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Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan

By Matthew S. Hull

University of California Press. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan, Matthew S. Hull, In the electronic age, documents appear to have escaped their paper confinement. But we are still surrounded by flows of paper with enormous consequences. In the planned city of Islamabad, order and disorder are produced through the ceaseless inscription and circulation of millions of paper artifacts among bureaucrats, politicians, property owners, villagers, imams (prayer leaders), businessmen, and builders. What are the implications of such a thorough paper mediation of relationships among people, things, places, and purposes? "Government of Paper" explores this question in the routine yet unpredictable realm of the Pakistani urban bureaucracy, showing how the material forms of postcolonial bureaucratic documentation produce a distinctive political economy of paper that shapes how the city is constructed, regulated, and inhabited. Files, maps, petitions, and visiting cards constitute the enduring material infrastructure of more ephemeral classifications, laws, and institutional organizations. Matthew S. Hull develops a fresh approach to state governance as a material practice, explaining why writing practices designed during the colonial era to isolate the government from society have become a means of participation in it.



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