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To Sarah, Fiona and Laura

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Editor's Preface

SINCE 1968, when the Economic History Society and Macmillan published the first of the 'Studies in Economic and Social History', the series has established itself as a major teaching tool in universities, colleges and schools, and as a familiar landmark in serious bookshops throughout the country. A great deal of the credit for this must go to the wise leadership of its first editor, Professor M. W. Flinn, who retired at the end of 1977. The books tend to be bigger now than they were originally, and inevitably more expensive; but they have continued to provide information in modest compass at a reasonable price by the standards of modern academic publication.

There is no intention of departing from the principles of the first decade. Each book aims to survey findings and discussion in an important field of economic or social history that has been the subject of recent lively debate. It is meant as an introduction for readers who are not themselves professional researchers but who want to know what the discussion is all about – students, teachers and others generally interested in the subject. The authors, rather than either taking a strongly partisan line or suppressing their own critical faculties, set out the arguments and the problems as fairly as they can, and attempt a critical summary and explanation of them from their own judgement. The discipline now embraces so wide a field in the study of the human past that it would be inappropriate for each book to follow an identical plan, but all volumes will normally contain an extensive descriptive bibliography.

The series is not meant to provide all the answers but to help readers to see the problems clearly enough to form their own conclusions. We shall never agree in history, but the discipline will be well served if we know what we are disagreeing about, and why.

T. C. SMOUT

University of St Andrews

Editor

Introduction

OVER the past twenty years, detailed research on the economic history of India in the British period has extended considerably, greatly increasing our knowledge of the subject. Whilst the work will continue – the publication of the *Cambridge Economic History of India* (edited by Dharma Kumar), promised soon, forms a major example – this seems an appropriate time to review the broad themes under discussion and make some preliminary judgements. In this essay, I have attempted to do this for the period 1800–1914. Detailed statistical material (available in the works referred to) has been deliberately excluded in order to highlight the general analysis.

As always, in such a work, one incurs wide debts to those with particular specialisms, and I am very grateful indeed to friends and colleagues who freely provided advice, especially Clive Dewey, Forbes Munro, Richard Saville and B. R. Tomlinson. I also greatly valued the help and encouragement of Professor Eric Stokes, given not long before his untimely death in February 1981. I, of course, am solely responsible for the work's conclusions and deficiencies. Mrs Blythe O'Driscoll and Mrs Linda Craig efficiently typed the text and my wife, Sarah, acted throughout as unpaid assistant and secretary. To her, and to our daughters, I owe a special debt.

BRITISH INDIA in 1900

0 miles 500

- Boundary of British India and Adjacent States
- Boundaries between Major Provinces
- Major Indian States (i.e. not directly ruled by the British)