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SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES • HISTORY

ANTHEM MODERN SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY

‘Dr Sinha provides a fascinating study of transportation and communication in Bihar. This book moves, and therefore moves all of us, beyond the published literature. The periodization, the 1760s to the 1880s, enables Sinha to identify better the continuities and discontinuities within the circulation of people, goods and ideas in India before and after the 1850s advent of railways.’

—Professor Ian J. Kerr, University of Manitoba

Communication and Colonialism in Eastern India: Bihar, 1760s–1880s departs from the dominant scholarship in South Asian history that focuses narrowly on railways, and instead argues that any discussion of railway-generated changes needs to see such changes, at least up to the 1880s, as situated amidst existing patterns and networks of circulation within which roads and ferries were crucial. The volume also offers a detailed exploration of early colonial policies on road building and ferry improvement – an area that has hitherto remained unexplored.

Just as the new development of steam technology required and necessitated ‘lateral growth’ alongside the older technologies, so too were trade linkages marked by the interconnectedness of local and supra-local ties in which the world of peddlers intersected with that of native merchants and capitalist sahibs. This volume contends that the history of colonial communication is not a story of ‘displacement’ alone – either of one means by another or of one group by another – but also of realignment. Combining the understanding of production of knowledge about routes with the ways the practice of surveying and mapping led to territorial construction of national space of India, this book reinterprets the ‘colonial state-space’ as constituting a series of layered components, both of ‘inherited spaces and networks’ from pre-colonial times and of the processes of objectification that colonial rule initiated.

The aim of this volume is to contribute to the ‘history of social spaces’, a new field of study in which neither cultural nor economic discourse is overridden by the other. This is achieved via a micro-historical study of local circulatory regimes, together with an exploration of colonial and imperial cultural discourses on communications.

Nitin Sinha is a research fellow at the Zentrum Moderner Orient (Centre for Modern Oriental Studies) in Berlin. He has published on issues of transport and the ‘Mutiny’ of 1857, mobility and criminality, and railway labour movements in nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial India.



COMMUNICATION AND COLONIALISM IN EASTERN INDIA:
BIHAR, 1760s–1880s
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COMMUNICATION AND COLONIALISM IN EASTERN INDIA

Bihar, 1760s–1880s



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