

In conclusion, this book is a significant contribution for those engaged in the study of East and Central Asian cultures, as well as those interested in pastoralists and human-animal relationships more generally. Fijn's work has already suggested new directions for my own research, supporting some theories and contradicting others – I predict that this will remain a key text in the area for many years to come.

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THEATRE OF CONFLICT, CITY OF HOPE: MUMBAI, 1600 TO PRESENT TIMES. By MARIAM DOSSAL. pp. xl, 252. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.
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In early November 2010, media outlets around the world splashed images and jaw-dropping descriptions of the world's "first billion dollar home", Mukesh Ambani's 27-storey glass spire in Mumbai's tony Altamount Road neighbourhood. The Ambani home has helped sharpen the juxtaposition between wealth, poverty, glitz, and squalor in India's business capital: from its rooftop, originally slated for three helipads, the Reliance Industries chairman can survey a city where sixty percent of his 15 million fellow Mumbaikars live in slums.

Such juxtapositions are nothing new in the so-called Maximum City. In her new volume, *Theatre of Conflict, City of Hope: Mumbai, 1660 to Present Times*, Mariam Dossal has traced the politics of land use that has made Bombay/Mumbai a topography of contrasts since when, in the seventeenth century, it was a collection of obscure islands ruled by the Portuguese. This is Dossal's second book on the urban history of Bombay/Mumbai—her earlier work, *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities* (Oxford University Press, 1991) focused on the period 1845–1875—and it constitutes an important addition to a growing body of scholarship on South Asian cities.

The "*land question dominates all others*", Dossal argues and she marshals reams of archival records in order to construct a complex story of struggle and compromise between land tenants, government administrators, and developers as Bombay mushroomed into the *urbs prima in Indis*. In her account of the history of Bombay/Mumbai, land is the ultimate contested resource, the object of elusive government efforts to establish its authority and plan for the city's growth, as well as a medium of resistance for subjects and citizens both rich and poor. The result of over three centuries of intense land politics has been one of the world's most dynamic and diverse cities, a metropolis that, nevertheless, Dossal believes has "reached a saturation point" (p. 230).

Dossal begins with the transfer of Bombay from Portuguese to English hands in 1661, a transfer that was, by itself, deeply mired in controversy. What exactly constituted Bombay, after all? While the English ultimately succeeded in securing their rights to a more broadly defined Bombay, the transfer by no means spelled the end of Portuguese influence. Here, in the first corner of India directly ruled by the English crown, Portuguese systems of land tenure remained in place, Portuguese law prevailed, and Portuguese subjects continued to man administrative posts. Throughout Dossal's work, in fact, we see how the legacy of Portuguese rule has remained a powerful influence in Bombay's development. As late as the first decades of the twentieth century, landholders in then-suburban Mahim complained that state requisitioning of their land violated covenants dating from the Portuguese era (pp. 169–170).

In 1669, Charles II handed Bombay over to the East India Company. Shaky English control of Bombay received a shot in the arm under the governorship of Gerald Aungier, who reached settlements with Portuguese and Indian landowners on collection of land rents, formally instituted English law,

and outlined a general plan for Bombay's development. Dossal considers Aungier's declaration of rights and duties under newly-instituted English law to be "a *Magna Carta* for Bombay's inhabitants, a charter of rights and a vision of a just society" (p. 15). In spite of further development of legal infrastructure, a programme of incentives to attract Indian merchants and artisans to the new settlement, and attempts to govern land use and assert the state's land rights, Portuguese influence remained strong: Portuguese remained a language used in courts and the administration relied on *veredores* (collectors of land revenue) to mediate legal disputes. Portuguese *fazendas* (land magnates) resisted the state's claims to own all of the land in Bombay.

Dossal illustrates how land tenure and land rights, and the consequent methods of extracting land revenue, remained perennial thorns in the side of the Company's administration. The government possessed "hopelessly inadequate" information on landholding and revenue through its first century of rule (p. 50). Complicating the situation was the fact that nine different forms of land tenure coexisted on the island, including tenures dating from the Gujarat sultanate, Chalukya, and Shilhara periods. Encroachment was another concern: in spite of the Company's land rights to all of Bombay, cultivators, tenants, and government intermediaries regularly usurped these rights and even conducted land sales. By 1790, the panicked collector of land revenue was informing his superiors that unless the government took urgent steps to collect proper information on land tenancy and rights, the very existence of the East India Company in western India was in danger (p. 53).

It took two more decades for the government to finally commission its first comprehensive land survey, completed in 1827 in spite of the best efforts of *fazendas* and other land magnates. The survey revealed widespread encroachment and revenue underpayment, oftentimes by the wealthiest and most prominent members of Bombay society. Most importantly, as Dossal emphasizes, it allowed the government to finally assert its authority: it was able to set rents commensurate to rising land values and prosecute revenue defaulters. The survey also helped the government plan for Bombay's rapid transformation in the mid-nineteenth century from a bucolic landscape of coconut groves and rice fields into a teeming industrial and commercial centre.

It was at this critical juncture that Bombay's civic leaders felt enough confidence to attempt some grand urban projects. In one of her most interesting chapters, which builds on material previously covered in *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities*, Dossal traces government efforts to transform the walled Fort area into an imposing commercial and political centre dubbed Frere Town in honour of Bombay's governor in the mid-1860s. Dossal describes Frere Town as "one of the most comprehensive civic initiatives in British India" (p. 141). Having demolished the city walls, cleared out congested and squalid by-lanes, and banished the cattle herds and voluminous cotton bales from the Esplanade that surrounded the Fort, the government laid out strikingly rigid sanitary and architectural design codes before soliciting investors for a monumental core of new buildings. From the rubble rose Bombay's trademark neo-Gothic skyline.

But the gleaming new arches and domes of a strictly regulated Frere Town did little to disguise one serious by-product of Bombay's commercial success: a chronic shortage of housing for the middle and working classes. Industrial strikes, violence stemming from the government's highhanded response to the plague epidemic of 1896–1906, and the rising crescendo of nationalist unrest pushed the government to explore solutions. Dossal traces the work of new committees, such as the Bombay City Improvement Trust, which stressed that better urban design could mitigate further unrest. These committees proposed urban decongestion along with a "massive imperial scheme" (the actual words of the Bombay Development Department's director, Sir Lawless Hepper) of tenement and middle class housing construction that would push Bombay's limits northward to Mahim and Salsette (p. 177). Ultimately, as Dossal shows us, many ambitious plans faltered due to bureaucratic quarrels, administrative malaise, and the perennial conflict over land. "[T]he state had never been dominant nor

determined enough to ensure that planning initiatives were actually implemented”, she declares. “The essence of Bombay’s history lay in the conflict between serving the immediate needs of vested interests and the long term benefits for society as a whole” (p. 164).

This fundamental dynamic propelled Bombay’s evolution in the years leading up to independence and the decades beyond. In her last chapters, Dossal traces the efforts to create a master plan for the mushrooming city, which was expanding haphazardly in the interwar years, as well as the activities of the Bombay-based Indian Institute of Architects (IIA), which began championing “nationalist architecture” to express the aspirations and fulfill the needs of a future Indian citizenry. Yet, the master plan was both subverted and rendered largely theoretical in the face of massive migration into Bombay from the rural hinterlands. The IIA, meanwhile, transformed from being an architectural discussion forum to being a commercial-oriented lobby.

Dossal identifies the “builder-politician combine” for creating a “juggernaut of unregulated construction activity” since the 1950s (p. 216). It is this combine which has carried the day in the former mill lands of central Mumbai, now a maze of high-rise construction, and has trained its eye on new opportunities in the derelict docklands, salt pans, and mangroves that fringe the city. In spite of environmental concerns, increasing instances of severe flooding, and a crying need for more open space, the government appears unwilling to resist the power and influence of landowners and developers, threatening to condemn Mumbai to being “a Maximum City with Minimum Facilities” (p. 218).

Throughout Dossal’s work, we meet a fascinating array of characters that shaped the development of Bombay/Mumbai. These include Franjee Cowasjee Banaji, a keen horticulturalist who experimented with sericulture, growing Mocha coffee, sandalwood, and mangoes at his estate in Powai; Navibai Ludha, a courageous young widow who in the 1860s successfully fought two court cases against the Bombay government in order to secure her rights to her deceased husband’s estate; and Claude Batley, the Ipswich-born architect who outlined a “nationalist agenda” for Indian architecture in the years before independence (p. 186). Vignettes of these individuals, along with a dazzling array of rare maps and visuals (some of them, unfortunately, blurred and pixelated by the publisher), adds complexity and texture to Dossal’s story of the city.

Dossal’s volume comes amidst some new work on Mumbai including Preeti Chopra’s *A Joint Enterprise* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), Nile Green’s *Bombay Islam* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), and Gyan Prakash’s *Mumbai Fables* (Princeton University Press, 2010). The chronological breath of her work sometimes does not allow Dossal to do justice to the vast array of archival sources that she has obviously assembled. We can rest assured, nevertheless, that Dossal now has ample material for future volumes of equal importance and scholarly significance.

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It is a matter of sadness, at least for this reviewer, that Mughal history has barely a foothold in the British university system. I am not aware, although would be most happy to be proved wrong, that it is taught anywhere as a full undergraduate course. It does, however, have a presence in the odd postgraduate programme. It is a matter of sadness: in part because British students, some of whom are of South