the texture of literalism, accordingly, the closer we get to the historical. “Readers or listeners at home in a culture have natural sensitivity to texture. They *know* when the past is being treated in a factual manner” (5). I am not so sure. Roland Barthes, a native speaker of French, knew no such thing: “Does the narration of past events . . . [as real],” he asked decades ago, “really differ, in some specific trait, in some indubitably distinct feature, from imaginary narration, as we find it in the epic, the novel, and the drama?”⁸ His answer was an unqualified “no.” Indeed, Barthes provides additional sand to throw in the gears. For one thing, it may be that the closer we get to the factual the closer we get, not to the historical,

6. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 18-19. Recent scholarship complicates these contrasts; see, for example, the discussion of the beginnings of history in Homer in François Hartog, “The Invention of History,” *History and Theory* 39 (2000), 384-395.

7. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 19-20. To complicate things further, we are informed that, “to write history is so difficult that most historians are forced to make concessions to the technique of legend.”

8. Roland Barthes, “The Discourse of History,” *Comparative Criticism. A Yearbook* (1981), 7 (the essay was originally published in 1967).

but to the realistic (here Barthes's notion of *l'effet de réel* is pertinent; I will come back to it below). For another, the belief that the simplest unadorned literalism comes closest to history runs up against the fact, or what many like Barthes have taken to be a fact, that you cannot have history without narration, and narration of necessity complicates literalism.

Equally troubling is the problem of the "factual" in this sort of narrative style ("they *know* when the past is being treated in a factual manner"), something to which *Textures* refers without qualification throughout. But what, in fact, does "factual" mean? What is a fact? The authors of *Textures* may be right in wanting, with Paul Ricoeur, to find a way "to resist the temptation to dissolve the historical fact into narration and this latter into a literary composition indiscernible from fiction."⁹ But the difficulty is they apply a very contemporary diagnostic, one neither defended nor problematized, about what constitutes a historical fact. As many writers on the theory of historiography, beginning with Barthes if not earlier, have shown, whereas no one need doubt that events occur in the world, they become *historical facts*—and not just events—only when embedded in a narrative. It is narrative that makes facts as such, and therefore you cannot use a text's "factuality"—which is just another narrative feature—as an independent criterion to identify a narrative as historical. And as we will see, once an event is narrativized, all bets about a straight path to its historicity are of necessity off.

Things are more complicated still, however. In *Textures*, the historical/factual refers not to what really happened, objectively, transcendentally, beyond the filtering of any historical subjectivity, to what Vico called *verum* (in contrast to *certum*) and a philosopher today would call truth-simpliciter. It refers instead to what is true for the *karanam*. Thus when the authors tell us that "Texture . . . always provides a strong assertion about the nature of articulated truth . . . the truth has its own characteristic consistency, integrity, and range," they are telling us about the *karanam*'s truth, not truth as such. Accordingly, when a *karanam* history describing the death of the Nayaka king Vijayaraghava in 1673 in Tanjavur reports as a fact that his body entered the deity at Srirangam (and it is presumably the entrance that is the fact reported, not the fact of observers seeing him enter), they remark with justice, "and who among us is bold enough finally to rule it out?" (255). Similarly, when in noting the inconsistencies or differences between the eighteenth-century *Desingu-raja-katha* and a work composed in the nineteenth century for the British collector in Arcot, they add, "our task here is not to determine whether or not they [the earlier narrative materials] were or are 'true'" (189), the authors of *Textures* can only be referring to the uncontingently true. Therefore, the kind of facticity to which they believe their textural diagnostic is an inerrant guide must be what constitutes facticity for the *karanam* himself. Although they do not always make it clear, their interest lies not in what really happened, but rather in what people in the past think happened—which I readily agree is the first-order question for a history of history.

Yet if not everything in a *karanam* text has, in the authors' view, the texture of facticity and hence of truth, we are confronted by a rather awkward discontinuity.

9. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 178.

We are compelled to assume that the *karanam* is including in his text material he himself does not really believe to be factual, real, true; that he is reporting both what he really believed and what he cannot really have believed. Such an assumption seems *prima facie* improbable, and might more readily be explained as an index of the preferences of the authors themselves. They are awake to this danger, to be sure, rightly pointing out that “we do an injustice to the sources if we begin to filter their contents through a process of evaluation informed by our notion of what constitutes a fact.” But this is just the kind of evaluation they sometimes proceed to offer, as with a dynastic genealogy of the Kakatiya kings of fourteenth-century Andhra: “It would not be excessive to claim that the earliest links in the genealogical chain are not meant to be taken as facts in the way that the latest links clearly are, with their dates, regnal years, and highly specific locations. In a sense, mythic origins are a transparent device aimed at elevating the dynasty, as the texture of telling reveals” (100).

Some readers may well find such a claim excessive. Can we introduce distinctions in facticity or truth between “a purely mythic register” and “a known historical, family tradition” thought to have been felt by the author? How can we know the real differences in truth-claims supposedly indexed by stylistic differences? What leads us to assume the latter are anything more than a consequence of a difference in the quality of the author’s sources (which in the case of a royal genealogy might include a Sanskrit encomium in the high style)? Moreover, what to *Textures* is a “transparent device” of social self-elevation may to another, premodern, reader be a longing for some higher truth, for some connection with cosmic power that may be as sincere and real as anything else—and as sincerely believed to be real by the *karanam* author as he believed anything else to be real. Such a longing may have prompted the use of another register because of its subject matter, with the stylistic change reflecting no essential difference whatsoever in truth-claims or beliefs. The rhetoric of “clearly” (namely, “meant to be taken as facts”) does not in the end really serve to make anything clearer.

It seems fair to ask, in the same way, what is meant by “myth,” and, something equally nontrivial and consequential, whether the dichotomy fact/myth maps against any Indian conceptual scheme concerning ontological truth. The evidence for the scheme seems to be the texts cited in *Textures* as examples of it. When the authors differentiate what the “village elders” are doing when they speak about the *aitihya* (history) of Palnadu from the “myth” that is presented in the *Palnavirula-katha*, they base their judgment on a “cultural ecology which clearly distinguishes the historical text from non-historical fiction, despite shared genre features” (96), the metric again being “texture,” the internal stylistic criterion for differentiating fact from nonfact (260). But there is a circularity here as unvirtuous in India as it is elsewhere: you cannot define the difference between myth and history in terms of their styles, and define their styles in terms of the difference between myth and history (in other words, using the distinction between textures to ground the distinction between truth and fiction, and grounding the distinction between truth and fiction on the distinction between textures). The only way out of the circularity is to assert privileged access to the truth (“a native speaker’s natural sensitivity”). What eludes our grasp is whether the people in the streets

of fourteenth-century Warangal even contrasted myth and *aitihya*. Nothing in the sources I know suggests the two genres were cognitively or sociologically or otherwise distinct.

Indeed, we have to use the English word “myth” precisely because there is no obvious Sanskrit (or Telugu or Marathi) equivalent—on the contrary, there is an easy adjacency in traditional Indian usage of the terms *purana*, the genre of “myth” par excellence, and *itihasa*, the Sanskrit word translated into English as “history” (indeed, meaning literally “thus (*iti*) indeed (*ha*) it was (*asa*)”—it seems almost calqued on *wie es eigentlich gewesen*). There are further complications, for the Sanskritist at least, in trying to understand the interpretation given in *Textures* to the latter term (*aitihya* is the Telugu form, *itihasa* in northern Indian vernaculars). At one point it is said to comprise singularity, localization, casual sequence, and authoritative transmission (93 and n. 3), whereas elsewhere it is said to refer to what is “always true and rarely factual . . . a true and tried recipe but nothing of the taste of a non-repeatable curry” (14). Equally dark is this second distinction, between true and factual (let us leave aside the more complex question of who believes *aitihya* to be “true and rarely factual”). One must wonder whether it even makes sense in traditional India. For contemporary philosophers, truth is a property of propositions or sentences or states of mind such as beliefs, conjectures, or supposals. By contrast, facts are in the world and they are what make propositions, sentences, beliefs, and so on true.¹⁰ This does not sound to me like an Indian epistemological distinction. Factual knowledge is *pratyaksha*, or based on sense data; knowledge based on propositions is *shabda*, or linguistic. But the knowledges from these two domains, while not coextensive, are equivalent in terms of truth.

The factual, or apparently factual, has a seductive power for the authors that sometimes seems to reduce their readings or to overmaster them. Consider the account of the Prolaraju story of the *Pratapa-raja-caritramu*: A king receives a prophecy saying his son will kill him; he exposes the son, who is saved, grows up, and eventually “through the power of fate” kills him (97-99). Here a folklorist like Alan Dundes would have found a Stith-Thompson motif, or a cultural psychoanalyst like A. K. Ramanujan another Indian Oedipus. The last thing either of them, and I suspect most of us, would find is history. *Textures* does, however, because of the use in the story of “clearly stated dates, spatial and temporal measurements, and statistical details” (these are omitted from their retelling, which makes it difficult to gauge the force of the argument): “Factuality clearly matters . . . What is at base a folktale . . . has been entirely subsumed by the texture of factual reporting.” Why, furthermore, should this factuality be anything more than what Barthes famously called the “effect of the real”? Here is a recent restatement of his argument: “Apparently ‘irrelevant’ detail is indeed one of the great instinctive conventions of fiction-making.” The barometer in Flaubert’s *Un Coeur simple* suggests nothing. “It is apparently ‘irrelevant.’ Its business is to denote reality, it is there to create the effect, the atmosphere of the real. It simply says: ‘I am the real.’” For Barthes, an object such as the barometer “is supposed

10. I am grateful to Akeel Bilgrami for helping me think through some of these issues.

to denote the real, but in fact all it does is signify it. Realism in general, it is implied, is just such a business of false denotation.”¹¹

Is what we are seeing in the Prolaraju story not a new discourse on history, but a new kind of fictional mimesis, a new *realism*? That would indeed be an interesting discovery, a discovery challenging our history of Indians’ mentality, and, possibly, of their modernity, but not necessarily of their “historical consciousness.” That the problem of realism, at least, was firmly marked on the cognitive map of Indian thinkers is shown by the ninth-century masterpiece of Indian literary criticism, the *Dhvany-aloka* (Light on Suggestion), which explores this problem under the rubric of *aucitya* (what in seventeenth-century French criticism was given by the two terms *vraisemblance* and *bienséance*, “what it is probable for a character to do and what is appropriate for him or her”). It thus reflects on the boundaries of realism in reference to historical narratives (since great historical personages like King Satavahana did super-real deeds such as descending to the underworld) and on the stricter limits of realism in fictional tales.¹²

It is instructive to see how these questions of factuality and realism, along with the central proposition that we can distinguish fact from fiction by means of different styles of the same work, are dealt with in the discussion in *Textures* of the Sanskrit masterpiece from twelfth-century Kashmir, the *Raja-tarangini* (River of Kings), brief though it is and peripheral to the book’s core archive of south Indian texts (254–260). Kalhana’s work—he calls it a poem (*kavya*)—is one of the few texts in the Sanskrit canon to receive special (if limited) dispensation in the eyes of earlier generations of Western critics of Indian historical thinking.¹³ The author is the only premodern Indian writer I am aware of to explicitly assert his objectivity and honesty with respect to historical knowledge (“Praiseworthy the virtuous man who is free from love and hate, who discourses on the past like a judge,” v. 7) and to carefully describe his source materials (something the *karanam* never did). Yet we are told it is a case of “mistaken identity” to think of Kalhana as a historian, in part because his work is deficient in the “causality” held to be central to “historiography” as such. But this definition may be unnecessarily stipulative—much European history has been concerned with narrative, not explanation, and even the early modern history that *Textures* treats aimed at offering *niti*, or political maxims and exempla (for example, 139). As for Kalhana’s history, it is not that of a war or a city (let alone some proto-nation) but of a succession of rulers. Establishing the *sequence* of early kings is for Kalhana the only proper subject of historical memory, however unfamiliar to us it may be, and it is critical to him to get it right (indeed, unlike the *karanam*, for whom earlier parts of the genealogy are, if we accept *Textures*’ argument, less factual than more recent parts). Causal explanation is irrelevant because history is nothing but the natural

11. James Wood, “The Blue River of Truth,” *The New Republic* (August 1, 2005).

12. *Dhvanyaloka of Anandavardhana*, ed. Pattabhirama Sastry (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1940), 3.10.

13. But contrast Bernhard Kölver, *Textkritische und philologische Untersuchungen zur Rajatarangini des Kalhana* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1971), 8–9, who argues, despite its professed aims, that the work is not “critical in our sense” and therefore should not be interpreted primarily as “history.” See also Walter Slaje, *Medieval Kashmir and the Science of History* (Austin: South Asia Institute, 2004), who makes a strong case for the empirical authenticity of Kalhana’s successors.

consequence of sequentiality. The old Orientalists argued that there was no history in premodern India because *nothing ever happened*; absurd though the very idea is, it usefully prompts the question whether there may have been a different conception of *happening*, and accordingly a different form of discourse about it.

Textures does not discuss Kalhana's assertions or his purposes or philosophy of history, but rather in keeping with its thesis concentrates on style. But here we encounter two more difficulties with that thesis: for one thing, Kalhana's style remains uniform throughout the work; for another, the diagnostic powers of native competence do not apply in the case of this text, since Sanskrit was never anyone's native language in the common-sense sense of the term. Yet the authors are able to tell in a given episode where history ends—with the assassination of King Jayasimha's general—and fiction begins—with the description of the general's severed head thrown in the courtyard by his killers. There seems to be something intuitively right about this judgment: it is unlikely that Kalhana's sources (about which he is very explicit) would have recorded such a detail as the rolling head. But the judgment itself seems irrelevant to helping us grasp Kalhana's aim in fusing (if that is what he is doing) two levels of narrative. Moreover there seems to be a tension between the treatment of Kalhana's account and the reading of a "factual" story such as that of the coward king Pedda Venkatadri Nayadu: unwillingly riding out to confront a more powerful enemy, the king mounts his horse Rajya-laksmi ("Royal Glory") and somehow crushes his testicles. When we are told that this particular narrative is "believable" (268), we begin to find ourselves sliding down a very slippery slope of subjectivism.

It is not for me to assess Kalhana's aim here, though I suspect it comprises more than is captured by calling him "a talented historical novelist" whose accounts are "in some sense historical" (259). Historians since the time of Thucydides (if we are in fact permitted to call *Thucydides Historiae* history, given its texturally uniform high rhetoric) have recorded not only the words that people actually spoke but, as Thucydides himself put it in a phrase that would be discussed for two millennia, what "in [the historian's] opinion, was called for in each situation." Many storytellers besides the author of the Venkatadri tale have made use of factualizing tropes (indeed, when the authors describe Venkatadri's "impotent rage" they show they have found the episode's metaphorical key). The two vignettes, of Jayasimha's general and of the south Indian coward king, combine to suggest that historical fact is not "definitively marked" off from realist fiction by texture (which, again, "speakers of the language in which [the text] is written recognize without difficulty" [260]); that we cannot "*know* when the past is being treated in a factual manner" and when it is not; and that, while the authors are well aware of "the old trap of weeding out those parts of the texts that might appear fantastic, or mythic, or mystical," subjectively sifting fact from fiction seems not far from what they sometimes want to do.

If facticity and the real could be read off the page as *Textures* asserts, then history would be a much less contentious practice and the world a safer—and maybe less interesting—place. (And if by "history" they do not mean "true," then what differentiates it from myth, legend, fiction?) Rather than textures of time—accounts of what really happened in history—what these medieval south

Indian works are offering us may be only pretextures of time, textualized forms of various human experiences that make claims about their various degrees and types of truth through representations of various states of temporality.

What is perhaps most important, I am not sure we have come closer here to grasping why historians want to employ features of fiction (the way fiction writers want to employ features of history), why they are so often intermingled, or indeed, how in an important sense the fictional is itself factual. Perhaps, instead of assessing whether Indian texts are history or myth, we might ask whether the texts themselves invite us to transcend this very dichotomy.

III. THE FACTUALITY OF THE FICTIONAL

By this formulation I do not refer to the truth status of fictional propositions (“Willy Loman was a small man with a big heart” or “Hamlet was weak and procrastinating”). I refer instead to our capacity to make Indian history out of Indian “fiction,” though nothing salient for my argument rides on that scare-quoted distinction—on the contrary, I want to consider reasons we might suspend it. One such reason is provided by the historicity of the (putatively) fictional for those of us who are interested in the history of Indian consciousness; another, by the historicity of the (putatively) fictional for Indians who once turned the fictional into a model for action in the world.

Let me try to make these distinctions clear. Consider the story related in *Textures* of Desingu Raja, king of Senji, who fought the Nawab of Arcot in 1714. In one of the texts that relate these events, Mahamat Khan, a Muslim ally of Desingu Raja, dies by his side: “As he cut his bonds to this world” he “recited verses from the Qur’an, called on God (*allare allare*) . . . As the gods rained down flowers, a *vimana* [celestial chariot] arrived and carried him to heaven” (163). Our interest here, which concerns the factual in the fictional, is recognized implicitly by the authors of *Textures*, but it is not analytically differentiated. They do not want to dismiss this reality of the celestial chariot and the rain of flowers but their model does not easily accommodate it. The important point is not that *the author* of the text may be exhibiting a form of consciousness about the historical—what is surprising or interesting about the fact that people make texts out of their real worlds?—but that *we* can identify here an element of a form of consciousness that once existed in history, whether about a composite culture in early eighteenth-century Tamil Nadu (calling on the one God, Allah, while showing multiple Hindu gods appear), or perhaps about just its opposite, the deep cultural misunderstanding of Islam that is specific to this text, time, and place.

What matters for me, in short, is making sense of a *historical form of consciousness* rather than attempting, as *Textures* does, to identify a *form of historical consciousness*. In the former case we confront directly what was in the head of premodern makers and readers of texts (which we must then of course go on to interpret); in the latter, we address that content indirectly, even in an a priori way, by first trying to retrofit it onto a category that itself, unless all history is identical, can only be theorized a posteriori (and thus circularly) from the texts themselves. A form of consciousness that is historical for us can enter transpar-

ently into our understanding of the past; a form of consciousness that is supposed to be “historical” for them opens out onto a hall of mirrors.

A second way of suspending or at least usefully complicating the distinction between factual and fictional lies in registering the factual enactment of the fictional—in other words, in perceiving how people have sought to live their lives in accordance with the paradigmatic. Think here of the Quixote problematic—of fiction as a model for action—writ broadly across the domain of social action. This seems to have been the case with Desingu Raja himself, whose behavior in some ways fits, as the authors brilliantly show, into a pattern of kingship established in earlier Tamil *puranas*. One wonders to what degree Desingu’s real life may have been patterned after such expectations in an effort to re-enact the life of an ancient, “mythic” Arcot king. After all, not only does art imitate art, but sometimes life does, such that imitation can be a real source of social and political action (Luther as the Apostle Paul, or Robespierre as Brutus).¹⁴ Indeed, it is this very real dimension of historical imitation that makes it even more difficult to weed out the actual from the mythical, since the mythical can be actualized.

IV. THE PLACE OF GENRE

Genre undoubtedly has something to do with capturing the different kinds of truth-claims that texts in India have asserted, as they have done elsewhere. The distinction, for example, between narratives of things that really occurred and narratives of things that have been invented—the Sanskrit terms are *iti-vrta* and *utpada-vastu* respectively—is as intelligible in India as elsewhere. Similarly, though *Textures* considers the great seventh-century Sanskrit work *Harsha-carita* (Life of King Harsha) to be “almost reminiscent of biography” (“almost” because they believe it has too many elements of myth), Indian theorists took pains to define the royal biography in a way that must shape our interpretation: the *akhy-ayika*, of which *Harsha-carita* is the supreme example in Sanskrit literature, is categorized as a genre the matter of which is known to have occurred (*upalabdha-artha*), and distinguished from *katha* (tale), which is “imaginary in its [narrative] construction” (*prabandha-kalpana*).¹⁵ Naturally, local complexities begin to emerge when we see this distinction complemented by another that differentiates between texts of invented stories and texts that “tell of the actual doings of gods and others” (to say nothing of differing views of gods: a fifteenth-century commentator on the *Ramayana* tells us that everything in that text is “absolutely true” while another reader, centuries earlier, says that it is full of lies).¹⁶

Discussions of genre in premodern India, however, typically address the various kinds of “predominance” or emphasis (*pradhanya*), whether on wording (thus scriptural texts), meaning (historical and related texts), or both (poetry);

14. For some reflections on this problem, see my “Empire and Imitation,” in *Lessons of Empire*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, and Kevin Moore (New York: New Press, 2006).

15. From the sixth (?) century Sanskrit lexicon, the *Amarakosha* (1.6.5, 7).

16. The first binary is common in the *Dhvanyaloka*; the second citation is from the seventh-century *Kavyalankara* (Ornament of Literature) of *Bhamaha*, ed. B. N. Sarma and Baldeva Upadhyaya (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1928), 1.15. For the *Ramayana*, see *Srimadvalmikiramayana*, ed. Gangavisnu Srikrnadasa (Bombay: Venkatesvara Steam Press, 1935).

the relationship to language choice (certain genres are composed only in certain languages, like the pastoral in the faux-demotic idiom known as Apabhramsha); differentiations in terms of pragmatics (some genres, like scriptures, command us to do things; some, like legends, give us advice; some, like poems, seduce us).¹⁷ What I have nowhere found is any indication that Indian thinkers believed the same genre could do multiple things (however much texts in India, no less than in Europe, could and did migrate among genres in actual literary history: the *Mahabharata* was now history, now jurisprudence, now statecraft, now literature), or that style was a sign of anything but the emotional register of the work; it certainly was not an index of its truth claims. *Textures* has not convinced me that Indian readers themselves ever picked and chose portions of texts that were factual as opposed to mythic (or “quasi-mythic”).

This is what we seek help in grasping: what premodern Indian readers themselves understood to be the interpretive protocols of different genres. Where *Textures* purports to know when a text is mythic or literary and when it is historical, what we want to know, at least in the first instance, is what those readers may have believed. If the authors want to talk about what is inside the literary culture (“We thus seek to trace . . . the distinction, internal to the literary culture, between works of ‘history’ . . . and other texts treating of the past in other modes” [21]), they have to find a way of answering that question. Simply to assert that some discourse is “mythic and not historical” or “true and rarely factual,” or that the distinction is “built into the consciousness of the literary world” (21), is to assert an interpretation that tells us more about the interpreter than about Indians’ “historical consciousness.”

V. A NEW—AN EARLY MODERN—FORM OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS?

Ways of textualizing the world in premodern India, of which the *karanam* works would be another instance, have a history, though as noted at the start of this essay, this has never been systematically reconstructed. Unsurprisingly, this history (as Hegel’s well-known arguments about history, law, and the state would suggest) is closely connected with that of political change in the subcontinent.¹⁸ There was a demonstrable shift in the puranic style of narrative that produced the *Yuga Purana* around the beginning of the Common Era with the break-up of the Satavahana empire and the coming of the Indo-Scythians, and again later, with the expulsion of the Sakas from Ujjain, in the remarkable historical narrative, the *Kalaka-acarya-katha* (early second millennium, but recording traditions of half a millennium earlier). A new prose historiography of an unprecedented sort marked the rise of the regional kingdoms, first in Sanskrit with the Badami Chalukyas in the sixth–eighth centuries, but gradually in the course of India’s vernacular revolution in local language, as in the Tamil *meyykirtis* of the Cholas (late-tenth–twelfth centuries). Something new again appeared in the Sultanate-era *prabandha*

17. Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 105–114.

18. On Hegel and history, see Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 11–12.

literature among the Svetambara Jains of Gujarat of western India (the texts are in Sanskrit, Apabhramsha, and Old Gujarati). The fourteenth-century *Prabandha-cintamani* (Wishing Stone of Narratives), for instance, explicitly thematizes its prose form; makes reference to the authoritativeness of its sources; lays stress upon the importance of the near-contemporaneity of its historical subjects while rejecting ancient stories; and shows a specificity about dates that borders on the compulsive (it is irrelevant to the text's self-understanding that positivist Western historiography has determined these dates in many cases to be false).

What we may be observing in the remarkable materials collected in *Textures* is another stage in this process of textualizing the world, one that is quantitatively though not necessarily qualitatively different from what can be found earlier. Especially notable from about the seventeenth century on—and this is perhaps what forms the basis of *Textures*' assertions of a larger novelty—is the profusion of historical sources as such. Yet this may be nothing more than an artifact of the “filter of tradition”: the more recent the events the more profuse the sources.

The authors of *Textures*, however, have a larger argument to make than even a “powerful shift in historical awareness.” They want to argue that this new historiography represents part of the emergence of an early modernity in south India: “This literature has links to older historiographical modes . . . but constitutes a new departure . . . the arrival of a certain kind of ‘modernity’ in the far south,” to which other features may be added: a new individualism, a new sense of the human body, a new common political culture transcending collective identities, and a new aesthetic basis for kingship (264).¹⁹

The study of the conceptual order of the early modern world outside Europe—the study of what made that world *modern* at the level of consciousness, and not merely new or different—is only just beginning. There is no doubt that the non-West participated in major ways in the material transformations that marked modernity as a global phenomenon.²⁰ More uncertain is what, if anything, in the sphere of thought may have marked it as such. A serious difficulty here is obviously presented by the definition of modernity itself. Although there is in principle no reason why the conceptual transformation of the early modern world had to be globally uniform, the self-promotion of the European case as singular and paradigmatic has led many to believe it must be.²¹ Hence the search everywhere for instances of the radically new sense of history that typified European modernity, of its sense of skepticism, its individualism—the search for the Indian Vico, the Chinese Descartes, the Arab Montaigne.

The characteristics of the new sense of time, temporality, and, accordingly, history in European modernity have been usefully summarized by Reinhart

19. Several of these other topics are explored in their earlier collaborative volume, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka Period Tamilnadu* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).

20. See, for example, John Richards, “Early Modern India and World History,” *Journal of World History* 8:2 (1997), 197-209.

21. There is a large and growing bibliography on some of these questions. For an overview of some key contributions and questions, see Sheldon Pollock, “We Need to Find What We Are Not Looking For,” *International Association of Asian Studies Newsletter* (Leiden) 43 (2007), 1, 4; *The Ends of Man at the End of Premodernity* (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Stichting J. Gonda-Fonds, 2005), 83-90.

Koselleck.²² These include the sense of an open future coupled with the ideas of progress and development; the expected otherness of the future; the experience of acceleration of one's own time; *die Ungleichseitigkeit des Gleichseitigen*, or the nonsimultaneity of very different but chronologically simultaneous histories (comprising a diachronic classification of different cultures); a new idea of transition between epochs. Most important, the view of the ancients as a "model resting on the structural similarity of all possible past and future histories" collapses in modernity. Hence there arose the sense of the absolute difference of the past, or historicism, while singularity, the absolute newness of events, fills out experience.

From the evidence of *Textures*, nothing remotely comparable characterizes early modern Indian conceptions of temporality or practices of historiography. The sense of historical time in India remained (as one scholar described it for China) one of classicity, caducity, and continuity.²³ But on top of this, the very approach to Indian early modernity at a conceptual level—finding Europe in India—strikes me as questionable. Indeed, it even seems paradoxical in *Textures*, insofar as it wants to deny the peculiarity of Western modernity even while its definition of modernity is based almost entirely on the early modern West. We should be forewarned of trouble by the striking coincidence: precisely the elements of modernity found in Europe are discovered in India. But why should the newness of the early modern world have been experienced the same way everywhere? On the contrary, although the postulate awaits systematic empirical and conceptual grounding, it seems that modernity across Asia may have shown simultaneity without symmetry. But should this asymmetry turn out to reveal continuity and not rupture, no need to lament the fact. There is no shame in premodernity.

The measure of a book's importance is not how much it gets right but how much it gets you to think. As this essay has aimed to suggest, *Textures of Time* gets us—historians of historiography as much as Indologists such as myself—to think a lot. If my reservations are strong it is only because the book is itself strong and wonderfully provocative.²⁴

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22. Reinhart Koselleck, "The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity," in *The Practice of Conceptual History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 154-169. An intellectual history of the early modern tipping point is offered in Anthony Grafton, *What Was History?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 188-254.

23. On-Cho Ng, "The Epochal Concept of 'Early Modernity' and the Intellectual History of Late Imperial China," *Journal of World History* 14:1 (2003), 37-61.

24. I am grateful to Allison Busch and Sudipta Kaviraj for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay.