

people who previously had been least affected internally by immigration. At the same time, many white Americans made no such distinctions, looking only at skin color.

Berlin concludes with a summary epilogue focused on President Obama. As the descendant of a Kenyan father, Obama is portrayed as symbolic of the change created by the last great migration. He believes Obama “embodies the collective experience of those who have journeyed, found new places, and constantly remade themselves”. This “suggests the utility of the new narrative” (p. 240). Berlin’s imaginative and integrated approach certainly opens a way to explore deeper theoretical issues related to linking forced and voluntary migrations over long periods of history.

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AHUJA, RAVI. *Pathways of Empire. Circulation, ‘Public Works’ and Social Space in Colonial Orissa (c.1780–1914)*. [New Perspectives in South Asian History, vol. 25.] Orient BlackSwan, Hyderabad 2009. xiv, 362 pp. Maps. [Incl. map.] Rs: 695.00; doi:10.1017/S0020859011000290

Ravi Ahuja’s *Pathways of Empire* is a social history of roads, canal waterways, and railways in colonial Orissa between 1780 and 1914. The author focuses on the built environment of transportation modes and the circulation regime of goods and people in Orissa in the immediate pre-colonial period and the colonial period up to the outbreak of World War I.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first part the author establishes the relevance of theories of space by Henri Lefebvre and others and the potential of methods of historical geography for analysing networks of transport as spatial forms. Ahuja redefines the notion of “infrastructure” and opens up new heuristic possibilities for historical investigation. There is a lesson here of the scope of infrastructure for those who write the history of large technological projects. Current writings, Ahuja tells us, do not question concepts like “public works” or “infrastructure”, as if “roads and railways are open to the ‘general public’ or, more precisely, cater to the needs of a wide range of social actors” (p. 3). In contrast, in the author’s analysis, “the starting point [...] is the recognition that roads, railways and other forms of infrastructure should be perceived, not as isolated and neutral technical ‘facts’, but as materializations of social relations in space” (p. 9). The issue of colonial public works has been analysed before. But Ahuja’s questioning of the assumed public nature of infrastructure represents critical social history at its best. He puts the issue of access and use of networks of transport at the core of analysis and interrogates the assumptions of improvement made around them, questioning the policies of the colonial state and the progressivist assertions of nationalists.

The author, though, fails to consider the technological dimension of large infrastructural systems. The preference of state officials for navigable canals over railways or between different railways lines are left unanalysed as “geographical patterns”, or ascribed to the “balance of government decisions” (p. 223). Similarly, “the railway debates of the 1890s” seem to occur in the context of policy formulations alone. Thus, colonial policy emerges as the only determinant of choices made between different modes of transportation in the current analysis. Roads, waterways, and railways as large technological systems bore distinct characteristics. Colonial officials evaluated and acted upon the possibilities opened up by those traits as well as were constrained by the foreclosing of other options on techno-social grounds. This sub-text of technological history is missing in the account.

The second part of the book consists of narrative chapters that move forward chronologically. The description starts by looking at the pre-colonial *ancien regime* of circulation networks in Orissa in the period before colonial occupation. Ahuja uncovers the historicity of pre-colonial spaces and the agency of relational forces in the origin and development of channels of transport, notwithstanding the fact that colonialists conjured of natural and social space in the colony in terms of a blankness, as if it were “a tabula rasa to be engraved upon at will” (p. 101). He bypasses such triumphalism in colonial accounts to interpret the extension of roads, waterways, and railways, and their multiple uses by Indians as a reflection of the struggle between the colonial regime and different sections of the Indian population. The book ends by surveying the common drive for setting up infrastructure leading up to the pre-World-War years not only in the coastal plains that were fully under colonial control but also in interior Orissa that was not under direct colonial control.

*Pathways of Empire* makes a seminal contribution to the history of transport networks in colonial India. The monograph’s contributions are many. Firstly, it focuses on Orissa, a region that has often been relegated to the periphery in histories of transport, of railways in particular. But it does a lot more than merely plugging a geographical gap. It is masterful in connecting the expansion of transportation modes to the political economy of resistance by petty chieftains in the period of early colonialism, to the needs of expanding colonial capital, and to the rhythms of local rice production and pilgrim traffic. It also studies the development of transportation as creation of abstract spaces of use to both colonialists and Indians. The monograph never loses sight of the inherent materiality of these spaces for purposes of domination, commerce, or religion.

Chapters 7 and 8 form key parts of the monograph. Chapter 7 challenges the general assumption that major infrastructural change came to Orissa as a result of the drive by the colonialists to end the region’s isolation after the devastating famine in 1866. Such sharp changes in any case do not fit into the type of analysis that Ahuja advances. He points out that “the production of social space is a multi-authored, accumulative process and thus irreducible to a single and unambiguously datable act of volition” (p. 224). Thus, he proceeds to connect changes in infrastructure to broader changes in circulation and production going back to the 1840s and 1850s.

Chapter 8 takes the study of the establishment of transportation networks to the interior hills and valleys of Orissa. These were the regions under the sway of India’s petty chieftains. But regardless of the separate political and administrative salience of these “satellite” polities, Ahuja shows among them a similar drive to establish road and rail links and bring improvement to the territory. Apparently, these kingdoms were not untouched by the pace of commercialization of agriculture that first started in the coastal plains. The author suggests that agriculture, commerce, and “improvement” had become a generalized process in which local rajas and Indian entrepreneurs were equally invested along with the colonial regime. Infrastructures were laid down in many of these kingdoms in a context where such initiatives by political powers were welcomed because networks of transport contributed to commerce and thus to improvement. Thus, the author correctly surmises that in the little kingdoms of Orissa “the ‘improving’ raja was a commercial raja” (p. 277), at least to those to whom such improvement mattered.

Some readers may take exception to the author’s ploy of placing conceptual development and narrative history in two different parts of the monograph. The early chapters in the second section reflect some problems in integrating concepts with descriptive history. Some of the jargons thus hinge artificially in front of sentences describing empirical processes (see the use of words like “socio-spatial inheritance”, “compression”,

“dispersal”, “articulation”, “disarticulation” in a cluster on pp. 151–152, for instance). But such instances do not recur as the book progresses. In any case, these only reflect an articulation strategy rather than anything else, and do not take away anything from the merit of the monograph.

The book fulfils a major need for a social history of roads, canals, and railways in colonial India. It represents first-rate scholarship on the colonial history of transportation networks based on a rigorous use of colonial state archives. It will be useful to historians of South Asia as well as to those broadly interested in South Asian Studies. It is slated to make an impact in the field.

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CHOUDHURY, DEEP KANTA LAHIRI. *Telegraphic Imperialism. Crisis and Panic in the Indian Empire, c.1830*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke [etc.] 2010. xii, 277 pp. Ill. Maps. £55.00; doi:10.1017/S0020859011000307

Something must have gone wrong with the title of the book. First of all: in 1830 the telegraph did not yet exist though, admittedly, preliminary experiments had taken place in Europe, North America, and British India. Experiments with an electric system of transmission, however, had been going on at least for fifty years. Second: “Telegraphic Imperialism” sounds like a period covering the second half of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century. The “c” – *circa* – thus does not make any sense at all. In fact, as the author points out in his introduction (p. 1), the book covers the period just mentioned.

Yet something further is confusing. In his “Acknowledgements” (p. xi) Choudhury mentions that his thesis won a prize for the best thesis submitted at Cambridge University in 2000. Scanning the bibliography one wonders why a certain Lahiri Choudhury, D.K., submitted a thesis at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, dated 1997, entitled: “Communication and Empire: The Telegraph in North India, c.1830–1856” (p. 270). As there is no bibliographic difference indicated between Choudhury’s thesis and, for example, the dissertation of Saroj Ghose, which is a Ph.D. thesis submitted at Jadavpur University, Calcutta, in 1974, it leads one to assume (probably falsely) that the said thesis of Lahiri Choudhury is also a Ph.D. thesis. However, most likely Choudhury’s unpublished dissertation is his M.A. thesis. That should have been made clear. In any case, a more thorough editing would have helped to avoid such confusion and inconsistencies.

Having said this, the contents of the book are much more interesting than the cover, the first, and the last pages. Some of the chapters have been published earlier in various journals and edited volumes which have established the author’s reputation as a telegraphic insider, especially with respect to the telegraph’s social implications in a British Indian context. The topic of the Indian employees’ telegraph strike of 1908 is, without doubt, the most lucid example, and has been reprinted in a reworked version as chapter 7 (pp. 157–178).

The first chapter deals with the independent invention of a telegraphic system by William O’Shaughnessy during the 1830s and 1840s. Within a decade O’Shaughnessy established a telegraph network which covered the main routes of the British Empire in India. However, the network lacked completeness as the Great Rebellion of 1857–1859 would demonstrate. Instead of covering the whole subcontinent, major arterial lines such as that between Madras and Calcutta were not built. This story is told in the second chapter which illustrates that, at that time, the telegraph was by no means a highly