

Claiming the city: protest, crime, and scandals in colonial Calcutta c. 1860-1920

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Abstrak

As the administrative and commercial capital of British India and as one of the earliest experiments in modern urbanization in the sub-continent, Calcutta proved enormously challenging to both its residents and its architects. In this imaginative study of colonial Calcutta, Anindita Ghosh charts the history of its urbanization from below, in its streets, strikes, and popular urban cultures. *Claiming the City* offers a close-up view of the city's underbelly by drawing in a range of non-archival sources, from illustrations and amateur photographs to street songs, local histories, and memoirs, which show that Calcutta was not just a problem to be disciplined and governed, as the colonialists would have us believe. Instead, the city emerges as a lively and crucial site for the shaping of the discourse on claims to urban spaces and resources by various marginal groups. Ghosh uses the everyday as a prism for exposing the wide spectrum of political and social imaginaries that shaped the city and shows how the once proverbial City of Palaces slowly turned into a city of endemic unrest and strife.