

Preface

The articles collected in this issue of *Modern Asian Studies* all deal with ways in which social, political and cultural information is collected, defined, analysed, and used. Although obviously drawing on the insights of some mid-twentieth century social and political theorists, it is the great merit of the essays that follow that each stands on its own ground and each contains fact and argument which must extend and qualify the more polemical theoretical discourse.

The collection owes much to the initiative of Professor Christopher Bayly, who persuaded colleagues to write to a reasonable time-table for this publication. I am grateful to him for his help. I am also delighted that Professor Francis Robinson chose this issue of the journal for the publication of his inaugural lecture.

Dr Randolph Cooper devoted much time and energy to finding the right picture for the cover. To him, and to Dr Alan Guy of the National Army Museum, I offer my heartfelt thanks. The *hircarrah*, who appears on the cover of this issue, courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London, is described in Solvyns' *Costume of Hindustan*, from which the illustration is taken, as 'one who carries messages, letters, etc., runs in processions, carrying a short spear or pointed stick, and waits in attendance under the jummadar. He is here dressed in the Mahommedan costume, and wears round his neck larger beads of pebbles, or onyxes, highly polished. The hircarras are of all sects; those employed in the army are principally Brahmans, who are the most intelligent and can best insinuate themselves into the sources of information; they are frequently employed as spies.'

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank colleagues in the journals section of Cambridge University Press for their support of *Modern Asian Studies*, particularly Mrs Jill Walden, recently retired, and her successor Mrs Penny Carter. As ever, the journal is deeply indebted to Miss Livia Breglia who so meticulously checks the copy and reads the proofs.

Gordon Johnson

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