tend various hackneyed epithets (‘dying city’, ‘capital of culture’ etc) and to fascinate the identity later in life – one which he feels is not the ‘true’ Calcutta. The city is shown to con-affected by globalisation. The author describes experiencing connection with memory, landscape and life touched or un-
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wide range of impressions through which the city presents corrections at once, as the author’s observant eye captures a-
metropolis in a state of flux. The book moves in various di-

Reviewd by Arshdeep Singh Brar of Jadavpur University.

Rs. 599/-

Calcutta: Two Years in the City.
Amit Chaudhuri.

Images for the Month

Preuss’l. Isle De L’ Inde des la Gange, ou sont les Royaumes de Oecan, de Golconde de Bisnagar, et le Malabar.
Map Maker: Nicholas Sanson
Paris / 1657
Source: Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps

Imperi Magni Mogolis sixe Indici Paduchh juncta recentissimae Navigations accurata delineatio . . .
Map Maker: Mathaus Seutter
Augsburg / 1728 ca
Source: Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps

Progress Report

The ETIC project was set up in March 2013 by project leads, Professor Nandini Das and Professor Supriya Chaudhuri. Involving over 51 academics and students from University of Liverpool and Jadavpur University, Kolkata the project has made great progress in estab-
ishing a research network between the institutions. Monthly reading group seminars involving guest speakers have taken place and a number of visits have been made. In August 2013, John Falconer (Curator, Photographs, India Office Collection, British Li-

bry) visited Jadavpur University (funded by the BL) and met with Professor Amlan Das Gupta and Professor Sukanta Chaudhuri.

Dr Nilanjana Deb (Department of English, Jadavpur University) was invited to Liver-

pool in October 2013 for the ETIC Reading Group Seminar. She presented a lecture, ‘Nabobs, Coolies and “Our Ganga of Calcutta”: Towards a Spatial History of Cal-

utta’s Waterfront’ and met with the UK project team members, Dr Ian Magedera and Cleo Roberts. This month also saw the launch of Uol-India Visiting Fellowships (http://www.liv.ac.uk/research/liverpool-india-fellowships/).

In November 2013, Leena Mitford (Curator, South Asian Collections, British Library) went to Jadavpur University for discussions regarding the ETIC Project (funded by the BL). Kathleen James-Chakraborty (Professor of Art History, University College Dublin) spoke at the Liverpool Reading Group on ‘Kolkata and Berlin: A Tale of Two Cities’.

In January 2014, JU hosted the inaugural ETIC symposium and workshop: ‘Spaces of En-
counter’. The Workshop was successful in attracting presentations not just from those directly involved in the ETIC project but leading scholars and practitioners working on cities, social history, architecture and urban planning. The keynote lecture was given by Professor Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed. Calcutta: The Living City, OUP, 2 vols. 1991). Oth-
ers speaking included Dr Partho Datta (author, Planning the City, Tulika, 2012), Professor Kiran Joshi (author, Documenting Chandighat, Mapin, 1999) and Professor Swati Chattrapadhyay (author, Unlearning the City, U of Minnesota Press, 2012). Excellent presentations were also made by new researchers and students. A panel on ‘Heritage, Conservation and the Living City’ was led by the art historian Professor Tapati Guha-Thakurta and included prominent conservation architects Manish Chakraborty and Partha Ranjan Das. A film exploring new urbanisms, Spring in the Colony, was screened together with a video-inter-
view of the director, Moinak Biswas, specially commissioned for the occasion. An exhibi-
tion, ‘Photographing Calcutta’ was mounted at the Jadavpur University Press and attract-
ed public notice. Around 80 researchers and scholars attended each day. A report on the symposium is available on the project website (http://www.eticproject.wordpress.com/).

The project has begun a number of public engagement activities including a web-
site (https://eticproject.wordpress.com), linked Twitter (@ETICProject) and Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/eticproject) accounts, and recently, a crowd-sourcing initia-
tive through Flickr (http://www.flickr.com/groups/eticproject/).

(Prepared by Cleo Roberts)

Recommended Reading


(Reviewed by Arshdeep Singh Brar of Jadavpur University.)

Written between August 2009 and December 2011, Amit Chaudhuri’s memoir of the city he was born in, catches the metropolis in a state of flux. The book moves in various di-

rections at once, as the author’s observant eye captures a wide range of impressions through which the city presents itself in various ‘incarnations’.

Calcutta features ruminations on the perennial conflict of the old and the new, the dynamics of nomenclature and its connection with memory, landscape and life touched or un-
affected by globalisation. The author describes experiencing the city as “real of childish anarchy” and as “one of the great cities of modernity”, only to be greeted with an alternative identity later in life – one which he feels is not the ‘true’ Calcutta. The city is shown to con-
tend various hackneyed epithets (‘dying city’, ‘capital of culture’ etc) and to fascinate the observer by revealing uneasy co-existence of various modes of living. Chaudhuri investi-
gitates the fabric of the city; whether it is synonymous with ‘Bengaliness’ as he ponders over the notion of the abangali (literally, non-Bengali) and the phenomenon of linguistic chauvinism. The culinary habits of the city and its different aspects are also glossed upon.

An interesting aspect of the book is the author’s conceptualisation of spaces. He begins the book with an observation overheard by the poet Utpal Kumar Basu. It is about a homeless woman who cooks for a few others who share their plight with her. She dismisses resi-
dential address as a proof of existence, but asks instead a question that is more important to her: where does a person sleep. For Basu persons like her are the actual nagariks (citi-
zen) of the city. Later, Chaudhuri writes about traversal and exploration of space in malls where people stay by and lean on balconies as they observe others. He further presents us with a vignette about the slatted windows of the city, which possesses iconicographic value.

Chaudhuri’s book is an important addition to our perception of Calcutta because it engag-
es with the contemporary scene of the city and also expresses an urgent need for works in the spheres of art and literature that will shape our memory of the city in the present-day.

ETIC Project. University of Liverpool, UK, and Jadavpur University, India. Funded by UGC-UKIERI.
http://eticproject.wordpress.com