



CENTRE FOR ASIAN AND  
TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES

SOUTH ASIA  
INSTITUTE



UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG  
ZUKUNFT  
SEIT 1386

**Lecture Series on Governance and Politics in South Asia**  
**Department of Political Science**  
*Special Lecture on*

**Impact of Colonial Institutions on Economic Growth and  
Development in India: Evidence from Night Lights Data**

*by*

**Professor Priyaranjan Jha**

*University of California, Irvine*

We study the implications of two historical institutions, direct British rule, and the heterogeneous land tenure institutions implemented by the British, on disparity in present day development using district level data from India. Using nightlights per capita as a proxy for district level per capita income, we find that modern districts that were historically under direct British rule had 39.47% less nightlights per capita in 1993 relative to modern districts that were historically under indirect British rule. The large gap persists even after including other controls such as educational attainment, health, and physical infrastructure. Looking at the growth pattern during 1993 to 2013, directly ruled districts had a 1.84% lower annual growth rate compared to indirectly ruled districts. As well, directly ruled districts were converging at a rate of 2% per year while indirectly ruled districts were converging at a rate of 5.7% per year. Much of the development gap between areas under indirect rule and direct rule can be accounted for by the adverse effect of the landlord-based revenue collection system in the directly ruled areas.



**Professor Priyaranjan Jha** is a Professor of Economics at the University of California, Irvine. He completed a PhD in Economics from Columbia University. His areas of research are International Trade, and Economic Growth and Development. He has published extensively in peer reviewed journals such as the *Economic Journal*, the *Journal of International Economics*, the *Journal of Development Economics*, the *European Economic Review*, the *Journal of Applied Econometrics*, and the *World Economy*. He has also served on the board of editors of several journals. Currently he serves as a co-editor of the *Indian Growth and Development Review* and an associate editor of the *Journal of Development Economics*. He also writes in the popular media in outlets such as the *Economic Times* and the *Indian Express*.

**Date:** Monday, May 2, 2022

**Time:** 14:00 – 16:00, CET

**Venue:** CATS, Great Lecture Hall (room 010.01.05, building 4010)