

Memoirs of roads Calcutta from colonial urbanization to global modernization

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Abstrak

This book is an attempt to understand a city through its roads. It explores the origins and development of three important roads of Calcutta (now renamed as Kolkata) from the pre-British colonial era to the postcolonial period. Spanning a period of four centuries, these three roads, Bagbazar Street in the north, Theatre Road in the centre, and Rashbehari Avenue in the south, register the contours of urbanization and the changes in the socio-cultural profile of the residents. The author locates this history within a broader theoretical framework with the help of which one can analyse the role of roads in urbanization, which are determined and influenced by the various political, economic, and socio-cultural impulses. The narrative traces the rise of Calcutta from a fledgling town to a giant metropolis through the history of these roads, and approaches the present era, when these roads have reached a cul-de-sac where their further expansion is restricted by territorial limits and environmental constraints. But the roads are still needed to meet the gargantuan appetite of urbanization, which is leading to the expansion of present-day Kolkata beyond its north-eastern borders. Here, the development of commercial-cum-residential complexes in the area known as the New Town, is Kolkatas first step in its ambition to graduate from a metropolis to a megalopolis. The book ends with a discussion on the changing character of roads in this New Town in the era of globalization.