Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 1995, volume 13, pages 67–90

Europe's 'Others'? Forestry policy and practices in colonial and postcolonial India

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Received 20 September 1993; in revised form 28 February 1994

Abstract. In this paper I intervene in the debates around Orientalism and 'Othering' that are still current in human geography and the humanities. I do so with particular reference to forest policies in British India and post-colonial India. I contend that the concept of Orientalism needs to be unpacked further than most of its proponents have allowed. At no time has a united Europe had a common and singular 'Other'. I further argue that imprecise understandings of Orientalism and Othering blind us to certain variations in interpretive and material practices that have had important implications for our so-called Others. This point is expanded in relation to forest policies in tribal (*adivasi*) areas of India. I demonstrate that colonial forest (and 'tribal') policies were far from unitary, but were open to contestation and negotiation by sympathetic colonial officers and missionaries (such as Verrier Elwin). I also show that elements of what might be called the dominant discourse of scientific forest policy have been continued since Independence in 1947. An Indian elite has disciplined its 'internal Others' by means of this discourse (and others besides), although there are signs now that this discourse is being challenged by adivasi leaders and sympathetic government and nongovernment officers.

1 Introduction

Recent work in geography (Duncan, 1993; Gregory, 1994) and the allied social sciences (Clifford, 1988; Mernissi, 1993; Pinney, 1988) has come to recognise that the process of colonisation was as much a project of the imagination—a classification, celebration, or normalisation of 'Others'—as it was of practical politics: a desire by the colonial powers to "shape others according to their own image and likeness, and to impose on them their particular way of living" (Nehru, quoted in Elwin, 1964, pages 98–99). Indeed, the two themes are not easily separated.

Although the concept of an 'Other' long predates the work of Said—both historically in the sense of European[1] accounts of an 'asiatic tidal wave' of Islam at the time of the crusades [Baudet (1965); see also Pagden (1982) on the attitudes of the ancient Greeks in relation to 'degrees of humanity'], and in the academy—it is clear that recent understandings of 'Othering' are greatly indebted to Said's accounts of Orientalism (1978; 1986; 1993). Said has insisted that the relationship between the Occident and the Orient—what Hall (1992) has called the West and (versus) the Rest—has been produced as part of a discourse of "power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said, 1978, page 5) that has its roots in "a created body of theory and practice in which ... there has been a considerable material investment" (page 6) by the Western colonial powers. Said further argues that the "hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness" (page 7), lack of "energy and initiative" (page 38), have in the past provided a justification for the 'uplifting' of the Orient by colonial rulers. Likewise, the representation of Orientals as 'irrational', 'depraved',

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[1] It is worth noting that most societies have their 'Others'. The Chinese, for example, divided the world for a long time into the 'middle kingdom' of China and the Barbarians outside it.

'childlike', and 'different' justified a Western view of their need for 'correction', through exposure to 'rational', 'virtuous', 'mature', 'normal' (and occupying) Europeans (Said, 1978). At the same time, Said has recognised that Orientalism was never a singular discourse (see also Bhabha, 1984). The West also invented an East (or parts of an East) that was savage but noble. According to this strain of Orientalism, the West's own sense of loss, of inauthenticity, was projected onto regions and peoples that had not yet fallen from grace. The West aimed to celebrate and to exoticise this Edenic East, not to normalise it or to destroy its supposed conditions of existence.

It is hardly surprising that Said's original work on Orientalism should have occasioned so much interest and debate (even if this debate came rather late to geography). Most commentators have been sympathetic to Said's general project, although Lewis has not been alone in denouncing the many historiographical inaccuracies that (as he sees it) have made *Orientalism* (Said, 1978) a poor guide to "Islam and the West" (Lewis, 1993; see also Gaeffke, 1990). Nevertheless, some recent commentaries on Said's work have drawn attention to its own essentialisation of what for Said is *the* essentialism: Orientalism itself. That is to say, there is a growing recognition that Orientalism as a concept is both too inclusive and not inclusive enough. It is too inclusive, according to Rocher (1993), because it lumps together a series of Anglo-French commentaries on the Orient that share certain common assumptions, but which in other respects develop different voices, grammars, attitudes, and depictions of their so-called Others. Its common usage is also not inclusive enough, because it tends to see Orientalism only as the bedfellow—or as the imagination—of a territorial imperialism. In my view, a truly Foucaultian reading of Said's work would want to recognise the capacity of formally postcolonial governments and elites to define and discipline their 'own' (internal) Others by means of Orientalist assumptions, languages, and strategies.

In this paper I seek to intervene in these continuing debates around Orientalism and Othering, but in the very particular context of forestry policies in precolonial and postcolonial India. (These debates will surely only be taken forwards by means of empirically grounded theoretical work.) I will first join with others (see Breckenridge and van der Veer, 1993; Inden, 1986) in suggesting that the concept of Orientalism needs to be unpacked, not least because traditional Orient-Occident, Europe-Other dichotomies are too simple to be given much credibility. At no time has a united Europe had a common—and also singular—Other. Although Kiernan (1969), Baudet (1965), and Said (1978) all recognised that attitudes towards Europe's Others have varied greatly over time, and with respect to political changes within the different European countries concerned, little attention has been paid to the existence of Others *within* Oriental countries or societies. Yet these 'internal Others'—often identified by their gender, class, or cultural 'markings'—can be quite as instructive as the more often studied external Others. Nandy (1983) maintains, rightly in my view, that the state in postcolonial India has inherited a colonial 'attitude of mind' from the British. The 'official' Indian elite now constitutes its own others in terms of continuing caste, class, and gender differences within Indian society. Nandy warns of the 'intimate enemy' within.

Second, I want to suggest that, although Said's more general concerns about the difficulties of representing Others 'truthfully' deserve to be taken seriously, it is necessary to view some more extreme relativist and antimodernist standpoints on representation with caution. Said's work is generally modernist in inspiration, but there is now a growing literature which dismisses all Western representations of its supposed Others as 'white mythologies' [see Young (1990) for a discussion],

and which refuses to entertain the idea that the West's Others can be 'known' at all or represented by 'non-Others'. Linked to this is an emerging 'tradition' of antidevelopment[2] which sometimes equates 'development' with a Western disease (Rahnema, 1988) which disturbs the authenticity of non-Western, 'nonmodern' societies. According to Shucking and Anderson (1991), development assistance "can be likened to the AIDS virus; a pathogen that destroys the ability of the host country to resist the invasion of a foreign socio-economic system" (page 21).

I will argue that positions such as these are not only relativistic in form, but are also nihilistic in intent. Although they might seem to enjoy many points in common with Said's work on representation and Orientalism, they depart from Said's evident humanism when they deny the validity of all so-called Western knowledges and practices with regard to an entire population of Others. I accept, of course, that one can never fully know oneself or another person, let alone another culture. But I do believe that some knowledges and understandings of Other peoples are 'better'—more coherent, more informed, more empathetic—than are others, *and* can thus be made to serve useful purposes when combined with a process of dialogue with the beneficiaries (victims) of development. In my judgment, there is little evidence to support the view of Escobar (1992) when he maintains of development, that "little, if anything, has 'trickled down', life conditions for most have deteriorated enormously, and the damage to persons and the environment has reached such unprecedented levels that it 'can now be seen, touched, and smelled" (page 417). My own experiences in an Oraon community in Bihar, India[3] also caution me against the view that people in developing countries are always resistant to development, or that they do not see it as a set of processes with costs and benefits, pleasures and pains, attached[4].

Third, and relatedly, I want to argue that an all-purpose critique of Orientalism, or Othering, or development, or white mythologies, is rendered less than helpful by its very imprecision. Processes of development, however they are defined, always involve trade-offs and dilemmas (Toye, 1987), and sides have, on occasion, to be taken. This point is particularly relevant in cases where policies affecting internal Others are being drafted by elites belonging to the same country. In such cases, it is extremely important to recognise that, although these policymakers' representations of their Others can be criticised on the same grounds as traditional Orientalist accounts, some will be better at getting closer to "an objective image of reality" (Duncan, 1993), and will, as a result, inform policies that are more sensitive towards the needs and desires of the Others in question. Debates around Orientalism and

[2] Prominent writers in this tradition include Esteva (1987), Marglin and Marglin (1990), Parajuli (1991), Pieterse (1991), Escobar (1992), and Sachs (1992). Their work is closely echoed by people such as Nandy and Shiva in India. I will return to this corpus of work later in the paper.

[3] This paper does not report the products of my fieldwork directly. This will appear elsewhere and in the form of a PhD in 1995.

[4] A version of this paper was originally written for presentation at the Association of American Geographers Conference in Miami in April 1991. Many of the basic ideas in the paper were confirmed when I lived with an Oraon community in Chota Nagpur, Bihar, while I was doing my PhD fieldwork. The longer I lived amongst adivasi people, the more I came to understand that although they wanted greater control over the future of Jharkhand—the tribal heartland of Bihar—they were not opposed to development per se. Indeed many of the village youths voiced a strong desire to obtain a good education so that they could compete for the highly desirable service placements which seem so often to be taken by nontribals. This, they said, would allow them to swap the drudgery of agriculture for the excitement of the town.

Othering, just like the debates around development–antidevelopment, have an obvious practical relevance, and I want to emphasise this point throughout the paper.

To lend support to these general arguments I have organised my more specific discussions of forestry policies and Orientalisms as follows. Section 2 is concerned mainly with the normalising, dominatory, and paternalistic instincts of Orientalism, and the ways in which these attitudes were written into India's forest and tribal policies by officers of the British Raj. Section 3 is concerned more with the celebratory or empathetic aspects of Orientalism and addresses, in particular, the work of the British anthropologist, Verrier Elwin, on tribal (*adivasi*) populations in India. My intention here is to draw the reader's attention to some important departures—or acts of subversion—within a more general discourse of celebratory Orientalism.

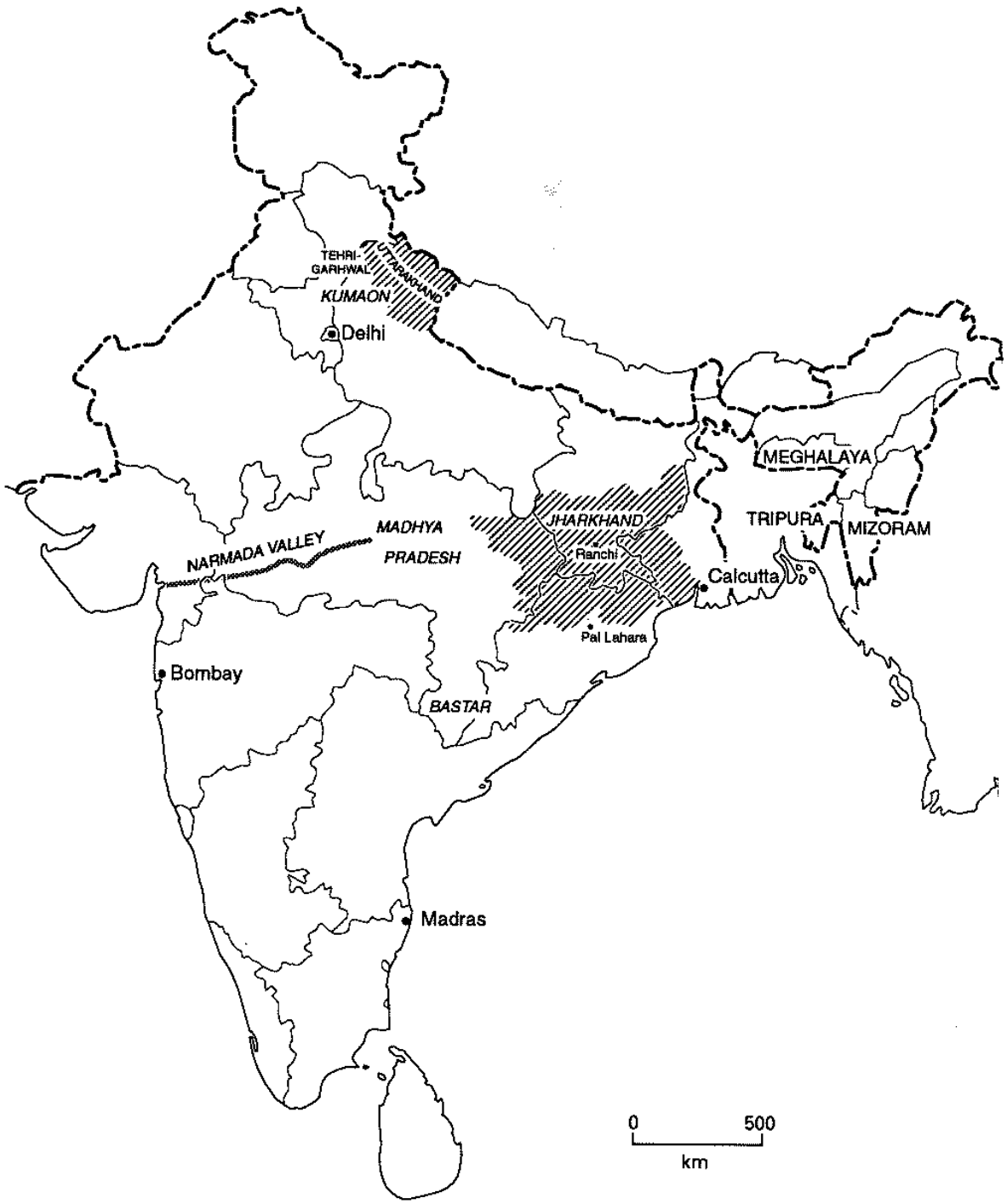

Figure 1. India: key reference areas.

In section 4 I deal with the ways in which these ambivalent and diverse Orientalist discourses have been carried beyond India's Independence in 1947. I also consider some of the practical and policy-related effects of these different discourses in Uttarakhand, Jharkhand (see figure 1) and the (ex-)Central Provinces (roughly Madhya Pradesh). In section 5 I examine some of the ways in which India's Others—in both colonial and postcolonial periods—have 'talked back' to their representors, criticised policies that they perceive to be unjust, and stood up in resistance to their oppressors. Finally, in section 6 I draw together these ideas and offer some brief thoughts on the extent to which critiques of Orientalism are relevant to contemporary representations of the Other. In particular, I am concerned with the possibility of empathy—not only as a means of portraying yet another of Orientalism's multifaceted 'voices', but also in relation to the craft of policymaking in developing countries.

2 British forest policy in India 1865 to 1945

Large-scale forest management in India dates back to long before the period of British rule. The Arthashastra of Kautilya, for example, gives an account of ancient forest management in Northern India during the Mauryan period, involving the division of forests into those to be used for hunting and those for community subsistence purposes. Great care was taken to classify and conserve the various different forest trees, minor forest produce, and wildlife (Padhi, 1982). During the Vedic period, too, much value was attributed not only to trees, but also to forest fruits, leaves, flowers, shade, roots, and timber. The links between deforestation and changes in rainfall were also recognised and guarded against (Agarwala, 1990).

When the British first looked to India for their supplies of military timber the subcontinent was considered to have 'inexhaustible tracts' of forest land (Shiva, 1988). A royalty right in teak was vested in the East India Company and much wood was exploited during the late 18th and early 19th century. By the 1860s, though, the need for conservation to enable the continued extraction of timber for British shipbuilding, railway construction, and military purposes was recognised. Associated concern about climatic change, soil erosion, reduced irrigation water supplies, and declining agricultural production provided further impetus for the development of a modernising (and normalising) forest policy. One result of this was the enactment of the first Indian Forest Act in 1865 and the simultaneous introduction of 'modern scientific forestry' (Stebbing[5], 1922).

The 1865 Act was strengthened in 1894, on the advice of the German agriculturist Dr J A Voelcker, who stressed the necessity of maintaining a good forest cover to prevent soil erosion and associated losses in terms of (taxable) agricultural production. The legislation resulting from this advice—Resolution 22F on Forest Policy in India—became known as the Voelcker Resolution and was applied throughout British India. Like the ancient forest management systems preceding it, the resolution divided British India's woodlands into four main categories: (1) reserved forests, (2) protected forests, (3) private forests, and (4) village forests and wastes. Here the similarity ended, as British forestry policy, following along classically Orientalist lines, sought to procure the largest possible amounts of timber and agricultural revenue for Britain, whilst at the same time negating the rights of 'native' village and adivasi populations to their forest land. Reserved forests were restricted solely for commercial purposes except for a few minor concessions such as fruit collecting (Anderson and Huber, 1988). Villagers were forbidden to obtain

[5] E P Stebbing was Professor of forestry at Edinburgh University, formerly employed by the Indian Forest Service.

their subsistence requirements from the reserved forests and punishments were meted out to those who took more than their allowance from the protected areas. Guha (1989) links this 'positivist criminology' to the German school in which scientific forestry has its roots.

The restrictions placed upon local cultivators and forest dwellers were justified on the grounds that the 'natives' were quite unable to manage their own forests without British help. Scientific forestry was held up as an example to the supposedly stupid and destructive Indian villagers and, as such, it fits quite well into Said's and Pinney's hegemonic, modernising, and normalising visions of colonial responses to Otherness. Lord Tweedale, for example, emphasised the necessity of having an expert forester in charge to "impart his knowledge to all natives" (Stebbing, 1922, page 97), and the British Association's report of 1951 stated its concern for the "almost uncontrolled destruction of the indigenous forests in progress from the careless habits of the native population" (Stebbing, 1922, page 217).

The main purpose of restricting these forest lands was to promote sustained timber yields and curtail any obstacles—especially local burning, shifting cultivation, lopping, and grazing—to its attainment. In the protected forests, villagers were allowed to hunt, graze livestock, and cut timber for basic necessities. Only village forests were for communal use. Overall management, though, was on behalf of the Forest Department: supposedly for the 'public benefit' (Kulkarni, 1983). In reality, commercial needs and the desire for maximum revenue collection were the main policy considerations, with the result that little attention was paid to the needs of local populations.

Sociocultural impacts were probably the most significant factors affecting local populations following the implementation of the 1894 Resolution. Forest commercialisation and the "commodification of time and space" (Corbridge, 1991) associated with the regularised layout and use of the reserved and protected forests, brought about a severe disruption in the life-styles of forest people. Many villagers were separated from their main means of subsistence and the 'social bonds' that had traditionally regulated community forest use were frequently broken. Forced or indentured labour (*begar*) associated with rapidly spreading landlord, moneylender, and liquor-vendor networks became widespread in many—especially adivasi dominated—areas (Prabhu, 1983).

In the case of the Juangs of Pal Lahara, Orissa, for example, "complete cultural and religious collapse" is said to have accompanied their "economic decay". After the loss of their land, they were "unable to offer worship or sacrifice to their gods" and their artistic expression was "killed by the march of civilisation into the forests" (Elwin, 1964, page 173). This denial of access to sacred forest areas and deities was associated, in many areas, with the disruption and subsequent decline of community-based resource conservation and management systems. In most cases it was not even as though the natives could retain their contact with the forests by seeking employment in the Forest Department. According to Stebbing (1923), "the right stamp of man did not present himself for competition with the European applicants" (page 31). As a result, the symbiotic relationship between the hills people and their forests was often lost. They became "alienated from nature" (Guha, 1989) and frequently turned their frustration and resentment inwards: to the destruction of the restricted forest lands.

Ecologically, the impact of the reservation policy on the remaining private, protected, and reserved forests was severe. The dominant forest structures were commonly changed from all-aged, diverse, and naturally regenerating jungles to simplified, even-aged monocultures, often dominated by sal, teak, and pine. In many

nonreserved areas, fuelwood shortages came to be a particular problem because of the loss of area available for firewood collection. In Uttarakhand, for example, Guha (1989) reports the degradation of many of the remaining fuelwood resources through their overutilisation and destruction by people (or cattle) who had nowhere else to obtain their subsistence requirements.

The forest management system that suffered the most from the advent of British forest policy was that of *dhya*, or shifting cultivation. Most colonial forest officers regarded it as "a pernicious system ... probably as destructive to forests as any other act of man" (Stebbing, 1922, page 31). Great efforts were made to promote a "weaning from the axe" and a movement away from that "lazy form of cultivation" by the adivasis (Elwin, 1939). Indeed, Mr J H Morriss, the Settlement Officer for the Central Provinces, was of the opinion that "so long as these people do nothing but grow Kodo or Koatkee on *dhya* patches for their own food; so long as they produce nothing at all for sale or barter to other people; so long as they actually consume nothing except for a few grains of salt from the outer world, they can never improve, they can never rise in the human scale, but must continue to be wild men of the woods as they are now" (quoted in Elwin, 1939, page 111).

Attempts to discourage shifting cultivation in the Central Provinces involved particularly drastic measures such as the imposition of an 'axe tax'. This was followed by attempts to mix Baiga and Gond communities (despite their traditionally separate settlements) in the hope that the Baiga would learn plough cultivation from the Gonds (Elwin, 1939). Although the tax was later abolished because of the difficulties involved in imposing it, and the manner in which the Baiga "clung like a spoilt child to their axe and fire" (Deputy Commissioner of the Forest Department, quoted in Elwin, 1939, page 119), the basic fact that plough cultivation violated many of the traditional religious mores of the Baiga seemed to escape consideration by most forest officers. Instead, their main concern was to ensure that shifting cultivation was not allowed to prevent forest regeneration in commercially operated timber areas.

The justification for this large-scale disruption of traditional community life was often worded in classically Orientalist terms. Stebbing, for example, blamed the "Oriental conservatism and apathy of the local population for the slow progress of forest conservation and administration" (1923, page 462) and suggested that they needed to be "gradually weaned from their old methods of utilising—wastefully utilising—the forests and educated to a recognition of the fact that the work being carried out was in their true interests".

This image of a childlike 'native' population benefiting from the 'stern' paternalistic rule of a 'superior' colonial power is an important one in many of the normalising Orientalist discourses mentioned above. Nandy (1983) describes this "homology between primitivism and infantility" (page 13) as being part of the colonisation process whereby the imperial powers often viewed their colonies as "the abode of people childlike and innocent on the one hand, and devious, effeminate and passive-aggressive on the other" (pages 37-38).

A good illustration of these different Orientalist themes coming into conflict can be found in colonial Britain's 'official tribal policy' in India. In theory—following the 'kindly' paternalistic recommendations of various missionaries and anthropologists who had worked closely, or lived with adivasi populations—the policy after about 1880 was 'isolationist'. 'Excluded' and 'partially excluded' areas were set up where the adivasis would be protected and could (supposedly) continue their traditional life-styles unmolested. The British strongly believed that they could look after the tribal peoples, safeguarding them far more effectively from the disruption associated

with modernisation, than could their own countryfolk (Corbridge, 1991). In addition to being paternalistic, the isolationist policy was also politically inspired as it enabled adivasis to be 'divided' from nontribal Indians and 'ruled' in a specific geographical area. This helped to reduce British anxiety about the possibility of the Independence movement spreading into the hills and creating unrest in frontier zones such as the northeast.

It was not long after the establishment of this isolationist policy, however, before its paternalistic and hegemonic aspects came into conflict with a desire fully to exploit India's natural resources and mineral wealth. In forest, coal, and mineral-rich areas such as the Jharkhand region of Bihar, land acquisition (without adequate financial compensation) associated with mining developments and the reservation of forest areas, meant that the adivasis were frequently 'under-mined' in an almost literal sense by the British desire to "seek the economic transformation of peninsular India" (Corbridge, 1991, page 155). Any unrest associated with these actions on behalf of the adivasis, was rarely tolerated. The British "commitment to the use of force" (Corbridge, 1991, page 160) meant that protesters were usually—although there were some exceptions—punished for their 'transgressions'.

These conflicts between the normalising-dominatory aspects of British rule, and a paternalistic desire to protect the 'savage' but 'noble' adivasis exemplify quite well the complexity and opposition within these Orientalist discourses. They also justified, to a large extent, the contradictory nature of much British policymaking in colonial India. To complicate matters still further, a number of British people living in India developed a great deal of sympathy and respect for their so-called Indian Others. Of particular interest were the more 'primitive' aboriginal populations as they were deemed to have great value for anthropological study generally and, more specifically, for reflecting light upon the 'history' of Western cultures themselves.

Although the thrust of this point probably would be recognised by Said, he does, nevertheless, seem to suggest that all outsiders commenting on the Orient were (or are) nonparticipant observers unconcerned "with the Orient itself except as the first cause of what [they] say" (1978, page 21). Other scholars, such as Bhabha (1984) and Mohanty (1991), have pushed this perspective still further, to the extent that they would seem to dismiss all attempts by Imperial Britons to understand their colonial subjects as just another form of Orientalist voyeurism. In contrast to this suggestion, I will show that, although even the most liberal discourses about adivasis, such as those of Elwin (1936; 1939; 1964), Grigson (1938), and von Furer-Haimendorf (1989) are Orientalist and paternalistic (almost by definition, according to some critics of Eurocentrism), their attempts to empathise with the adivasis was Orientalist in a different and subversive manner (a point I will return to in section 6).

3 Sympathetic outsiders

One of the most prominent 'empathetic Orientalists' in India during the latter part of the colonial period was the pro-nationalist, Oxford-educated anthropologist and missionary, Verrier Elwin, who spent a great deal of time living with and studying the Baiga and Gond tribes of the Central Highlands of India. With his strong ideas on the importance and attractiveness of these tribes' independence and 'moral freedom', Elwin was a major advocate of tribal self-government with minimum interference (other than medical) from the British. He was also well tuned-in to the ecological knowledges and conservation strategies of the Baigas and Gonds, and was one of the few proponents of the idea that tribal agricultural practices were not so destructive as had been suggested by the scientific foresters.

One of Elwin's main concerns was to question the traditional wisdom concerning shifting cultivation in the Central Provinces. Instead of condemning it as a 'pernicious system', he ventured to question whether it was really as ecologically unsound as it had been made out to be by most European foresters. After all, the Baiga considered "the magical protection of the forests [to be] their charge" (1964, page 115), and the destruction of their main means of subsistence would have been at odds with this idea. From intensive study of Baiga 'gardens' or *bewars*, Elwin concluded that, so long as suitable rotations (twelve to fifteen years) were maintained and the bewars were cut above the frost line, regeneration was so good that the jungle often became impenetrable within a few years after cutting. Elwin also corrected the classic Orientalist assumption that shifting cultivation was a very lazy agricultural method. He want to great lengths to stress the arduous nature of bewar clearing and the intensive weeding necessary to protect crops from resprouting stumps. Fencing, too, was often necessary to prevent deer or bison from damaging the cultivated 'gardens'.

With respect to 'weaning from the axe', Elwin was one of the main protagonists for leaving the adivasis alone. After all, their "cultivation with the axe and mattock is of an entirely different type to plough cultivation, and they cannot more reasonably be forced to a plough than a weaver can be forced to service in a cotton mill" (1939, page 128). In addition, he recognised their deeply held reservations about plough cultivation—it was considered wrong to "lacerate the breast of mother earth" (1964, page 147). He was also sensitive to the Baigas' 'religious devotion' to their bewars (1936). Indeed, he feared the loss of the "vital and energetic culture" of the Baiga, and a decline in their status from "lords of the jungle to the very bottom of the social scale" (1939, page 519), if the weaning policy continued and a more sensitive strategy were not found.

Although very few Britons in colonial India were as sensitive as Elwin to the so-called "loss of nerve" (1964) likely to occur within adivasi peoples upon contact with modernising colonial (especially forestry) policies, there were other eminent figures in authority who were sympathetic towards the supposed singularity of tribal life-styles. The Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, Sir Richard Temple, for example, was concerned—despite his enthusiasm for the weaning policy—to protect "the material interests of the wild tribes" (quoted in Elwin, 1939, page 112). He arranged for special areas—such as the Baiga Chak in the Central Highlands—to be reserved specifically for cultivation by adivasis. Colonel Ward recognised the "hard and impolitic task" of forcing the Baiga to take to the plough (1870, page 35) and even Stebbing recognised the "amazing folly" of trying to prohibit shifting cultivation (1922, page 71).

Other forest officers focused more upon the recognition and defence of specific tribal ecological practices. Grigson, the Administrator of Bastar 1927–31, for example, celebrated the "bold and persevering champions of the great law of nature" in his book about the Maria Gonds of Bastar (1938), and the silviculturalist Troup (1921) was quick to point out the benefits of regulated burning in jungle areas. Still others, including Dietrich Brandis, the first Inspector General of Forests; Cleghorn, the Conservator of Forests in Madras; and Stebbing showed great sensitivity to the hills peoples' need for fuelwood and tried hard to involve village and adivasi populations in schemes for its provision (Anderson and Huber, 1988; Stebbing, 1922). Even Voelcker, one of the strongest opponents to shifting cultivation, recognised the need for fuelwood provision. His concern, however, was probably more related to the need to prevent manure from being used as a cooking fuel instead of as a

fertiliser—thereby reducing agricultural productivity and taxes—than it was to the cultivators' requirements per se.

Not all of the British administrators and service personnel in colonial India shared this sensitivity and 'kindly' paternalism, of course. Instead, most of the "Victorian Gentlemen" who occupied the higher colonial administrative positions probably maintained an "aloof and chilly manner" (Kiernan, 1969) in their dealings with 'natives'; distancing themselves in order to justify their own positions as colonial rulers and to bolster their associated "magical feelings of omnipotence and permanence" (Nandy, 1983, page 35). Pagden (1982) suggests that the experience of certain officers in dealing with the "inferior rural savages" back home probably put them in an excellent position to dominate and rule abroad. After all, the "disgruntled native in the colonies, labour agitator in the mills were the same serpent in alternate disguises" (Kiernan, 1969, page 316). Some might even have believed that the self-sufficiency and independence of the Indians made them much easier to rule than the welfare-dependent, poverty-stricken Others in Britain. But, even if a majority of 'Victorian Gentlemen' did feel this way, Said's recognition of the at least Janus-faced nature of Orientalism seems to challenge the idea that all colonial officers thought only of ruling and 'correcting' these 'childlike natives' and had no sympathy at all for their problems.

With regard to lower level administrators and service personnel, it would seem unrealistic to suggest that none of them had any fellow feeling towards the Indians whose lives were so obviously being disrupted by British policies. Kiernan (1969) suggests that the lower ranking, working-class army personnel in India were probably far more in tune with the life-styles of their (equally subservient and supposedly inferior) Indian colleagues than they were with those of their superiors. Elwin (1939), too, notes the sympathy held for adivasi people by some of the less-high-ranking forestry officers working with them in the field. In addition, many often highly educated British liberals serving as researchers, social workers, and missionaries in India were also sympathetic to some of the claims of the Indian national movement and sensitive to the deleterious impacts of colonial rule. Most of these people—Gandhi's follower Mirabehn (born Madeleine Slade) being an excellent example—seem to have held little truck with the Darwinian ideas about moral and developmental hierarchies and the unquestioned inferiority of Indians. They instead tended to focus on means of helping Indians to cope with the externally imposed modernisation and colonisation process.

Elwin himself is perhaps the classic example of a well-educated colonial living in India and trying to understand and empathise with, rather than dominate and rule over, the 'natives'. Indeed the *Bombay Chronicle* of 1932 said that it was people like him "who enable Indians to believe that the British nation does not consist entirely of Imperialists, commercial exploiters, swashbuckling special correspondents. They are the one link that holds the attenuated chain of Indo-British relations together" (quoted in Elwin, 1964, page 79).

Ironically, though, his pro-nationalist sentiments and his insistence on living like a tribal villager probably made him appear more of an outsider to the mainstream colonial administration than the adivasi populations that he was studying. After all, Britons like himself and Mirabehn who had chosen to turn their back on colonialism in order to join the Indian cause, must have seemed more incomprehensible than the Indians themselves who supposedly did not know any better.

Although modernising and normalising themes were the dominant ones in most imperial discourses about colonial Others, it is important not to forget that some other, less negative, discourses, do exist. Celebratory accounts such as those stemming

from Elwin's detailed anthropological studies amongst Indian adivasis are particularly good examples of this. Both types of account can easily be criticised for being Orientalist: the former for its desire to modernise India, to exploit the subcontinent's natural resources and to uplift its people from their 'childlike' state, and the latter for its paternalism (albeit kindly) and its sometimes prurient interest in tribal sexualities. But the classification of such widely different types of discourse as Orientalist does render the concept of Orientalism at best hard-to-define, and at worst rather dubious. Even if we do accept, or allow, that very different representations can be criticised as Orientalist (in one sense) this does not mean that their impacts are the same. Elwin's work was very much a product of its time, but his hard-won empathy enabled him to suggest some important changes to the colonial government's tribal and forest policies (von Furer-Haimendorf, 1989). Insofar as he was sometimes successful in this, Elwin's intervention undoubtedly helped prevent much of the damage that would have otherwise resulted from the implementation of policies informed solely by modernising and 'stern' paternalist forms of Orientalism.

4 Postcolonial discourses about the Other

One of the virtues of Said's reworking of Foucault's theory of power, is that it has suggested how discourses that are Orientalist in style can continue long after the collapse of formal empires. Power resides in words and languages, as well as in political systems and armouries. Although a detailed discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, some of the most obvious instances of a continuation of very broadly Orientalist attitudes into the postcolonial period can be found in some of the West's early attempts to bring about 'development' in the Third World. Indeed, Kothari goes so far as to say that "where colonialism left off, development took over" (1988, page 143). During the 1960s, in particular, the failure of many development projects was blamed on the so-called 'backwardness', 'irrationality', and 'stupidity' of farmers who were deemed unwilling or too slow to adopt new farming technologies. Typically Orientalist ideas that Third World farmers "were ignorant and needed to be taught how to farm" (Hecht, 1987, page 18) reasserted themselves in association with doubts about their efficiency, economic rationality, and willingness to work. Orientalism as justification for territorial imperialism resurfaced as Orientalism as handmaiden to the bounties of capitalism and modernisation.

Since the early 1970s more emphasis has been placed upon the study of the constraints affecting farmers in developing countries (Barlett, 1980; Bennett, 1980; Berry, 1980; Cancian, 1972; 1980; Cohen, 1967). As a result, attitudes towards them have tended to take on a more celebratory tone and there has been much recent interest in indigenous knowledge systems, the rationality of Third World farmer decisionmaking processes (Appadurai, 1990; Barlett, 1980; Brokensha et al, 1980; Chambers, 1979, 1983; Chambers and Ghildyal, 1985; Chambers et al, 1989; Ellen, 1982; Howes and Chambers, 1980; Ortiz, 1980; Schultz, 1964), and farmers' abilities to minimise risk (Cancian, 1980; Lipton, 1968; Watts, 1982).

More recently still, this shift in attitudes has encouraged some scholars and activists to voice a more radical (fundamentalist?) disenchantment with development itself (see Esteva, 1987, page 128), not least because each "development 'strategy' or 'approach' has been tested, again and again, under widely different conditions but with the same frustrating results" (page 136). Consequently, it has been argued that the West should no longer be a role model for the rest of the world as "the experiment is over ... development is dead" (page 137). Antidevelopment—"not so much a development alternative, as an alternative to development" (Watts, 1993, page 258)—is proposed in its place.

Implicit in many antidevelopment discourses is the idea that Western representations of non-Western Others are dangerous as they provide the justification for a postcolonial exploitation of the Third World in the form of development. Equally damaging in the eyes of some are the governments and policymakers of developing countries themselves, which—taken in by the so-called 'dream' of development—subjugate their own Others to development's hegemonic discourses (Parajuli, 1991). According to Escobar (1992) development has, like "the orientalist discourses examined by Said ... functioned as a mechanism for the production and management of the Third World in the post-war period" (page 413). Many of the most vocal proponents of these views are based in the West[6], including Banuri (1990), Marglin (1990), Parajuli (1991), Pieterse (1991), Escobar (1992), Norgaard (1992), Sachs (1992), and Slater (1992), but similar ideas have also been put forward by intellectuals and radical academics resident in the Third World, including Nandy (1983) and Shiva (1988; 1991a; 1991b; 1993) in India, and Esteva (1992) in Mexico.

The early postcolonial discourses about the 'stupidity' and 'irrationality' of Third World peasants and tribals can be criticised for their innate Orientalism just as easily as those of their colonial counterparts. These derogatory accounts of the farming abilities and knowledge systems of people who live in developing countries echo uncannily many of the colonial Forest Department's views on Indian forest dwellers. Antidevelopment views, by contrast, are so celebratory about Other, non-Western life-styles that it becomes hard to know whether to criticise them for Orientalism or Occidentalism. What is clear, though, is that their rejection of the West is blinkered insofar as it refuses to recognise that the West has brought some benefits to the Third World. It also fails to raise counterfactual questions with regard to what the situation in the Third World would be like in the absence of development assistance from the West or Western-style development from within. Instead, it has been argued that development "has in many ways created the hungry, the illiterate, the marginals, the migrants, those belonging to the informal economy, the excluded women and indigenous peoples etc" (Escobar, 1992, page 431). There is plenty of evidence to suggest that this is blinkered at best, and simply false in the case of a majority of men and women in developing countries (Singh, 1990; World Bank, 1991).

In addition, some recent work on those new social movements (Escobar, 1992; Guha, 1989; Parajuli, 1991; Scott, 1990; Slater, 1985) which demand "greater autonomy over the decisions that affect their lives" (Escobar, 1992, page 421), and which are capable "not only of resisting the dominant knowledge but also of articulating their own world views" (Parajuli, 1991, page 185), has encouraged some to believe that *all* members of developing countries are keen to, or are able to, reject that which is offered by development. This allegation is a pernicious one to my mind, and it certainly raises the question of whether antidevelopmentist representations of what people in poorer countries might want are any more accurate than those found in more traditional development discourses.

As indicated earlier, these types of discourse are not restricted to Western representations of developing countries. Indeed, many are mirrored within the ex-colonial countries in the form of representations of marginal groups or cultures by policymaking, intellectual, or academic elites. After India's Independence,

[6] Some have doubted the sincerity of these radical arguments. Nanda, for example, has gone as far as to suggest that given "the stardom and comfortable appointments in western universities that have followed, one cannot but suspect that their anti-western rhetoric is more a self-serving ploy than honest scholarship that engages with the political and economic realities of their societies" (Nanda, 1991, page 34).

for example, one might have imagined that the new government would have made great efforts to cast off the shackles of British colonialism. It has often been remarked, however, that many British ideas and methods of rule have been continued by postcolonial governments, especially as India has become more and more hooked into Western commercial and consumer systems. Indeed, Nandy (1983) notes that Indian society has "held in trusteeship aspects of the West which are lost to the West itself" (page 74).

A good example of this is India's postcolonial forest policy. Instead of rejecting the modernising policies of the British and replacing them with a more socially and environmentally sensitive forest management strategy, the postcolonial forest department actually embraced and enlarged on British policies. Indeed, many people have commented on the striking similarity between the colonial and postcolonial governments' concern for the 'national interest' over and above the claims of locally affected communities (Guha, 1983; 1989; Joshi, 1983; Kulkarni, 1983). In this manner, what Nandy (1983) would call a "colonialism of the mind" was reproduced in the working practices of a predominantly urban Indian elite. Independent India followed the dichotomising and hierarchical traditions of the British, by identifying its own Others in the form of its scheduled castes and tribes.

In many cases, the forest management strategies of the colonial authorities were directly extended by the independent government. Guha (1989) draws attention to the remarkable invariance of "silvicultural and other strategies of manipulation and control, designed to limit and carefully regulate the access of all surrounding populations to the forest" (page 143). Kulkarni, meanwhile, stresses the highly commercialised nature and antipoor bias of the postcolonial Forest Department: "The destruction of forests for the construction of roads, building of irrigation and hydro-electricity projects, ammunition factories and other projects was justified in the name of national interest whereas cultivation of lands shown as forest lands but without any actual tree cover was treated as encroachment" (1983, page 89).

Scientific forestry provided the main basis for the Forest Act of 1952 which, as Guha points out, contains an "explicit assertion of state monopoly right at the expense of the forest communities" which is "legitimised in the name of the 'national interest', so as to ensure that the 'country as a whole [sic]' is not deprived of a 'national asset' by the mere 'accident of a village being situated close to a forest'" (1983, page 1888). So, in spite of the postcolonial Forest Department's commitment, in principle, to policies that 'meet local needs first', there are many instances, in practice, of a continuation of colonial-style large-scale felling operations. Such activities—often undertaken to leave the way clear for agriculture and commercial timber monocultures which serve the growing demands of India's paper and other wood-based industries—have left many forest communities deprived of their life-support systems (Guha, 1983).

In addition, my own fieldwork in Chopta Nagpur, Bihar indicates that many *zamindars* (landlords) felled their forest lands after 1950 in order to make a quick buck from timber sales before a process of land reform was implemented. In 'my' fieldwork village of Ambatoli, no mango trees were left intact in a village named after the mango tree. Twenty-two acres of orchard land was felled by the ex-zamindar in the early 1950s. Throughout India, one major result of this 'official deforestation' by timber contractors and zamindars (with its resultant financial kickbacks for contractors, landowners, and forest employees) was to encourage a change in the attitude of many local communities to nearby forest resources. Their action was similar to that of many forest dwellers who had seen the forest being reserved for the first time by the British, in that they saw no reason to continue to

protect and manage the forest so that the state and contract cutters could profit from their work. Instead, they decided to maximise their personal benefit from the forest through overcutting and illegal felling.

This led, eventually, to large-scale ecological damage in the form of deforestation, runoff, soil erosion, and ecosystem impoverishment (D'Abreo, 1982). It was also instrumental in creating a situation of widespread conflict between the Forest Department and local forest communities which echoed earlier tensions surrounding the issue of forest reservation during the colonial period. But, as Guha (1983) points out, the postcolonial Forest Department's ways of dealing with local opposition to its policies or the infringement of its regulations have been "strikingly unlike the British methods of paternalist rule" (page 1891). Instead, there has been "increased repression" and "use of armed forces" to contain unrest. The result is that the postcolonial Forest Department has been able to enforce a modernising forestry policy that is—ironic though it may seem—even more imposing, insensitive, and paternalistic than was its British predecessor. Baxi (1983) has pointed up the underlying arrogance of the postcolonial Forest Department when he writes that: "The administration knows the problem and knows the solution. Therefore, it is [according to this view] the duty of people to cooperate and all would be well. The ... law-makers do not expect or wish people to be self-reliant or participate in policy decisions vitally affecting them" (page 102).

The piece of legislation which best illustrates the colonising attitudes built into much of Independent India's forest policy is the draft Forest Act that was proposed in 1980. Based on the 1878 Forest Act [eighty one out of eighty four sections are reproduced (Guha, 1983)] and influenced by recommendations from the National Commission of Agriculture, 1976, the Act retained the fourfold division of forest lands established in the Voelcker Resolution of 1894. In addition, its "pro-rich, pro-urban and anti-rural people bias" (Kulkarni, 1983, page 91) showed a similarly superficial consideration of forest-dwelling adivasi populations. The major differences between the two pieces of legislation reflect the far greater power of the postcolonial government to uphold and defend its chosen policies. One effect of the 1980 Act would have been to "further increase the powers of the forest and police bureaucracy—powers that have been consistently misused in the past" (Guha, 1983, page 1942) by giving forest officers far greater powers of arrest, rule enforcement, and confiscation than had been available to their colonial counterparts.

The draft 1980 Act was staunchly and successfully resisted, but forest communities—particularly the traditionally less politically motivated (and supposedly less vocal) adivasi populations—were forced to continue to bear the burden of existing forest-related restrictions. In many states, for example, minor forest produce has been nationalised, making it necessary for permits to be purchased before villagers can collect it. Strict rules and regulations also surround the amounts that each person may take (Fernandes, 1983). As Elwin (1964) so neatly pointed out, the "rights and privileges" that colonial officers afforded to the forest people during and after the 1890s, were further eroded during the postcolonial period, to the extent that they often became little more than "rights and concessions" in 1952 and "concessions" thereafter (page 52).

Successful planning strategies attempting to reverse this situation by promoting a fair deal for Indian adivasi populations have, until very recently, been few and far between. Most have tended to be highly imposed top-down type programmes: their poor results often stemming from the lack of adivasi involvement in their own development. Many of the early social forestry programmes, especially those favouring exotic eucalyptus plantations, are cases in point (Shiva et al, 1983). Other so-called

development projects have actually worsened the social and economic positions of the target rural and adivasi populations, by encouraging the penetration of nontribal traders, moneylenders, and settlers into the forest regions. Large-scale, foreign-sponsored projects have often been amongst the worst examples of this: the end result being a combination of the most detrimental elements of Western and indigenous Orientalism, in the form of top-down, imposed, and insensitive projects, coupled with local explosions of loansharking, land alienation, and bonded labour (Anderson and Huber, 1988; Joshi, 1983). Even when adivasis were employed to work in the forests, they were usually paid a mere pittance. Often, they became trapped into usurious relations with the forest contractors who act as middlemen for minor forest produce, selling it for huge profits in the cities (D'Abreo, 1982).

Socially, then, the ways in which the normalisation and modernisation processes that were started during the colonial period have been continued beyond India's Independence have been highly detrimental, especially for adivasi communities whose traditional life-styles have been almost completely undermined. In a study carried out in 1979 for the World Bank, the Tribal Research and Development Institute of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, stressed that "forests are so interwoven with the tribal life that it is beyond the imagination of a tribal to survive without forests, because of the ecological setting of a tribal village, socio-religious equilibrium, and economic dependence" (quoted in Anderson and Huber, 1988, page 68).

Since Independence, however, the continued extension of capitalistic circuits of commodity production and exchange deep into forest communities, and the associated decline of available subsistence resources, has all but destroyed this harmonious relationship. Traditional usufruct life-styles have been widely replaced by commercial relationships. Migration for jobs in the cities is now widespread, causing severe disruption to village family life (Dogra, 1983). Some of the greatest impacts have fallen—within hill communities, especially—upon one of the most long-standing Others of all: women. The increasing amounts of time needed by women to collect fuelwood—often up to five hours a day in degraded forest areas—are well documented (Agarwal, 1986; Shiva, 1988), but neither social forestry programmes nor agricultural policies (discouraging the use of dung for fuel instead of as a fertiliser) have been very successful at alleviating the fuelwood crisis to date (Tiwari, 1983). Even greater difficulties arise when men migrate in search of work. In such situations, village women are often forced to undertake the lion's share of agricultural production, in addition to collecting fuelwood and carrying out their other domestic duties such as preparing food and looking after small children.

The ecological deterioration often associated with the spread of commercial forestry, plus the restriction of hill populations into limited nonreserved forest areas, has frequently exacerbated this type of social disruption. In Uttarakhand, for example, population increases and erosion-related reductions in agricultural yields have necessitated the expansion of hills people into remote forest areas. Reductions in soil fertility, water-table levels, and diversity of woodland species that are often associated with commercial timber plantations have brought about a general impoverishment of many forest ecosystems, and landslides and flooding have been linked to deforestation—especially at high altitudes (Guha, 1983; 1989). The result of this has been that food procuration, as well as fuel and fodder collection, now require far more time and effort than used to be the case. The burden of this falls primarily on women.

Even in the forests to which hills people still have access, the widespread replacement of native broadleaved fodder trees by unpalatable conifer monocultures has meant that animal husbandry is a much more difficult system to manage than it

used to be. It is also, arguably, a less stable system, as pine plantations, because of their homogeneity and their usually high rates of stocking, are often less able to resist soil erosion than are the more natural all-aged jungles, with their rich ground flora and efficient utilisation of the soil profile (Guha, 1983).

Local people would almost certainly have known this, as detailed silvicultural knowledges essential to their survival are passed on from generation to generation. Women, according to Shiva (1988), play a critical role in maintaining forest diversity and procuring herbs, tubers, fodder, manure, fuel, fibre, and food in a sustainable manner. In effect, many hills people have a scientific forestry of their own, based on use value and a carefully controlled balance between the exploitation and conservation of forest resources. Unfortunately, this wider appreciation for forest productivity does not appear (until very recently), to have been shared by many of the Indian Forest Service's policymakers. Rather than utilising the indigenous knowledges and skills of their people, they have chosen to adopt the modernising and normalising strategies of the British before them.

Overall, the postcolonial Forest Department has, as a result of the sheer scale of its operations, added a huge impetus to the social and ecological problems of the people who are dependent on forests—adivasis in particular. By continuing and extending the British policy of reserving forests for commercial use, the Department has virtually forced forest dwellers to destroy large parts of their ecosystems as their subsistence requirements can no longer be met in a sustainable manner from the forest lands that they still have access to. Land alienation, poverty, and population increases have exacerbated this problem and the commercialisation of adivasi-forest relationships has removed the incentive for local people to protect the forest. Shifting cultivation, 'the pernicious practice' so hated by the British Forest Service, has again been singled out as a major cause of forest decline in the postcolonial period. The 1952 National Forest Policy tried, unsuccessfully, to wean hills people away from this practice and normalise them into the more 'acceptable' plough agriculture. When this did not work, and a particular forest area was selected for development, excuses for the displacement of local people were often made in the national interest: to make way for the creation of large-scale, capital-intensive hydroelectric, irrigation, mining, and commercial forestry programmes, etc.

Not surprisingly, the effect of these top-heavy and insensitive policies and programmes upon adivasi and other hill populations has often been disastrous. Opposition by foresters to dhya cultivation (plus a lack of supportive agricultural policies) has forced this type of agriculture into ever-decreasing areas of non-reserved and nonprotected forest. In Tripura, Meghalaya, and Mizoram, traditional rotation cycles have been reduced from an average—a few decades ago—of thirty to forty years, to only four or five years at present (Agarwala, 1990). Population increases have further exacerbated the situation, with the result that soil erosion and environmental degradation have become widespread in many areas. According to Guha, once the "informal code between the ruler and the ruled known as the 'moral economy' of the peasant" (1989, page 174) was breached, the harmony of human-forest relations was lost for good. But the Forest Department and other critics—like the British before them—were not slow to cast the blame for the resulting ecological deterioration upon the adivasis themselves. "What do these villagers know about ecology? What do they know about forestry? They only know how to destroy trees" (Senior Forestry Department official of Almora, September 1977; quoted in Dogra, 1983, page 5).

This kind of attitude, which one might have expected to find in a traditional Orientalist account of British forestry policy in India, exemplifies very well the

extent to which the postcolonial Indian Forest Service—with "its twin principles of state monopoly right and exclusion of forest communities" (Guha, 1983, page 1943)—has adopted many of the policies and ideologies of the colonial Forestry Department before it. But the greater strength of the postcolonial state, and its commitment to the development of its growing population, means that the respective powers of the two forest departments have been very different. As a result, the "violent" and "reductionist" nature (Shiva, 1988, page 95) of postcolonial forest management probably has had a much wider impact on India's adivasi populations than was possible before Independence.

5 The Others talk back

Despite the Orientalist nature of many colonial and postcolonial policies, the Others themselves were never subdued to the extent that they were unable to 'talk back' to those with the power to speak and act for them. At almost no point in time were Indians as Others under colonialism, or India's own Others under postcolonialism, unable to retain their "latent rebelliousness" and turn "even the standard stereotypes others have of [them] into effective screens and means of survival" (Nandy, 1983, page 104). The upshot of this has been the slow realisation that the Others are, and always were, capable of representing themselves and offering their own critiques of the representations made of them. They have proved this by fighting back and speaking out against the colonisation process—be it British or Indian—that has sought to marginalise them.

Because of the often fragile state of British rule in India, and the contradictions inherent within it, it was not possible for either forestry or tribal policies to remain consistent over space and time. For a start, the supposedly silent and passive Orientals were not slow to voice their objections to colonial rule; forest policies, in particular, frequently being greeted with widespread resentment—especially on behalf of adivasi and other forest-dependent populations. Also, British forestry officers were too thin on the ground to be able to implement truly hegemonic forest policies: the Santal *hul* (uprising) of 1855–57 and the rebellion of 1857 had had a severe impact, and the risk of native unrest and rebellion was considered to be a very serious one.

In Kumaun during the summer of 1916, opposition to colonial forest policy took the form of large-scale planned incendiarism which destroyed hundreds of acres of forest land (Guha, 1989). In Uttarakhand, the rules associated with the introduction of scientific forest management were frequently contravened by hill villagers who continued to exercise their traditional rights in the forest (Guha, 1989). In the Jharkhand region of Bihar, too, adivasis were often known to break forest regulations by exceeding their felling and grazing allowances in the reserved areas (Corbridge, 1991). In several cases—especially where nonviolent resistance to forest policy was involved—the British forestry officers were forced to recognise the limits of their power. In Bihar, attempts were also made, on occasion, to diffuse local tension by commuting fines and punishments for forest crimes (Corbridge, 1991). When the British did use force to implement their policies, however, resistance by some local peoples had to take more subtle forms: often, as Nandy puts it, by means of "protecting in the corner of their heart a secret defiance which [reduced] to absurdity the victor's concept of the defeated and his unspoken belief that he [was] morally and culturally superior to his subjects" (1983, page 100).

After Independence, resistance on behalf of India's internal Others increased, if anything, because the postcolonial state subjected them to policies that were frequently as harsh (if not harsher) than those of the British. Taking forest struggles

as an example, the Chipko movement—which grew out of a long tradition of peasant protest against commercial forestry in the Himalaya—and others like it are cases in point. The Chipko activists (many of them women) became so concerned by the ecological destruction wrought by large-scale felling operations in the early 1970s, that they took to embracing forest trees to prevent timber contractors from cutting them down (Guha, 1989; Shiva, 1988).

With respect to tribal policy, also, the decisions of governments in the post-colonial period have not gone unchallenged. The isolationism espoused by the British administration, although continued in theory by the Republic of India, has in practice been overruled. This is primarily because the 'exoticism' of the adivasi populations has often proved to be less attractive to the postcolonial state's fisc than are the mineral and forest reserves that lie within the 'excluded' areas. After all, more money can be obtained by stressing the alternative normalisation, modernisation, and integrationist ideologies—with their associated tribal displacement strategies—than can be gained from following a protectionist and paternalistic policy. Politically, though, this has proved to be a nonstarter in many tribal areas. A notable example is Bihar, where a 'Jharkhand' politics, headed by highly educated tribal leaders such as Ram Dayal Munda and Shibu Soren, has developed in opposition to the policies of the Indian state and exploitative private industry. The demand is for an independent state controlled by adivasis, in which their culture and their spiritually valued forests can be protected from external commercial exploitation.

The adivasis are not always alone in their struggles, however, for the contradictions within Indian attitudes towards their scheduled castes and tribes can be seen in the sympathetic attitudes of many Indian academics, politicians, writers, and policymakers to their grievances and demands. Central to this sensitivity seems to be a desire to view tribal policies as a means of providing "protection, development and social justice" whilst at the same time "introducing change without being destructive of the best values of the old life" (Elwin, 1964, page 295). Nehru, for example, was well known for advocating tribal development "along the lines of their own tradition and genius" (Elwin, 1964, page 295) and the Chief Minister of Assam suggested "a little understanding, a genuine respect, a lot of affection" (quoted in Elwin, 1964, page 316) as the best means of solving tribal problems. Even far-reaching projects such as the Community Development Programme, stressed in the late 1950s the need for a 'tribal bias' which would "recognize and honour their way of doing things, not because it is odd or picturesque but because it is theirs, and they have as much a right to their own culture and religion as anyone else in India" (quoted in Elwin, 1964, page 245). Of course, a lot of this was rhetoric, but it was (and is) important that such rhetoric was placed on public record.

Other writers—academics and social workers in particular—have talked more specifically about particular adivasi practices. Padhi (1982), D'Abreo (1982), Fernandes and Kulkarni (1983), Dogra (1983), and Guha (1989), to name but a few, have shown great appreciation for indigenous (often tribal) agricultural practices and ecological knowledges. Others such as Roy (1970), Agarwal (1986), and Shiva (1988) have stressed the spiritual significance of forest lands and their importance in the lives of adivasis. Almost all of them are critical of the postcolonial forest policy in India, especially the draft 1980 Forest Act. They highlighted the Act's lack of consideration for the needs of forest-dependent people and the destructive effects that it would have had upon traditional social customs.

This widespread criticism of the Act, plus a recognition that the polarised and antagonistic relationship between the people and the Indian Forest Service was benefiting nobody, resulted, eventually in its replacement. In addition, significant

efforts are now being made by the Indian Forest Service to encourage village-based forest protection, management, and control. In Bihar, for example, a revolutionary new scheme called the "Development of Forests through Peoples' Participation Programme" was introduced in November 1990. Its aim is to set up "village protection and management committees" in degraded protected forest areas.

At the time when I was doing my fieldwork, the villagers of Ambatoli were just starting to set up their "village protection and management committee", so I took the opportunity to ask them about how it was going to be organised and what they thought about the programme. In addition, I talked to Sanjay Kumar, the Divisional Forest Officer of Ranchi East Division, and Anand Jha, the Forester for Bero Block, about the aims and organisation of the "Development of Forests through Peoples' Participation Programme".

The actual unit around which these protection and management committees are to be formed is the revenue village, and every household within the village is to be represented by one member. In large villages like Ambatoli, where a committee made up of one member per household is impractical, an executive body will be formed. This will consist of fifteen to twenty elected villagers, the elected and defeated headmen (Mukhiyas), and a president selected from amongst the villagers. Although the villagers of Ambatoli were not exactly sure of the numbers involved, they were aware that the executive body must contain a certain number of female and scheduled caste or tribe members (the specific numbers are at least three women and four people from scheduled castes or tribes). To ensure communication between the committees and the Forest Department (and also to prevent corruption), a forester acts as the 'member secretary' on the committee or executive body. In Ambatoli, it is hoped that this, plus the fact that one representative from each of the village's hamlets will be a member of the executive body, will help to reduce intravillage conflicts over the forest[7]. The forester also helps to assess demands for infrastructural and development help, such as road and well provision—some small funds for which are being provided by the Forest Department.

The duties of the village protection and management committee include protecting the forest from overuse, guarding it from exploitation by 'outsiders', and formulating management plans which will serve local needs. This enables villagers to choose the species that they want to plant and where they want to plant them. In return for formulating and implementing forest management plans, the proceeds from the sale of forest produce (minus a small royalty) is given back to the committee. This is to be used equally for the development of the forest, the development of the village, and the committee's funds (for building, transport, etc). The committee or executive body itself receives no wage, but the cost of setting it up is borne by the government.

Although only about one hundred such committees have so far been set up, the enthusiasm of the Ambatoli villagers for the programme seems to bode well for its success. Many villagers have maintained for a long time that they could manage the forest better than the Forest Department. The Peoples' Participation Programme has provided them with an opportunity to do just that and the existence of voluntary forest protection committees in neighbouring areas of Bihar and Orissa and Van (forest) Panchyats in Garhwal suggests that in areas where there are strong village leaders, large-scale forest decline or perceived damage as a result of 'official' neglect; forest management and protection by local communities can be very successful (Guha, 1983; Kant et al, 1991; Mehrotra and Kishore, no date).

[7] This information came from Basant Kumar, a villager who has been at the forefront of the organisation of Ambatoli's village protection and management committee.

Obviously, the development of such a programme in Ambatoli by what most villagers think of either as an inefficient or exploitative Forest Department has been greeted with surprise and more than a little suspicion. Some people fear that promises will be broken and that the Forest Department will take all the revenue from the timber sold. Others predict conflicts between hamlets over forest protection and the sharing of forest produce. Nevertheless, there is a lot of enthusiasm for the project, both from villagers and local Forest Department staff, and if agreements between both groups can be maintained and corruption controlled, the Development of Forests through Peoples' Participation Programme could signify an important new shift in villager–Forest Department relations.

The above example illustrates how an effective and more acceptable forest policy can be proposed and put into action by forest officers sympathetic to (and informed by and about) the needs and skills of local people. Much of the initial criticism of postcolonial forest policy, in general, and the proposed 1980 Forest Act, in particular, came from a variety of Indian academics who, as a result of sustained research, had much empathy with the people most likely to be affected by it. Consequently, they could foresee and predict the damage that the Act would have and were in a good position to 'speak for' and represent their 'Others' in a sensitive manner. One result of their concern and the Others' own objections to villager–Forest Department relations during the early 1980s was—if the Peoples' Participation Programme is anything to go by—to help set in motion a distinct change in the course of postcolonial forest policy.

6 Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to take seriously the import of the critique of Orientalism that has been made over the last fifteen years. The work of Said (1978), Nandy (1983), Bhabha (1984), Inden (1986), Pinney (1988), and others has encouraged many academics and some policymakers to think more critically about the terms in which they represent other people and propose to enact policies on their behalf. Even a cursory review of forest policy in British India reveals a number of shared assumptions about 'irrational' and 'damaging' forest practices that can only be understood properly as an instance of a wider Orientalism in policy and thought. In some respects, too, I think we can learn from the recent work on antidevelopmentism. If development is but a modern form of Orientalism, it behoves us to question very fundamentally, not just particular development practices, but the ideology of development itself. Anyone who has worked with indigenous communities in Amazonia, say, or in the Narmada Valley region of India, will be sympathetic to some of the issues now being raised by antidevelopmentism.

Having made these points, however, I have also tried to intervene in what might be called the 'second generation' of debates around 'Othering' and Said's account of Orientalism. On the one hand, I have tried to show that Orientalism is not just a cloak for specifically Western forms of territorial imperialism and/or colonialism. Nandy is surely right to point out (and Said would almost certainly agree with him) that colonialism is in part a "state of mind" (Nandy, 1983, page 3). It follows that colonialism can survive the physical act of decolonisation, and that colonial-style policies can be enacted and be forcefully policed by postcolonial states. This was true of forest policies in India between 1947 and 1990. The greater extent of the postcolonial Forest Department's control over local people enabled large-scale timber extractions in the 'national interest' in spite of the resistance to scientific forestry by those dependant on forests. For this reason, I consider it useful to extend some aspects of Said's critique of Orientalism to include local representations of an 'internal Other'.

At the same time, I have also tried to argue that a critique of a singular Orientalism is too imprecise and fails to do justice to certain important differences of approach within a so-called Orientalist framework. I consider this matter to be of crucial policy significance. It clearly is the case that Elwin was an Orientalist of sorts, if we include a kindly paternalism within that general term. But it is also the case that his Orientalism was born of an empathy that directly confronted the normalising ambitions of scientific forestry in British India. Elwin's Orientalism was a subversive Orientalism as well as a paternalistic Orientalism. Now, of course, we are rightly sceptical even of kindly paternalism and most academics and some policymakers are mindful of the need to devise development policies in consultation with the beneficiaries or victims of development. Nevertheless, it is surely a leap of logic to jump from this position to one where it is believed that all development must be harmful. The same also goes for the view that a useful input into development planning cannot be made by outside observers or so-called experts who have lived with these local communities for a considerable period of time, who have attempted to understand their ways and to empathise with them, and (crucially), have the power (and I would say responsibility) to speak and act on their behalf. In short, I want to argue that so long as we are sensitive to the voices of so-called 'Other' people, *and* to the Orientalism that must affect our own sensibilities, we should not be precluded from working sensitively and sympathetically on behalf of others as and when we are called upon to do so. The main danger of a critique of Orientalism, and of the new philosophy of antidevelopmentism, is that a language of dissent can become so relativised that nothing practical ever gets done.

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank Jim and Nancy Duncan for stimulating my interest in issues relating to the 'Other' during and since the time that I was at Syracuse University. I would also like to thank Richard Grove, Piers Vitebsky, Ajay Rawat, and others for their advice and constructive criticism on an early version of this paper which was presented at the Conference on the Environmental History of South and South East Asia at NISTADS, New Delhi in February, 1992. I am also extremely grateful to my partner, Stuart Corbridge, for his suggestions and comments on earlier drafts of this paper and, more importantly, for his encouragement and patience while it was being written. My greatest thanks, however, go to the villagers of Ambatoli for their kindness and hospitality and for all that they taught me. I would like to dedicate this paper to 'ma' who once said to me "I can't wait for the day when electricity is brought to the village, as then I will be able to have a light and a fan".

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