

The news of empire: telegraphy, journalism, and the politics of reporting in colonial India, c. 1830-1900

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Abstrak

On 14 July 2013, India closed down its telegraph service, drawing the curtain over an important chapter in its history of telecommunications. Introduced during the British colonial period, the telegraph was opened for public use on 1 February 1855. The beginning of the service, much like its end, was marked by strikingly similar scenes of people rushing to the telegraph office in order to send messages. The similarity with the contemporary scenario does not end here. Like the internet today, the electric telegraph came to play an important role in the conduct of journalism in nineteenth-century India. This book is an attempt to reconstruct this interconnected history of telegraphy and journalism and the first systematic account of the development of English-language news reporting in nineteenth-century India. Drawing on a wide range of historical material and an in-depth analysis of the newspaper press, it questions grand narratives of media revolutions, arguing instead that the use of telegraphy in journalism was gradual and piecemeal. News itself emerged as the site of many contestations, as imperial politics, capitalist enterprise, and individual agency shaped not only access to technologies of communication, but also the content and form of reporting.