

Reviews

PETER OBORNE, *Wounded Tiger. A History of Cricket in Pakistan*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2015. XXX, 592 pages, £12.99. ISBN 978-1-84983-248-9 (pb) (Originally published in hardcover in 2014.)

This monograph provides a comprehensive survey of Pakistani cricket from the founding of the country in 1947 right up to the present day, with digressions where necessary to trace developments in earlier periods. Along the way much is learned about the political, social, and even economic history of the republic. Cricket is now Pakistan's national sport (pp. 398–9); by coincidence, the white clothing and green field match the colours of the republic's flag. "Cricket is the game of the village, it is the game of the towns. It is the game of the old, it is the game of the young, the rich and the poor. It is played in the plains of Sindh and in the mountains of the north. It is played by the army and the Taliban. It is enjoyed by all Pakistan's sects and religions" (p. 509).

Yet cricket is far more than a game: it is inextricably linked with considerations of power, religion, national identity and historical revenge. The cricket world sometimes seems to have a rather unpleasant sub-text that has little or nothing to do with mere sport. It provides a platform for triumphalism, bitterness, petulance, jealousy, affronted *amour-propre* and endless internecine disputes between players and administrators, both domestically and internationally. The search for any sign of sportsmanship in Test cricket is long and hard (p. 86, 265). *Joie de vivre* is conspicuous by its absence.

Pakistan cricket was born out of the mayhem of partition, accompanied as it was by violence and the mass displacement of populations. It is no accident, therefore, that the author of this book should be not a sports writer as such, but a former chief political commentator for the *Daily Telegraph*, a distinguished journalist of great probity who resigned his post on ethical grounds in early 2015. Although Peter Osborne (born 1957) is not an academic, *Wounded Tiger* is a scholarly study with no fewer than forty-six pages of endnotes and bibliography (pp. 520–65), not to mention a profusion of footnotes in the text proper. Where possible the author has gone back to original documentation and unearthed new information, for example about the controversial MCC tour of Pakistan in 1954–5. He is also an excellent oral historian, having interviewed almost all the relevant parties. And he has conducted plenty of field work. But Osborne does not appear to have done everything himself: Charles Alexander contributed substantially to the chapter on the finances of Pakistan cricket and Stuart Jackson carried out archival research, while the novelist Richard Heller became "more like a collaborator". Osborne, displaying his formidable forensic skills and taking nothing on trust, provides a profound and penetrating analysis.

He is passionate about his subject: this book is a labour of love designed as a corrective to the “Anglo-Saxon bias” (p. 168) of much cricket writing.

Osborne’s periodisation of Pakistan cricket starts with the Age of Kardar (1947–1975), followed by the Age of Khan (1976–1992), the Age of Expansion (1992–2000) and the Age of Isolation since 2001. He promotes the case for his great favourites among the players: AH Kardar and Fazal Mahmood from the 1950s, Hanif Mohammad (who played in all but two of Pakistan’s first fifty-seven Tests down to 1969), and Imran Khan (born 1952), “Pakistan’s greatest cricketer” (p. 506), whose international career stretched for more than twenty years from 1971, culminating in the World Cup victory of 1992.

There are cameos about radio commentary and women’s cricket along with case studies of “reverse swing” and the Burki and Khan dynasties. The final section of the book deals with recent controversies (such as match-fixing) and with attempts by administrators to resist political interference. Terrorist incidents in 2008–9 mean that Pakistan is no longer able to host any international matches; their “home” games now have to be played in the Gulf States.

In Pakistan cricket has long been played under the shadow of war, civil war and, latterly, terrorism; and if not war, then domestic rioting. India and Pakistan have fought several wars (1948, 1965 and 1971), and there is frequent border strife; Kashmir remains the “most militarised place on earth” (p. 417). Pakistan itself split into two with the secession of Bangladesh in 1971. Under such circumstances, international sporting relations could not be resumed as if nothing had happened: no matches took place between India and Pakistan from the 1960–1 season until 1978–9. In the latter season, when Pakistan achieved its first win against India since 1952, General Zia proclaimed a national holiday: “It was almost as if the results of the wars on the battlefield had been reversed on the cricket pitch” (p. 271). One Pakistani test cricketer stated (p. 343): “I have always had a militant approach to cricket. To me it is not so much a game as it is war.” The idea that sport might foster peace and goodwill between nations is plainly fanciful. In 1945 Orwell characterised international sport as “war minus the shooting” (*The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, London 1970, p. 63), adding that even “a leisurely game like cricket, demanding grace rather than strength, can cause much ill-will” (*ibid.*, p. 62). He opined that, on the contrary, international sport aroused “vicious passions” and led to “orgies of hatred” (*ibid.*, pp. 61–2). Furthermore, since Pakistan was subjected to long periods of military rule, the large crowds attracted by cricket provided a rare opportunity for the political opposition, and matches occasionally resulted in riots.

Although Pakistan is sometimes unpopular (“no one really wanted to play Pakistan, home or away”, p. 476), there is no doubting the excellence of the country’s cricket, nor the genius of its players. Pakistan achieved Test Match status in 1952 and by 1992 had become world champions; it had provided a Wisden Cricketer of the Year as early as 1955.

Wounded Tiger does not reflect a Comptonian sense of cricket as a game of fun to be enjoyed by player and spectator alike. More than seventy years ago Orwell suggested that the “true test” of a cricketer is that he or she should prefer village cricket to “first-class” cricket (*CEJL*, III, page 66). Yet again, the mighty Orwell was spot on.

Anthony V.M. Horton

FRANZ-JOSEF VOLLMER / FRIEDERIKE WEIS, *Angels and Madonnas in Islam. Mughal and other Oriental Miniatures in the Vollmer Collection*. Berlin: Jörg Lehmann, 2015. 116 pages, €24.90. ISBN 978-3-00-048460-5 (The book can be ordered from www.amazon.de or dr_joerg.lehmann@web.de.)

In this work, Franz-Josef Vollmer allows us a glimpse into his impressive collection of miniatures from India and Iran. The subject of the miniatures is unusual: they depict Christian motives, but stem from the hand of Muslim painters and were sold in a market dominated by Muslim buyers.

In his introduction, Vollmer describes the history of the artworks. In the late 16th century, Mughal emperor Akbar – the first Mughal to reside permanently in India, and well aware that most of the subjects of his Muslim dynasty were non-Muslims – encountered the Portuguese and showed himself impressed with Christian teachings. Jesuit fathers came to Akbar’s court and acquainted the emperor with Christian theology. Vollmer remarks, illustratively, that Akbar was highly impressed with one of the presents he received, a beautifully illustrated bible dedicated to the Spanish (and subsequently Portuguese) king Philip II; he was enraptured that the most holy book of the Christians could be dedicated to a sovereign.

Persian and Indian Islam has never strictly observed the Islamic interdict on depictions of living beings. Consequently, a good deal of interest was shown in illustrations, and in the following period a thriving market for miniatures depicting Christian scenes emerged. To find Christian motives in Islamic art is less surprising than appears at first glance. Mary and Jesus were and are venerated in Islam, the former as a model of chastity and purity (there is an interesting reference in the introduction to a legendary ancestor of the Mughal dynasty, Alanqu’a, who like Mary experienced a virgin birth). Jesus, needless to say, is revered as the last prophet before the prophet Muhammad. Saints, likewise, are an important part of Islamic lore, particularly among Sufi brotherhoods, of which many existed in India.

Vollmer explains that the model pictures with Christian motives were not sent from Europe to India as paintings, but rather as engravings. This made them more resilient to the Indian climate, and also offered Indian artists the opportunity to colour and adapt them to local taste – the majority of the published works of art show Christian scenes in a clearly localized style. The publication