

independence, even though they face the growing risk of PRC's invasion. By the yardstick of the current young Taiwanese, the 1970s debate appears hopelessly elitist (limited to few select intellectual luminaries), restrictive (limited to paper publication venues), and high-brow (failing to mention the economic woes of overeducated precariat). As such, it will be an intellectually stimulating project to study the evolving cultural politics of the Taiwanese youth of the 2010s and beyond, by following the same methodological guidelines of cultural sociology.

In short, the publication of Hsiau's book is a milestone of international Taiwan studies and be incorporated into the essential reading list for any related courses. The book lays bare an inspiring story of how a seemingly innocent discussion of a nation's past history and literary works could have caused a political tsunami that ended up engulfing the repressive incumbents in the years to come. The troubled stories of Taiwanese people with their own identities have generated a wealth of research literature, including Leo Ching's *Becoming Japanese Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (2001), Melissa Brown's *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities* (2004), and Evan Dawley's *Becoming Taiwanese: Ethnogenesis in a Colonial City* (2019). Hsiau's book is sure to join this pantheon. With a solid scholarship, Hsiau has woven a convincing narrative of the power of ideas, and the moving saga of how Taiwanese youth's difficult search for their true selves should find wider resonance in present-day Taiwan, China, and beyond.

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doi:10.1017/S1479591421000620

## Anglo-India and the End of Empire

**By Uther Charlton-Stevens. London: Hurst (dist. Oxford University Press), 2022. 370 pages. Hardback, £25.00 GBP, ISBN: 9781787383128. Ebook, ISBN: 9780197683576.**

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(Received 26 September 2023; accepted 26 September 2023)

## Overview

In "Anglo-India and the End of Empire," Uther Charlton-Stevens takes the reader on a captivating historical journey that explores the intricate tapestry of the Anglo-Indian community – a group of individuals with both Indian and British heritage. This book not only uncovers the rich history of this community but also highlights its significant role in shaping India's past and present. Charlton-Stevens compellingly argues that the Anglo-Indians, positioned in space between colonizers and the colonized, warrant a more prominent place in the annals of Indian history.

## Reevaluating Indian history through the lens of Anglo-Indians

Charlton-Stevens' central thesis, which re-evaluates Indian history through the lens of the Anglo-Indian community, marks a pivotal contribution to historiography. The conventional portrayal of India's history often fixates on the colonial-era dichotomy between British colonizers and the Indian colonized. However, by placing Anglo-Indians at the forefront, Charlton-Stevens challenges this oversimplified narrative, introducing a more nuanced and inclusive framework.

One of the book's most significant merits lies in its meticulous tracing of the multifaceted identity and intricate relationship that Anglo-Indians maintained with both the United Kingdom and India. This exploration highlights the complexities of their existence within the colonial Indian context, where they grappled with dual allegiances, oscillating between their British heritage and their Indian surroundings. Charlton-Stevens adeptly unveils how these individuals occupied a distinctive social and cultural space, neither wholly British nor Indian, and how this in-between identity shaped their experiences and contributions.

By foregrounding Anglo-Indians, Charlton-Stevens invites readers to reassess India's historical narrative from a fresh vantage point. Through their stories, struggles, and achievements, readers gain access to a broader and more nuanced understanding of India's past. This shift in perspective not only enriches the historical discourse but also underscores the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to studying the subcontinent's history – one that acknowledges the multifaceted interactions and identities that have shaped the Indian subcontinent throughout its complex history. In doing so, Charlton-Stevens' work invites scholars and enthusiasts alike to embrace a more comprehensive portrayal of India's history, which goes beyond "balancing" two perspectives.

## The birth of Anglo-India

The book's exploration of the birth of the Anglo-Indian community within the historical context of British colonialism in India offers valuable insights into the complexities of identity formation and social dynamics during this period.

Charlton-Stevens rightly underscores the historical inevitability of the emergence of the Anglo-Indian community. With European traders, soldiers, and administrators establishing a long-term presence in the Indian subcontinent from the sixteenth century onward, interactions and intermingling between British individuals and the local population were bound to occur. These interactions laid the foundation for the hybrid Anglo-Indian identity that would eventually take shape. The book's acknowledgment of this historical backdrop provides a solid grounding for understanding the origins of the community.

However, what sets Charlton-Stevens' analysis apart is his astute recognition that the formation of a cohesive community and identity among Anglo-Indians was far from guaranteed. This nuanced perspective sheds light on the intricate social dynamics at play during this period. Many individuals of Anglo-Indian heritage initially sought to assimilate into the colonial British communities, aspiring to fully adopt British identities and lifestyles. Yet, as Charlton-Stevens astutely points out, they encountered discrimination and exclusion based on their mixed ancestry.

This aspect of the narrative highlights the complexities of identity in a colonial context, where individuals grappled with questions of belonging, acceptance, and the tension between their British and Indian roots. Charlton-Stevens' exploration underscores how social hierarchies and prejudices shaped the trajectory of the Anglo-Indian community, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and hurdles faced by its members in their quest for recognition and inclusion.

These processes shaped not only the experience of those pioneers of identity, but also created new social forces which would continue to contribute to history in the centuries to follow. Furthermore, the documentation of Anglo-Indian contributions in various sectors, such as railways, customs, and nursing, fleshes out how the author's approach can be applied. By highlighting the significant roles played by Anglo-Indians in a broad range of sectors, Charlton-Stevens illustrates their tangible impact on India's development and infrastructure. This documentation rectifies historical oversights and

underscores the community's agency and contributions to the nation's progress. It enriches our understanding of the diverse ways in which the Anglo-Indian community engaged with and contributed to the colonial and post-colonial Indian society.

### Navigating evolving social hierarchies

The book's exploration of the evolving social hierarchies and attitudes toward the Anglo-Indian community during different phases of British colonial rule in India is a testament to its depth and historical richness. Charlton-Stevens' analysis not only illuminates the shifting dynamics but also underscores the complex interplay of race, class, and identity in colonial India.

A noteworthy strength lies in the vivid portrayal of the contrasting attitudes toward intermarriage and social inclusion during distinct eras – specifically, the transition from the East India Company period to the British Raj. The recognition of how the acceptance of intermarriage evolved over time is a crucial aspect of understanding the changing dynamics within the Anglo-Indian community. In the early years of British presence in India, it was relatively common for East India Company employees to form unions with local women. This practice, as Charlton-Stevens points out, underwent significant diminishment during the British Raj. The book's articulation of this shift offers valuable historical context, shedding light on the changing norms and attitudes that influenced the community's social fabric.

Charlton-Stevens also effectively conveys the intricate web of class and social barriers that Anglo-Indians navigated. The struggle to claim their identity and even to assert their name is a poignant reflection of the challenges they faced within a complex colonial society. The term "Eurasian" was initially preferred by many British individuals in India, reflecting a desire to distance themselves from the local communities and avoid tainting on the British identity. This resistance to self-identification and the imposition of external labels underscores the deep-seated prejudices and social hierarchies that the Anglo-Indian community had to contend with. The book's exploration of evolving social dynamics and attitudes toward intermarriage is a valuable contribution to understanding the intricacies of the Anglo-Indian experience.

The author meticulously traces the journey of the community as they transitioned from predominantly identifying with their British heritage to aligning more closely with their Indian roots. This transformation, influenced by historical events and interactions with Indian leaders, offers profound insights into the complexities of identity dynamics during India's struggle for independence. By engaging with this aspect of the narrative, readers gain a deeper understanding of the community's evolving sense of self and its intricate negotiations within a rapidly changing socio-political landscape.

### Beyond a balanced approach

One of the book's primary contributions is its positioning of Anglo-Indians within the framework of Indian history. Charlton-Stevens challenges the established binary narrative of colonizers and colonized by introducing a third perspective – the Anglo-Indian experience. By avoiding the pitfalls of colonial apologia, he refrains from sugarcoating the negative aspects of British colonial rule, thus countering the biased portrayal that sometimes whitewashes the oppressive nature of colonialism. Simultaneously, his avoidance of nationalist polemic prevents an overly critical or one-sided view, challenging the caricature of colonial history that can overly vilify the British presence. This allows for a more empathetic examination of the Anglo-Indian identity, acknowledging both the agency and constraints faced by its members. Acknowledging the complexities and contradictions of the Anglo-Indian experience within the colonial context, he presents a more honest and unvarnished picture of the historical context in which Anglo-Indians lived.

While conventional historical narratives often marginalize or oversimplify the role of mixed-race communities in colonial settings, this book rectifies that omission, prompting scholars and readers alike to reevaluate their interpretations of India's history. This nuanced perspective enriches the historical discourse by highlighting the complexities of identity and belonging that characterized the

Anglo-Indian community. It encourages a more inclusive and multifaceted understanding of the subcontinent's past, recognizing the agency and contributions of a community that defied easy categorization. By eschewing both colonial apologia and nationalist polemic, Charlton-Stevens ensures that the Anglo-Indian experience is portrayed authentically. Charlton-Stevens' commitment to a new approach in his portrayal of the Anglo-Indian community and their contributions to Indian history fosters a deeper and more authentic appreciation of the multifaceted nature of the Anglo-Indian experience within the complex tapestry of colonial India.

### Post-independence challenges

Charlton-Stevens' exploration of the post-independence challenges confronted by the Anglo-Indian community serves as a critical lens through which to examine the enduring consequences of partition and the complex dynamics that unfolded in the aftermath of India's independence in 1947. This aspect of his work contributes to our understanding of the long-term effects of political decisions on minority communities.

The Partition of India in 1947 was a seismic event in the subcontinent's history, resulting in the division of British India into two independent nations, India and Pakistan. While this political transformation promised independence and self-determination for the majority populations in these newly formed states, it also engendered significant challenges and hardships for minority communities, including the Anglo-Indians.

One of the immediate challenges faced by the Anglo-Indian community was the upheaval caused by the redrawn borders and the violence that accompanied the partition. Families were divided, and many Anglo-Indians found themselves living on the "wrong" side of the newly demarcated borders, leading to displacement, dislocation, and the loss of homes and livelihoods. This experience was particularly traumatic as it disrupted the stable and often insular communities that many Anglo-Indians had established over generations.

Furthermore, the socio-political landscape of post-independence India and Pakistan presented a series of dilemmas for the Anglo-Indian community. As newly independent nations defined their national identities, questions of belonging and allegiance arose. The Anglo-Indians, who had historically identified with their British heritage, were now confronted with the challenge of reconciling their identities with the emerging nationalist narratives of their respective countries.

In India, where the dominant narrative centered on the rejection of colonial rule and the assertion of Indian identity, Anglo-Indians faced pressure to assimilate into the broader Indian society. This process of assimilation was not without its difficulties, as it often required individuals to shed their British-oriented identities and adapt to a new cultural and national milieu. Additionally, the gradual decline of British influence in India meant that opportunities for Anglo-Indians in sectors like the railways and the civil service began to diminish.

In Pakistan, the situation for Anglo-Indians was no less complex. The demand for a separate Muslim state had led to the creation of Pakistan, and this new nation was framed around Islamic identity and ideology. This posed a unique challenge to the predominantly Christian Anglo-Indian community. While some Anglo-Indians chose to stay in Pakistan, others opted to leave, as they felt increasingly marginalized in a society with a distinct religious and cultural identity.

The examination of post-independence challenges faced by the Anglo-Indian community in both East and West Pakistan underscores the enduring impact of partition and political decisions on minority communities. Charlton-Stevens' meticulous analysis sheds light on the trials and tribulations that the community confronted as they sought to establish their place in a post-independence India. This aspect of the book offers a valuable perspective on the long-term consequences of political decisions and the resilience of the community in adapting to new circumstances.

Charlton-Stevens' analysis sheds light on the difficult decisions faced by Anglo-Indians as they navigated their place in post-independence South Asia. Many Anglo-Indians chose to emigrate, primarily to the United Kingdom, in search of greater stability and opportunities. This mass migration

had a profound impact on the community's demographic composition and dispersion, with the United Kingdom becoming a new center of Anglo-Indian life and culture.

The author's meticulous examination of these post-independence challenges illuminates the lasting consequences of partition on minority communities like the Anglo-Indians. It underscores how political decisions, and the reconfiguration of national identities can have far-reaching effects on the lives and identities of individuals who find themselves caught in the midst of historical transformations, the significance of their contribution, and exposes how those contributions have been essentially written out of established histories of the Indian subcontinent.

Finally, the book reflects on the future of Anglo-Indian relations with both Britain and India, as it advocates updating scholarly conceptions of the Anglo-Indian community. This encourages the reader to contemplate the continued relevance of this community in contemporary contexts. This forward-looking approach contributes to ongoing discussions about identity, belonging, and cultural preservation, prompting readers to engage with the legacy and future prospects of the Anglo-Indian community.

### Conclusion

"Anglo-India and the End of Empire" by Uther Charlton-Stevens emerges as a significant and multi-faceted masterpiece within the realm of Indian history. Through its deliberate repositioning of the often-overlooked Anglo-Indian community as the nucleus of the narrative, the book audaciously challenges established historical paradigms, ushering in a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of India's intricate past. Charlton-Stevens' poised and judicious methodology, fortified by scrupulous research and evocative storytelling, bestows upon this work the status of indispensable reading for scholars, students, and anyone intrigued by the dynamics of identity, belonging, and discrimination in the context of India's march toward independence and beyond. In essence, the book fills a profound void in the annals of Indian history, proffering a persuasive and innovative perspective informed by the experiences and contributions of a community that transcended facile categorization, adeptly bridging the chasm between colonizers and the colonized.

Furthermore, this analysis prompts broader reflections on the complexities of identity and belonging in post-colonial nations. The Anglo-Indian experience serves as a compelling case study of how minority communities negotiate their identities and allegiances in the aftermath of decolonization and the redrawing of borders. It underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by such communities and the ways in which they adapt and evolve in response to changing political and social landscapes.

This scholarship pioneers new colors and textures in the tapestry of India's history, given its profound capacity to disrupt prevailing narratives and cast light upon the hitherto invisible Anglo-Indian community. Charlton-Stevens' diligent scholarship and the narrative's layers beckon the reader to reevaluate established historical constructs, fostering a deeper understanding of the multifaceted socio-cultural dynamics that have molded the Indian subcontinent. This book, characterized by its unwavering commitment to inclusivity, not only pays homage to the Anglo-Indian community's contributions but also enhances our collective comprehension of India's past, making it an indispensable and enduring resource in the field of Indian history.