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"Environmental Histories of South Asia: A Review Essay"

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Rangarajan, Mahesh. "Environmental Histories of South Asia: A Review Essay." *Environment and History* 2, no. 2, South Asia special issue (June, 1996): 129–43. doi:10.3197/096734096779522347 . Ecological histories of South Asia are going through a growth phase. Within a few years of the first ecologically informed study of a peasant movement, there has been a welter of fresh monographs. From an initial focus on forests and irrigation, the agenda is also broadening out to include a range of sectors, from small dam systems to urban air pollution, from changing attitudes to fauna to histories of science. Yet, the unifying theme largely remains the nature and significance of the colonial experience. The only overview of the processes of change, *This Fissured Land*, is an ambitious attempt to span centuries and subregions tom ap the changing patterns of prudence and profligacy in resource use. Two broad themes taken up in the literature will be the focus of this essay: how far colonialism was an ecological watershed, and how producers responded to new pressures. The third issue is of what we can or should learn (or unlearn) from the colonial experience. Such a select reading of themes still omits a large corpus of work, but it can help focus attention on interpretive problems that may well be of wider interest. All rights reserved. © 1996 The White Horse Press

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