

**The Economic History of Bengal: From Plassey to the Permanent Settlement. Volume I.** By *Narendra K. Sinha*. (Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Agents. 1956. Pp. 260. Rs. 12/8.) and **Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency, 1793–1833.** By *Amales Tripathi*. (Bombay: Orient Longmans. 1956. Pp. xiii, 289. Rs. 20.) [Get access >](#)

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Holden Furber

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policy toward China at this time and into the strategy and tactics which the Department of State used to meet it. The problem itself, stated simply, was how to vitalize in the military, political, and economic sense our wartime alliance with the National Government. The documents here printed, read in the context of those published for the years immediately preceding, support the conclusion that the Department of State was informed both broadly and in detail on the state of affairs in China. The problem lay not in any lack of information but in how to use the information at hand in evolving a wartime set of policies for action.

Current and conflicting interpretations about our China policy in 1942 will find support in these pages. There is some support for the theory that the Department's circumspect approach, its emphasis on traditional aspects of policy, its tendency to regard Chiang as the George Washington of China, its fear of giving offense and thereby destroying what remained of Chinese morale were sound bases for operation. At the same time there is evidence here that the policy of caution was a Sinophile doctrine based on "a myth and a hope about China." The historian, when more evidence is available, will have to judge whether the dead hand of the past—the principle of noninterference in China's internal affairs—had not disarmed us diplomatically in the face of what Ambassador Gauss described as Chungking's attitude of "either or else." In any event, if there was bluff in aspects of China's position toward us in 1942—and Gauss believed there was—it was not called effectively. As the year closed, some of the foundations of the wartime alliance could hardly be described as stable.

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SIGNIFICANT contributions to our knowledge of India's economic history are found in these two works, one by an established authority in the field and the other by a young scholar who has recently received his doctorate at the London School of Oriental and African Studies. Both are of primary interest to the specialist, but authors of all subsequent general studies of the first century of British rule in India should take account of them. Professor Sinha's volume is really a series of essays on trade and finance in Bengal from 1757 to 1793; in a second volume on this period, he "intends to describe the land-revenue history of Bengal and the economic conditions of rural Bengal." The most valuable essays are those which deal with economic activity among Indians and the interrelationship of Indian business enterprise with European. With his unrivaled familiarity with the Bengal records, especially the hitherto insufficiently used Mayor's Court papers, Sinha takes us behind the scenes as no European investigator could possibly do.

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