

Problem and Prospect of Cultural Resource Management in Urban Areas with Focus on the Metropolitan City of Kolkata

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ABSTRACT

India enriched with tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The cultural heritage is considered as a symbolic and behavioural expression of a group which passes from one generation to the next. It is our responsibility to preserve and protect our national heritage for our future generations. Kolkata as a metropolitan city contains cultural heritage since early historic period. The present paper focuses on the cultural relics that were uncovered by excavation in Clive House in Dumdum of North 24 Parganas and Bethune College of Kolkata. The historical and cultural values associated with these sites have been documented. We would specifically focus on the problem of preservation in urban context. Our discussion is based on secondary sources as well as primary sources. The secondary data collection includes literature review and newspaper and the primary data have been taken from the interview with the authority of the heritage and local resident. The data has been systematically analyzed to identify the problem in preservation of this cultural heritage. This paper serves as an initial database of the cultural heritage in the metropolitan city Kolkata, that will contribute to planning for protection from vandalism of the artifacts, preservation of the sites for future generation, and creating scope for future research and development.

Keywords: Heritage Management, Preservation and Conservation, Metropolitan City of Kolkata.

INTRODUCTION

Heritage management is the application of management techniques to conserve and development of cultural resources so that the remain part of a cultural heritage bears long-term value for the nation and benefit for the public. The cultural heritage is considered as a symbolic and behavioural expression of a group which passes from one generation to the next. When humans organize in their space and express their culture in a tangible or an intangible form of culture, it becomes a heritage or a cultural heritage.

Calcutta was the extension of colonial power from 1757-1947. These one hundred and fifty years of colonization influenced Calcutta's cultural trend in a visible and imperceptible fashion. The most effective colonial evidence is the architectural works. Calcutta has wide variety of grand colonial structures like Victoria Memorial, Metcalf Hall, St. John's Church, along with the Clive house and Bethune college. Which help Calcutta to renown as the "colonial city" of India.

The rapid growth of cities in the last few decades had led to the fast disappearance of archaeological evidence, as a result we are losing many vital information in understanding the urban archaeology. It is a fact that most cities had a long history, but due to the lack of attention given on cultural heritage local history of the area are fading out day by day. It is our responsibility to preserve and protect our national heritage for future generations.

Literature Review

In 1998 Dr. Chakraborty and Dr. Biswas first described a brief report on the excavation at Bethune college. After that in 2001 ASI Kolkata circle has enlisted the Clive house as a protected site and they have started excavation work under the supervision of Dr Ota. and Bandhapadhyay. During that period several newspapers like Frontline, Times of India, The Telegraph has published a report regarding the excavation at Dumdum mound. On Journalist Sumitra Das wrote a report about the present condition of Clive house in daily newspaper. After a long gap in 2016 Dr. P K Mishra has shared a brief historical journey about Lord Clive. After that in social media again the Clive house has been highlighted. Finally On 2018 Dr Chattopadhyay compared the excavated relics of the Dumdum mount with the findings of Chandraketurarh in his book "The Archaeology of Coastal Bengal"

Aims and objectives:

- The present study aims to shed light on the cultural relics which were uncovered by excavation in Clive House and Bethune College in Kolkata.
- A focus given on the problem of preservation of these sited in in urban context.

METHODOLOGY

Data has been collected from the secondary sources like books, journals, magazines, newspaper, IAR report etc. Some books written post-Independence by Indian authors were also studied. The classical religious texts which had the mentioned of 'Kolkata' have been examined. Exploration of the studied area was done along with the interview of the authority of these heritage and local resident in primary context.

Area and the Site

Kolkata as a metropolitan city contains cultural heritage of early local inhabitants of pre-colonial as well as post-colonial period and afterwards. The Clive house is situated at 91, Rastraguru Avenue in south Dumdum municipality West Bengal-700028, The latitude is 88°25'30" N and longitude is 22°47'35" E. It occupies southern half of the archaeological mound (200m long and 75m wide). There is a football ground on one side of the mound and the area surrounded by high rise apartments. In 1905 Blechynden describing Dumdum in his writing that in the old days, before the country has been drained, the Great Salt water lake lies to the east of Calcutta. Now it is a wide treeless stretch of low-lying land, the clay soil dry and cracked in the winter months but flooded in the rainy season, when it springs came for mile upon mile the rice crop of the villages waves green. Just beyond this Dumdum House. (Blechynden 1905: 195). British civil servant Lewis O'Malley mentioned in his writing in 1914 "The name Dumdum is a corruption of the Persian word '*Dumduma*', meaning a raised mound."

The local people of the area shared a myth that once upon a time probably Clive cleaned his guns and tested them and the '*dham-dham*' sound generated from testing of guns got established as "Dum Dum". Bethune college is located in the northern part of Kolkata beside the Azad hind Bag swimming pool and park. It falls under word no. 26 of borrow IV of the Kolkata Municipality corporation. The latitude is 22°58'80" N and longitude is 88°36'80" E. The college and school campus are bounded by Ramdulal Sarkar street in south, Bethune Row in the West, Bidhan Sarani in the East and Beadon street in the North. This area is known as Simulia because of the massive Growth of simul (Bambox Ceiba) and Red silk cotton trees in the past. The Nans, Sens and Basaks mainly lived in this area. They are mainly weavers by profession. In later part their ancestors come to Sutanuti leaving their Satgaon (now Adisaptagram) by attracted with a local market at Sutanuti Hat.

The short history of Kolkata: The earliest origin of this place is not known, however through review of few books and archive letters it can be said that in 1530 the Portuguese first started trading in Bengal. They had selected two great canters for trading which were Chittagong in Bangladesh and Satgaon (now Adisaptagram) in the bank of river Hooghly. We know that Job Charnock, landed in Calcutta in the mid-17th century and he took control of three villages which are *Sutanuti, Gobindpur and Kalikata*. It was belonging to the Mughal emperor. The *jagirdari* (form of land tenancy developed in India during Mughal period) taxation rights were held by the Sabarna Roy Choudhury family of Barisha as zamindars. In 1698 these rights were transferred to the East India Company in exchange of Rs. 1300 per annum. That was the beginning of British colonialism in India in Indian History. (Banerjee, 2009). Kalikata was a fishing village. In 1717 Mr. Holwell, wrote in a letter that only 10 to 12 thatched huts were present at that time, some composed of mud, and others of bamboos and mats and those were possessed by simple farmers and fishermen. Sutanuti was a riverside weavers' village. Where the Sheths and Basaks lived. They are mainly weavers by profession.

After that their ancestor comes to Sutanuti leaving their Saptagram attracted by local business at Sutanuti Hat. The etymological study of any historical site is very significant as it shades light on the historical journey of a particular place The first documented reference of Kolkata has been found in two popular Medieval Bengali literature which are *Manasa Mongal* composed in 1495 by Bipra Das Piplai (Sen, 1953). and *Chandi Mongal Kavya* composed by Mukundaram Chakrabarti in 1589. (Chakraborty, 1868). Both of them describing the travel of their protagonist as *Chand Saudagarh* in *Manasa Mongal* and *Dhanapoti* in *Chandi Mongal*, how they pass Calcutta and snail down their ship on the west side of Ganga at Betor (presently in Howrah). In 1590, the name 'Mahal Kolkata' was mentioned in *Ain-i-Akbari* by Abul Fazal (Jarrett, 1949:154). According to some belief that the area specialized in the production of quicklime or kolichun (Bengali: কলি চন) and coir or kata (Bengali: কাতা); hence, it was called Kolikata (Chatterjee, S.N.2008).

Another reference of the name 'Kalikata' was found in *Kalikamangal* which was composed by Krishnaram Das during the year 1677. In this text, Kolikata is thought to be a variation of Kalikkhetro meaning "Field of the goddess Kali (Ray, 1986:4). The city's name has always been pronounced as *Kolikata* in Bengali, and the anglicized form was Calcutta until 2001, then it was changed to Kolkata. August 24, Charnock's arrival in the city was considered as Kolkata's birthday. In 2002, the Sabarna Roychowdhury Paribar Parishad filed a PIL in

Calcutta high court by disputing the founder of Calcutta. They had submitted a Parsi letter mentioning that the Sabarna Roy Choudhury family had leased these three villages (Kalikata, Sutanuti and Gobindpur) to the East India Company six years after Charnock's death. After validating the proof in 2003 The Hon'ble High Court dismissed the myth about the birthday and founder of the city. They directed the West Bengal state government to delete Charnock's name from history books and not celebrate August 24 as the city's birthday. (Roychoudhury)

Historical Background of Clive house: Clive house is known as Burra Kothi or bad cottage or the grand house. It was built in early 18th century CE, is regarded as one of the oldest building of Bengal. The Monument is situated on a raised mound. The local inhabitant shared a myth that the house was built in a single night and it was still mystery that how did the herculean job was completed within a few hours of night. In 1984 Probably, for the first time the name of the building was referred in the book 'History of the War in Bengal', by Robert Orme. He mentioned that, On 8th February 1757 morning while crossing the camp of Nawab Siraj-ud-daulah at Sealdah, Clive marked an old building constructed on a high mound in Dumdum.

According to historian the building was constructed during the late Mughal period, subsequently became the property of Nawab Alivardi Khan and later his grandson Nawab Siraj-ud-daulah. He uses the house near Calcutta to keep a close eye on the British. After Siraj's defeat in the battle of Plassey in 1756 historical treaty between the Europeans and the Nawab of Bengal was signed in this building. Robert Orme mentioned that the garden house has changed hands several times. After leaving off Lord Clive, the house was auctioned off by East India Company. Bengal Artillery officers lived in the house for field practice. After that phase, it served as a private residence of notable Englishmen.

In 1891, the Clive house has used as a headquarters of Presidency Volunteer Reserve Battalion. Sir Owain Jenkins, mentioned that once upon a time industrialist Balmer Lawrie lived in this place for a few years in the 1930. After independence of India Clive house and its surrounding area was the residence of 20 to 25 helpless refugee families of East Pakistan. Bishop Heber, visited the house in the 1820s, expressed his utter satisfaction about the excellent beauty of its gardens.

Structural Description of Clive house: The Clive house is a fine specimen of colonial architecture and looks like a fort. It is also believed that, once upon a time it was a Portuguese

or Dutch factory or a go-down of Cotton and Salt. In 1911 scholar Lewis O'Malley said that, the building was originally a one storied brick house with underground chambers which leading up to the Mall Road area. The strong structure, seemed to be capable of defense that is why it caught the eyes of Clive.

The monument has occupied approx. 100 X 125 sq feet area. The walls had great thickness for 4 to 8 feet. mostly 3 types of bricks discovered, triangular shape with semicircular upper section possibly used in column, rectangular shape used for wall and round shape which used to make pillars. The floor made of lime and brick jelly. A semi-circular stairway leading to the arched opening in the northern side of the building. There was a 'Gari Varanda' in front of the house, which is very common in colonial architecture. There was a marble plaque established on the front of the building which mentioned that, Lord Clive used to reside here in 1757 – 1760 and 1765 – 1767.

Lord Clive renovated the building and introduced some basic changes in its architectural pattern, he added another floor to make it a double-storied house. He put down the extensive gardens and strengthened the building in terms of security as well as foundation stability. He added rooms to make it a very comfortable residence. Behind the renovation of Clive house, the role of Lady Margaret Clive also deserves special mention as she was very active participant during that time. (IAR 2001–2: 93)

The History of Bethune college: The Bethune college was initially known as The Hindu Female school founded by John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune in 1849. He came to India as a Law member of Governor General Council. He was first convinced that Indian woman desperately needs to be educated for their awareness and their right to ability to voice their protest. He established first school for girls in 1849 on a piece of land donated by Dakshina Ranjan. It started with 2 students, Bhubanmala and Kundamanla and in later 21 student has joined. Dr Kadambini Bose Ganguly cleared entrance examination and arranged college classes in the school on 1879 that was the beginning of Bethune college.

Historian Dilip Biswas said: "The two sides of the Ganga are archaeologically very rich as foreign ships sailed down regularly." The site Bethune college campus was surrounded by 6 archeological sites which are Mahanad in Hooghly district, Chadrocketugarh in North 24 Parganas, Harinarayanpur Deolpota and Boral in south 24 paraganas. He said that the artifacts which discovered in the Bethune College campus, was found while digging a section to build an auditorium. "A trial trench has been dug up near the west wall. As it hit groundwater level hence excavation stopped."

Archeological Findings from Clive house: In 2001, a decorated part of potsherd was found from the periphery of the mound which attracted the attention of the chief of ASI, after those excavations conducted under the directorship of S.B. Ota and Bimal Bandyopadhyay in 10x10 meters trench under 3 field session (2001-02, 2002-03). In march 2022 again the excavation was conducted under the direction of ASI superintendent Subha Mazumdar.

Two cultural periods and 7 major layers have been discovered which are Period-I (2nd Century B.C. to 12th Century A.D) and Period-II (15th A.D to modern time). **Period II (comprising layers 1 and 2) :** In these mostly habitational deposits has been discovered. The ceramic assemblage includes Black and red ware, red ware, black ware, channel- spouted bowls, Northern black polished ware and porcelain wares of diverse shapes. The fabric varies from medium to fine and the wares are mostly slipped and wheel made. Other findings include terracotta figurines, plaques, pendants, bangles, amulets, net sinkers, beads of semi-precious stones like agate, jasper, chalcedony, crystal found; iron nails and punched mark copper coins also found which issued by East India Company. The floor of ballast and lime indicated dwelling house and settlement pattern of the area. Few stone tools such as quern, pestle, and muller has found which suggested of milling and food processing subsistence strategies. A remarkable horse head unearthed with ornamentation on its neck and head band. This jeweled horse can be compared with the findings from Chandraketugarh. Apart these findings, three human skeletons were found. After the analysis of these skeleton ASI referred that it belongs to the 1st or 2nd century B.C. which throw light on the burial rites of the people of this region.

Period I (Comprising layers 3 to 7): the ceramic assemblage mostly includes red ware, dull red ware, black ware, grey ware. They are mostly handmade and without slipped. Few of them bearing incised decorations like horizontal lines, oblique strokes, wavy lines. ASI also unearthed bone discs, antlers, terracotta, seals, lamps, A cast copper coins (square and rectangular in shape), punch-marked coins, and arrowheads. A Sunga and Kushana style plaque has been found where a prince sitting on an elephant. In his hand he got the ankush, in the other hand a bag of money. One terracotta seal found contains Kutila Brahmi script with a name “Samapasasya”.

A plaque of single-horned rhinoceros also found. Stylistically, the rhino carving dates back to the Kusana period, around the first century A.D Few terracotta plaques and figurine found from this layer shows religious affiliation like mother and child bond, figurines of semi-divine yakshinis including a female statue with two lotus stalks and a winged fairy. These figurines mostly found in post Gupta period. A stone icon of Mahisasurmardini datable to the 9th–10th

century CE also unearthed from this layer. (B. Bandyopadhyay 2002: 32). Apart from these floral, faunal remains also found from the burials. Charred specimens of paddy and pulses and charred bamboo have been reported. The faunal remains include bones of turtle, birds, fish, goat horns, nails and teeth of buffalo. A hearth and around it a lot of tortoise shells and fish scales, were found which indicate that the inhabitants were non vegetarians. (p.191)

The relative cultural period found from this site is Post Mouryan period, or Sunga Kushana period to modern times.

Archeological Findings from Bethune College: The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of West Bengal (DAWB) carried out excavations in the campus of Bethune College in two phases-from 1997 to 1999 (Chakraborty and Biswas 1998). They have excavated till the ground water level touches.

Terracotta: mainly comprise of male female figurine beside an animal figure which belongs to early mediaeval period to late mediaeval period. Few objects have been collected which are inkpot, variety of chillum, cane shaped earthen lamp and toy cart.

Pottery: ceramic assemblage includes Red ware with dark brown slipped, grey ware etc. Mostly well fired with fine texture and decorated with lines, notches, vertical stroke etc. Different shape has been discovered include handi, lota, narrow mouth vase dated from 2nd to 1st century AD . Three types of brick have been found.

Glass material: Variety of glass piece has been excavated mostly are broken bottles and lamps. The colour of glass varies from black, olive green and blue. Porcelain ware also found which belongs to late mediaeval period

Apart from the evidence of Bethune college few objects have been recovered from the North Calcutta while digging then tunnel for metro Railway. These are having been displayed in Sovabazar Metro station and Park Street Metro station.

Present Condition of the Clive house: Despite non maintenance, the building was in very poor condition. the top floor collapsed and a portion of the chunk has fall off, the core of the building has filled with heaps of debris. Broken windows, chipped off plasters from the walls and the wild growth of the unwanted shrubs, makes the house look like a haunted place. The main grand ballroom has no roof overhead. The 6 rounded pillars remain intact. wooden beams were identified which used as support for the roofs. There are few families who have settled down in the back and side portions of the Clive house. They are using one side of the wall of Clive House as part of their dwelling and which causing further damage. The front entrance has covered with roots of a banyan tree jungle of electric cables.

Case studies

1. On interviewing Mr. Sanjay Sarkar, the present care taker of Clive house from ASI, said that the work has hampered due to the existence of the families. The government and the municipality have issued vacation notices but the occupants claim rehabilitation with large amount of money to leave the place. Due to vandalism, they have already lost the large Marble Plaque of the Clive house. He tried his best level to secure the places but trespassers are always entered in the Clive house from the southern gate as there has no barrier. Now a days Photographer and Vloggers also entered from the southern gate and take photo session in this place without any permission. When I asked about the planning of restoration Sanjay said, “After the restoration of the building we will turn the building into a museum where the discovered artefacts under the mound will be displayed.”
2. In 2006 ‘The Calcutta’ journalist Soumitra Das, wrote that the deep-rooted trees were removed and the huge mass of debris on the main entrance was cleared. a semi-circular stairway leading to the arched opening at the northern side. The pillared hanging roof was still kept in a precarious state. Some stairways were repaired on the north-western side.

Restoring works of the Clive House: The building has been partially covered with the iron fencing, which indicate that the construction work has started. Although some rooms have been repaired but the complete restoration work has not been finished. ASI has set up a local office just right of the building where the present caretaker lived. The authorities are trying to arrange some sort of rehabilitation for them however no progression has been noticed. The local inhabitant are still using a wall of the building as a part of their dwelling. The deep-rooted wild trees were removed from the wall and the huge mass of the heaped debris was also cleared from the southern main entrance of the building. A balcony, in the main entrance was hanging in a precarious state. Some stairways were restored. The local people said that the further progress of the work has been suspended for a long time.

Preservation and Protection Law and order: Indian Government has published **Antiquities Act 1906** which declare the national importance of historic sites, structures and monuments. **Archeological site and remains Act 1958:** Provide permission to excavate sites. Prohibits alteration of archaeological resources and trafficking in archaeological resources. It

said extending to a distance of 100 meters in all directions shall be consider as Protected area with respect to the monument. [Section 20-A] and extending to a distance of 200 meters in all directions shall be the prohibited area. [Section 20-B]. Any person knowingly violates the rule will be Imprisoned up to 2 years and or a penalty to the maximum of rupees one lakh. In case of Clive house, I have found that the local inhabitants are desperately occupied the protected are as a part of their dwelling which causes the further damage of the monuments.

Limitations

- The college authority not willing to share much more details regarding the excavated material remains.
- No documentation found of the excavated relics at Bethune College Museum as well as Archaeological survey of India.

DISCUSSION

The urban myths and legends were an inseparable part of any historical site. Historically, the Dum Dum and Kolkata region associated with the habitation of Islamic and colonial periods. This leads to the growth of city and local Zamindar. Realizing the historical importance of the Clive house, the excavation led to the first systematic attempt towards the conservation and restoration of the oldest building in Kolkata. The site is a unique architecture of medieval Bengal and suitable for permanent settlement.

The excavated relics and their characteristic features are comparable to findings of Chandraketugarh, which is the well-known early historic site of West Bengal. The terracotta specimens from Sunga to the post-Gupta period suggest that Calcutta has highly developed civic life. It was prosperous business Centre with skilled craftsman. All these findings signify that, Calcutta was not born or flourished during the last two hundred years, it has a glorious history of civilization. Now a days the city has earned a fame 'The City of Joy' because of its cultural traditions, literature, history, monuments and more. Every nook and corner of this city is filled with stories that are bound to mesmerize and cherries us. We can say that Kolkata is the perfect amalgamation of ancient civilization with the modernization.

Right now, The Clive House is protected by archaeological survey of India. Although the renovation work has started but after witnessing its current state of preservation, it is hard to imagine the beauty of the building hence Clive house deserves a lot of attention from ASI and site need a proper restoration. From the case study analysis, it can be said that only few people are aware of this piece of history, through regular mentions in various platforms like this, I hope one day we will keep our national heritage protected and sprayed our glorious history to everyone

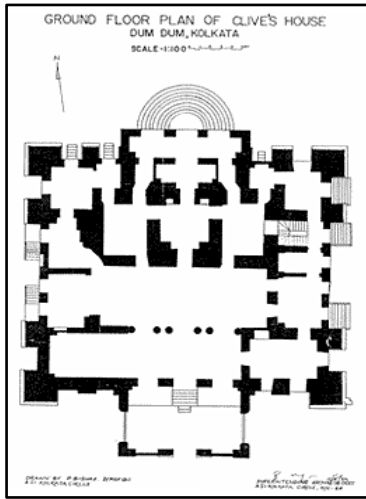
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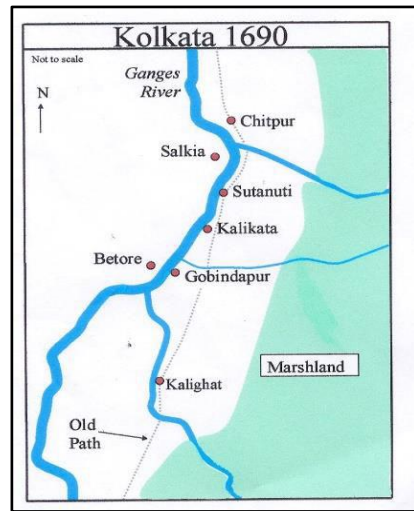
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Photo Plates



Ground Plan of the Clive house



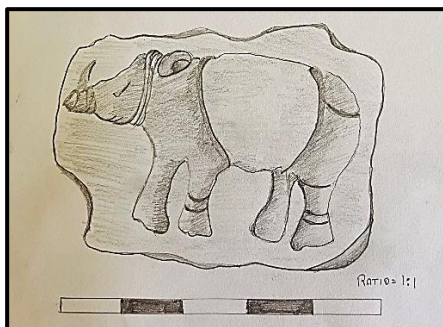
Ancient map of Kalikata (Niyogi 2007)



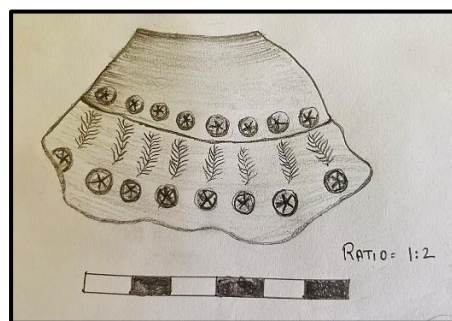
Present condition of Clive house



Present condition of Bethune College



A plaque of single-horned rhinoceros (ASI)



A red ware from Dumdum mound (ASI)