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Analyzing Attack on Titan through Ranajit Guha's *On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India*

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Abstract-

Theoretical discourse in literature gains deeper meaning when applied across boundaries of genre and medium. This paper attempts such a cross-disciplinary endeavour by applying Ranajit Guha's historiographical theory, as laid out in *On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India*, to the contemporary Japanese anime *Attack on Titan*. Guha critiques the dominant historiography of colonial India for its elite-centric narrative, which privileges colonial and bourgeois-nationalist actors while marginalising the autonomous historical agency of the subaltern classes. This paper examines how similar mechanisms of historical erasure, narrative control, and elite-driven legitimacy are represented within *Attack on Titan*. The anime depicts the Eldians as subaltern figures whose history has been co-opted, distorted, and weaponised to sustain a system of oppression. The Marleyan state constructs and disseminates a dominant narrative that portrays Eldians as inherently monstrous, thereby justifying their political and social exclusion. This mirrors the colonial historiographic practice critiqued by Guha, where history is written by the elite to legitimise their power and suppress alternative versions of resistance or selfhood. The paper interrogates the ideological battleground of history and the potential for reclamation of the subaltern voice in a world structured by violence and memory control. Ultimately, the study tries to contribute to the ongoing discourse on global postcoloniality and the politics of memory, bringing together literary theory and visual narrative to illuminate the transnational relevance of Guha's historiographical concerns.

Keywords – Historiography, Subaltern, Eldians, Marleyan state, Resistance, Memory control

Introduction

Literature and visual narrative have long been instruments through which societies grapple with questions of power, identity, and historical memory. Literary criticism, as a scholarly practice, emerged prominently in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the rise of New Criticism and later diversified through structuralist, poststructuralist, Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial lenses. Among these, postcolonial theory—especially the Subaltern Studies collective initiated in the 1980s—challenged dominant historiographies that suppressed or misrepresented the political agency of colonised peoples. Scholars like Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Ranajit Guha focused attention on how colonial and nationalist discourses effaced the presence of subaltern voices. Guha's intervention was particularly crucial in redefining historiography, shifting focus from elite-driven nationalist narratives to the lived experiences and political agency of the subaltern classes, especially peasants and labourers.

Parallel to these developments, anime, the Japanese form of animated storytelling, has evolved from its early origins as commercial children's entertainment in the post-WWII era into a complex and transnational medium. *Emakimono* was its predecessors. The 1963 series *Astro Boy* marked the emergence of anime as a distinct aesthetic form, but it was through later works like *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Akira*, and *Attack on Titan* that anime began to reflect deeply philosophical, political, and ethical themes. Susan J. Napier, in *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, observes that anime often explores existential dread, catastrophic trauma, and shifting identity structures—features which resonate with postcolonial and historiographical anxieties.

This convergence of literary theory and anime presents a unique space for interdisciplinary dialogue. Anime, like literature, is a site of ideological contestation where historical memory, marginalisation, and resistance can be dramatized. It provides visual allegories for complex theoretical concerns such as subalternity, nationhood, historical legitimacy, and agency. *Attack on Titan*, in particular, constructs a dystopian world marked by rigid hierarchies, fabricated historical narratives, and the systemic oppression of a racialised group—Eldians—by the Marleyan empire. The ancestors of the current Eldians were not completely innocent either. The anime's narrative framework offers fertile ground to apply Guha's critique of historiography, exploring how subalternity is produced and resisted in modern cultural products.

By bringing together Guha's historiographical theory and Isayama's anime, this study seeks to explore how *Attack on Titan* symbolically reenacts colonial structures of dominance and the possibility of subaltern resistance and historiographic reclamation. The aim is not merely to trace parallels but to show how contemporary anime can reconfigure and globalise subaltern theory, demonstrating its continued relevance across time, cultures, and media.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach, employing critical methods from postcolonial theory, subaltern historiography, and anime studies to examine *Attack on Titan* through the theoretical framework laid out in Ranajit Guha's *On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India*. The research primarily relies on close textual reading, discourse analysis, and comparative analysis, guided by Subaltern Studies methodology. The aim is to trace how *Attack on Titan* reenacts, deconstructs, or problematizes the structures of elite historiography that Guha critiques in colonial Indian history, especially in relation to the subaltern's political agency and representation. At the core of the methodology is Ranajit Guha's critique of elitist historiography, which asserts that both colonial and nationalist narratives marginalize or erase the subaltern's autonomous role in history. Guha's analysis, which highlights the absence of the oppressed's political consciousness in nationalist historiography, serves as a framework for exploring how *Attack on Titan* similarly portrays the systematic silencing, manipulation, and oppression of Eldians—especially the Subjects of Ymir—within historical narratives of Marley and Paradis Island.

Literature Review

The discourse surrounding *Attack on Titan* (Shingeki no Kyojin) is rich and diverse, spanning critical media studies, semiotic analysis, and political allegory, although explicit intersections with subaltern historiography remain scant. Studies like "Revisiting the Fascist Subtext of Attack on Titan: Some Notes on a Modern Reactionary Anime" by Tim Brinkhof critically examine the series' ideological underpinnings, arguing that its narrative architecture and imagery evoke fascist aesthetics and militarist propaganda. Brinkhof situates the series as a reactionary narrative reflecting authoritarian worldviews, drawing parallels between Eldians' internment and real-world persecution (e.g. Nazi Germany and colonial ghettos). A 2023

preprint by Febri Dwi Aryanto & Poppy Febriana also identifies fascist ideology embedded in the narrative through a semiotic reading, finding that the series portrays themes of discrimination, state violence, and authoritarian dominance as core structuring elements. While these studies foreground *Attack on Titan*'s critique of fascism, otherness, and historical myths, few explicitly deploy Subaltern Studies or Guha's historiographical framework. The academic conversation thus seldom connects the series' depiction of historical memory and propaganda with Guha's theoretical critique of elite-authored historiography and subaltern agency.

Research Gap-

While *Attack on Titan* has been widely analysed through various critical lenses there remains a notable absence of scholarly engagement with the anime through the lens of subaltern historiography, specifically as articulated by Ranajit Guha in *On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India*. Guha's work critiques both colonial and nationalist historiography for erasing the political consciousness and agency of the subaltern. This theoretical framework has rarely been applied to contemporary visual narratives like anime, despite their increasing thematic engagement with history, power, and marginalization. This research intends to fill this gap by conducting a comparative critical analysis of Guha's essay and the narrative, historical, and ideological structures of *Attack on Titan*. It seeks to demonstrate how the anime becomes a site of subaltern historiographical inquiry—challenging elite-imposed narratives, foregrounding lost voices, and dramatizing the political consequences of historical control. By bridging the disciplinary gap between postcolonial historiography and anime studies, this research contributes a novel perspective to both fields, expanding the application of Subaltern Studies beyond traditional literary and historical texts.

On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India

Ranajit Guha's "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" offers a critical analysis of the dominant historical narratives of colonial India, primarily focusing on what he terms elitist historiography. This dominant perspective, according to Guha, is characterised by the history written by colonialist and bourgeois-nationalist elites. One of the fundamental arguments Guha makes is that this elitist historiography has historically

dominated the understanding of Indian nationalism. This history, originating with British rule and sustained even in post-colonial India, predominantly focuses on the actions, ideas, and institutions of the elite, thereby marginalising the contributions and perspectives of the subaltern classes or the people. Guha contends that this approach presents Indian nationalism as something conceived and developed primarily within the intellectual and political circles of the elite, both colonial and nationalist. Furthermore, Guha points out that various strands of elitist history attribute the development of national consciousness and the making of the Indian nation to the achievements of these elites. This includes their policies, administration, constitutional reforms, literary works, and other cultural and intellectual activities. By focusing almost exclusively on these elite domains, such historiography tends to overlook or downplay the independent initiatives, struggles, and contributions of the broader populace in the making of their own history and consciousness. Guha also critiques the way elitist historiography often frames Indian nationalism as a function of stimulus and response. This implies a rather passive role for the Indian people, reacting to colonial policies or elite leadership, rather than actively shaping their own destiny and national identity. This stimulus-response model, according to Guha, fails to capture the inherent agency and dynamism of popular movements and resistance. A key aspect of Guha's critique is the argument that elitist historiography generally views Indian nationalism as an idealist venture primarily led and conceived by the elite. This perspective often fails to recognise the fundamental difference in the nature and objectives of elite and subaltern nationalism. While elite nationalism might have focused on political and administrative reforms within the existing colonial structure or on a gradual transfer of power, the subaltern perspective often involved a deeper antagonism towards colonial rule and a desire for more radical social and economic transformation. Guha highlights the inherent antagonism between the elite and the people as a crucial dynamic often ignored by elitist accounts. Moreover, Guha argues that elitist historiography, with its emphasis on the structure and functioning of the colonial administration, often neglects the deeper structure of the colonial state and the fundamental significance of class relations. By primarily focusing on the actions of the rulers and administrators, it fails to analyse the underlying power dynamics and the ways in which colonial rule impacted different social classes. Guha also criticises historical writing that fails to adequately explain Indian nationalism from the perspective of the people. He notes the frequent discrepancy between the mobilisation achieved by the elite and the actual participation of the masses. During periods of vertical mobilisation, where the elite attempted to draw the masses into their movements, the underlying dynamics and motivations of popular participation are often not

properly understood or explained through a purely elite-centric lens or within the framework of a real political process defined by the elite. According to Guha, the fundamental inadequacy of elitist historiography lies in its narrow and partial view of politics. It tends to equate politics solely with the activities of the government, the legislative bodies, and the organised political movements led by the elite, effectively excluding the everyday forms of resistance, collective action, and consciousness of the subaltern classes from the realm of the political. This narrow definition inherently blinds such historiography to the politics of the people. Guha emphasises that the historical domain left out by this narrow, elite-centric approach is precisely the domain of the politics of the people. The principal actors in this domain were not the colonial rulers or the dominant indigenous groups, but the peasantry, the working classes, and other subaltern sections of society. Their political actions and consciousness often operated outside the formal structures and ideologies of the elite. Furthermore, Guha contends that elitist historiography tends to overestimate the extent and nature of the mobilisation achieved by elite-led politics. He argues that much of this mobilisation remained largely vertical, relying on traditional social hierarchies, kinship ties, and territorial loyalties, rather than developing into a truly horizontal mobilisation based on shared class consciousness and common interests across different social strata. In contrast, Guha asserts that the ideology underpinning the domain of the people and their resistance to colonial domination was often more comprehensive and deeply rooted than that of the elite. This was because it stemmed from the direct experiences of exploitation and oppression and found expression in various forms of subaltern political action and collective resistance. Guha also highlights that the distinctive characteristics of this other history, the history of the people, derived fundamentally from the productive labour of the subaltern classes and their experience of exploitation. This material reality shaped their consciousness and gave their political actions a different character and set of objectives compared to the politics of the elite. A significant challenge in understanding the politics of the people, according to Guha, is that it often did not find adequate representation in official records and elite narratives. This absence or misrepresentation in the dominant historical sources has led to its marginalisation or dismissal by elitist historiography. Guha also suggests that the ability of the Indian bourgeoisie to act as a truly hegemonic force capable of representing the entire nation was weakened by the impact of colonialism on subaltern resistance, which often remained autonomous and outside of elite control. Guha further argues that subaltern movements frequently maintained a degree of autonomy from elite-led nationalism, often sealing themselves off and articulating their opposition in ways that the elite could not easily

assimilate or co-opt. This highlights the distinct and independent nature of subaltern political consciousness and action. In a crucial point, Guha suggests that while subaltern initiatives may not have always succeeded in achieving national liberation in the way envisioned by the elite, they often demonstrated a more profound and fundamental opposition to imperialism. This opposition was rooted in their daily experiences of exploitation and domination and aimed at a more radical transformation of the existing social and political order compared to the more reformist or gradualist approaches of many nationalist elites. Guha concludes by implying that the failure of the Indian nation to fully realise its potential might be linked to the inadequacy of the bourgeoisie as a hegemonic force that could effectively integrate the subaltern classes into the national project on terms that acknowledged their agency and aspirations. Ultimately, he calls for a reorientation in the study of modern Indian history, one that pays due attention to the political consciousness and autonomous actions of the people, which have for too long been neglected by the dominant elitist historiography.

Attack On Titan

Isayama's *Attack on Titan* or *Shingeki no Kyojin* is a dystopian world, where humanity is forced to reside in cities surrounded by three enormous concentric walls, each with cities (outcrops) situated on the outer side (also surrounded by a boundary of walls, one in each of the four directions; Wall Maria-the outermost wall, Wall Rose-the middle and Wall Sina- the innermost) that protect them from gigantic man-eating humanoids referred to as Titans. According to the locally propagated explanation of their history, it's the last surviving vestige of human civilization. It's inhabitants, known as the Eldians (or Subjects of Ymir or Devils of Paradis as Marleyans call them), have been led to believe that over one hundred years ago, humanity was on the brink of extinction after the emergence of Titans, who attack and eat humans on sight. The story follows the journey of Eren Yeager who vows to annihilate all Titans after their attack on his hometown Shiganshina (an outcrop district of Wall Maria) and it's subsequent destruction; he had witnessed his mother, Carla, being killed by a Pure Titan (Eldians who were forcefully transformed into Titans by injecting them with Titan serum). This leads him to join the Survey Corps or the Scout Regiment which ventures outside the walls to gain knowledge about Titans in the hopes of defeating them one day and re-acquiring humanity's lost liberty. But the basement of his home in Shiganshina unfolds the reality about their world and the existence of humans beyond their Island. Titans were

originally humans known as the Subjects of Ymir, descended from Ymir, the First Titan. Centuries before Eren's time, Ymir was enslaved by King Fritz. After a minor transgression (setting the pigs free), she was hunted for sport, fleeing into a tree where a mysterious spine-like creature fused with her, granting her Titan powers. She returned to serve Fritz, her abilities being exploited by Fritz to expand Eldian tribe into an empire. As a reward, she was made his concubine and bore three daughters—Maria, Rose, and Sheena. After 13 years (since she acquired her Titan powers), she died protecting Fritz, yet remained bound to his lineage in the Paths where she found herself after death, endlessly creating Titans for her descendants. To preserve her power, Fritz forced their daughters to consume her corpse, leading to the division of her abilities into the Nine Titans handed over to the subservient families. Over time, the families subservient to royal Fritz family waged civil war for control of these Titans. The 145th King, Karl Fritz, ashamed of Eldia's brutal past, conspired with the Tybur family to fabricate a Marleyan hero, Helos, as a ruse to dismantle Eldia. Moving to Paradis Island, he created the Walls with countless Colossal Titans, bluffing that any attack would trigger worldwide devastation. However, he renounced war, erasing the memories of his people, hiding the true royal family, and ensuring his ideology persisted within the Reiss bloodline. Meanwhile, Marley became the new oppressor, segregating Eldians into Internment Zones and enforcing strict discrimination. To maintain control, they created the Warrior Program, selecting young Eldians to inherit Titan powers in exchange for "Honorary Marleyan" status, shielding them from persecution. This led to the rise of the Eldian Restorationists, led by Eren Kruger, an undercover Eldian within Marley's Public Security. Among them was Grisha Yeager, who married Dina Fritz of the royal family. However, their son Zeke betrayed them, leading to their capture and exile to Paradis, where all but Grisha were turned into Titans. Saved by Kruger, Grisha inherited the Attack Titan and infiltrated the Walls, later marrying Carla and continuing his quest for the Founding Titan.

Applying Guha's On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India on Attack on Titan-

Attack on Titan can be rigorously examined through Ranajit Guha's critique of elitist historiography, especially his emphasis on how dominant historical narratives marginalise subaltern political consciousness and deny the agency of the oppressed. In the early episodes of the anime, Eren Yeager's life within the walled confines of Paradis Island reflects what

Guha refers to as the domain of the people—a sphere separated from elite political institutions and largely absent from officially sanctioned histories. The Eldians living under the monarchy are subjected to a fabricated historiography imposed by the royal government, which erases the truth of their lineage, the reality of the outside world, and their own political significance. This deliberate concealment of historical truth is closely aligned with Guha's critique of colonial and bourgeois-nationalist historiography in India, which, in his analysis, prioritised elite political actors—such as colonial administrators, educated reformers, and nationalist leaders—while systematically excluding the experiences, resistance, and autonomy of the masses, particularly peasants and tribal communities. Likewise, the Eldians residing in Marley's internment zones are subjected to a racialised and institutionalised framework of exclusion. Designated as descendants of historical oppressors, they are stripped of subjecthood and rendered subordinate through a state apparatus that conditions them to accept their inferiority. The Eldian Restorationist groups was a response to this constant suppression. Marleyan propaganda, public memory, and education coalesce to define their identity, not through their own lived experience, but through the imposed narrative of guilt and barbarism. Zeke was a victim caught in the crossfire. This condition mirrors the position of colonised subalterns in Guha's analysis, who are not only oppressed materially but are also ideologically configured by dominant historiography as politically inert. Just as Indian peasants and workers were positioned as passive recipients of elite-led nationalist mobilisation, the Eldians in *Attack on Titan* are portrayed—both within the narrative world and by the regimes that govern them—as incapable of autonomous political action. Their history is not something they participate in or shape, but rather something that is written for them by ruling classes—whether Marleyan officials or royal Eldian bloodlines—thus reinforcing Guha's assertion that subalterns are routinely denied visibility and voice within elite-controlled frameworks of historical discourse.

Ranajit Guha critiques elitist historiography for portraying nationalist movements as the accomplishments of an enlightened few—be they colonial administrators or nationalist leaders—while systematically neglecting the autonomous, frequently radical initiatives of the masses. In *Attack on Titan*, this critique finds a compelling parallel in the structure and ideology of the Marleyan Empire, whose global dominance replicates the functioning of the colonial state. The Empire not only exercises military and economic control but also imposes a master narrative that stigmatises the Eldians as inherently malevolent—a race that once oppressed the world through Titan power and must now atone through servitude. Although

this is not completely false since King Fritz did expand his once Eldian tribe into an empire based on the Titan powers of the Founder Ymir, the girl he had enslaved and whose potentials he exploited, and thanks to King Karl Fritz the tables were turned against Eldians as Marley took its place as the new oppressor while the abandoned subjects of Karl Fritz and eventually their successors were left to fend for themselves due to Karl's pacifist views. The erasing of the memory of Eldians of Paradis rendered them in a similar if not worse state. This ideological framework mirrors the logic of colonial domination described by Guha, where the colonised are subjected to narratives of inferiority and guilt, designed to justify their subjugation and erase their capacity for autonomous resistance. The anime's portrayal of Eren Yeager's transformation marks a critical moment that resonates with Guha's emphasis on subaltern consciousness. Eren's discovery of the falsified history the evidence of which is revealed in the basement of his home in Shiganshina, promulgated by the Marleyan regime and the royal government of Paradis, and his subsequent inheritance of the Founding Titan (which gave him multifaceted powers one of them being witnessing the memory of past inheritors and in some cases influencing decisions of past and changing them as well), signal his passage from passive subject to active historical agent. This awakening is not the result of elite guidance or formal political instruction, but emerges from his confrontation with structural oppression and historical truth—precisely the kind of subaltern awakening that Guha identifies in the Indian context. In Guha's formulation, subaltern groups, though excluded from dominant historical narratives, were not politically inert; they engaged in a variety of uprisings and forms of resistance grounded in their material realities and lived experiences of exploitation under colonial rule. Similarly, Eren's agency is not derived from elite institutions or state-sponsored ideology, but from a radical disillusionment with the structures that have dictated his existence and suppressed his people's history. Eren's evolution therefore serves as an allegorical representation of subaltern consciousness reclaiming historical agency, echoing Guha's contention that subaltern resistance—though often dismissed or misrepresented in elitist historiography—was in fact central to the anti-colonial struggle. The Marleyan state's attempts to reduce Eldians to tools of empire, devoid of autonomy or historical voice, sometimes forcefully converting them into Pure Titans by injecting them with Titan spinal fluid developed into Titan serum, parallels the colonial strategy of rendering the colonised population into mere appendages of imperial governance. Eren's rebellion and reassertion of identity challenge the colonial script, just as Guha insists the subaltern challenges and disrupts the elite historiographical monopoly on the national narrative.

Ranajit Guha's critique of the stimulus-response model is instrumental in analysing the representation of Eldians under Marleyan rule in *Attack on Titan*. Guha condemns the elitist historiographical tendency to frame subaltern political action as mere reaction to elite initiatives or external provocations, thereby denying the subaltern their independent historical agency. Within the Marleyan imperial structure, Eldians—despite being the ethnic group responsible for the power of the Titans—are ideologically conditioned to view themselves as inherently sinful and dangerous. This internalised inferiority is inculcated through systematic propaganda, which not only casts the Eldians of Marley as guilty inheritors of historical atrocities but intensifies the division by portraying the Eldians on Paradis Island as even more monstrous and irredeemable. In this imposed structure of moral and political hierarchy, the Eldians in Marley become passive recipients of ideological stimuli, reacting to a dominant narrative without the space to formulate an autonomous counter-discourse. Those who attempt to resist are expected to be outed by their families and loved ones, with those involved suffering the consequences of revolting against the state across generations. That is how Grisha and his resistance group got caught, Zeke, his son, outed them to the authorities rising in rank through the Warrior Program very quickly. Thus families are pitched against each other just like patriarchy pitches women against each other. By the same logic the Eldians of Marley are pitched against Eldians of Paradis. This manufactured hierarchy among subaltern groups—where one segment is turned against another—closely parallels Guha's observation that elitist historiography often treats the masses as reactive and fragmented, lacking cohesive political will or ideological sophistication. Just as the colonised Indian peasantry was portrayed as disorganised by poverty, hunger, irrational, or incapable of self-directed resistance unless mobilised by elite leadership, the Eldians in Marley are depicted as being unable to transcend the ideological framework imposed upon them. Even when some are offered opportunities for relative privilege—most notably through selection in the Warrior Candidate Programme—their social and political advancement is predicated on their complete submission to Marleyan doctrine. This advancement does not signify empowerment in any meaningful sense; rather, it represents a conditional assimilation into the imperial structure, one that demands the erasure of critical thought and self-determination. Characters such as Reiner Braun, Annie Leonhart, and Gabi Braun exemplify this dynamic. Their elevation through the Warrior Programme parallels what Guha identifies as "vertical mobilisation"—a mechanism by which nationalist elites during the colonial period co-opted sections of the subaltern classes into political structures without challenging the overarching

hierarchies. These Eldian Warriors, trained and deployed as weapons against their own ethnic kin, function as Marley's instruments of domination. Their collaboration is not necessarily rooted in ideological allegiance to Marley but is shaped by fear, coercion, or the aspirational promise of protection and social legitimacy. This phenomenon mirrors Guha's interpretation of certain elite-nationalist figures in colonial India who, though indigenous, participated in structures of colonial rule not out of full political agency but because their positions of relative power depended on their complicity in maintaining the status quo. Thus, the Warrior Candidates' engagement in Marley's military and ideological machinery cannot be interpreted as expressions of autonomous political subjectivity. Their actions reflect the dynamics of vertical mobilisation, where the ruling elite—in this case, the Marleyan state—manages and manipulates subordinate groups through conditional incentives without altering the structure of domination. As Guha argues, such mobilisation may generate participation but not emancipation; it instrumentalises the subaltern while continuing to exclude their consciousness and aspirations from the centre of historical narrative. This analysis underscores how *Attack on Titan* dramatizes Guha's central concern: the persistence of elite frameworks that mask subaltern subjugation under the guise of inclusion, thereby silencing the authentic voice of the oppressed.

Guha critiques elite-led nationalism for overestimating its reach and ignoring the independent agency of the people. Partha Chatterjee once said, "The claim of the political elite to represent the nation is complicated by its acceptance of the modernising mission of colonialism... it [the elite] cannot act in the name of the entire society." Eren's leadership of the Yeagerists and his decision to launch the Rumbling exemplify this, as his vertical mobilisation excludes collective participation and imposes a singular vision. Though framed as a fight for Eldian survival, his actions turn the masses into passive instruments, not active agents—mirroring how Indian elites, as Guha argues, mobilised the subaltern through hierarchy and fear rather than shared consciousness. The ideological separation between Eldians in Marley and those on Paradis further illustrates Guha's insight into how elitist narratives suppress solidarity among the subaltern by constructing internal divisions. The divide between Eldians in Marley and those on Paradis further reflects Guha's point about elite strategies of fragmentation to prevent horizontal mobilisation. Marleyan propaganda distorts the history of Paradis Eldians to prevent unity, ensuring that Marleyan Eldians, like Gabi, internalise hostile views rooted in elite narratives rather than subaltern autonomy. As a

result, the Eldians in Marley are denied the ability to conceptualise a common political future with those of Paradis.

Ranajit Guha identifies a central flaw in nationalist historiography: its failure to differentiate between elite and subaltern modes of politics, and its tendency to erase the inherent antagonism between the two. In his analysis, nationalist narratives frequently collapse all anti-colonial efforts into a unified struggle led by elite figures, thereby subsuming or silencing the autonomous efforts of subaltern groups. *Attack on Titan* mirrors this critique through its depiction of the deep ideological fissures that emerge within Paradis Island, particularly following Eren Yeager's transformation into a revolutionary leader. "There's no time to think whether it's right or wrong. Just act! Don't try to end things all nice and neat. Yes. We live in a cruel world." (*Attack on Titan*, Isayama et al., Season 1, episode 24, Wit Studio, 2013). Eren, once a symbol of resistance against Marleyan oppression, gradually becomes the architect of a new authoritarian order, enforcing his vision through the Yeagerist movement. Even though it was part of his plan to set himself as the embodiment of all evil and his friends as heroes of humanity by stopping him, the division between Eren's followers and those who oppose him—such as Armin, Mikasa, Hange, and the remnants of the Survey Corps—reveals the same antagonism Guha outlines: a conflict between an emergent elite and those subaltern elements that refuse to be co-opted into the dominant narrative. Eren's trajectory exemplifies how a subject who once occupied a position of marginalisation can, upon acquiring power, reproduce the very structures of domination they once resisted. His consolidation of power excludes alternative voices and forecloses spaces for ethical and democratic dissent, thereby perpetuating a logic of authoritarianism under the guise of liberation even though he did give free will to his friends; they can do whatever they wanted. This pattern directly reflects Guha's analysis of the postcolonial Indian state, where nationalist elites, after achieving independence, reconstituted hierarchies rather than dismantling them. Instead of integrating the aspirations of the peasantry and labouring classes into the national project, postcolonial leadership preserved elitist structures of governance, thereby replicating the colonial model of political exclusion under a different banner. Moreover, *Attack on Titan* dramatizes the persistence of autonomous resistance within both Paradis and Marley, movements that are not fully aligned with the ideologies of either dominant power. Characters such as Falco Grice, Onyankopon, and Armin Arlert embody this resistance. Their opposition to both Eren's genocidal plan and Marley's imperial aggression is not rooted in institutional authority or elite doctrine, but in their lived experiences, ethical

convictions, and engagement with the material realities of war, violence, and historical trauma. This form of dissent parallels Guha's emphasis on the subaltern's capacity for autonomous political consciousness—an agency that is neither reactive nor derivative of elite agendas, but rather emerges from concrete social conditions and moral judgement. By highlighting these figures who resist both Marleyan and Yeagerist hegemonies, the anime foregrounds the distinction between elite and subaltern politics—a distinction nationalist historiography, as Guha argues, tends to obscure. These characters do not merely follow orders or align with dominant ideologies; rather, they engage critically with their historical moment, often at great personal risk, in pursuit of justice, coexistence, and collective survival. Their actions substantiate Guha's argument that subaltern agency is irreducible to elite politics and that the voice of the people—when allowed to speak—offers a radically different vision of history and political possibility.

Finally, Ranajit Guha's assertion that the Indian bourgeoisie failed to constitute itself as a truly hegemonic force—one capable of integrating subaltern interests into a coherent national project—finds a compelling parallel in the aftermath of the Rumbling in *Attack on Titan*. Eren Yeager's decision to unleash the power of the Founding Titan and annihilate eighty percent of the world's population is positioned as the culmination of his radical departure from traditional modes of resistance. Frustrated by the futility of dialogue and reconciliation, Eren attempts to impose a revolutionary solution through catastrophic violence just to save the Eldians of Paradis. However, like the Indian nationalist elite critiqued by Guha, Eren's vision ultimately fails to establish a sustainable or inclusive framework for liberation. His actions do not culminate in the emancipation of the Eldian people, but instead generate new fractures—both internal and external—within the socio-political order of Paradis and beyond. Guha attributes the limitations of the Indian national project to the inability of the postcolonial bourgeoisie to engage meaningfully with subaltern consciousness, instead reproducing colonial models of authority under nationalist guises. In *Attack on Titan*, Eren similarly enacts a project that is fundamentally top-down in nature, engineered without broad-based consent or pluralistic dialogue. Although Eren frames his violence as a necessary condition for the survival of his people, his failure to secure a collective or democratic vision for Eldian future renders his project structurally fragile and morally contradictory. His revolution, rather than empowering the masses, enforces a singular narrative that excludes dissenting voices—including those of his closest allies—and collapses under the weight of its own contradictions. The post-Rumbling world portrayed at the end of

the anime reflects this breakdown. Far from attaining lasting peace, the survivors are left with unresolved tensions, mutual distrust, and a precarious political vacuum. The Eldians on Paradis remain isolated and vulnerable, while the outside world, though devastated, is not entirely pacified. This unresolved outcome underscores the inadequacy of any liberatory project that emerges solely from elite initiative or authoritarian violence, without substantive participation from the broader community it claims to represent. His legacy is not one of freedom but of ambiguity, contestation, and continued struggle. To conclude in the words of Yelena - “Every country has its problems. The only certain thing is that there are those who stepped forward to put an end to the long history of fear, blood and tears. Caused by the existence of titans. Those are Eren and Zeke.” (*Attack on Titan*, Isayama et al., Season 4, Part 2, episode 2, MAPPA, 2022)

Conclusion

By applying Ranajit Guha’s *On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India* to Hajime Isayama’s *Attack on Titan*, the anime emerges as a profound critique of dominant historiographical frameworks. Through its complex narrative structure and multifaceted character arcs, *Attack on Titan* reveals how the construction and control of history are central to the exercise of power. The anime lays bare the mechanisms by which ruling classes manipulate collective memory, suppress dissenting voices, and maintain authority—mirroring Guha’s analysis of colonial and nationalist historiographies that privileged elite agency while systematically excluding the subaltern from historical discourse. The false narratives propagated by the royal government within Paradis, the dehumanisation of Eldians in Marley, and the internalised guilt among the oppressed all exemplify how dominant ideologies operate by erasing or distorting the lived experiences of the masses. This suppression of subaltern voices, as Guha identifies in colonial India, is not merely a matter of omission but a deliberate act of historiographical violence—an erasure that sustains structures of domination. *Attack on Titan* reflects this condition through its portrayal of historical concealment, propaganda, and ideological control, where the ruling powers on both Paradis and Marley construct narratives that justify oppression and obscure the origins of conflict. As the story unfolds, the ideological foundations of these regimes are destabilised, leading to a crisis of legitimacy that mirrors the collapse of colonial authority in the wake of subaltern resistance. Most significantly, the narrative charts the eventual emergence and assertion of

subaltern agency, seen in the resistance of characters who reject both Marleyan and Yeagerist ideologies. This trajectory resonates with Guha's emphasis on the political consciousness and autonomous actions of subaltern groups in colonial India—agents who, despite marginalisation, enacted significant resistance outside elite frameworks. In this way, *Attack on Titan* not only critiques dominant historiography but also offers an allegorical representation of how history is continuously written, contested, and reclaimed from below. As such, it stands as a powerful narrative through which to examine postcolonial structures of knowledge and authority, making it an especially compelling subject for comparative analysis alongside the historiographical debates in postcolonial India that Guha so incisively critiques.

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