

The Introduction of Telegraphy in Ceylon, c. 1858: Economy, Technology, and Colonial Governmentality

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This paper examines the British colonial government's introduction of telegraphy in Ceylon during the second half of the nineteenth century. Firstly, it analyzes why the colonial government introduced the technology and provides data concerning the material and geographical outlay of its network. The paper traces the origins of Ceylon's telegraph network to Europe and India and argues that as in these other parts of the world, it was introduced for the purpose of facilitating speedy communications among traders and merchants active within the export economy. It was constructed to improve communications between the coast and the interior of the island, to facilitate the transference of banking information with India primarily, to contend within an increasingly competitive global market of export production.

Secondly, the paper examines the relationship between the telegraph and government and stresses the political, social, and economic contexts in which this association operated. By exploring colonial objectives, the paper concludes that the use of the telegraph in governmental communication was ancillary to the colonial government's project of fashioning the island into a liberal economic state.

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