



## Einladung

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### **Contract, Work and Resistance: Boatmen in Early Colonial Eastern India, 1760s-1850s.**

**Lecture by Nitin Sinha (York University)**

**Friday, 28 March 2013  
5 pm**

**Zentrum Moderner Orient**  
Konferenzraum  
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin-Nikolassee

In the period between 1760s and 1850s, boatmen, at least numerically speaking, were the most important transport workers, who unfortunately have received little scholarly attention so far. By looking at the regime of work, which surprisingly from as early as in the 1770s had strong bases in the notion of contract, the paper explores the nature of work, work organisation of and resistance by the boatmen. It argues that although work was structured along the wage or hire-based (thika) contract regime, other social and economic forms of relationship also thrived. Being one of the most important 'native' groups with which the British men and women were left with on their often long journeys, the lecture suggests that the contract helps us to understand the formal 'structure of work' and the minute details of the journey the 'world of work' of which the clandestine trade, weather, wind, rain, torrents, tracking, mooring, internal squabbling, and not least, preparing food were some of the main components.

Nitin Sinha is a historian of modern South Asia, specifically focusing on the themes of history of transport and communication, labour, and agro-ecology under the British colonial rule from the late eighteenth to twentieth centuries. His research interests include topics such as the production of colonial knowledge, history of travel and mapping, urban and labour history and social and cultural history related with Hindi printed texts and visuals. Since 2012 Nitin Sinha is a lecturer in modern history at the department of history, University of York. Between 2008 and 2012, he was a post-doctoral researcher at ZMO, Berlin. As a fellow at re:work, Berlin, he currently studies the history of Jamalpur, a railway town in colonial India from the 1860s to the 1960s.

Among his recent publications are: *Communication and Colonialism in Eastern India, Bihar: 1760s–1880s*. London and New York: Anthem Press 2012; "Entering the Black Hole: Between 'Mini-England' and 'Smell-like Rotten Potato', the Railway-Workshop Town of Jamalpur, 1860s–1940s", *South Asian History and Culture*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 317–347.