

Images of road culture in paintings - Ethos of socio cultural space in colonial Calcutta

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Abstract

In the global context space, there is an abundant and increasing fascination for the painting as a tool for historical evidence of society. Presently metropolitan city of Kolkata in India has historical as well as colonial legacy. British East India Company had started their trade network from Calcutta (formerly named). Calcutta is a visual object which was constantly constructed and shaped by multiple and varied discourses and practices. The series of paintings in the early colonial time has been presented in this paper to capture the colonial politics of representations of road culture as well as urban society of Calcutta. This paper focused on the old road connection that was represented in paintings. Chitpur Road, esplanade road, circular road was Kolkata's oldest road. In early paintings these are represented in different manner. Chitpur road has existed for at least 400 years. It was known as Pilgrim Road and started from the North-end of the city stretched up to Kalighat Temple on Adi Ganga. Apart from the aristocracy, there have been common folks engaged in various trades. The distinctive Bengali panjika almanac and Battala books were brought out from this place. So many things on Chitpore Road have been an integral part of Bengal's life and culture being the centre of supplies for jatra, magic shows and musical instruments, including English brass bands. The Street exhibits a bewildering mix of Indian and decaying Palladian architecture, however it is obviously a bazaar. This paper tries to cortically analyse the visual representation of western eyes in the space of east.

Key Words: *Colonial eye, Critical theory, Space, Representation, Road culture*

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