

An analysis of the process of economic change in modern India is central to an understanding of the country's history over the last hundred years. Numerous specialist studies exist on some part of this process – on agricultural development in a peasant society, the imperial impact on colonial income, industrialisation and business history, the implementation of state planning after 1947, and the coming of the 'green revolution' to South Asia. In this volume in *The New Cambridge History of India* Dr Tomlinson draws together and expands upon the disparate literature to provide a comprehensive account of the economic history of colonial and post-colonial India.

He examines the debates over imperialism, development, and underdevelopment, and sets them in the context of historical change in agriculture, trade and manufacture, and the relations between business, the economy and the state. What emerges is a picture of an economy in which some output growth and technical change occurred both before and after 1947, but in which a broadly based process of development has been constrained by structural and market imperfections, the manipulation of social and political power to distort access to economic opportunity and reward, shortages of essential resources, including foreign exchange, and inappropriate and debilitating government policies. Dr. Tomlinson argues that India has thus had an underdeveloped economy, with weak market structures and underdeveloped institutions, which has in turn profoundly influenced the social, political and ecological history of South Asia.

*The Economy of Modern India, 1860–1970* offers a concise and coherent account of the characteristics and performance of the modern Indian economy and will be widely read by students and specialists of South Asian studies, development economics and economic history.



THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY  
OF INDIA

*The Economy of Modern India,*  
1860–1970

# THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA

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Although the original *Cambridge History of India*, published between 1922 and 1937, did much to formulate a chronology for Indian history and describe the administrative structures of government in India, it has inevitably been overtaken by the mass of new research over the past fifty years.

Designed to take full account of recent scholarship and changing conceptions of South Asia's historical development, *The New Cambridge History of India* will be published as a series of short, self-contained volumes, each dealing with a separate theme and written by a single person. Within an overall four-part structure, thirty-one complementary volumes in uniform format will be published. As before, each will conclude with a substantial bibliographical essay designed to lead non-specialists further into the literature.

The four parts planned are as follows:

- I The Mughals and their contemporaries
- II Indian states and the transition to colonialism
- III The Indian empire and the beginnings of modern society
- IV The evolution of contemporary South Asia

A list of individual titles in preparation will be found at the end of the volume.

THE NEW  
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III · 3

*The Economy of Modern India,  
1860–1970*

B. R. TOMLINSON

UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE



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## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

*The New Cambridge History of India* covers the period from the beginning of the sixteenth century. In some respects it marks a radical change in the style of Cambridge Histories, but in others the editors feel that they are working firmly within an established academic tradition.

During the summer of 1896, F. W. Maitland and Lord Acton between them evolved the idea for a comprehensive modern history. By the end of the year the Syndics of the University Press had committed themselves to the *Cambridge Modern History*, and Lord Acton had been put in charge of it. It was hoped that publication would begin in 1899 and be completed by 1904, but the first volume in fact came out in 1902 and the last in 1910, with additional volumes of tables and maps in 1911 and 1912.

*The History* was a great success, and it was followed by a whole series of distinctive Cambridge Histories covering English Literature, the Ancient World, India, British Foreign Policy, Economic History, Medieval History, the British Empire, Africa, China and Latin America; and even now other new series are being prepared. Indeed, the various Histories have given the Press notable strength in the publication of general reference books in the arts and social sciences.

What has made the Cambridge Histories so distinctive is that they have never been simply dictionaries or encyclopaedias. The Histories have, in H. A. L. Fisher's words, always been 'written by an army of specialists concentrating the latest results of special study'. Yet as Acton agreed with the Syndics in 1896, they have not been mere compilations of existing material but original works. Undoubtedly many of the Histories are uneven in quality, some have become out of date very rapidly, but their virtue has been that they have consistently done more than simply record an existing state of knowledge: they have tended to focus interest on research and they have provided a massive stimulus to further work. This has made their publication

## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

doubly worthwhile and has distinguished them intellectually from other sorts of reference book. The Editors of the *New Cambridge History of India* have acknowledged this in their work.

The original *Cambridge History of India* was published between 1922 and 1937. It was planned in six volumes, but of these, Volume 2 dealing with the period between the first century A.D. and the Muslim invasion of India never appeared. Some of the material is still of value, but in many respects it is now out of date. The last fifty years have seen a great deal of new research on India, and a striking feature of recent work has been to cast doubt on the validity of the quite arbitrary chronological and categorical way in which Indian history has been conventionally divided.

The Editors decided that it would not be academically desirable to prepare a new *History of India* using the traditional format. The selective nature of research on Indian history over the last half-century would doom such a project from the start and the whole of Indian history could not be covered in an even or comprehensive manner. They concluded that the best scheme would be to have a History divided into four overlapping chronological volumes, each containing about eight short books on individual themes or subjects. Although in extent the work will therefore be equivalent to a dozen massive tomes of the traditional sort, in form the *New Cambridge History of India* will appear as a shelf full of separate but complementary parts. Accordingly, the main divisions are between I *The Mughals and their Contemporaries*, II *Indian States and the Transition to Colonialism* III *The Indian Empire and the Beginnings of Modern Society*, and IV *The Evolution of Contemporary South Asia*.

Just as the books within these volumes are complementary so too do they intersect with each other, both thematically and chronologically. As the books appear they are intended to give a view of the subject as it now stands and to act as a stimulus to further research. We do not expect the *New Cambridge History of India* to be the last word on the subject but an essential voice in the continuing debate about it.

## PREFACE

The writing of this book has benefited enormously from the criticism, advice and companionship over the years of a large number of fellow scholars, many of whom have produced the work that is discussed in its pages – including Amiya Bagchi, Chris Baker, Crispin Bates, Chris Bayly, Sugata Bose, Raj Brown, Raj Chandavarkar, Neil Charlesworth, Robi Chatterji, Kirti Chaudhuri, Pramit Chaudhuri, Clive Dewey, Omkar Goswami, Partha Gupta, John Harriss, Dharma Kumar, Michelle McAlpin, Morris David Morris, Aditya Mukherji, Terry Neale, Rajat Ray, Tapan Raychaudhuri, Peter Robb, Sunanda Sen, Colin Simmons, Burton Stein, Eric Stokes, Dwijendra Tripathi, Marika Vicziany and David Washbrook. I am also grateful for the tolerance and confidence of Gordon Johnson, who has waited for this part of the *New Cambridge History of India* with grace and patience.

The text was begun while I was a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Economic History at the University of Melbourne during the antipodean winter and spring of 1990 – a visit which was made enjoyable, stimulating and productive by the efforts of many people, notably David Merrett, Boris Schedvin and Allan Thompson. My colleagues at Birmingham, especially Peter Cain, Rick Garside, Tony Hopkins, Leonard Schwarz, Henry Scott and Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, have provided constant encouragement and support, while Suzy Kennedy made learning word-processing easy. Above all, my family – Caroline, Sam, Charlie, Martha and Edward – made possible the effort that created this book, which I dedicate to them in return.

March 1992

B. R. Tomlinson







