



# **Mad Tales from the Raj: The European Insane in British India, 1800-1858 (The Wellcome Institute Series in the History of Medicine)**

*Waltraud Ernst*

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Europeans in India had ambivalent feelings towards their mentally deranged compatriots. The authorities encouraged medical practitioners to treat European "lunatics" with kindness and respect, but they also insisted on segregating them from the European public, as well as from Indians. This attitude did not simply echo practices in the colonial motherland: it is closely linked to the British imperative of preserving the prestige of the ruling race. Like poor Europeans and vagrants, "lunatics" were seen as tarnishing the image of the British in India. "Mad Tales From the Raj" is an extensively researched study of European "insanity" within the context of British colonialism in early 19th century India. The author challenges the assumption that western medical psychology was impartial, and highlights the extent to which it not only reflected British colonial ideology and practice, but also helped to shape the interaction between rulers and ruled. Waltraud Ernst, a psychologist and historian, shows how the "colonial twist" assumed by European lunacy policy in India is reflected in psychological assessment and clinical treatment. She also discusses individual patients' life-stories and their experiences of confinement in asylums in India and England. Based on archival sources and medical experts' reports, the book provides an account of contemporary psychiatric treatment and colonial policies. It will be of interest not only to students of colonial history, medical sociology and related disciplines, but to all those with a general interest in British life in the colonies.

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