Michael Mann. *Wiring the Nation: Telecommunication, Newspaper-Reportage, and Nation-Building in British India 1850–1930.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xxii + 298 pp. $55.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-947217-8.

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In *Wiring the Nation*, Michael Mann pens an innovative case study that weaves together the three topics named and dated in its subtitle in what he labels "an Age of Globalism" (p. ix). Among the era's characteristics he includes Western domination of politics, commerce, and science, along with telegraphy and the emergence of the nation-state. Both themes relate to his goals, namely to showcase leading English newspapers owned by Indians in British India and to show how telegraphy and the press contributed to Indian nation-building.

In the process, and important for press history, the text concentrates on the status of journalists and the variety of roles they played. Among the most salient discussions are those on whether journalism was a profession, a vocation, or had other standing; whether commentary outweighed reporting; and whether telegraphic news and news agencies had the same clout as newspapers. The inclusion of these matters is especially useful to the researcher in two ways. They expand ongoing assessments of national and international scholarship on journalism and accord well with the current focus on cross-cultural investigations of the press.

The book, with a prologue, six chapters, and an epilogue, provides comprehensive citations at the end of each component, mini-biographies of key journalists, and a comprehensive bibliography of thirty-six pages. Irrespective of its length, the work carefully details material at hand. The prologue, for instance, describes the nation-state as an imagined community based on invented commonality and spurred by print capitalism, and then goes on to explain how telegraphic news fit this profile.

Chapter 1 emphasizes telegraphic global connection that facilitated various public spheres, although British India attempted to maintain strict control of information. Nonetheless, technical and social aspects of telecommunication appeared. For example, problems with cables and the introduction of standardized time occupied a British business cadre paying for speed. Equally considered are civic matters, such as whether telegraphy served the warrior or confirmed rigid imperial behavioral codes.

The next chapter extends the conversation about telegraphy, highlighting competitive individuals, such as the Siemens brothers and P. J. Reuter, and cooperative ones who created a code of conduct that would ensure uninterrupted transmission. The latter's efforts, initiated by the Paris Convention in 1865, culminated in an International Telegraph Union. By late century, as

Mann notices, several countries and private companies had signed on, reinforcing a commitment to transnational communication rules that continued past World War I.

With this backdrop, Mann in the third chapter turns his attention to public spheres in British India. The value of this chapter is its careful tracking of newspapers from the introduction of *Hicky's Gazette* in 1780 to the plethora of papers in circulation by 1870, a period that ended with growing antipathy to colonial control. One area of interest threaded through the time frame was the getting, writing, and selling of news. By 1850 its unrestricted availability in coffeehouses and libraries reinforced the idea that news was public property open to opinion, a stance the British rejected with regard to India.

By the 1880s, top newspapers were modernizing, committing to unbiased accounts situated in columns. From this larger picture, Mann in chapter 4 produces what is akin to a monograph, concentrating on seven newspapers located across British India, six owned by Indians and one by a colonial. His meticulous scrutiny of data and close analysis of ideas make their trail easy to follow. In addition to newspapers, he covers news agencies, spotlighting Reuters and the lesser-known K. C. Roy's Associated Press of India (Madras, 1899) and S. Sadanand's Free Press of India (1924). The result of his extensive and intensive endeavors sets the benchmark for all journalism historians.

Concurrent with the evolution of newspapers and agencies, the concept of journalism as a profession resurfaced. By the 1920s Indian journalists divided over the question of requiring a professional education or German-model apprenticeship. Ironically, the United States had the same argument around 1900, with Joseph Pulitzer a key player in the debate. But Americans and Indians agreed that preparation aside, journalists had to show solidarity in order to have the influence expected of a Fourth Estate. To earn that rank, K. Natarajan, editor of *The Indian Social Reformer*

and president of the first All-India Press Conference (Calcutta, 1929), demanded that journalists establish standards that would earn them respect as professionals. As Mann observes, news transmission within India, though not connection to the outer world, was turning journalists into critical investigators capable of protecting public opinion.

Building on his prior chapters, Mann devotes the last two to the creation and confirmation of an all-India public sphere. He traces the development of a national consciousness, beginning around 1900, that by the 1930s had solidified into a national movement. In what he labels the development phase, 1904-21, he credits five events for certifying the Indian press as the primary agent in building an all-India public sphere. Ranging from the Bombay plague and its impact on sanitation to the division of the Bengal province and its consequences for political space, Mann scrupulously delineates linkage of worldwide reporting to newspapers and news agencies. And he underscores that by the 1930s the press was the only independent public institution able to organize all the rest. But this seeming orderliness was superficial, as social and political issues, among them fears after the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy and growing Japanese expansion, intensified.

Concluding with what Mann tags the mature stage (1928-30 in the title and 1931 in the table of contents), the book targets the contrast between Motilal Nehru's initial preference for dominion status and the Indian National Congress's (INC) call for independence. To achieve it, leaders asked the "imagined nation" (p. 209) to prioritize it ahead of class, caste, and creed and asked immigrants in the United States for fiscal assistance, soon forthcoming by way of a San Francisco newspaper and a New York monthly. Seriously interrupting these plans was the specter of communism, which to some implied that India was ungovernable. To counter this perception, Jawaharlal Nehru, on behalf of the INC, sought press sup-

port in editorials that sparked telling British and Indian articles. Thanks to his energy, the INC could rely on the press to rouse readers, best achieved by American Webb Miller's telegraphed report on the 1930 Salt March, a report that 1,350 newspapers across the planet carried. Complementing INC tactics, telegraphy, bold headlines, and photography smoothed the road for an all-India independence drive.

The epilogue is a valuable summary. From the start it credits the telegraphic press for fathering an imagined community and a real all-India public sphere for siring a new country. And it attributes that success to an indigenous press capable of national and international collaboration. Above all, it portrays the telegraphic press as time-sensitive and trustworthy and supplies unique and significant details about major newspapers.

Notwithstanding his thorough review, Mann identifies subjects for future research, among them the social and cultural consequences of telegraphy and its effects on local and regional spaces. And the influence of global capitalism on mass communication compared to that on nationalism deserves a broader examination, which makes another book by Mann requisite.

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