FOUNDING EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

James Tod (1782–1835) was a self-educated polymath. Born in London of Scottish parents with Indian connections, he was schooled in Scotland and trained as a military engineer at Woolwich. But these bare details of his life give no hint of the fact that he was to be intellectually omnivorous in his studies of western India, of Rajasthan and Gujarat, during the peak of his career when he served as political agent in that region. He was interested in cartography and topography, in geology and botany, in both human and natural history, in philology and myth, in archaeology and architecture, and in the comparative history of societies in both Europe and India. The pursuit of his military and political duties was deeply embedded in his extensive studies. His relationships with the courts of princes gave him access to documents and libraries which he assiduously used in his search for information and ideas.

He was also very much a man of his time. Though lacking a university education, he was influenced both by the Enlightenment and by the Romanticism which was, in some senses, a reaction to it. He was well read in romantic literature and was keen, like many contemporaries, to illustrate his topographical descriptions, his visions of mythic pasts and his descriptions of heroic events with allusions to and quotations from a wide range of literary works in English. He was also fascinated by some of the dominant scientific ideas of the age as well as by the conventional artistic perceptions of the time. In all of this, he demonstrated both a sympathetic understanding of the Rajputs and a desire to fit them into a universalist concept of human society which, to a certain extent, contrasts with the harder, more hierarchical, ideas of the later nineteenth century. All of this emerged in his copious writings.

As such, he has excited the interest of a number of scholars, but none of them have cast their net as wide as Florence D'Souza. She presents an extensive picture of Tod's many interests, interpreting them in terms of the efforts at knowledge exchange that took place in the period, the genuine fascination with indigenous understanding exhibited by quite a number of East India Company employees, as well as the extraordinary networks through which such information and ideas were garnered, circulated and propagated. Tod acknowledged the help of his local helpers, notably the Jain Yati Gyanchandra. He was also in communication with the remarkable group of East India Company employees, a number of them Scots, who turned themselves into students of India in the period.

Tod's life and work also illustrate the manner in which Oriental studies were developed during his life time through the foundation of institutions and the publication of journals. He himself was employed by the Royal Asiatic Society of London, founded in 1823, and published, or was reviewed, in its *Transactions*, in the *Asiatic Journal* and the *Oriental Herald*. These developments were international, connecting for example with the Société Asiatique

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de Paris and the *Journal Asiatique* or with German Orientalist scholars. Tod contributed to a remarkable flowering of studies of India, and Florence D'Souza has charted, through both her extensive research and her close studies of his works, just how significant he was. She has also provided some useful appendices of material not readily available elsewhere. Her book represents a notable addition to the literature of Orientalism while offering a significant revision to the crudely binary interpretations of some modern scholarship.

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