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978-0-521-12965-7 - South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity

Edited by Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach and Steven Vertovec

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Comparative ethnic and race relations

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Comparative ethnic and race relations

Published for the Centre of Research in Ethnic Relations at the University of Warwick

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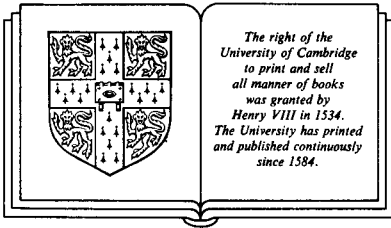
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South Asians Overseas

Migration and ethnicity

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STEVEN VERTOVEC



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particularly the position of ethnic minorities in Britain. He wrote *Transients, Settlers and Refugees: Asians in Britain* (Clarendon, 1986), and co-edited *Ethnic Segregation in Cities* (Croom Helm, 1981). He is currently completing the manuscript of *The Geography of Race in Post-War Britain* (Clarendon, 1990).

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Preface

Development of the world capitalist economy during the last two centuries has brought together far-flung factors of production – including South Asian workers, the topic of this book – at economically advantageous locations: here, tropical plantations in the nineteenth century and cities of the developed world in the twentieth. These inter-continental movements of South Asians are only a small sample of the variety of labour migrations which have operated at global scale under the influence of capitalism, beginning with the African slave trade and later involving indentured Indians and Chinese, white convicts, and free labourers of many national origins, religions and races.

South Asians overseas represent only a small fraction of the ethnic populations displaced by imperialism and more recently by modern capitalism; likewise the complex overseas societies in which they have settled are only a sub-set of a larger body of racially and culturally pluralistic societies – all products of migration – which are scattered across the globe. Study of South Asians overseas therefore involves consideration of social issues such as the salience of race and culture versus class, the role of race and religion as keys to identity, the scope of civil rights as the basis for ethnic incorporation, and the relationship of gender roles to class and race differentiation. All these themes are discussed in this book, a major feature of which is the comparative analysis of South Asians in colonial and post-colonial contexts – largely the result of indentured emigration, and South Asians in western and Middle Eastern countries – the products of recent free movements.

This volume is the outcome of a symposium on South Asians overseas, funded by the Centre for Indian Studies, St Antony's College, Oxford, and the Economic and Social Research Council of the United Kingdom. It was held in Oxford in March 1987 and brought together scholars from Social Anthropology, Economics, Geography, History, Law, Psychology and

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Sociology: many participants felt that it was one of the most fruitful conferences that they had experienced. The symposium involved fifty-five participants and thirty-five papers. The academic level of the contributions was very high, and the editors of this book have had great difficulty in selecting chapters from the wealth of material that was submitted. The editors would like to take this opportunity to thank the Centre for Indian Studies, St Antony's College, and the ESRC for their funding, Dr T. Raychaudhuri for his encouragement, and Professor Adrian Mayer for his support and advice, particularly regarding the choice and editing of the materials in this book. We should also like to thank Barbara Hird for the excellent index she prepared

We have tried to produce a volume with a coherent but comparative theme – migration and ethnicity as they relate to South Asians overseas. We have arranged the contents to illustrate the two basic locales in which South Asian communities have developed, and have written an introduction which highlights crucial themes in the general literature and provides a context for the contributions made by individual authors. In addition to the main introduction to the book, we have produced brief introductory notes to each of the two major sub-sections. Readers may wish to read the introduction in conjunction with these notes to get a preliminary view of the way in which material in different chapters ties together and the way various case studies are related to the more general issues embedded in the notions of migration and ethnicity.

Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach, Steven Vertovec