



General & Higher Academic Programme

NEW BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

In Defence of Honour and Justice: Sepoy Rebellions in the Nineteenth Century

by Sabyasachi Dasgupta

The book

This book focuses on the 'sepoy' rebellions of the nineteenth century as an entry point into the wider dynamics of the pre-1857 colonial armies. Delving beyond the usual binaries of discipline and indiscipline, which tend to draw a linear teleology between the localized mutinies in the colonial armies and 1857, the chapters in this book seek to explore the broader issues that these mutinies raise about the colonial armies. These issues include the prevalence of certain notions of honour and justice among the 'sepoys', contrasting conceptions of discipline, structures of deference, the construction of colonial stereotypes and their influence on policy decisions. These indices were linked to broader questions of loyalty and the construction of a distinct 'sepoy' identity.

The actual modus operandi of the colonial project to produce a loyal 'sepoy' was complex, contradictory, involving regional variations and moreover, was continuously mediated by the 'sepoys'. One could read the various mutinies of the nineteenth century as violent interventions by the sepoys to renegotiate the indices around which the East India Company armies sought to build a 'sepoy' identity. In the final analysis, it is possible to surmise that the colonial endeavour of ensuring a loyal 'sepoy' could be a bitterly contested one even in the absence of mutinies and could revolve around instances of everyday conflicts.

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