

ABSTRACT

The working-class habitat in Bombay at the colonial times (1850 – 1947)

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Starting from the mid XIXth century, the city of Bombay has known an early industrial development which has had important consequences on its demographic growth and urbanisation. Indeed its clearest impact appears in the massive inflow of working-men, which has resulted in the outbreak of areas and districts specifically devoted to the working-men population in the heart of the city.

This study is focused on this last phenomenon which is questioned from both a social and an urban historian's outlook. The notion of « habitat » is thereby understood in a broader sense than in its mere definition as lodging but also in a wider view than that which is used in the functionalist approach of town-planning. It embraces the ways of living as well as the daily practices of city-life. It is thought as the product of an interaction between three actors : the colonial State – which has built to lodge the working-men population, the private landlords and the working-men who live in these areas. This study will attempt to restore this population's role, putting forward an approach of the working-men ways of living in the city and of their relations with the other social groups and with the colonial State within the city.