

### BOOK REVIEWS

#### **Geography of Transportation in Eastern India under the British Raj** **Sunil Kumar Munsii**

Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Monograph 1, Calcutta, 1980, 172 p., tables,  
16 figures, appendix, Rs. 40.

It is imperative in any geographical analysis of the transportation network of India not to just consider the existing infrastructure, or the changes it has undergone during the last decade, or might undergo in the next decade, but to see its development in a historical frame. S. K. Munsii's Monograph is a contribution to the understanding of the historical dimension of the development of the transportation infrastructure in Eastern India. Munsii gives a detailed account of the different means of transportation, the transportation network and its priorities and functions during the earlier days of the East India Company and the period of British rule in India. Special chapters are dedicated to road transport, steam navigation and railway development. Each chapter gives a well documented account of the phases of historical development and their geographical and economical implications. The final chapter deals with the colonial imperatives of transportation network development. Here, the author elaborates with the special features of network development in Eastern India, the overemphasis on railway transport and the convergence of all transport and trade activities on Calcutta, and compares the Indian situation with network development models of other underdeveloped countries.

Numerous tables concerning road categories, distances involved, articles of export and import, value of trade and passenger transport serve as valuable clear source of

information. The text is illustrated by sixteen maps, some of them, like the growth of railways in Eastern India show at a glance the development phases. Regrettably, a number of maps suffer from over reduction. The content of the maps is rather descriptive. It would have been more informative if the relative importance of the three means of transport, or the volume of transport handled by the trunk and feeder roads in one transport system, would have found a cartographic presentation.

In this monograph, S. K. Munsii has succeeded in demonstrating a logical sequence of development of the transportation network in Eastern India, which is based on relief, economic infrastructure, industrial developments, technological advances and above all, the colonial needs. Means of transportation remain stagnant, experience a fast development or undergo curtailment according to colonial-economic requirements, profits, rentabilities and decision making, as Munsii shows for example in the development of road transport. The author elaborates the shortcomings of the transportation network under the British rule from the point of view of India's economic development, like the convergence of all transport systems in Calcutta, the terminal point for overseas export and import, the absence of cross linkages, the relative neglect of waterways and roads. Though the author deals with most of the aspects of transportation geography, the monograph

would have been more complete, if a better qualitative assessment of the problems involved would have been attempted by him, like the volume of goods handled, and not only the financial earnings. In an overall

assessment it is a good monograph, which all those interested in the transport system of the country, will find of immense value.

J. K. D.

### **Introduction to Population Geography**

**R. C. Chandana and Manjit S. Sidhu**

Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi and Ludhiana 1980.

Introduction to population geography is the first handy treatise on the subject by Indian authors. This makes it a welcome addition to the already existing texts on population geography, as the discipline which is fast acquiring increasing recognition in social and economic planning as well as an independent course of study in the University departments in India. The contents of the book have been organized with a view to meeting the needs of the graduate level students in a comprehensive manner.

The introductory chapter on the nature and scope of population geography packs in a nut shell the subject matter and its development to the beginners, who would otherwise be required to refer to voluminous material on the subject. Chapter II on the Sources of Data and the Problems of Handling Data, and the third chapter on Distribution and Density of population are concise and provide a clear picture of the association of population with physical and cultural factors. The chapter on the growth of population is the most exhaustive, treating each and every aspect of the component of population growth in a systematic manner.

The treatment of the next three chapters

unfortunately is rather superficial and tends to be somewhat sketchy. The authors might perhaps like to give a fuller treatment to these topics in a later edition. The chapters on Economic characteristics (chapter IX), Urbanization (X), and Population and Resources (XI), ably introduce these topics to a student of population geography. The influence of economic characteristics of a population on the demographic attributes is shown in the chapter on the Economic Resources, while the contrasting features of livelihood patterns and the degree of socio-economic interaction between the rural and urban population is well discussed in the chapter on Urbanization.

In addition to the final chapter on population and resources, the authors might have rounded up the book by including a chapter devoted exclusively to population in the developing countries, highlighting in particular, the trends and problems of these countries. All in all the book will be a useful introductory text for Indian University students, for it provides in a compact form the fundamental concepts of the subject, which today is emerging, as an important area of academic and social concern.

J. N. D.