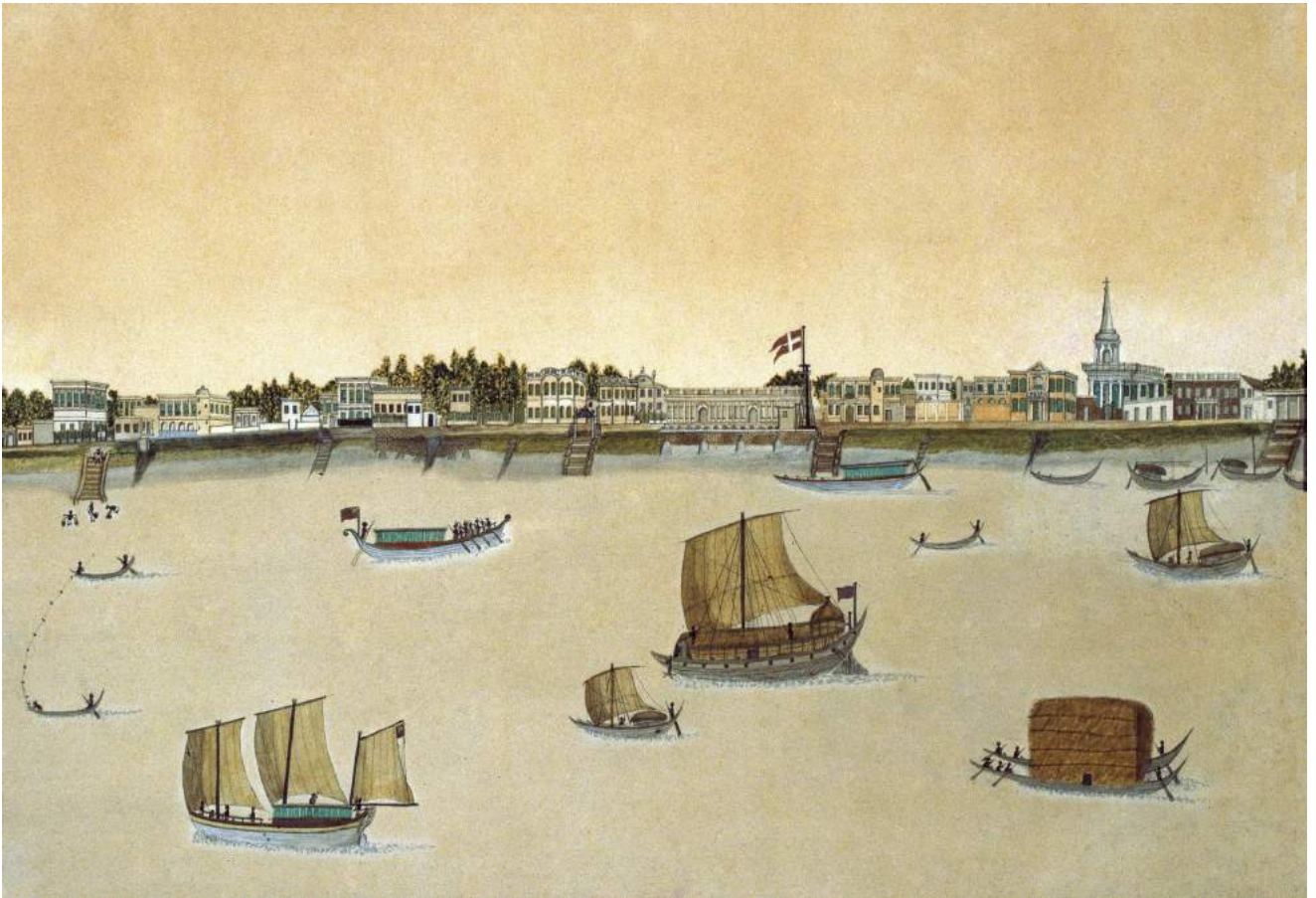


The Serampore Initiative



The Indian-Danish Heritage of Serampore

Interim report 5.1. – 29.1.2009

Survey and Project Proposals

The Serampore Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark for the preservation of the Indo-Danish cultural heritage in Serampore

Content:

Introduction.....	p.03
The Municipal Development Planning.....	p.04
Topography and urban development.....	p.04
Heritage Management Strategy.....	p.09
Project Proposals.....	p.09
1. The eastern part of the river side and adjacent areas.....	p.10
2. The central part of the river side and adjacent areas.....	p.12
The former Danish government compound and related structures.....	p.13
St. Olav's Church and immediate environment.....	p.14
The Nisan Ghat Lane.....	p.17
THE Danish cemetery.....	p.20
The historic buildings along T.C.Goswami Street.....	p.19
3. The western part of the river side and adjacent areas.....	p.20
Proposals for heritage listing and conservation planning.....	p.23
Survey of Architectural Values in the townscape.....	p.24
Development of cultural tourism	p.25
Project proposals and budget estimates in separate annex	

The Serampore Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark

Introduction

In 1755 the Danish Asiatic Company was granted the right to establish a trading post at Serampore (Srirampur) at the Hoogly River in West Bengal, about 25 kms north of Kolkata. The settlement was given the official Danish name of Frederiksnagore, though in daily use Serampore was maintained. The place remained on Danish hands until 1845, when the territory was ceded to the British, together with the other Danish trading post in India, Tranquebar (Tarangambadi) in Tamil Nadu.

Apart from its role as a commercial settlement, Serampore became an important centre of education. The Baptist mission produced and disseminated printed translations of the Bible in many Asian languages. Subsequently Serampore College, which was built under the protection of the Danish King Frederik 3rd, is considered to be the first university of Asia ranging among the oldest institutions in Asia with the right to confer academic degrees. Serampore College still operates today, being affiliated to the University of Calcutta.

Several landmarks originating from the Danish period are immediately identifiable: The Government House (1771), the Lutheran St. Olav's Church (1806) and Serampore College (1823). Many other historic buildings and structures remain, but they are only partially preserved or in complete ruin and may not be immediately recognisable.

The Serampore Initiative by the National Museum of Denmark seems to be very timely indeed, as restoration of the former Danish Government House is already in progress at the initiative of the West Bengal Heritage Commission. However, other parts of the rich heritage are under eminent threat from lack of maintenance and urban development pressures. New constructions that rise to 4 or 5 stories in reinforced concrete have become the main feature of the new townscape, and in the process of urban transformation precious heritage buildings are falling into ruin, possibly awaiting demolition to give way for more rewarding economic investments.

In this process of modernisation there is an imminent risk that important buildings and heritage values are being irrevocably lost even before they are being identified and appreciated.

The aim of this report is to justify a possible Danish involvement in preserving the common Indian-Danish heritage putting focus on heritage as a source of cultural identity and a resource of economic and social development, which may serve as a means for the improvement of the qualities in the urban environment.

The Municipal Development Planning

The Bengal Municipal Act 1998 requires that the municipalities prepare adequate Development Plans to guide the future development. The draft plan for Serampore provides detailed analysis of the current situation and outline the future planning objectives.

The analysis of the population configuration show that the rate of the population migration is as high as 67,3%, which create an immense pressure on the infrastructure services and housing requirements of the area. The majority of the population is in the low income range, posing an immense demand on the municipality for the creation of more opportunities of earning increase and improvement of general living standards.

The challenges of providing adequate social infrastructure at a reasonable standard regarding health, education and decent housing are eminent, but also issues relating to heritage conservation, creation of recreational open space as well as preservation of the aesthetic quality of the landscape are being addressed in the plan.

The twelve prioritized Development Objectives for the Environmental Management Plan include the following three issues pertaining to heritage :

- Increase in the percentage of opens spaces and green cover.
- Conservation and restoration of historic and heritage buildings.
- Development of the side of the river through river front development projects.

At he municipal level the Plan recognizes that “ the Heritage Conservation Committee is functioning proper, but the unavailability of fund is a major hindrance”.

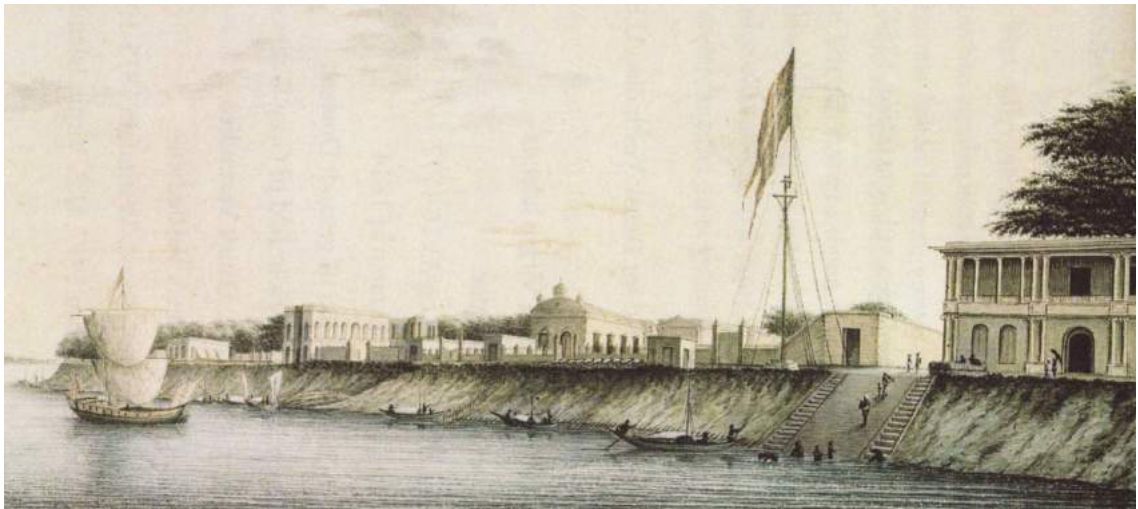
The scope of the Serampore Initiative by the National Museum of Denmark is considered pursuant to the overall municipal vision as it is framed in the perspective of Goals and Objective of Vision 2025, which is explicitly mentioning the intentions of “conserving natural reserve and heritage (national, local and regional), and providing sufficient space for housing and social infrastructure for the anticipated and allocated population in the future”.

Topography and urban development

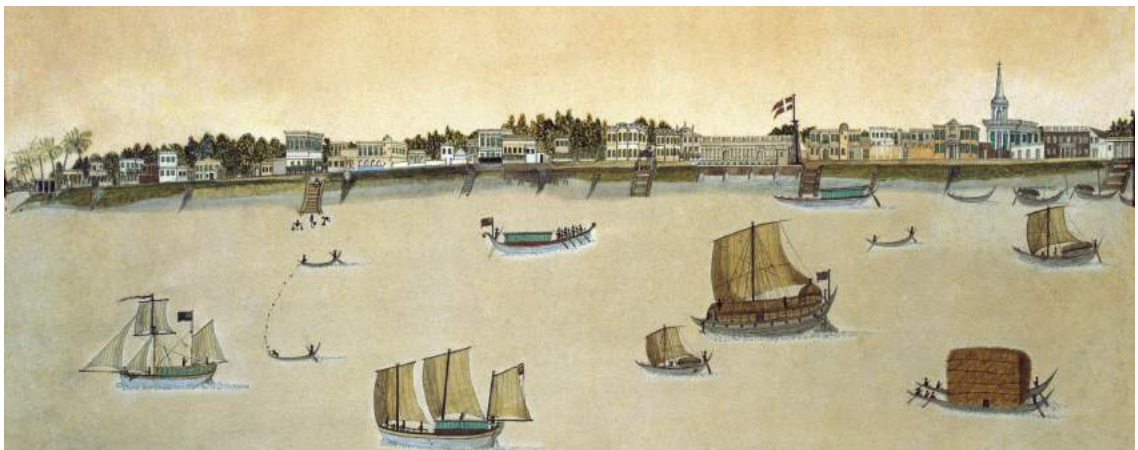
The early sketches and paintings originating from the Danish occupation in Serampore are depicting the silhouette of the town with the St. Olav Church as the most significant landmark and a long row of whitewashed buildings facing on to the river. Obviously the settlement pattern was oriented towards the river as the main line of seawards communication, but also in appreciation of the aesthetic and recreational qualities of the open vistas to the river and beyond.

For the most of the 19th century there was a quest for the picturesque and a shared aesthetic attitude with a preference for the neo-classical architectural style among the

Europeans. A contemporary traveller along the Hooghly in 1803 describes the buildings: “they were in themselves picturesque being white, with expensive porticoes to the south, and the windows closed by Venetian blinds painted green” (quoted from Nilsson, p. 27).



Frederiksnagore (Serampore) seen from Hooghly river. Drawn 1790 by Peter Hammer (section only/ The Ethnographic Museum, Oslo).



Frederiksnagore (Serampore), a Danish town in Bengal, seen from Hooghly river. Drawn 1810 by J. Hammer. Coloured. (Mus. no. 261: 49/ section only/ The Danish Maritime Museum, Ellsinore).

The appearance of the town has changed in the meantime. The long row of white painted mansions with open porches situated in green environment and facing on to the river have disappeared in favour of new apartment buildings built close to the river. However, a few historic buildings are still to be seen along the riverfront and many more can be identified in various parts of the town. Especially the many *ghats* (ramps and steps leading down to the river) constructed in red bricks are still a characteristic feature of the Indian architecture, which also appears at the early pictures of the Danish settlement.

The development of the town can be followed in some detail from four historic maps originating from 1827, 1841, 1860 and 1883. In a sequence of chronology the maps are presented in the following pages providing information on the topography and changing building patterns.



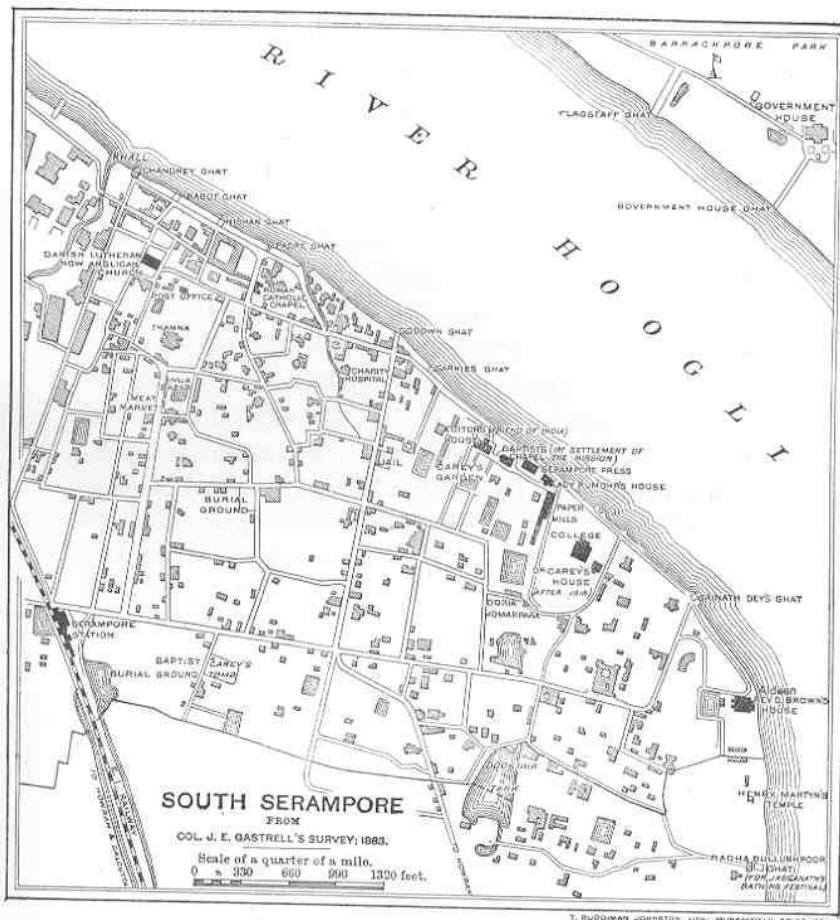
1827: "Frederichsnagore or Serampore" Topographical plan. With elevations & views. Surveyed, protracted and drawn by James Thompson. Col. 2 scales. 68,6 x 58,6 cm. (section only, Her Majesty The Queen's Reference Library, Copenhagen)



1841: "River Hoogly, Bandel to Garden Reach", Topographical map by Charles Joseph. (Section only, The Danish Maritime Museum, Elsinore)



1860: "The Town and Environs of Serampore, District Hooghly", Surveyor General of India. (section only, the Carey Library, Serampore).



1883: "South Serampore", plan according to Col. J.E. Gastrell's Survey 1883 (British Library ?)

On the basis of the analysis of the townscape three distinct heritage precincts can be identified representing the original organisation of the early settlement in the 18th century:



1. To the east the Serampore College and related activities represented the academic and religious segment of the township;
2. The Danish administrative and commercial area was established in the centre with the Danish compound as the seat of the government and St. Olav Church as the most significant landmark;
3. The Indian landlords were residing in the western part of Serampore in large building complexes. Originally surrounded by open fields the remaining residences of the extended families are situated to the west of the “Danish Canal”. Only a few of the buildings are preserved within the densely build up residential quarters.

The majority of the Indian population was settled further away from the river and the vernacular habitation of that time is hardly discernable today.

This organisation of the town remained largely intact until the railway connection from Kolkata to Howrah was constructed in 1854 resulting in a marked shift of orientation away from the river towards the new railway station. Subsequently new commercial activities developed in that area..

During the late 19th century industrial development was initiated by the establishment of the first Jute Mill in 1866 at the site of the former Botanical Garden next to the College resulting in a further segregation of the town from the river side.

Between 1866 and 1915, six more jute mills were established within the Hooghly District. The local landlords, *thikadars* and mill-owners made arrangements for the habitation of the labour force around the factories and because of the arrival of migrant workers, the population in Serampore increased from 24,440 to 44,451 between 1872 and 1901.

Along with the Jute mills, many other subsidiary factories grew up in the rural areas within the fringes of the town. This growth of the town has changed the original historic townscape, but the main street pattern remain and the scale of the town has maintained a pleasing harmony in defiance of poverty, decay and neglect. However, the finely moulded urban structure is a most vulnerable asset that requires special attention, if it shall be maintained in a future urban development.

A program for civic uplifting aiming at the improvement of living conditions is closely linked to the betterment of the amenities in the town and concern for the historic identity of the place. In this respect the river Hooghly and the surviving evidence of the Danish history provide an exceptional rich potential for Serampore.

Heritage Management Strategy

At the provincial government level the West Bengal Heritage Commission has taken the initiative to start the restoration of the former Danish Government House and funds have been allocated for the first phase of the project that is carried out through the Hooghly District Sub Division (SDO). The subsequent phases of the restoration project has not yet been determined.

However, restoration of one or two historic buildings from the Danish period should not stand alone, but form part of a more comprehensive effort for preserving the unique heritage originating from the Danish, the British and the Indian periods, as well as representing a more recent industrial development that collectively have influence on the formation of the present townscape.

A successful management strategy for preserving and integrating the Indian-Danish heritage into a future urban development can best be adopted through a joint cooperation between public and private parties, who have a vested interest in the future development. The decisions about priorities and the modalities of the cooperation should be taken in joint cooperation of all involved stakeholders.

It is hoped that this report can help to facilitate the process and possibly initiate a further Danish involvement in a joint co-operation initiative for heritage preservation in Serampore.

Project Proposals

The project proposals are centred on the preservation and enhancement of the former Indian-Danish heritage originating from the period 1755 to 1845. The aim is to enhance the specific historic identity of Serampore, but also to improve the aesthetic and recreational qualities of the town, which are so closely relating to the Hooghly River.

In a longer perspective the scope of the immediate restoration efforts may be extended to include heritage values relating to the subsequent British and industrial development.

The following proposals for restoration and urban improvement schemes are based on the survey carried out in January 2009. The list of project proposals is providing an overview of initiatives that may help to preserve the remains of the Indian-Danish heritage as an integrated part of the urban environment.

Divided into three separate zones a number of individual project proposals are listed, which are considered to be of specific significance. The projects are designed to utilize the rich heritage resource in a forceful and dynamic process of regeneration and urban development that will create economic development and improvement of living conditions.

So far the individual proposals have not been discussed with the relevant Indian authorities, but the catalogue of possible initiatives is put forward for a closer scrutiny and subject to discussions among all stakeholders about priorities and possible funding.

1. The eastern part of the river side and adjacent area.

Serampore College, the main building. 13. (Opposite) Serampore College, detail of the portico.



This area is stretching along William Carey Road from the Dey Ghat Street to Hrishikesh Sarani Street and includes the Serampore College as the main historic landmark.

The Baptist missionaries Carey, Marshmann and Ward arrived in 1792 and was afforded protection under the Danish Crown. A Botanical Garden was founded in 1800 and during the subsequent years the activities were intensified. Most significantly a paper mill and printing house were established for the production and dissemination of the Bible and other scriptures translated into different languages.



Officially recognized by a Royal Charter issued on 23rd February 1827 the Serampore College was offered the same power of conferring degrees as enjoyed by the Danish universities in Copenhagen and Kiel. Serampore College is now affiliated to Kolkotta University and its activities maintain a very significant importance for Serampore, which is widely recognized in West Bengal and beyond.

During the Danish period the area was largely an open green space that included the Botanical Garden the College Compound. Later the industrial development and the establishment of the jute and cotton factories have changed the previous character of the place.



The cast iron gate in front of the College and the double staircase inside the building were offered as a generous gift by the Danish King Fredrich IV in 1823 testifying to the special relationship that exists between the Danish Crown and the College.

It may be considered if the Foundation of the Danish Queen and Consort would contribute to the restoration to ensure that the authentic quality of the cast iron gate is maintained for the future, providing a unique and tangible testimony of the early history of this very significant place.



Landscaping of the eastern part of the river side area

The stretch of land along the river is formally the property of the Port's Trust, however in practical terms the land is administered by the individual property owners, who owns the adjacent land immediately beyond the river bank. The College and the Indian Jute Factory are the major private property owners in the eastern part of Serampore.

The river side area is located to the north of the factory buildings and the recreational qualities are not well developed. All goods imported and exported from the factory are transported on trucks via the William Carey Road and occasionally long rows of trucks are parked along the road blocking the view to the river. In view of this situation the Chief Executive Director of the Indian Jute Mill recognizes the need of environmental improvements along the river site.

Inspiration for amelioration and amenity planning of the surroundings can be drawn from Chandanagore, where the river side is turned into an attractive promenade. Improved connections to the Barrackpore leisure park on the other side of the river would also add to the attractions along the river.

The construction of a jetty in front of the College would fit well to the plans for development of cultural tourism allowing visitors to board or embark both at the eastern and the western end of the town and stroll along the river side or into the town as they please. A *ghat* in front of the College is actually shown on the map in the college library dating from 1860.



The old iron jetty and cat-davit is an important industrial heritage.

Restoration of the Godown Ghat, the Sarkin Ghat and Srinath Dey's Ghant would also highly improve the quality of the river site area.

The jetty and the crane rail with a cat-davit in front of the Jute Mill represent an immediately visible and significant vestige of the early industrial development in Serampore, when import and export were still depending on ships sailing up the Hooghly River. Today the Jute Mill is relying on landwards transport by trucks only and the crane is no longer in use for loading and unloading goods to the factory.

It is expected that the Indian Jute Mill may get interested in maintaining and restoring this significant piece of industrial heritage



The memorial of the first Christian baptism

A Christian meditation place is set up at the river bank as a memorial ground of the first Christian baptism by William Carey on 18th December 1800. For security reason the site is currently fenced in with barbed wire surrounding the barren ground with only a commemoration plate and a cross above.

This arrangement is however not very pleasing and the College may be interested in improving the site by putting a more appropriate fence around that gives more dignified appearance to the site.

Measures of protection should be included in coherent plans for the whole stretch of land. It is expected that the improvement scheme can be shared by the Serampore Sub Division, the Municipality and private stakeholders as an integrated part of a tourism development scheme for Serampore.

2. The central part of the river side and adjacent area.

This area is stretching along Mahatma Ghandi Road from Hrishik Bankim Sarani Street to the Danish Canal/ Serampore Khal and includes the former Danish Compound and the St. Olav Church precinct.



Actual condition of the main gate to the former Danish Compound

The most significant historic features include the former Government House and the St. Olav Church, but the whole district still have significant remains from the Danish period. It is referred that "in 1782, there were sixty fairly large stone houses outside the factory enclosure. All of them stood near the river, an area which Bie laid out by making a number of wide roads. These roads continued into the Indian quarters and were to form a pattern like the veins in a gigantic leaf. Thus the entire area had acquired an urban character and Bie was able to say in 1783 that the place, which six years previously had looked like a desert, was now a fine town". (quoted from Steen Nilsson p.72).

The former Danish Government Compound



Aquatint of the main gate with the King Frederick VI's monogram (British Library)

The surroundings of the Government House within the protecting wall have maintained the former importance as the administrative centre of Serampore due to the continued use for administrative purposes by the Serampore Sub Division and the Court. The continued importance and prestige of the site is further testified by the construction of the new Court Building.

The brick wall surrounding the former Danish Compound was originally erected on the initiative by Ole Bie in 1780. The total length is approximately 600 m. The western part along the Church Street is apparently preserved to its full height, but is also the part in the worst condition. This section is approximately 150 metres in length, with a thickness of 0.72 m and a height of about 3.20 m., but about 1 m of rubbish is accumulated at the interior side. To the other sides the wall is lower and hardly visible due to the many stalls all along the exterior perimeter of the compound.



Current condition of wall surrounding the former Danish Compound towards the Church Street

A new store in cement blocks and corrugated iron roofing at the back of the former Government House is unfortunately constructed in front of the southern gateway that forms part of the old wall. Restoration of this southern gateway will have a specific bearing on the Governor's House and its immediate surroundings.

The restoration works may include:

- Restoration of the wall, including top capping, plastering and lime washing of the whole wall.
- Restoration of the northern gateway building and the guard's house. Originally the front of the gate was designed with coupled Ionic pilasters supporting a triangular pediment with crowning urns and the royal monogram of the Danish King Frederick VI.
- Demolition of the temporary storehouse and restoration of the southern gateway building and adoption for new use.
- Landscaping of the whole of the compound, incl. brick pavement of the access roads and environmental improvements as an open space for recreation and public events, including cleaning of the tank and restoration of the brick seating arrangement.



The southern gateway building to the compound



The former Danish Government House

The former Danish Government House is currently under restoration. Please confer with the special restoration report. The first phase of work includes the structural parts (walling and roofing) started on site 1st of November for a scheduled duration of six months. The total cost is estimated at a total of 10 mill Rupees of which the first phase runs to 3.5 mill Rupees

The second phase including floors and joinery repairs (doors and windows) is not as yet put on tender and the budget not yet allocated.



The installations, interior finishes and furnishing are so far not included in the project and there is no final decision about the future use of the building after completion, although there seems to be consensus about some cultural functions, which will secure public access to the historic building.

The completion of the restoration and, including costing of the remaining work and decisions concerning the future use is awaiting further decisions by West Bengal Heritage Commission.

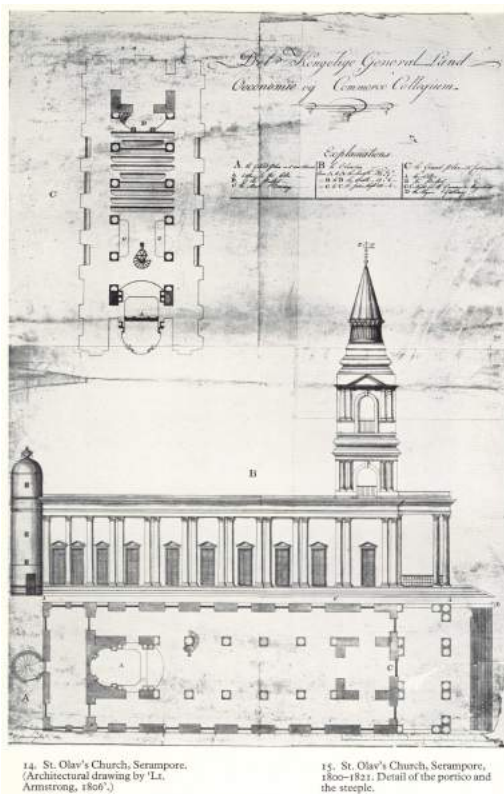
St. Olav Church

The Construction of St. Olav Church was initiated in 1800 and the nave was completed in 1806. Subsequently the portico and the bell tower were completed in 1821.

The monogram of the Danish King Christian VII's is maintained at the pediment of the portico. The one bell in the bell tower has the inscription "FREDERICKS VÆRCK ANNO 1804. The bigger bell has the inscription "CHRISTIAN VOGT STUTT GARD 1853".



The completion of St. Olav Church had a significant impact on the perception of Serampore as a Danish settlement. The church became the major landmark of Serampore appearing at all the early depictions of the town. The steeple was - and still is, contributing to the town silhouette when seen from a distance, especially when arriving by boat or viewed from the other side of the river. This view from Chandanagore was especially appreciated and commended upon by the British Commander-in-Chief, who had missed "the distant view of a steeple" to give the right romantic associations to his English country side.



Many of the churches in British India were inspired from St. Martin-in-the-Fields that lies in the centre of London and became well known due to its publication in the *Book on Architecture* by the architect James Gibbs, which came out in 1728. The design of the St. Olav's Church has many similarities to St. John's and St. Andrew's in Kolkata.

The church is designed as a three aisle building. Six commemorate tablets are placed on the aisle wall of which the three are praising the former Danish heads of Serampore. Otherwise the interior is sparsely decorated with some stucco work high on the walls in the choir.

The church belongs to the West Bengal Church under the administration of the Kolkata Diocese. However, the day-to-day use and maintenance is carried out by the Serampore College.

The church is not in daily use at present as the roof construction is considered to be in a precarious condition and pose a potential danger of collapse. The exact condition of the beams is however difficult to assess, but traces of white ants indicate that the wooden beams may be affected. Only one of the about a total of 17 wooden beams in the main nave has been exchanged in favour of a iron beam.

The interior has been regularly maintained with lime wash in blue colour, but there are signs of salt efflorescence at the lower parts of the walls and the condition generally is damp and humid.

The lower part of the southern facade has been renovated fairly recently by use of cement plaster that already show traces of salt efflorescence. The northern facade is in a deteriorated condition with large patches of missing plaster. However, the original lime plaster is maintained at this side with about 12-15 successive layers of lime wash in white or light ochre hues.

The front part of the church building including the protruding portico and the steeple has been renovated by use of cement plaster. It now appears in a light greyish colour with a 'hard' and smooth finish that in parts have blackish and reddish patches of lichens.

The restoration work may include:

- Restoration of external facades, including stripping of cement plaster and deteriorated lime plaster; treatment against raising damp; plastering with lime mortar and lime wash. The previously applied cement plaster at the portico and the bell





Photo of the church from the 1930s with an open square in front allowing a free view to the church



Traffic congestion at St. Olav's Square



Historic house at the corner of St. Olav's Square disfigured by later additions.

tower may be maintained and painted with silicate paint in same light yellow hue as the lime wash at the main building

- Restoration of roof (change of weak beams; treatment for white ants; renew top layer with traditional lime cement)
- Repair and painting of doors and windows
- Restoration of the interior (strip loose plaster and salt affected lower parts of walls; clean stucco decorations and repair)
- Landscaping of church ground (pavements, planting, repair of surrounding wall, construction of annex buildings and play ground for children)

Landscaping of the square in front of St. Olav's Church

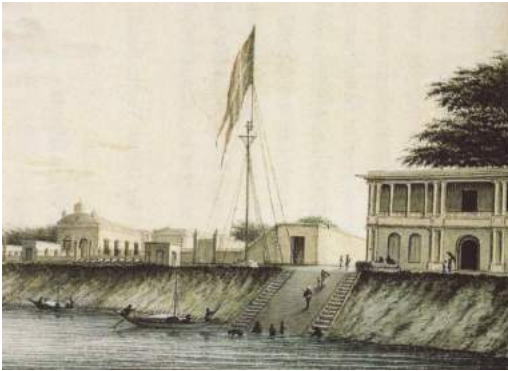
Early photographs and plans show this space lined with trees at each side and a free view to the front of the church. The funnel-shaped square would seem to have been designed in conjunction with the completion of the church in 1821 and provides the space necessary to appreciate the tall façade of the church as a whole.

Apart from the wall around the Danish compound Serampore had no fortification, and only a small battery, used for salutation. The cannons are preserved and put on display inside the fenced-in memorial ground in front of the church.

Unfortunately urban encroachment has impaired the former unique position of the church. Especially the new post administration building in five stories immediately to the south of the church is diminishing the perception of the former scale of the free standing church building.

The restoration of the urban space in agreement with its original layout is conditional of the relocation of the bus terminal to a more appropriate location near the train station.

Felling the trees in the middle of the square, and planting of new trees along both sides of the square should be considered, as well as a modification of the heart-shape form and high fence surrounding the memorials and the water basin with dolphins, possibly moving the saluting cannons back to the original position at the river side.



Section of painting 1790 by Peter Anker showing the Nisan Ghat and neighboring buildings

Restoration of buildings along the western side of Nisan Ghat Lane.

The most prominent go-down of the Danish period was located immediately on the river front as it appears from the early maps and drawings. The building has disappeared in favour of the present SDO Bungalow, which is located in the middle of a large garden surrounded by a modern wall. A series of wall paintings from the 1990s depict sceneries of Serampore's history providing a popular reading of past events that collectively forms the specific identity of the place.

As it appears from a 1790 painting a saluting cannon stand, a guards house and a flagstaff were standing next to the Nisan Ghat providing the main access from the river to the government compound.



The ruined building next to Nisan Ghat which appears on the painting by Peter Anker 1790.

Restoration of the ruined mansion located along Nisan Ghat Lane between N.N. Roy Street and Mahatma Ghandi Road would re-establish a prominent example of the original buildings fronting on to the river.

The building has a very prominent location and it was previously an importance for the perception of the former access from the river to the Danish compound, as it appears from the painting by Peter Anker dating from 1790.

The northern part of the complex is originally build in two stories with an open portico facing on to the river. This part of the building is however in ruin and "not for use by order of P.W.D. ".

The southern part of the building is partially in ruin and the remaining part including the courtyard is occupied by The West Bengal Emergency Police under the District Magistrate.



The southern part of the building is occupied by the police forces.

The whole structure needs a careful survey and the preparation of a detailed project proposal before decisions can be taken about a use. Once restored this building will however be an extraordinary example of the fine houses that existed during the heydays of Danish occupation in Serampore.



Rive bank to the west of Nisan Ghat Lane



The Indian pavilion at the end of Nisan Ghat Lane



Rive bank to the east of Nisan Ghat Lane



The fence and seating arrangement

Landscaping of the middle part river side area.

The many ghats along this stretch of the river side are providing a specific quality to the environment fulfilling both a practical function as well as providing an aesthetically appealing sense of the close relationship to the river.

The Nisan Ghat Lane provides the direct connection between the river and the former Danish Compound. The significance of the landing place was emphasised by a battery of saluting cannons used for ceremonial purposes, a flagstaff and a guard's house.

The ghat is still existing, whereas the other installations have disappeared in favour of a new Indian pavilion and a modern arrangement with concrete seating and tables. However the constructions are in disrepair and the area lack regular up-keep

Landscaping and improvement of the whole stretch of land has very high priority as the foremost recreational amenity area along the river for the whole of Serampore.

Restoration and environmental improvements may include:

- Renovation of the Indian Pavilion and related Nishan ghat.
- Reinstatement of the saluting cannon positions and flagstaff.
- Renovation and improvement of the existing recreational facilities.
- Restoration of the mural paintings at the wall surrounding the SDO compound.
- Restoration of Bamboo Ghat.
- Restoration of Padre Ghat.

Cluster of mansions along T.C.Goswami Street



The buildings along T.C.Goswami Street have previously been occupying the most prominent part of the town with large gardens facing directly on to the river. Especially a cluster of four remaining mansions and a number of original gateway pillars have preserved a high degree of authenticity and give a vivid impression of the character of the original townscape in the early 19th century notwithstanding the present ruined condition.



- House no 1 is located at the corner of the Circular Road leading to the Mahatma Gandhi Road. The plot is facing on to the river. The House has a colonnaded veranda at the front facing towards the street. The front part is used as a local police quarters and the remaining part is in ruin while the garden towards the river and the side wing is used as a cow shed. A new apartment block immediately to the west on the neighbouring plots is unfortunately diminishing the original quality of the surroundings.
- House nr. 2 is situated at a long, narrow plot facing on to the river. The house is partly rebuilt and enlarged by with new additions, but together with the neighbouring houses it contributes to an attractive whole.
- House no 3. The plot facing on to the river is the private property of Mr. Prosun Ghoswami. The mansion is now in ruin and the owner is applying for subdivision of the plot in anticipation of a sale. The restoration of the ruin is problematic due to its present condition. However if the building is not restored restrictions on height and plot ratio should be imposed in order to maintain the quality of the immediate environment.
- House nr 4 , T.C.Goswami Street nr. 35. The so-called Bose House is situated at a large plot to the south of the street. The impressive house is in a ruined condition and not inhabited at the moment. All the architectural elements have been preserved however and the building has maintained its authentic architectural qualities that would qualify for restoration.





- Restoration of the gateway pillars along T.C.Goswami Street, Altogether four gateways with pillars at both sides gives an immediate anticipation of the former luxury of the streetscape. If restored the gateways would enhance the visual appearance of this section of the street and initiate more awareness and concern for the conservation of the individual historic properties along the whole length of this historic street.

The Christian Cemetery



The Danish cemetery is listed as a Protected Monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958. The site is protected by a surrounding wall and the gate is only open on appointment. Recently new trees have been planted, and the caretaker is weeding and keeping the site neat and clean.

A total of 33 burial places can be immediately identified of which 16 seem to be listed by number. The three most notable commemorate epitaphs are sacred to the memory of Factor Casper Top; Colonel Ole (Olave) Bie and Jacob Krefting, Chief and Director of the Danish Possessions in Bengal.



Unfortunately almost all the masonry tomb have been renovated by use of cement plaster, that may be doing more harm than good. A proper restoration will imply a complete removal of the cement rendering, repair of the masonry and application of a new hydraulic lime plaster.

3. The western part of the river side and adjacent area.

In the 18th and 19th centuries the area to the west of the Danish Canal was occupied by large residences of the extended Goswami family being the most influential Indian landlords in Serampore. There are several early buildings or part of buildings preserved from the Danish period.

Especially three building complexes have maintained an authentic appearance that qualify for conservation:

The northern Goswami family residence buildings.

The large family residence is built in 1794. On the 1827 Serampore map it appears as several interrelated structures surrounding two large courtyards. Originally used by the extended family the complex had about 400 rooms and the building was extended whenever it was required. It seems that various family members became in disagreement and subsequently moved out of the common family residence sometime in the early 20th century in favour of building their own individual homes in the neighbourhood. Some of these large mansions built in extravagant eclectic architectural style are still existing, others are sadly demolished to give way for new concrete apartment blocks.



The northern complex : The front part seems to have been changed at different times with each addition representing varying architectural styles ranging from plain Tuscan to a more elaborate composite order dominated by fluted shafts and rich ornamental capitals of Corinthian Order. The interior is even more elaborately enriched with multiple mouldings and stucco decorations. The building is now converted into a temple and the open courtyard is occupied by a large open structure serving as a community space for marriage parties and festivals. One room is preserved as a (sort of) family museum with easel paintings portraying some of the ancestors of the Goswami family.



It is to be expected that the maintenance of the northern part of the complex is secured by the present owner. Restoration as a heritage building by use of public funds may be problematic due to the private ownership of the building.



The southern complex : Only the front wing and the main façade of the southern part of the complex is preserved, while the rear parts are demolished. The long stately front façade gives the appearance as a palace in eclectic neo-classical style with half-columns in a simple Tuscan Order at the ground floor and a more elaborate Ionic Order at the first floor.

Conservation of this Goswami residence complex would preserve an important part of the heritage in Serampore representing the large houses belonging to the old aristocracy.

The building seems to partly out of function and a new use may possibly justify public spending that can ensure a sustainable future conservation. Restoration of the remaining part of the southern complex is required as well as a partly rebuilding of the rear part of the house and landscaping of the courtyard and garden

A future use as a heritage hotel would possibly be an option.

The large open space in front of the building provides a recreational space for the public in an otherwise densely built up area, but a more careful landscaping of the space as a playground and public amenity site is required.



The southern Goswami family courtyard house

This beautiful courtyard house in two stories has maintained a unique authenticity in its completeness as well as in detail. The location with an open space in front of the building and green space with a tank to the rear is exceptional in Serampore due to the high density of buildings. The organisation of the house with a open, covered space for worship and public gatherings inside the private house is representing a rare type of building that qualify for heritage listing.

The present condition is precarious, however, and the stability of the construction is under threat from weak foundation. It is doubtful if the building can be retained as a one family residence due to the high cost of restoration and maintenance.

Public funding of the restoration is problematic due to private ownership. However negotiations with the family might be possible in order to secure a long term and sustainable preservation of this exceptional building.



Southern Goswami family courtyard house

Restoration of the Shile Ghat and access building

Situated immediate to the west of the “Danish Canal” the Shile Ghat is preserved in spite of encroachment from high-rise apartment buildings. The ghat is shown on the 1827 map.



The access building is constructed in red bricks with an open portico supported by four sets of double columns in Tuscan Order and a pedimented frontispiece facing on to the river. This lovely building remains as one of the few recreational public spaces in the areas with a direct access to the Hooghly River. However, the nearby canal is an open sewer and the environment is fouled by litter and rubbish and a restoration should be followed by a more general initiative for improved sanitation.

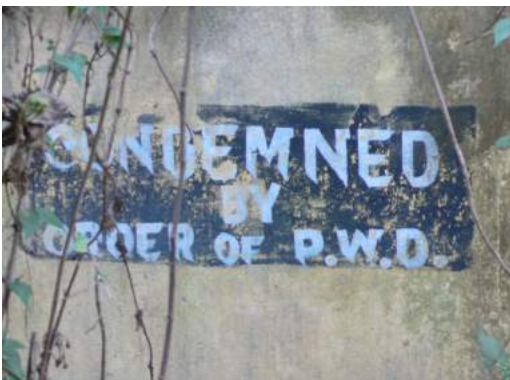


Shila Ghat

Proposals for heritage listing and conservation planning

The rich heritage in Serampore is under threat from lack of maintenance and urban development pressures. Very precious heritage buildings have been allowed to crumble into ruins, possibly awaiting demolition to give way for more rewarding economic investments. And new constructions build to 4 and 5 stories in reinforced concrete have become the main feature of the new townscape.

In this process of modernisation there is an imminent risk that important buildings and heritage values are being irrevocably lost even before they are being identified and appreciated.



With the aim of putting focus on heritage as a resource for improvement of the qualities in the urban environment and as a means for economic and social development it is suggested that a survey is carried out to precisely delineate the three areas as described in the preceding pages and identify all the individual heritage buildings in these areas.



The next step forward for the preservation of the Indian-Danish heritage in Serampore would be to declare these areas a Heritage Zone and put them under formal protection under the West Bengal Heritage Act.

Survey of the Architectural Values in the townscape

The many old buildings have in many cases been disfigured by later alterations and they are not always easy to identify. A systematic reconnaissance and registration will be required to obtain a complete information about the remaining historic buildings worthy of preservation throughout the town. A comprehensive survey should aim at identifying also the heritage relating to the later historic periods during the British colonial and subsequent Indian independence, including the industrial heritage and worker's quarters.

Inspiration for this type of building registration can be drawn from many similar examples in India or from the Danish Survey of Architectural Values in the Environment (SAVE), which has been used for the preparation of Municipal Atlases in Denmark..

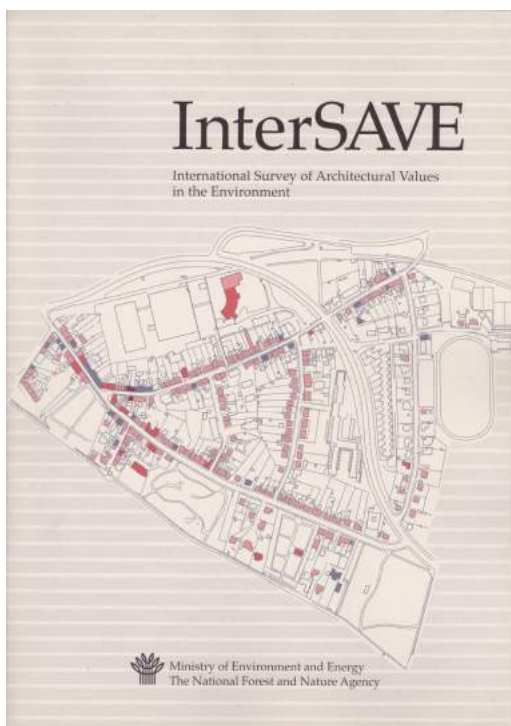
The average cost of conducting the survey and publishing a Municipal Atlas is amounting to about 2 mill Danish Kr. The equivalent cost of work carried out in India may eventually amount to about 200.000 Danish Kr.

The registration can be made by a consulting architect or alternatively at a cheaper cost as a study project by students of architecture from Calcutta Faculty of Architecture as part of their regular curriculum.

A comprehensive field survey will allowed for the achievement of other important objectives.

First and foremost the working process will raise more awareness about heritage issues and provide a unique opportunity to develop a long-term on the job training programme of Indian students of architecture and young architects. The training as heritage surveyors include the ability to recognise and evaluate heritage components and values, and the use of electronic tools for mapping and organising information.

Secondly, the heritage survey and assessment will provide the necessary information and conceptual framework for the definition of an overall integrated conservation strategy for Serampore.



Development of cultural tourism



The Indian- Danish heritage constitutes a considerable asset for the development of cultural tourism.

Two independent studies of the potential for tourism development along the Hooghly River have been conducted in recent years as summarised below. The Danish Serampore Initiative are supportive of both these proposals:

Europe on the Ganges.

The study is carried out by INTACH, The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, on behalf of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. It describes the heritage assets at seven sites along the Hooghly river from Kolkata to Bandel. The estimated investment in infrastructure improvement and beautifications in Serampore amounts to 36.750.000 Rps

Ganga heritage river cruise circuit

The study is initiated by West Bengal Tourist Development Corporation Ltd., with the aim to develop tourism related infrastructure, including jetty and riverfront beautification for exploiting the tourism potential of 12 identified destinations along the Hooghly River.

The upstream river circuit is covering a distance of 260 km stretching from Kolkata (Millenium Park Jetty) to Murshidabad (Outram Jetty). The total investment is estimated at 18.845.696 Rps.



The firm WEBCON (West Bengal Consultancy Organisation Ltd) was appointed to conduct the study that is carried out by an interdisciplinary study team included tourism - and management professionals, engineers and architects.

The following results are anticipated :

1. Increased revenue generation for the operators, local business community, local artisans and self employed at the destination.
2. Increased job opportunity among the local transporters, guides, servicemen like food stalls, handicrafts stalls.



3. Increased awareness among local people arising out of interaction with foreign and domestic tourists.

These studies form a sound basis for subsequent planning of cultural tourism, which will be attractive to local as well as to international visitors. Marketed internationally the Indian-European heritage along the Hooghly River would most certainly become an attraction on line with the Darjeeling Railway and the Sunderban National Park and similar well known tourist destinations in West Bengal.



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