

Empire in the hills: Simla, Darjeeling, Ootacamund, and Mount Abu, 1820-1920

Pradhan, Queeny, author

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Abstrak

Empire in the Hills explores the multiple perspectives underlying the aesthetics and spatial politics of development and policy making in different mountain sites of Simla, Darjeeling, Ootacamund, and Mount Abu in India during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Multiple voices, sometimes intersecting, sometimes contesting emerge throughout, transforming the nature of imperial discourse. A large number of hill stations were developed by the British in the Indian colony. Different desires, aspirations, and visions coexisted, marked by mutual paradoxes and ambivalences. It becomes evident that the English settlers of the nineteenth century cannot be considered a monolithic category. Hill spaces were reinvented to familiarize the unfamiliar to the Occident. The colonial authorities collected and preserved information about the hill people under the garb of benevolent paternalism. This authoritative knowledge was used to recast the hill communities according to their usefulness to the colonial capitalist enterprise. This book argues that there is a clear contestation of such representations. While the colonizers attempted to negate the presence of the locals, the latter on their part negotiated for their roles in these transitional times. The study also explores the aspect of institutionalization of leisure in the hillscape. The urban experience in the four stations led to a reorganization of spaces which reflected the cultural ethos of Europe. The book examines the hitherto unexplored linkages between Empire, space, and culture in the specific context of the colonial hill stations in India.