

Trans-cultural discourse on colonial transportation viewed through German Travel records on Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The involvement of cultural and political constructions embedded in the travel records has enabled critical awareness of the implication of travel and travel writings in colonial powers structures and it has given a new life for serious object of academic study. The expansion of colonialism fuelled by the improvements seen on transportation, travel writing had become a considerably popular and a successful genre. Increasing popularity and interest in scientific, geographical and anthropological research has also given a weight on travelogues serving as accounts of first-hand individual experience with potential instructions for travellers, administrators, religious expansion and scientific discoveries. As for Sri Lankan colonial heritage, until recent decades, colonial travel writings, especially that of the travel records of the authors of non-colonial powers writing on Sri Lanka had received relatively little or no attention. In post-colonial Germanic Studies, it has long been assumed that little need be said about colonialism and the Enlightenment, as Germany did not have colonies until the late nineteenth century, hence the German Enlightenment and colonialism appears derivative of and peripheral to what counts as the European tradition or any records founded in East-India Companies. This study hence focuses on the travel records of Germans in Dutch Sri Lanka, Herport (1669), von de Behr (1668), Schweitzer (1682), Fryke (1692) Wintergerst (1712) as recorded by R. Raven-Hart as well as the travel record of Wilhelm Geiger (1890) of the colonial Sri Lanka. Initially, until recently the personal records especially on the mobility of Sri Lankan then infrastructure as viewed by Germans is *terra incognita* or an unknown territory of information. This study will seek a new dimension for the heritage studies of Sri Lanka by revealing the transportation and road culture and the intercultural contacts positioning on the implications of the act of travel of an individual, national and spatial concept of identity prevailed along the crossroads and rivers throughout Sri Lanka revealing the stereotypes and the essence of an informative transcultural discourse written from the perspective of self-awareness and critique of the German perception of the colonial setup of Sri Lanka.

Key Words: *Colonial transportation, German perception, Sri Lanka*

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