

Brown concludes each part of the book with a section on alternatives. This provides an interesting thought exercise. While examples outside of Beijing might have shown that a non-violent conclusion was possible, most alternatives run up against the crucial reality that “old man politics” that stood in the way of any acceptable outcome on behalf of the protesters. Suggestions that the National People’s Congress might convene to provide a solution were floated but bumped against the reality of power broking in Beijing. Even more specifically, it was Deng who led the responses and called for the shots to be fired and unless he was willing to step aside, other scenarios were barely viable.

Brown is to be commended for bringing fresh thinking to an event that has already received a significant amount of attention and that has spawned numerous accounts by key participants. It is a lively, vivid account of this crucial period that will be the major work for many years to come.

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SINGHA, RADHIKA. *The Coolie’s Great War. Indian Labour in a Global Conflict 1914–1921*. Hurst & Company, London 2020. xxi + 372 pp. Ill. £45.00.

For many people in Asia, Africa, and South America, the war that began in 1914 and with incredible devastation wiped out millions of people over the course of four years was a European–North American war that had nothing to do with the rest of the world. It was a war that, as Karl Polanyi put it, was the terminal point of the “one-hundred-year peace” in Europe. However, the war that broke out in Europe did not remain within Europe’s walls and soon engulfed the people of distant lands. East and West Asia, as well as North Africa, were among the regions inveigled by the carnage. The changes in the British Empire came about as a result of several factors, including the war itself, which was the first instance of total warfare, involving entire populations of the Empire, the metropole, as well as the colonial peripheries.

Over the past decade, academic institutions, chiefly in Europe and the United States, commemorated the centenary of the Great War by conducting extensive research projects studying the origins of the war, its four-year annals, and the implications it left for the years that followed. However, most of these studies are confined to the frontiers of Europe and North America, and there are very few studies that crossed these frontiers, following the footsteps of the Europeans or North Americans in Asia or Africa, and hardly any touched on the lives of the non-European indigenous. Radhika Singha’s book is one of the very few studies that not only looks into the Great War from a non-European perspective, but even looks into the lives and times of the most voiceless among the indigenous, the coolies.

The Coolie’s Great War consists of six chapters, with an introduction and an afterword. Chapter 1 begins with the author’s remarks on the ranking in the Indian Army and her locating the geographical distribution of the Coolie Corps as Indian “non-combatants” across

theatres of war that spread from the Persian Gulf to Mesopotamia, East and North Africa, Gallipoli and Salonica, and, finally, to France. Behind the war fronts, although the coolies were employed as indentured labourers, for construction work, or as porters, sweepers, and grooms, they are widely absent from the military history of the Great War and rarely ever mentioned. They were categorized not as civilian labour, but as non-combatant members of the Indian Porter Corps. The root of this labelling could perhaps be traced to the restrictions in the Indian government's Emigration Act or the Army Act. We know that during the war, when the Anglo-Persian Oil Company faced scarcity of both skilled and unskilled labour and approached the government of India "to issue instructions to all concerned to facilitate recruitment and dispatch" of labourers for the Persian oil industry, the reaction of the Indian government, with reference to the Indian Emigration Act of 1883, was not complaisant. It was only in 1915, when the Abadan refinery was classified as "a munitions factory", that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was able to accommodate Indian labour, including the coolies, at the oil installations.

In Chapter 2, Radhika Singha examines the positions of the "follower" ranks, the "higher followers", and the "attached followers" in the Indian Army. The higher followers included mule and camel divers in the standing transport, who enjoyed certain privileges. The attached followers were chiefly those who were less mobile or, as Singha puts it, assigned to regiments: cooks, sweepers, or grass cutters. Customarily, compared with the combatants, the functions of the followers in the war have always been undervalued. The Indian followers, mostly coolies, who served in the British Imperial Army were also not immune to this value judgement. However, by conducting a detailed study of the everyday life and the performance of the followers, Singha demonstrates that, regardless of the pervasive discrimination faced by the coolies, the positions of coolie dhobis (washer-men) or coolie cooks and servants was essential to the general well-being of the Indian Army.

In Chapter 3, Singha introduces the reader to the first experience of the presence of the Indian Army in the Great War in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia. The Empire's needs for more combatant and logistics forces made the Indian Army launch a new campaign to recruit manpower for the war front. However, it soon became clear that providing skilled and unskilled manpower was not as easy as anticipated. Apart from the contradictory issues in the colonial laws, there was also indigenous communal resistance. At one point the Indian Army even sought to meet its needs for the Porter Corps by exploiting *corvée* labour, using prisoners, an endeavour that resulted in a certain degree of success. All these episodes are discussed in detail in this chapter.

In the footsteps of the coolies, Chapters 4 and 5 take us to the battlefields of France – a long journey from north-eastern India to the heart of Europe. A journey that was not easy. Not all those who were called on to make this journey reacted favourably to the call. Resistance – the refusal to go – was beyond what had been expected. It was a resistance rooted mostly in local and communal solidarity. But ultimately, those who embarked on the journey endured a lasting experience – an experience "that brought some home disabled and other stronger in health and with a sense of consequences, and left many buried in cemeteries in France" (p. 248). This experience of the "coloured" is something Singha has appealingly and accurately described in her study.

The concluding Chapter 6 deals with the end of war and the return of the soldiers and followers. As most European countries experienced, the end of the war and the repatriation of those able to return from the battlefields altered the political and social setting in Europe. The war brought with it the expansion of the public sphere and inadvertently opened up new avenues for greater political participation by the working classes and ordinary people.

While during the war the population, including workers, trade unionists, and politicians representing labour interests, generally supported the patriotic effort, by the end of the war they were demanding in exchange for the sacrifice of mass wartime participation that an equal sacrifice be made by property owners, in both material and political terms, constituting a new social and political order. In this context, India followed the same path. This unplanned expansion of the social and political domains subsequently allowed the working class and labouring poor to enter the political sphere more directly through a combination of electoral politics, trade unionism, and radical action, such as the 1920 and 1922 Indian migrant workers' strike in Abadan and the Akali movement of the 1920s and its impact on the post-war sphere of nationalist politics in India.

Radhika Singha's study is an objective, masterful, and beautifully written account of the lives and role of the Indian Coolies Corps in the Great War. With great skill Singha depicts the history of the Great War from below, and through the perspective of the coolies she also follows the practice of war in the British Empire in the multicultural colonial peripheries. Coinciding with the centenary of the Great War, this is a timely look at the war from a non-European and subaltern perspective – a perspective rarely adopted in studies of the Great War, a war that, although it originated in Europe, was not confined to Europe's frontiers.

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FIGAROL, THOMAS. *Les diamants de Saint-Claude, Un district industriel à l'âge de la première mondialisation, 1870–1914*. Préf. de Jean-Claude Daumas. [Collection Perspectives Historiques, Entreprises.] Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, Tours 2020. 379 pp. Ill. Maps. € 24.00.

When asked about which places they associate with the history of diamonds, the diamond trade or industry, most historians, scholars, and members of the general public will undoubtedly point to cities such as Antwerp, Amsterdam, London, or to the diamond fields and mines of South Africa. Not many would think of a few scattered villages in the Jura mountains (Haut-Jura) on the French border with Switzerland. Yet, it is precisely this area which lies at the geographical heart of this book and forms the basis of a fascinating historical inquiry into the role of the town of Saint-Claude, and a few other neighbouring localities, as a local manufacturing centre within the international diamond industry.

This book, the result of a doctoral dissertation defended at the University of Franche-Comté in 2015, uses the rigorous exploitation of an impressive corpus of local sources to tell the little-known history of the diamond industry of Saint-Claude. It offers a wide-ranging study of the economic, technical, and social realities of the diamond industry while giving ample attention to the companies, cooperatives, suppliers, and customers as