

Abstracts for Panel 35:

The city and the public: Social dimensions of intra-urban networks in colonial South Asia

Justin Siefert, MA, Heidelberg University

Chatting Sri Lanka

The presentation will deal with the impact of telecommunication technology on the socio-economical development in Ceylon/Sri Lanka. Beside a few theoretical considerations the main focus will be on the telegraph and telephone in Colombo during the colonial times.

Prof. Michael Mann, Humboldt-University Berlin

"Telecommunication in Colonial India, c. 1880-1930"

In South Asia, the telegraph network was speedily set up in the second half of the nineteenth century. Next to western European countries and the USA, in British India existed the largest network of modern communication worldwide. So far the story of the "Indian telegraph" has mainly be told as a success story of Western technology as a means to rule the colony, yet also as an example of western technological progress to uplift (civilise) the rest of the world. However, the social history of the telegraph was hardly ever dealt with. In the paper it will be argued that the telegraph had a deep influence on the social and political development of British India at the turn of the nineteenth century.

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Communicating Caste in Colonial Bombay: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmans and the Uses of Print Media.

The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmans, a small Konkani-speaking caste historically had centered in the coastal territories of North and South Kanara districts of the then Madras Presidency, south of Goa, during the 18th and 19th centuries CE. Dispersed through many small villages and hamlets, the community's living was primarily based in land-holding and petty government service. Social and cultural cohesion was manifested by the spiritual preceptor of the caste, the swami of Shri Chitrapur Math, who toured among his flock during the year, enforcing caste discipline and adjudicating disputes. During the 19th century, Saraswats had exploited new opportunities in a growing district administration. However, by the later decades of the 19th century, limited local opportunities and patterns of educational testing, led a growing number of young Saraswat men to migrate to Bombay city. Initially regarded as sojourners, a core of more or less permanent residents had made the city their home by the 1890s.

Bombay was a distant and alien city; young Saraswat men who went there in pursuit of employment in government or company offices, had little or no contact with the Swami and Math, and were also quicker to

assimilate non-traditional life styles and ideas in contrast to their rural cousins. A pattern of alienation and outright indifference emerged within the caste in relation to the guru swami, and connections to social reformers and 'foreign-returned' men led to excommunications and social disconnection.

This paper will examine the utilization of innovative models of voluntary association and integrative communications initiatives during the early twentieth century, originating with Saraswats of Bombay and subsequently extending to the community in the home districts and other points of geographical dispersal. Emergence of a caste association and regular publication of a journal provided a platform for addressing proximate social and cultural problems faced by the community. A discourse of caste culture and reform stimulated communication and creativity among members of the caste, as well as broadcasting debates on how Saraswats might face economic and social challenges. By the 1930s, the regular appearance of the journal gave record to accomplishments of members and encouragement to others to pursue new careers and to participate in a wider public culture of Bombay and India.

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Inventing 'Cultured' Delhi in the 1950s: Re-visioning the Contributions of the Indian Peoples Theatre Association (IPTA) and the Amateur Theatre Wallahs.

New Delhi in the 1950's was a city in transition, continuing in the immediate postcolonial era the processes of metropolitan shaping begun during the late colonial period. In 1911, the colonial government had moved its imperial headquarters from its earlier location in Calcutta and laid the foundation stone for a new capital city to be designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker. It was intended that this new city would be completed in three years, in fact it took twenty, and was only ready in 1931, a scant sixteen years before independent India's government claimed it as its seat of power. Having 'inherited' a capital city bearing the marks of imperialist triumphalism and a hybridized western classicism, it is not surprising that India's new governing elite would seek to refashion in the 1950s the capital city/nation and its cultures in 'indigenist' yet modernist idioms.

Central to this endeavor was the inauguration in the early 1950's of a group of institutions whose directive it was to patronize, sponsor and produce work in the plastic, performing and literary arts, namely the Lalit Kala, the Sangeet Natak (SNA) and the Sahitya Akademies. The mandate (sometimes unspoken) before these institutions was not merely that of supporting the arts, but also of rewriting in keeping with the post-colonial imaginary, the histories of pre and early post -independence forms of cultural production.

My paper takes as its point of departure the revisions of the contributions of the IPTA and the amateur theatre movement at the First Drama Seminar organized by the SNA in 1956. I must point out that the Drama

Seminar's revisionism with regard to the IPTA, a Communist, anti-fascist, popular, and in several ways anti-metropolitan initiative takes the form of almost complete erasure. In stark contrast, the efforts of the amateur theatre movement were represented as constituting a heroic vanguard against the depredations of the popular theatre and cinema. Despite its near disappearance as movement, as aural and written *text* from the Drama Seminar, the IPTA or in fact its remnants were ironically a material *presence* at the event. Several of the IPTA's members, among them key figures such as Sachin Sengupta, Mulk Raj Anand, Dina Gandhi, and Balraj Sahni were invited to the Drama Seminar as speakers, not in their capacity as IPTA members, but instead, interestingly, as stalwarts of the amateur movement.

My paper then will examine firstly, the reasons and consequences for and of this coincidence of identity, a coincidence deriving undoubtedly from affiliations of class and membership within the national elite. Secondly, it will consider the rationalities governing the disavowal of the forms of performance, representation, organization, and community that the IPTA had stood for. In this context it is important to indicate that IPTA in the 1940s and early '50s articulated through performance a dispersed, dynamic, non-metropolitan and non-Delhi centric vision. There is however in the period following the formation of the Akademies (SNA, 1953) a visible move (locational, institutional, stylistic and political) to the center, to New Delhi, now emerging as the *center* of activities, especially for the cultural interventions of an upper caste and class North Indian elite. Members of IPTA were among those who made this move, and in doing so contributed substantially to the reinvention of the cultural life of the new metropolis and consequently, the nation.

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Crime in Print: The Goondas in Press Reports on the Riot of Calcutta 1926

A communal riot broke out in Calcutta on April 2, 1926 and continued with intervals till the end of July. It originated over the issue of use of roads of thoroughfare for the purpose of the carrying out religious processions of the Hindus and the Muslims. Violence of the riot was markedly communal in character. Attacks on places of worship of the Hindus and the Muslims were demonstrative of the communal acrimony between the two communities. However, as soon as the riot broke out the city press, comprising of newspapers and periodicals of the every shade of opinion, turned the riot into an orgy of goonda-ism. The goondas were the hooligans of Calcutta. The press attributed every act of communal violence to them,

reducing the riot into a large scale outbreak of hooligan violence. As the riot dragged on with the varying intensity through April till early May, the press voiced demands for a brutal suppression of the goondas as the only means riot prevention. Even as the riot came to a halt in early May, the goondas overshadowed all other concerns. As rioting broke out afresh in July, the press invoked the figure of the goonda with renewed vigour. The riot died down at the end of July but the fear of the goonda lingered on through the next couple of months.

The sections of Calcutta residents who equated the riot with goonda-ism and called for an anti goonda campaign were indigenous elites and middle class, namely, the Hindu Bengali bhadralok community, the wealthy Marwari traders of Calcutta, a section of the Bengal Muslim political elite and groups within Muslim journalists based in the city. They accused the Bengal Government of neglecting in its task of protecting the law abiding citizens. The Government responded by framing the Presidency Area Emergency Security Act, a draconian measure by which any person suspected to be a goonda or of the goonda type could be expelled from city summarily by the Calcutta Police without trial by of a court of law.

It is paradoxical in January 1926 the Calcutta Police claimed that crime in the city had dipped to an all time low, which was said to have been the consequence of a a systematic suppression of the goondas over the years 1923-25. Newspapers and periodicals published from Calcutta during 1926, till the outbreak of the riot, neither devoted attention to the goondas nor mentioned any upshot in crime in the city. The sudden and abnormal importance enjoyed by the goondas in the press stand out, thus, as a nuanced set of perceptions rather than as a flat statement of an actual explosion in urban crime.

This article seeks to establish that the figure of the goonda was invoked to voice anxieties perceived by the city elites and middle classes. They saw the riot as a spontaneous and unrestrained upsurge of the mass of the city poor. The figure of the goonda, though presented in the press as a purely criminal category, was invoked as a representative of the mass. Violence attributed to the goonda assumed special significance, not so much as it endangered life and property of these classes, but as it reduced the said sections into powerless onlookers whose attempted interventions in politics of the riot had no impact. The physical distance separating the elites and the middle classes from the urban poor did not immune them from violence of the riot. The moral and material superiority that these sections claimed for themselves offered them no protection. The goondas panic in this sense was not generated by a fear of crime, rather it was an outburst of anxiety of the elites and the middle classes over the maintenance of their exclusive privilege and pre-eminence in the city.

Dr. Shailaja Menon

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The Social Milieu of the Civic Leadership: Ahmedabad-1856-1919

The foremost factor conditioning the construction of political ideology and culture in Ahmedabad was the unequal power relationships between the colonial rulers and the colonized. Public culture was a product of British Rule and more importantly, of the efforts and struggles of local elites to create a place for themselves within the colonial order. Indigenous politicians shaped their values and self-images in reference to political languages derived from their ruler's culture because these languages carried a special persuasive appeal in the context of British colonial domination, particularly in arenas of politics influenced by the new institutions of self-government. As local elites sought to influence their rulers and their relations with their political overlords, they took recourse to a vocabulary and symbols that had meaning to their rulers. In Ahmedabad, the political culture was transferred through the broadening scope of education, which enabled new professionals, as distinct from caste based elites to enter public life.

The local elites created the public sphere in Ahmedabad. These notables came from diverse background and had different spheres of influence. For the British, they were local men of influence, though of a primordial nature. They, in turn were the intermediaries between the local population and the British officials, resident in the city. It was these men who first began to appropriate a British civic idiom and to forge a new style of politics centring on the concepts of the public and public good. They got involved in municipal government, they engaged in public philanthropy, they participated in imperial ritual life and took recourse to pressure group politics. However, this does not mean a total acceptance of Western principles. Civic politics became an important site to expand their network of social relationships and protect their family's reputation and defend their moral communities. Hence, the language of civic politics played a crucial role in the cementing of deferential ties with the ruling group and enhancing claims to political power.

This paper attempts to analyse how the notables acted as agents of change in Gujarati society. The focus would be on how the change was communicated and disseminated so that the social structure experienced a qualitative transformation, which ushered in a new public sphere based on achievement and legal rational norms.

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Tracks in the City: Electricity, Mobility and Social Life in South Asian Cities

The years between c 1880 and 1920 marked the high tide of urban electrification, and the cities of South Asia were no exception to this process. The advent of electricity had an tremendous impact upon the structure of cities as well as upon social life within them. At night, electric light carved out nocturnal spaces for the people and re-evaluated urban quarters, while at daytime tramways overcame travel times and distances, creating new suburbs and quarters, and enabled more people to travel more often. Moreover, electricity ran ventilators, lifts and fridges, providing for a new dimension of comfort and convenience. This paper will focus on the aspect of mobility, looking at the role of tramways and tramway companies in various South Asia cities, and the way they altered urban conditions and social interaction.

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Urban Administration of Mysore during Colonial period – Mysore Municipality.

Mysore is one of the historical places in India. It was ruled by Wadiyars, and when in 1861 the Indian Government issued a circular to establish municipal councils, it was the first city in India to have a council of elected representatives. The council was formed in Mysore in the year 1862 July; it consisted of Deputy Superintendent of eight Division of Mysore as chairman, five ex-officio officers as members and one member from among the backward community and Muslims. The prime function of this local administration was to provide basic services to the citizens. Thereafter, the urban administration in Indian cities changed slowly.

The process of election to the Mysore Municipal Council was introduced in 1888 through which the powers and functions of Municipal administration were transferred to Mysore Municipality. The subsequent 1906 Municipal Regulation Act was in operation for providing civic amenities to the residents of Mysore city till 1933 when it was amended by the Mysore City Municipal Act.

The Paper hopes to discuss the origin, nature, power and functions of the Mysore Municipality under colonial rule. The study focuses on portraying the impact of colonial rule upon urban composition of Mysore.

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Market and its impact on Urban Expansion, Growth of Trade in Colonial Mysore

Market is a place where buyers and sellers meet together, markets that make place in any part of urban place or region reflect the cultural and social value of the people. They not only fulfil the needs of consumers but also act as chains to link the socio-economic and cultural activities of the people. Markets are the source of social organization and economic empowerment of urban places. Markets are the windows of development of any urban place or region.

Mysore City was one of the cultural centres of South India during the British colonial period. Many markets emerged under British rule and Mysore Deveraj Market was one of them. Deveraj Market has played a vital role in the urban expression of Mysore. With the dawn of industrialization trade and commerce were induced during 18th century in India.

The paper hopes to discuss the origin and evaluation of Deveraj Market in Mysore and its impact on the urban expansion and growth of trade in Mysore during the colonial period.

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