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**Trustworthiness, Theft and Class Identity in Reading the Domestic Electric Meter in Early Twentieth-century Calcutta<sup>1</sup>**

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Of all the devices used in early electric supply projects in early twentieth century Calcutta, the domestic meter was perhaps the most controversial. Introduced as a reliable billing method to measure consumption by customers connected to the newly introduced electric supply system, the electric meter was also at the centre of cases of “improper use” of electricity supply. The term “improper use” is used broadly here to refer to a variety of consumer practices that the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation believed to be interferences to their property and operations. These included theft of electricity by bypassing or breaking seals on electric meters, or using electricity for purposes other than that for which it was supplied to the customer. This paper examines some of the disputes between customers, and engineers and inspectors of Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation on the deployment and use of electric supply and meters in early twentieth century Calcutta. Following recent works on users and non-users of technologies, and trust and the morality of measurements, this paper examines how electric meters became central to concerns over issues of quantities measures by meters, the class identity of customers, and trust between the supplier, consumers and the electric meter. In doing so, this paper will focus on both the design of measurements instruments, and the agency and discretion of the electrical consumer, thereby providing new perspectives on how consumers, suppliers and electrical measurement technologies interacted during the early days of electricity supply in colonial Calcutta.

<sup>1</sup>European Research Council