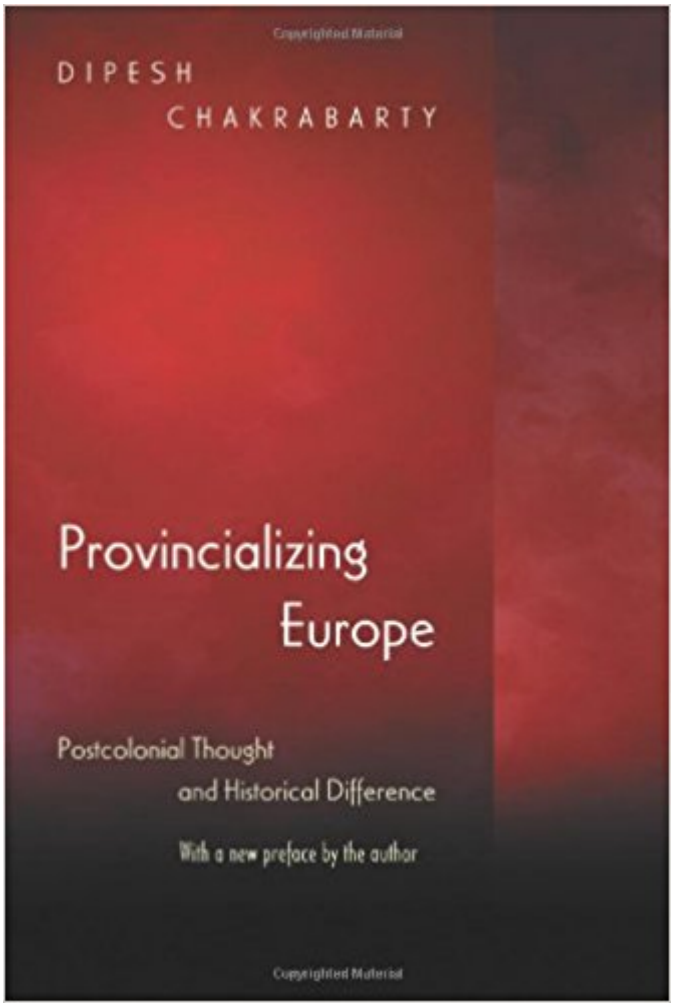
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Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought And Historical Difference (Princeton Studies In Culture/Power/History)



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Synopsis

First published in 2000, Dipesh Chakrabarty's influential Provincializing Europe addresses the mythical figure of Europe that is often taken to be the original site of modernity in many histories of capitalist transition in non-Western countries. This imaginary Europe, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues, is built into the social sciences. The very idea of historicizing carries with it some peculiarly European assumptions about disenchanted space, secular time, and sovereignty. Measured against such mythical standards, capitalist transition in the third world has often seemed either incomplete or lacking. Provincializing Europe proposes that every case of transition to capitalism is a case of translation as well--a translation of existing worlds and their thought--categories into the categories and self-understandings of capitalist modernity. Now featuring a new preface in which Chakrabarty responds to his critics, this book globalizes European thought by exploring how it may be renewed both for and from the margins.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Chakrabarty's work gives us a richer, more penetrating language to deal with modernity and the colonial encounter. . . . It is the ambiguity of Chakabarty's own position as both a critic and archivist of modernity that gives his study its poetic undertow and its intelligent irresponsibility."--Amit Chaudhuri, London Review of Books"The great value of this book lies in Chakrabarty's exceptional ability to bring to light what constantly gets glossed over and forgotten when we can only speak the

standard languages of the academy. To do this requires the kind of bilingual consciousness which can bring into illuminating relation Adam Smith and Tagore. Chakrabarty makes you regret that so few are capable of doing this with a high degree of eloquence and insight."--Charles Taylor, IWM Newsletter"This masterful re-examination of rationality, universality, and difference in the postcolonial world should prove inspiring for serious historians of all lands."--Alice Ballard, Theory and Society"A slow, detailed, careful reading of the author’s positively provocative style will be rich in rewards, generating, in the reader’s mind, new ideas with new questions pointing to interdisciplinary, inter-cultural research, dialogue. As a reference reading text, it is rich in direct and implied questions on intricate inter-cultural interactions, gaps in communication, etc. As a discourse on basic themes of socio-political modernism and cultural diversity, it is more a starting point than a store of conclusions on debate dealing with cardinal themes pointing to research in inter-cultural and intersocietal studies. His dialectic, constructive discourse is keen on generating lasting questions and not dogmatic, ephemeral answers."--WahÃƒÂ© H. Balekjian, Online Journal on International Constitutional Law"[T]he analysis of the processes and mechanisms of destruction are well worth reading."--Joyce Apsel, Human Rights Review"Giovanni Federico . . . has compiled an exhaustive and impressive array of historical socioeconomic data heretofore unavailable in one source. . . . One of the book’s strengths is the remarkable level of detail and the carefully assembled historical data. It is a rare sort of book and Federico tells the story of agriculture in a very interesting way. His mastery of the subject is plainly visible throughout the book. . . . This is not a text that can be used in undergraduate courses; rather, it is an analysis of economic performance and the history of agriculture that should be core reading for advanced students of agriculture and researchers. It will be a major reference for the foreseeable future and should be on the shelf of every agricultural scientist and anyone else interested in the historical and economic aspects of agriculture."--Krishna Prasad Vadrevu, Development and Change

"The idea of provincializing Europe has been around for some time, but mostly as an insight waiting for elaboration. In this book, Dipesh Chakrabarty develops the idea into a project informed massively by fact and brilliantly by theory. A work of exemplary scholarship, it is a call to raise the level of current debates about modernity and the colonial experience and reexamine our approach to histories and cultures on both sides of the colonial divide. A formidable challenge."--Ranajit Guha"Chakrabarty offers a fundamental rethinking of the most important and misunderstood of all historical categories--time itself. Never facile, always willing to confront the most intractable dilemmas, Chakrabarty forces us to reconsider our deepest historicizing impulses. His work is must

reading for anyone with an interest in the future of historical studies."--Lynn Hunt, University of California, Los Angeles

A scholarly work that both accepts and rejects the the European concept of modernity. It recognizes the impact of modernity on Indian society but argues that modernity and traditions can and should co-exist in the mind of each modern individual. Warning: Reading this author requires either a strong academic background or a thesaurus.

Genius Book.

Value for money

Chakrabarty lucidly summarizes the ways in which history-writing and historical thinking in Third-World countries is hopelessly based on European historical concepts, since "history" has come to mean, not a story, but a teleological account of how all events everywhere fit into a pattern of modernization.His concept of "subaltern pasts" for fragments and practices that will not fit into that "history" has promise, but his exploration of some of those fragments in Indian history does nod quite fulfill that promise

Everyone should read this. I realize that it’s silly and unrealistic for me to recommend such a thing. But still.

Interesting concepts. Terrible writing. If there’s a more complicated way of explaining anything, you’ll find it in this book.

Provincializing Europe is a kind of intellectual pleading that Dipesh has undertaken to include an Indian and specifically a Bengali case, within wider circle of post-modern studies. However, the ’subaltern history’ discussed in this book, is not taken to its desired conclusion. It just stands like a hanging data, with not much concrete theoretical matter required to lay a solid foundation of a perspective .Secondly, it looks like Dipesh is struggling to enunciate what he really wants to say. He is standing right in the middle of western academics and his experience as a student of Marxism in Bengal. His subconscious realization of interplay between political power, Marxism and religion, that reflects in his work, unfortunately takes a discursive turn, to wander in ’adda stories of Bengal’,

discussed in wide details. As an author, he continues to discuss details of Bengali life and its currents and yet fails to come out of these details to study it from a subjective height, for making a crucial argument in defense of subaltern history.Such a move actually proves to be counter productive to the real intent of his soft worded and somewhat (un)enunciated arguments.Overall, I would see this book as a work done in haste to publish. Although the subject has a potential to open up much wider areas, but that is perhaps an opportunity missed. It would be nice if Dipesh could include the works of other Bengal thinkers like Sri Auribindo, Vivekananda etc. Further, he can also open up his discussions to include areas like caste as a special feature of Indian society, that continues to exist vividly in modern India. This study can be easily taken deeper with the help of psychoanalytical tools and undertaking ontological studies in exploring formation of being that can supplement the data of subaltern studies.All these areas left behind, I believe, should help to make a stronger revised edition of this book.

"Provincializing Europe" by Dipesh Chakrabarty (no relation of mine), a professor of history at the University of Chicago is a delightfully written book on rather serious topics. The basic thesis propounded by Chakrabarty is about the predominant influence of European thoughts and ideals shaping the socio-political systems in India and its neighboring countries. Despite the recent uproar by many minority groups as well as women against the predominance of "dead white males" in the core curricula of most universities, we have to admit that these authors shape the economic and political models. Chakrabarty here has attempted to portray the integration of the non-western minds with the western ideals and philosophy.In doing so Chakrabarty covers a wide territory in terms of ideology, time and geography. The chapters on Marx and Heideggar are heavy reading; but it is worthwhile to spend one’s energy to go through them. Because, he has very expertly explained the the!oretical basis of the tenets of these philosophies that attract the Indian mind, particularly, the Bengali mind. These chapters provide a good background to understand the basis of cultural differences between the west and the east. I find this extremely valuable not only for the students of humanities, but also students of International business.Several of the important facets of Indian, Bengali in particular, society are discussed in great length. The chapter on widows and women in general is a very valuable topic. Plight of women Indian society is not new by any means. Even the Indian epic, Mahabharat through the questions of Draupadi to the Kuru elder Bhisma introduces the issue of women’s freedom. But neither Bhisma in Mahabharat nor the leaders of Indian society provided a definitive solution. Chakrabarty and I share the view that economic independence (and therefore proper marketable education) is the necessary condition for

betterment of women’s lot.I was delighted to read the chapter on "Adda", a unique Bengali culture. In Europe, cafÃƒÂ© culture comes close to it. The French had the "salon" culture. Having participated in many "adda" in my youth in Calcutta, I miss it while living in the US or in Europe. Chakrabarty does a favor to my occidental friends by properly explaining what it means and what it did for Bengali social system.Summing up, I would recommend this book to several groups of people. First, if you want to learn about the intricacies of the Indian, particularly Bengali, culture, this book is for you. Second, of course, this book is a required reading for any serious student of India and Indian culture. Third, students of international business should also be interested in this book as it lays the foundation of the many cultural tenets that are important in economic activities.

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