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Imagining the Urban: Sanskrit and the City in Early India

By Shonaleeka Kaul

Permanent Black, New Delhi, India, 2010. Hard Cover. Book Condition: New. Dust Jacket Condition: New. First Edition. When you think of Indias ancient cities, you think of khaki archaeologists digging crumbling structures out of ancient mud. Urban spheres, from this perspective, often look as dull as the dust from which they emerge. But the early Indian city wasnt like that at all, says Shonaleeka Kaul; it was certainly not only brick-and-mortar, nor merely an agglomeration of built-up space. In Sanskrit literature these cities were alive, vibrant, teeming with variety. Kaul examines Sanskrit ka-vyas over about a thousand years to see what Indias early historic cities were like as living, lived-in, entities. She looks at ideologies, attitudes, institutions, and practices in ancient urban areas, showing the ways in which they often cohered into a worldview, a mentalité. This is also a book about Sanskrit literature. Scholars have long argued for a nuanced use of literary texts to achieve a more rounded understanding of ancient history, and Kaul achieves exactly that. She takes forward the idea of a Sanskrit literary culture, arguing that genres influence methods of historical representation. Her book gives us a fresh view of the early city, showing distinctive...



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