Robb

Ancient Rights and Future Comfort

Bihar, the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885, and British Rule in India

This book analyses the character of British rule in nineteenth-century India, by focusing on the underlying ideas and the practical repercussions of agrarian policy. It argues that the great rent law debate and the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 helped constitute a revolution in the effective aims of government and in the colonial ability to interfere in India, but that they did so alongside a continuing weakness of understanding and in effective local control. In particular, the book considers the importance of notions of historical rights and economic progress to the false categorisations made of agrarian structure. It shows that the Tenancy Act helped to widen social disparities in rural Bihar, and to create political interests on the land.

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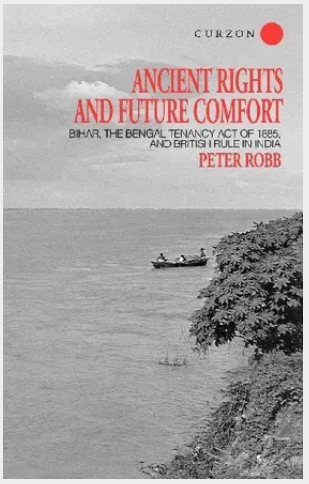

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