Introduction

This book raises three interlinked questions: first, how to do a social history of time; second, what are the ways in which it can be done without succumbing to the usual, and at times inevitable, pull of some of the useful binaries in which most of the historical accounts of time have been written; and third, how, as a result of overcoming some of these binaries, do we go beyond simply stating the 'fact' that time and/or temporality is plural and multiple when it is approached as a socially-constituted entity. In raising these questions, the book problematises the relationship between time and temporality and marks out the limitations in the current historiography that deal with the making of the modern time. It argues for not using time and temporality interchangeably, which is not a novel point in itself, but given the fact that the slippage between the two unwittingly persists even in some of the highly useful recent works, it becomes necessary to reiterate the difference. Rather than defining what time is, which is a philosophical and a physicist question, the book casts that inquiry into the historical mould to explore how time, as a contestatory resource, becomes part of social relationships and what it does to them when scripts of power align themselves with the control of time.[1] Nitzan Lebovic has put it elegantly: 'When one sets out to write about time, one soon discovers it is a stubborn creature rejecting all forms of characterisation. In fact, it is impossible to say what time really is: time cannot be grasped through its affirmation (what time *is*) or its negation (what time is *not*). Rather, it is more productive to think about time through its reception, its functions, its field of operations . . .'.[2] Similar is the contention of another volume which explains time as a function of coordination and rhythm but which also involves material, emotional, moral, and political dimensions.[3] It is both punctuated by extraordinary events like birth and death and ordinary routines of the everyday life.

There will hardly be any dispute with these formulations but the methodological challenges when encountering the stubborn character of time, as Lebovic puts it, find a quick resolution, in a number of recent studies, in dissolving the

1 For a very useful account of twentieth century study of time, influenced by physics, and reincarnating itself into different guises in humanities and social science disciplines, see Penelope J. Corfield, 'Time and the Historians in the Age of Relativity', *Geschicte und Gesellschaft*, 25, 2015, pp. 71–91. Also, Adrian Bardon, *A Brief History of the Philosophy of Time*, New York, 2013.

2 Nitzan Lebovic, 'The Sovereignty of Modern Times: Different Concepts of Time and the Modernist Perspective', *History and Theory*, 49 (May), 2010, pp. 281–82.

3 Elizabeth Shove, Frank Trentmann, and Richard Wilk, eds., *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life: Practice, Materiality and Culture*, Oxford/New York, 2009, p. 2.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111697215-001

problematic of time into the framework of multiplicity and plurality of time and temporalities. Time is relocated into the domain of the social or the historical; that the social is a non-uniform, hierarchical, and uneven formation goes without saying, and so is the historical which is regionally and ethnically differently constituted. Thus, based upon varying loci of plural social formation or multiple historical trajectories, both time and temporality emerge as plural and multiple entities. To continue with the words of the editors of the volume referred above: 'Rather than viewing time in terms of minutes, hours or years and instead of treating it as a resource that can be stored, released and used up like a rechargeable battery, the contributions to this book emphasize the creative production, reproduction and consumption of *multiple* temporalities.'[4]

In distinction to such views, the core of this monograph is based upon the idea that time has a strong, irrefutable character of its 'given-ness'. The main component of that character is irreversibility. The book takes social history as a foundational framework to approach the history of time in which the framework of plurality is put under rigorous interrogation and is not taken as an unquestionable article of faith. It may sound a little ironical at this stage that while adopting a social history approach, the book offers to treat time as a non-plural entity, but as different chapters will try to demonstrate, at least, for the sake of doing a social history of time, the time's given-ness character should be taken seriously if one aims to deeply historicise the relationship between time and society. This is so because the book draws a distinction between two approaches: one, of doing a history of social-time, and two, of doing a social history of time. It agrees in parts with the idea that if time is approached as an entity which is inherently constituted through social practices, then it is bound to appear plural. However, this inevitability of plurality also poses dangers emerging out of extreme forms of relativism and does not serve the purposes of writing histories of hierarchies, differentiations, and contestations which are some of the core themes of social history. Therefore, the book favours the approach of doing a social history of time rather than narrativizing the plurality of social-time, which is already a plural entity.

This mode of conceptualising a social history framework for history of time also necessitates maintaining a distinction between time and temporality. Time can be a stubborn creature; temporality is not. If time is an elusive entity, then temporality is both a regime of periodisation through which we understand and classify the passage of time as well as it is a historically constituted formation of materialities and ideas that interfaces the relationship between time and society. However, in a manner of talking as well as at the level of argumentation, often

4 Ibid., p. 3.

the distinction between time and temporality is blurred. The expression that 'time is plural' and the framework of 'pluritemporality' are used interchangeably. Against the prevailing strong currents in the multidisciplinary studies on time which take it as a plural entity or lapses into the interchangeable use of time and temporality, in this book, time has been approached as a linear, universal fabric and temporal as the dynamic social formation which is a result of people's practices in and with time.

A word on the relationship between practices and time is perhaps required. Elizabeth Shove's account of linking practices with production and consumption of time is very enriching except that I find a fundamental conceptual anomaly in the way she presents this relationship.[5] For her, practices make time. But then she goes on to use an array of expressions to explain this relationship which conflicts the claim that time is a product of practices alone. Through her own statements, one can perceive that time precedes practices. To read her in her own words: 'practices intersect in time and in space'; 'uses of time . . . represent the detectable remains or traces of practice'; and finally: 'Since people have to make time or find time in which to do – i.e. to perform practices –, it is reasonable to suppose that if new practices are to take hold, time has to be made for them at the expense of others which are no longer performed, or not performed as frequently as before.' If her contention is simply that because time is a limited resource in which new practices require displacing the older, which then semantically gets expressed as 'making time', then there is no disagreement. However, if the purchase of her argument is that it is inconceivable to think of time beyond practices, as the latter *make* the former, then her own stream of arguments shows that time exists prior to practices, exists as an independent entity and exists as a limited resource which forces people to make a choice or selection of practices.

The primary focus of this book is on the making of what we refer to as 'modern time' and what kinds of histories of this modern time are plausible and desirable. However, in order to counter a strong tendency prevalent in the existing studies that approaches, in a circular fashion, the making of the modern time from the vantage point of the modern itself, the book emphasises the historicising of the relationship between time, peoples' practices, and power in a longue-durée fashion as one of the most important ways of doing a social history of time. Privileging the methodological entry point of social history, the book attempts to show that the research questions emerging out of this concern overlap, but also significantly vary, from the perspectives used for studying social-time and histori-

5 Shove, 'Everyday Practice and the Production and Consumption of Time', in ibid., p. 18.

cal-time. In other words, a history of social-time or a history of historiography and historicity is not the subject matter of this monograph; time becoming a constituent of social relationship and power hierarchy, is. Therefore, a brief clarification on how this book uses the term social history, whose journey in the last six decades has itself been quite eventful, will not be out of place.

Charting the thematic diversity within the field of social history, in 1971 E. J. Hobsbawm quipped that the term social history was difficult to define.[6] However, a lot has changed since the time he optimistically pronounced that the coming years would be a good time to be a social historian to the early 2000s, when Jürgen Kocha shared the widespread impression that it was not a good moment to be a social historian.[7] In very general terms, the field of social history, as it is understood now, is not just limited to recovering working class experiences, writing accounts of 'class struggle without class', and histories of the poor and socialist movements.[8] It has also moved away from the application of strict social science quantification methodologies (to the extent that Hobsbawm bantered that historians with bad maths began to call themselves social historians) and in fact has absorbed, while being deeply threatened by them, newer sensibilities of archival readings; the importance of treating identities as unstable, relational, and intersectional; and the benefits of exploring constructed-ness of meanings around practices, which were generated by the literary turn of the 1980s. However, as tracing the development of social history is not the subject of this book, it can only be mentioned in passing that social history also informed and flourished through the opening of new lines of inquiry such as gender and race histories under the 'cultural turn'. Although the weight of 'cultural history' seemed to have made social history marginal, Christoph Conrad points out that, '[T]he very meaning of the term 'social' was itself reconceived; it lost its direct association with

6 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'From Social History to the History of Society', *Daedalus*, 100, 1, 1971, pp. 20–45. On the meaning of the term social in social history and what role 'class' played in the conceptualisation of social history, see Patrick Joyce, 'The End of Social History', *Social History*, 95, 20, 1, 1995, pp. 73–91.

7 Juergen Kocha, 'Losses, Gains and Opportunities: Social History Today', *Journal of Social History*, 37, 1, 2003, pp. 21–28.

8 Rudi Batzell, Sven Beckert, Andrew Gordon, and Gabriel Winant, 'E. P. Thompson, Politics and History: Writing Social History Fifty Years after *The Making of the English Working Class*', *Journal of Social History*, 48, 4, 2015, pp. 753–58. The latter reference is to E. P. Thompson's essay, 'Eighteenth Century English Society: Class-Struggle without Class?', *Social History*, May 1978. On this also see Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, Delhi, 1997, Ch. 2.

'socialist' movements or 'social policy' and embraced, instead, the whole abundance of the life-world'.[9]

In the last three decades or so in the case of South Asia as well, social history – which was mainly confined to workers and peasant histories and to their organised movements – underwent a decline as 'colonial discourse analysis' took precedence over investigation of dialectical structural asymmetries and contradictions constituted through economic and social factors.[10] As Sumit Sarkar has marvellously summed up, 'Colonial discourse analysis abstracts itself, except in the most general terms, from histories of production and social relationships.'[11] This involved the mutation of the figure of the subaltern constituted in the first three volumes of *Subaltern Studies* in a dialectic realm of production process and cultural practice to a socially-flattened subject(ivity) produced through colonial disciplining in the latter volumes of the same series. However, in the last few years, new horizons of research on social classes, castes, and everyday practices have also flourished which can broadly be incorporated under the term of social history. In this renewal, the underlying fidelity is towards understanding structures, processes, and agency together with experiences, perceptions, and meanings. The focus is on explaining social inequality, and formation of Dalit political identity through the lived experiences of alienation and humiliation. The social, the domestic, and the political are closely intertwined, lending credit to the observation that a new social history needs to be more dialogical with political and cultural identity formation. It also needs to be keenly vigilant of power and politics in the domestic sphere that animates social life in the public.[12] The implication of this new modality of doing social history for a history of time is tremendous. For instance, the domestic or say, the home, which is unfortunately a neglected space in time's historiography, is as much an important site for studying the making of the modern time as are the public institutions such as the office and the school.

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9 Christoph Conrad, 'Social History', *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 22 (2nd edn.), 2015, p. 309.

10 On disappearance of economic questions from Indian social history, see Prasannan Parthasarathi, 'The State of Indian Social History', *Journal of Social History*, 37, 1, 2003, pp. 47–54.

11 Sarkar, Writing Social History, p. 4. Also see Vinay Lal, 'Subaltern Studies and its Critics: Debates over Indian History', *History and Theory*, 40 (February), 2001, pp. 135–48.

12 For insightful, though limited, leads on the burgeoning field of Dalit Studies, see review essays by Ramnarayan S. Rawat, 'Occupation, Dignity, and Space: The Rise of Dalit Studies', *History Compass*, 11/12, 2013, pp. 1059–1067; Shailaja Paik, 'The Rise of *New* Dalit Women in Indian Historiography', *History Compass*, 16/10, 2018, pp. 1–14. On the connected worlds of labour and culture, and domestic and political spheres, see Nitin Sinha, Nitin Varma, and Pankaj Jha, eds., *Servants' Pasts: Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century South Asia, Vol. 1*, New Delhi, 2019; Nitin Sinha and Nitin Varma, *Servants' Pasts: Late-Eighteenth to Twentieth Century South Asia, Vol. 2*, New Delhi, 2019.

In laying out the meaning of social history as used in this book, I turn to Sumit Sarkar, who undoubtedly is the most ardent, self-confessed, and in his own words 'unregenerate' Thompsonian in South Asian history writing. In a lecture given at Goldsmiths, University of London, he says: 'Social is the term that attracts me because I think it coveys, best of all, a sense of totality, an effort to link many aspects of human life to emphasise the interconnections between them and in the process of emphasising interconnections also highlight the contradictions. Both are very important.'[13] Interconnections and contradictions between various facets of life, to paraphrase Sarkar's elaboration of Thompsonian methodology elsewhere, mean that neither culture is abstracted from material conditions, or from relationships of power, nor are power and resistance detached from each other.[14] While Thompsonian social history's scope has rightfully been found inadequate on grounds of (non)engagement with gender, imperial, and race histories, its meticulous reconstruction of the past along the dialectical processes of agency and structure, this book shows, is worth retaining. More broadly, social history allows us to see the unevenness of interconnected world without 'splitting' the world using the axe of postcolonialism.[15]

It is this ambitious vision of the social, with a non-hierarchical and non-causal relationship between facets of everyday life, informed by methodology of deep historical contextualisation of events and processes rather than proffering of easy generalisations, and one which emboldens one to 'dig deeper where one stands' to excavate the constitution of power – both materially and linguistically – at the micro-possible level of social behaviour and practice that animates the sense of 'doing social history' in this book. As Patrick Joyce emphasises in a more recent essay, the history of power and of the political is now intrinsic to an adequate understanding of the social which is processual rather than structural.[16] However, the social of the colonial, as he tries to convey through his example, cannot be simply written by following the bureaucratic practices of the British East India Company or the Raj. The new social history ought to maintain people and their relationship with other species at the centre of our historical narratives (there is more later on the Anthropocene's contribution to the thinking of social history beyond human), not as the template of perfectibility of reason and progress but as indeterminate ordinary subjects preserving and exercising their agency with the realisation that it is ultimately a limited entity because of more-

13 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr31d_fDJEg&t=3s (last accessed 15.05.2024).

14 Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, pp. 54, 60.

15 On two traditions of 'one-worldism lumpers' and 'postcolonial splitters', see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Chicago, 2021, pp. 16–18.

16 Patrick Joyce, 'What is the Social in Social History?', *Past and Present*, 206, 2010, pp. 213–48.

than-human constraints generated through ecological conditions and cohabitation with other species; not as an insularly structured being but as a contingent and hierarchised collective. Methodologically, this book clings to the tools of microhistory and the history of the everyday rather than to the current, deservingly fading, wave of global history. They, that is the cluster of microhistory and everyday histories, as David Sabean has remarked, do two things: one, they call to attention 'important aspects of human reality not captured by "master" narratives' and two, they reconfigure 'these narratives rather than reproducing them'.[17]

It is equally important to state that beyond using the approach of social history that is driven to questioning the master narratives of power, a social history of time should also question the master-temporal binary established between the day and the night. Exploring the everyday is a well-established methodological approach. In contrast, the everynight is a very scantly explored area of research which ought to be pursued rigorously under the rubric of a social history of time. In the context of eighteenth-century Ottoman empire, Avner Wishnitzer writes, 'While the Ottoman everyday was shaped by political, economic, and religious institutions, the everynight was shaped by their retreat.'[18] Night was not merely the extension nor simply an oppositional entity of the day. It was a habitus that had specific relations to individual and collective aspirations, practices of social stigma and subversive transgressions, invisibilisation of work, and not least predicaments of law. The everynight, to put it in conversation with the everyday, possibly has a distinctive implication though.[19] The category of the everyday as a research methodology does not indicate any direct relationship to the temporal category of the day. This may be the function of a rather unreflected

17 David Warren Sabean made these observations only in relation to microhistory. I extend them also to benefits of 'everyday history'. 'Reflections on Microhistory', in Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Janz, eds., *Transnationale Geschichte*, Goettingen, 2005, pp. 275–89. For the detailed exposition of the everyday, see Alf Lüdkte, 'Introduction: What is the History of Everyday Life and Who are Its Practitioners?' in Lüdkte, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, New Jersey, 1995 (English translation, William Templer), pp. 3–30.

18 See Avner Wishnitzer, 'In the Dark: Power, Light, and Nocturnal Life in 18th-Century Istanbul', *International Journal of Middle east Studies*, 46, 2014, p. 513. Also see, Craig Koslofsky, *Evening's Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, 2011; Avner Wishnitzer, *As Night Falls: Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Cities after Dark*, New York, 2021.

19 This strand of thinking is work-in-progress and much of it is a result of conversations with Amrita Chattopadhyay, Sagnik Kar, and Nitin Varma. The citations to published works on night has deliberately been kept to minimum because the purpose is to accentuate the need to think through 'the everynight'. For a very helpful review of existing works, see Amrita Chattopadhyay, 'Night and Nocturnality – A Historiographical Overview' (unpublished paper).

generalisation of the day subsuming the temporality of the night as well. After all, the everyday histories do claim to include histories of non-work and sleep. But in its core, the everyday is a methodological gateway to explore the boring, the banal, and the mundane of the social lives, particularly of ordinary men and women. The everynight, in distinction to it, has an obvious temporal bearing of studying darkness and night as a temporal habitus of social lives. Unlike the everyday, the everynight must highlight the temporal values of night and nocturnality not only as a neutral host of social activities but as an active agent in shaping those activities. While the studies on the everyday are not necessarily the studies on time, the exploration of the everynight should remain anchored in doing a social history of time. Works on night and nocturnality may not necessarily be considered as works on time. But if we foreground night through the conceptual category of the everynight as a temporal host or habitus, with its own dynamic set of regimes and cultures, we can use it as a connecting bridge between night and time. We may use the everynight as an analytical and a methodological prism to not only produce empirically-drawn rich accounts of night and darkness but also to show its utility to other types of history writing. The histories of crime, law, state, and technology are the most obvious ones, but it can potentially enrich other histories such as of emotion, gender, labour, and history of ideas wherein a focus on the everynight will bring out the temporally distinctive texture of social relationships that otherwise may appear undifferentiated if seen only under the light of the 'everyday'.

The methodology of the everyday history will of course be useful in sculpting the same for the everynight, but the latter may demand some uniqueness of its own. This may include a more rigorous reading of the archive together with the necessity of approaching diverse types of archives to discern a fairly obtuse relationship between power and night. Night should not be approached as a unit of 'natural time', that is, merely as a fabric on which scripts of power unfold. If power wants to control darkness, say through law, then darkness also holds the potential to let power, through the exercise of law, go rogue.[20] But the conceptual framing of the everynight should also attempt to go beyond labelling night only as a socially constructed entity. That indeed is the rightful basic assumption. The everynight should not become a mere assemblage of diverse nocturnal activities related to crime, social transgressions, policing, lighting, and so on. It should be the mode of explaining social practices and historical changes as and when constituted through darkness in relation to power. Thinking of the nature of state-

20 Nitin Sinha, 'Night and Law: A Tumultuous History', *The Wire*, 27 October 2024, https://thewire.in/law/night-and-law-a-tumultuous-history (last accessed 19.11.2024).

centric archives, the night is either poorly or formulaically documented mostly in relation to crime on the one hand and light/electricity on the other. The distinctive sociabilities of the night, the altered mechanism and the nature of power that controls or attempts to control it, and its invisibilised presence in the archives as well as in our history writing, need to be thought together in order to craft a new methodological approach of the everynight.

In the age of the Anthropocene, when the scale of our investigation has moved to the level of the planetary, holding the ropes of microhistory and everyday and everynight histories may appear odd. However, as this monograph intends to show, even for a universal concept and entity such as time, a historical study of it will benefit from adopting a micro scale of investigation. The term micro does not stand for a village in early sixteenth or seventeenth century Europe or Asia or for the inability to produce generalisations. It stands for the perspective in which historical research is ambitiously geared towards capturing every oddity, mundaneness, and uniqueness of people's practices and yet also simultaneously equipped to explore the force of the structures that shape social relationships.[21]

The history of time and temporality is a nascent field of inquiry in South Asia, whose contours are heavily marked by patchy studies on technology on the one hand and conflation of time and periodisation through literary-textual representations on the other. However, this book is not regional in its scope. In the third chapter, I do draw empirical substantiations from fields of colonial Indian history which I am a little better versed with,[22] but the aim is not to write only on ways of doing social history of time in South Asia. The book ambitiously tends to introduce new frameworks through which time and its role in human history and society can be explored. Aiming to use the methodology of social history to investigate the dynamic and uneven relationship amongst people as constituted through multivalent power, varied forms of subjectivation (at the collective rather than the individual level), and everyday practices of life and livelihood, the book proposes two analytical frameworks of 'temporal regime' and 'temporal

21 For an insightful review of both these strands, see Brad S. Gregory, '*Is* Small Beautiful? Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life', *History and Theory*, 38, 1, 2002, pp. 100–10. For microhistory's commitment to exploring 'exception typical' see, Matti Peltonen, 'Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research', *History and Theory*, 40, 2001, pp. 347–59. The last decade has seen an interesting debate emerging on 'global microhistory' but because the exploration of microhistory and its variants is not the theme of direct concern here, I am leaving that discussion out for the sake of brevity.

22 In general, I am using the term 'South Asia' when indicating a broader historiographical trend of the region, and 'India' or specifically 'colonial India' when empirically referring to the time period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

culture' of which the primary emphasis is on interrogating what people did with, and in, time. Meanings, narratives, and perceptions in themselves are not the agents of change without people and their practices in relation to ideas and objects (that is, human and non-human). The meaning of the material is no longer restricted to the economic sphere of production alone but incorporates urban, technological, and infrastructural aspects as well. This is the one of the core extensions of social history which this work attempts to put across.

When dealing with people and time the question of plural engagements is bound to emerge. People is a socially segregated and varied entity and hence, as the argument follows, how could time not remain plural? In the current existing repertoire of work, there is a strong tendency to regard time as a plural entity. The monograph argues that despite the plural ways in which people engaged with time, the plurality of time can become an impeding framework if one wants to write a social history of time. The latter is a framework distinct from studies on 'historical time' and 'social time'. The ontological plural configuration of time, pluritemporal dimensions of lives and objects, and multiple times through acts of memory, remembrance, and retelling via the presence of the past (or pasts) in the present (or presents) that is impregnated with the idea of the future (or futures), when analysed from the viewpoint of the modest ambitions of the approach of a social history of time, do not take us far in exploring the interconnected histories of institutional, structural, and experiential asymmetries which constitute the core of the relationship between time, power, and society. The hyper relativised understanding of time and temporality contributing to its plurality runs against the danger of such ambitions of theoretical valence of history writing – social history – which profess to put inequalities into the centre of our society's understanding.

Methodologically, pluralism as a framework reiterates the juxtaposition or interconnections of independent formations in their essentialist manner, thus foreclosing the option of exploring the dialectical process of production of 'differentiated unity' through internal movements of contradictions.[23] Further, as shown later in the book, the framework of pluralism is inadequate to explain the inequalities if the point of termination of any analysis is to simply highlight the presence of interconnections leading to existence of plural times or temporalities.[24] To partly capture this critique, and by foregrounding people and their prac-

23 The phrase taken from Jason W. Moore, 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene & the Flight from World History: Dialectical Universalism & the Geographies of Class Power in the Capitalist World Ecology, 1492–2022', *Nordia Geographical Publications*, 51, 2, 2022, pp. 123–46.

24 An example of this approach is Bernadette Bensaude-Vicent, 'Rethinking Time in Response to the Anthropocene: From Timescales to Timescapes', *Anthropocene Review*, 2021.

tices to the forefront of our research, I wish to push the idea that a social history of time can be imagined in terms of investigating what people do with and in time. People interact with time to turn it into a resource to exercise power or to turn it into a resource of power; people do things with time and thus create possibilities of multiple forms of engagement with time. They slot it, document it, catalogue it, and conquer it. In contrast, people act in time because time retains its pre-given character which exerts its own authority in how social groups attain and resist that power. People do things with time and in the course of doing so give meaning to it; but people are also constrained by the universality of time such as bodily degradation or planetary movements causing day and night which they may socially explain in a varied manner but may not control, reverse, or collapse it in any absolute sense. Therefore, they are forced to act in time which is independent of human action while they simultaneously interact with time to make it their own. Practices shape meanings of time, but they also happen within the matrix of time which is not often mutable. Multiple forms of engagement with time do not make time itself multiple or plural. I propose to locate the stuff of social history as resolutely perched between this constant traffic of practices with and in time.

The first two chapters of this book are of the nature of historiographical review in which different frameworks used in the study of time and temporality across disciplines have been critically analysed. The first chapter takes up the literature on the making of the modern time and questions the binaries that were created through that process between modern and primitive times/societies. While this has been substantially questioned in the new wave of writings on time which draws inspiration from postcolonial and global frameworks, this book nonetheless outlines the problems lying with the latter two frameworks as well. The second chapter engages more directly with the two most important clusters of themes: social-time and historical-time. It charts out the debates that constructed the binary between social and natural times on the one hand and that of using time as a proxy for historical periodisation that delineates its function more as a unit of classification than as an entity or resource shaping social relationships on the other. In this critical engagement, the aim is not to attain an unfailing comprehensiveness of the existing literature but to engage with those frameworks which have remained central to the writing of time. The third chapter introduces the frameworks of temporal regime and temporal culture and offers, by way of empirical examples, a more practical illustration of how these two frameworks can help us surpass some of the dead ends in which the studies of time and temporality have got wedged. The conclusion returns to the question of plural time and undergirds its limits when it comes to writing historical pasts through the lens of social history.