

SELECTED RAILWAY STATISTICS FOR THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT (INDIA, PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH), 1853—1946-47

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INTRODUCTION

Although quantitative data relating to the history of Indian railways are plentiful, they are not easy to use. Each scholar is forced to construct his own time series or to accept data that suffer from many defects. Coverage is often unclear, definitions are imprecise, and data are often inconsistent. For example, data which purport to refer to India (currently India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) often unwittingly include Burma.

For research purposes the senior author needed to prepare a group of time series on various aspects of railway activity that were purged of the most egregious of these defects. It seemed reasonable to take some additional time and, with the assistance of Mr. Dudley, prepare the material for general circulation. Our models have been the United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D.C., 1960); B. R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge, 1962); and Reserve Bank of India, Banking and Monetary Statistics of India (Bombay, 1954). The proper preparation of the tables for publication was more difficult and took much longer than we had anticipated. We hope that users will find the results worthwhile.

Our own research has been concerned specifically with the economic effects of railways on South Asia and the six general tables of railway data offered here relate to that topic. They include materials that have been extensively used by scholars. We have not prepared tables that describe the internal operations or financial performance of Indian railways, nor have we attempted to prepare tables broken down by region or which estimate the value of commodities moved. We have not analysed the behavior of individual series. The actual quality of each of these will become apparent only as they are used and subjected to rigorous testing. We have merely drawn together in convenient form the data that are available in the basic sources. Even this task was formidable. What remains to be done is for others to undertake.