

Indo-Danish Heritage Buildings of Serampore

Survey report by the Serampore Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark

August 2010

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NATIONALMUSEET



About the survey

The Serampore Initiative was established in 2008 at the Ethnographic Department of the National Museum of Denmark. Archival and field studies were carried out from November 2008 to April 2009 by Flemming Aalund and Simon Rastén, who have authored the present report.

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Illustrations

References are given to the institutions or private persons who hold the copyright to the illustrations used in the report. Where nothing is mentioned specifically, the photographs are taken by Flemming Aalund and Simon Rastén in the period December 2008 to April 2009.

Front: (1827. Thompson). Back: (1810. Hammer).

Abbreviations

1810. Hammer	Coloured drawing by J. Hammer (The Maritime Museum of Denmark, Elsinore)
1827. Thompson	Topographical Plan of Frederiksnagore by James Thompson 1827. (Her Majesty the Queen's Reference Library, Copenhagen).
1860. Gastrell	Survey map by J. E. Gastrell 1860-61. (Serampore College).
DDP	Draft Development Plan, Serampore Municipality, 2005.
DH	Her Majesty the Queen's Reference Library, Copenhagen
DNA	Danish National Archives, Copenhagen.
DSD	Den Store Danske. Online Encyclopedia.
MMD	The Maritime Museum of Denmark, Elsinore.
NMD	The National Museum of Denmark

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The Serampore Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark

The Serampore Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark was established in 2008 with the aim of identifying and describing the physical remains of the Indo-Danish history in Serampore, and subsequently assessing the possible need for restoration of selected buildings from this period. We also wish to explore and promote knowledge of the common Indo-Danish history of Serampore in collaboration with public or private local agencies, who are engaged in similar historical documentation or preservation of Serampore's heritage buildings. A key part of this collaboration is to make the relevant content of Danish historical records accessible to non-Danish speakers, for research purposes as well as for supporting future initiatives for the preservation of Serampore's heritage. A future outcome could also be the mutual transfer of knowledge on historical building techniques to new generations of restoration workers and architects in India and Denmark.

The material heritage of Serampore may seem insignificant in comparison with that of neighbouring Kolkata. However, the existing heritage buildings represent a tangible evidence of the common history between India and Denmark; a historical link that is often forgotten. Preservation of the remaining heritage structures is an excellent method for promoting knowledge about this part of the history and to build up new bilateral cultural relations.

Preliminary results and activities

The activity of the *Serampore Initiative* to date was made possible by a grant from the Realdania foundation, for which we wish to express our sincere gratitude. This funding enabled the establishment of the initiative and a visit to Serampore by several project team members

during the first quarter of 2009. So far the following results have been generated:

1. The identification and collection of relevant archival records, maps, photographs and paintings in the Danish National Archives (Copenhagen), the Royal Library (Copenhagen), HM the Queen's Reference Library (Copenhagen), the Maritime Museum of Denmark (Elsingore), the West Bengal State Archives (Kolkata), the Asiatic Society (Kolkata), Serampore College Library (Serampore) and the Serampore Municipality records (Serampore).
2. The identification and registration of relevant Indo-Danish heritage buildings *in situ*, including a preliminary assessment of the condition of the individual buildings and their need for restoration.
3. An informal, yet highly successful, cooperation with the local stakeholders and government bodies on the current restoration of the Serampore court building, dating from 1770s when it was constructed to serve as the Danish government seat. Based on the study of historical plans and descriptions from the Danish archives, correlated with building archaeological studies on site, it was possible to propose several amendments and changes to the ongoing restoration project.
4. Meetings with relevant authorities on state, district, municipal and town levels, as well as with key non-governmental agencies and private persons, involved in urban historical documentation and preservation work.

Structure of the report

The principal aim of the present report is to document a selection of remaining heritage buildings from the Danish period in Serampore 1755 to 1845. Focus has been put on the former Danish gov-

ernment buildings and structures, but local historical houses and other European buildings in Serampore have been included as well, in order to present the Danish buildings in the urban setting they are part of. The buildings have been divided into groups according to ownership and use.

In order to contextualize the heritage buildings and give an understanding of Serampore's past and present situation, the introduction contains a brief historical overview together with an outline of the urban development. Furthermore, a status of the present situation in regard to town planning, development of cultural heritage tourism and heritage management strategy has been included.

It shall be emphasized that the report does not contain a comprehensive list of heritage buildings in Serampore, but rather a preliminary overview of buildings with special connection to the Danish period. The rich and diversified heritage of Serampore includes buildings that originate from the pre Mughal era over the colonial period and the early industrialization to the present commercial town. To register and document the remaining heritage buildings is an important job that hopefully will be taken up in the near future.

We have largely refrained from giving specific recommendations on how to preserve the valuable historical buildings and features described. Forming a heritage strategy for Serampore is a highly complex task to be carried out in a formalized cooperation under the auspices of local authorities and institutions. We have put our efforts in documenting the existing material Indo-Danish heritage, based on our archival research. With this report we wish to pass on our findings to the responsible institutions, decision makers and other stakeholders and we hope that we hereby contribute to facilitating the ongoing process of heritage planning, preservation and restoration. It is moreover our future hope and vision to publish a more comprehensive book on Serampore, making this

interesting history available to a wider public in Denmark and India.

During our whole survey work we have cooperated fruitfully with local authorities on all levels, as well as with non-governmental organizations involved in heritage work. Without this cooperation, we could not have accomplished our aims of study, and we wish to acknowledge the great interest and positive spirit of collaboration we were received with everywhere. We deeply appreciate all the hospitality and kindness we met during our time in Serampore and Kolkata. A special thank goes to the responsible government offices for providing us access to the former Danish government house and to everyone on the building site who kindly assisted us in our investigations. We sincerely hope that our cooperation will be continued in the future and will lead to new insights into our common history and heritage.

Copenhagen, May 2010

Flemming Aalund, Simon Rastén & Bente Wolff

Introduction

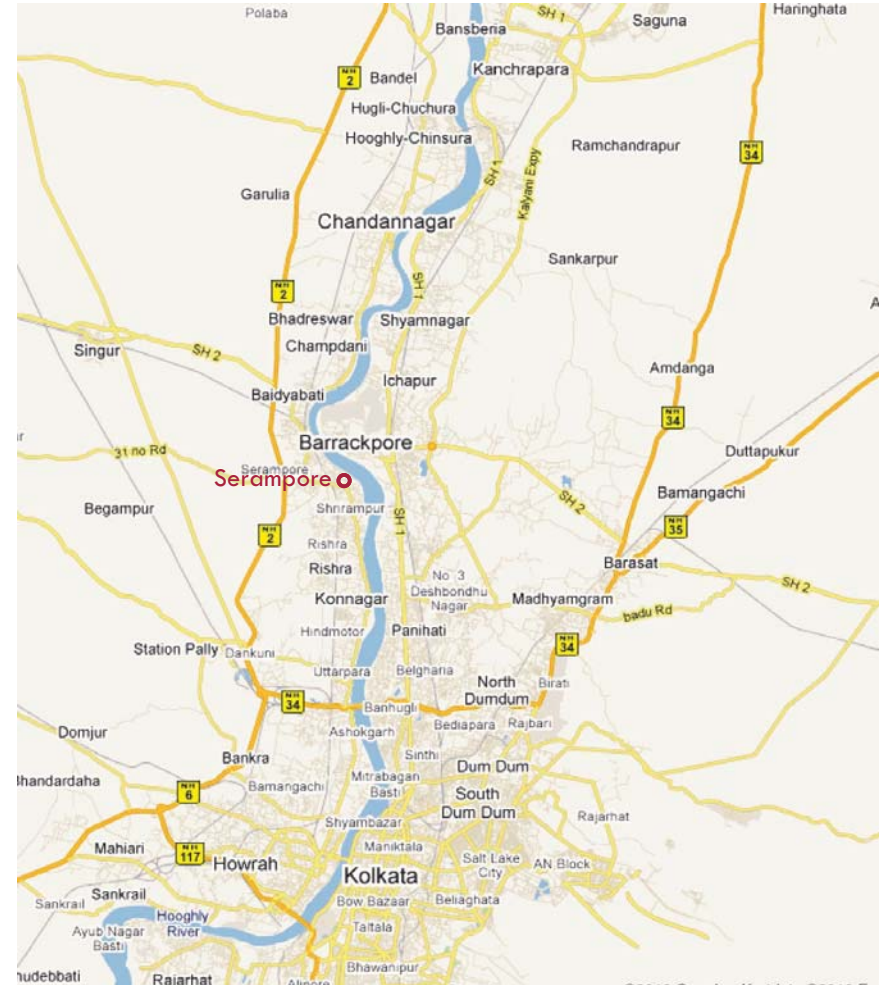
In 1755 the Danish Asiatic Company was granted the right to establish a trading post at Serampore (Srirampur) at the Hooghly River in West Bengal, about 25 km north of Calcutta (Kolkata). The name of the place was officially changed to *Frederiksnagore* in honour of the Danish King Frederik V, however, the local name was maintained in daily use. Subsequently Serampore came under direct administration of the Danish Crown in 1777 and remained on Danish hands, with only a few interruptions, until 1845, when the trading post was ceded to the British together with the other Danish settlement in India, Tranquebar (Tharangambadi) in Tamil Nadu.

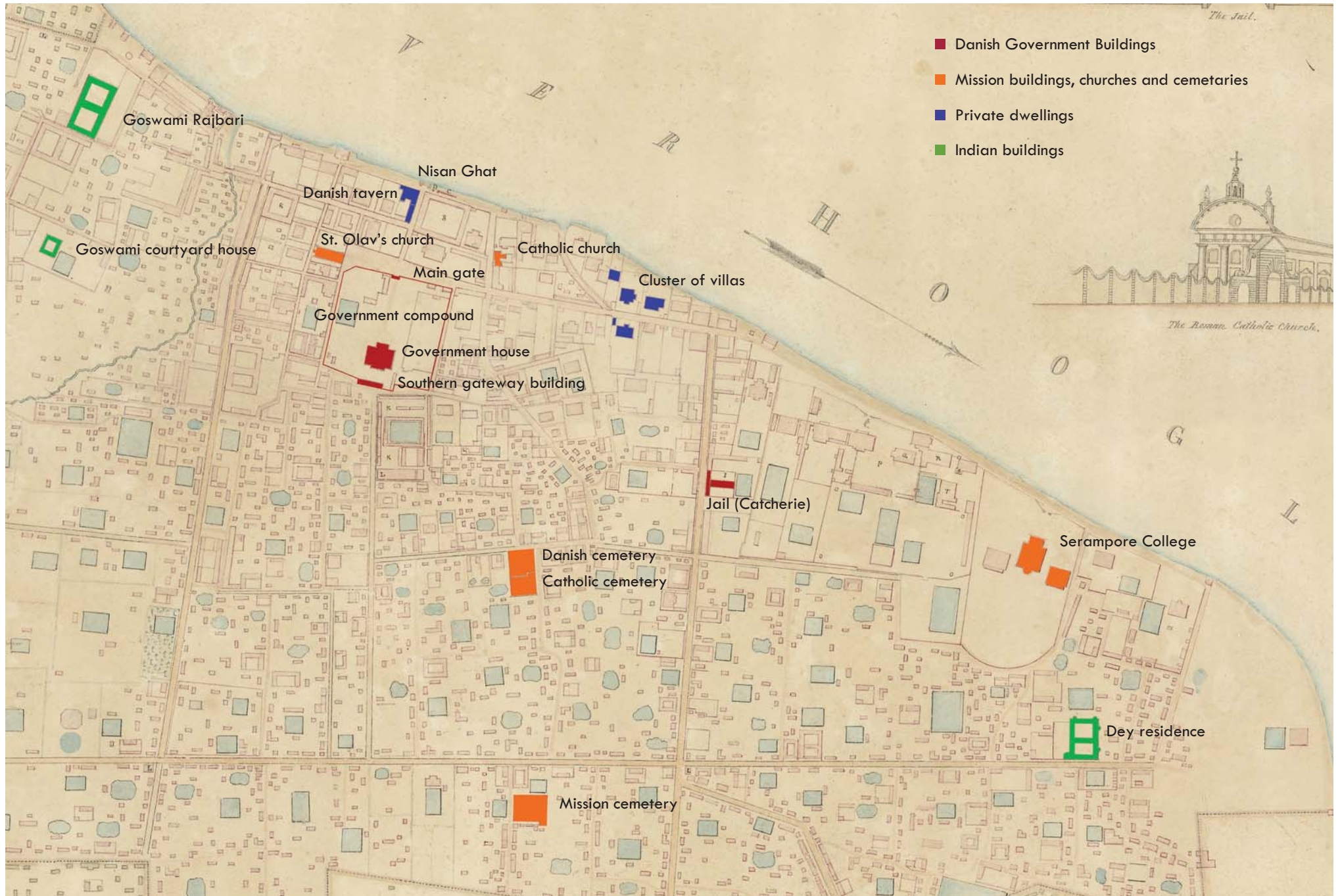
Apart from its position as a commercial settlement, Serampore became an important centre of education and learning in India. The Baptist mission produced and disseminated printed translations of the Bible in many Asian languages and established Serampore College under protection of the Danish King Frederik VI, who in 1827 afforded the College rights to confer academic degrees. For this reason the College is ranging among the oldest western university institutions in Asia and it is still operating, today in affiliation with the University of Kolkata.

During the 90 years Denmark was in possession of Serampore, the trading connections between West Bengal and Europe were intensified and European culture and town planning had a considerable impact on the development of Serampore. In these formative years the place developed from several small villages surrounded by rural land to become a bustling town that gradually has become part of the larger Kolkata conurbation. The townscape was formed on basis of the existing topographical conditions and as a

result of the interaction between the rich local Indian culture and the foreign influence.

Several buildings originating from the Danish period are still significant landmarks, contributing to the distinct identity of Serampore: The Danish Government House (1771), The Catholic Church (1776), the Lutheran St. Olav's Church (1806) and Serampore College (1823). Many other historic buildings and structures from that period are preserved, testifying to a rich architectural variety, while others are suffering from lack of maintenance and some are in complete ruin.







Opposite: Plan showing the location of the most significant Indo-Danish heritage sites in Serampore. Each site is identified by colour on the map and described in the report (1827. Thompson).

Satellite photograph of Serampore 2008. The large built up area close to the river is the India Jute Mill factory. The town is intersected by the Howrah railway line that was constructed in 1854 (Google Earth).

A brief history of the Danish period in Serampore 1755 - 1845

The establishment 1755

Inspired by the success of the other European overseas trading companies, especially the Dutch East India Company, the Danish East India Company was dissolved and reorganised in 1732 as the Danish Asiatic Company with the Danish Government as a major stockholder. The ambition was to extend the commercial contacts to the Bengal, where many foreign merchants were involved in trade. The major European powers had already negotiated commercial treaties with the local ruler, the *nawab* of Bengal, and they had acquired land and established separate posts or *factories* (meaning warehouses) along the lower part of the Hooghly River, providing an easy approach to the rich markets of northern India. The French was established at Chandernagore, the Portuguese at Bandel and Hooghly, the Dutch at Chinsurah, the British at Calcutta and now with the Danish settlement at Serampore, the European nations turned the area along the lower part of the Hooghly River into a 'Little Europe' (Chakraborti 2006).

The former Danish East India Company had already established a small trading post called *Dannemarksnagore* next to Chandernagore as early as 1698, but the place was abandoned in 1714 and the newly founded Asiatic Company was eager to return to Bengal. I.C. Soetmann, a member of the council in Tranquebar, was commissioned the task to contact the *Nawab*, Ali Verdi Khan, with the aim of establishing a new trading post. He succeeded in obtaining the required agreements in 1755, a so-called *parwana* (district jurisdiction), awarding the Asiatic Company the rights to acquire land in Serampore as well as conducting free trade in the whole of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa against a payment of 2.5% duty (Feldbæk 1980, p.130).

Taking advantage of Denmark's good relations to the French, the contact to the *Nawab* had been established with the French Governor of Chandernagore as an intermediate. The timing was very critical. The following year Ali Verdi Khan died and the new *Nawab* captured the British Fort William in Calcutta. At the same time war broke out between England and France and the following battles came to determine the future domination of India. The conflict ended with a fatal defeat of the Indian army in 1757, at the Battle of Plassey, and the subsequent total dominance of Bengal and the neighbouring provinces by the British army headed by Robert Clive, who subsequently became the first British Governor of Bengal (Struwe 1967, p. 172).

This incident was the very start of the imperialism that came to dominate the developments in India until the independence in 1947, and the Danish settlement in Serampore was able to survive and thrive only with an implicit British acceptance. The close dependency is clearly reflected in a letter sent to the Court of Directors of the Asiatic Company in Copenhagen by the then Head of Serampore, Terkel Windekilde, arguing for a need to raise the salary: 'Fredriksnagore is not like Tranquebar an isolated town and fort. If the soldiers are discontent, they cannot be forced to stay, as they find support wherever they turn as deserters' (Ibid., p. 182. Authors' translation from the Danish). Likewise the British tacitly consented to the sovereign Danish jurisdiction, and it is reported that many British merchants succeeded to evade trial by moving to Serampore, where they could resume their business under Danish asylum.

The beginning in Serampore was very modest, as it appears from the description by a Dutch traveller in 1769:

'...I landed at Serampore, where the Danes have a factory; this is the most inconsiderable European establishment on the Ganges, consisting only, besides the village occupied by the natives, in a few houses inhabited by Europeans. Their trade is of very little importance' (Stavorinus 1798, p. 121).



An ideal plan for the development of Frederiksnagore dating from 1762, indicating how the place was planned with streets and different zones. (A) shows the location of the Danish administrative quarter. (B) indicates future European quarters that were later implemented along the river. (Note: The map is oriented with south direction upwards) (DH).

The settlement grows

After many adversities and difficulties at the start, the commercial monopoly was liberated by a decree in 1772, thus allowing private business, but the Company had continued economic problems and the operations were carried on at a loss. In 1777, the Danish Crown took over all Danish possessions in India from the Danish Asiatic Company, which had previously administered the settlements and controlled the trade in both Tranquebar and Serampore. At the time of transfer an inventory including all items and buildings in possession of the Company was prepared. The main structures were: The house for the Head of Serampore containing one hall, four rooms and one veranda with additional annex buildings within a mud wall; a large garden house at the village Ackna; two bridges across the small streams in Serampore and Ackna as well as a canal bordered by brick walls; a cemetery surrounded by a stone wall; a *Catcherie* (arrest house); a stone platform for the canons, a guard-house and a flag staff; as well as three separate land possessions at Ackna, Serampore and Perapore (DNA, 2050).

The following years were especially lucrative to the Danish commerce. During the heyday of the Danish overseas trade, Serampore thrived and developed through considerable public and private investments. The salary offered to the Danish government officers was notorious low, therefore the officers conducted private business along with their official duties, and it seems that the condition in Serampore was especially liberal, providing attractive private business opportunities.

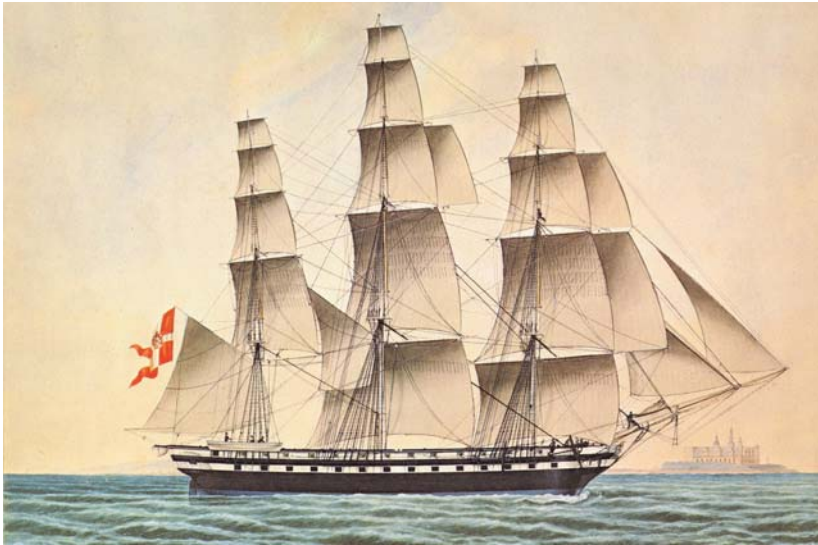
The sad background to the successful trade was the pending wars in Europe. Due to the Danish neutrality and the utilitarian policy, a major source of income to the Danish settlement was the export of articles from other European merchants and not least from remitting the accumulated wealth earned by personal trade by British civilians and Company officers through bills drawn on the

Danish company (Feldbæk 1980, p. 210).

The commodity supply was mainly cotton and silk textiles as well as saltpetre (*potassium nitrate* used for black powder) and sugar. The manufacturing of these products resulted in the rise of a local class of trading middlemen and agents and a gradual urbanisation of the settlement. Approximately at the same time of the Danish arrival to Serampore, the founder of the Goswami family in Serampore, Ramgovinda, settled here in the western part of town (O'Malley 1912, p. 317). At the end of the 18th century his two sons, Harinarayan and Ramnarayan Goswami, had built up large fortunes by virtue of their positions as middlemen and their good relations to the Danes (Ray 2004, p. 9). Harinarayan functioned as the *Diwan of Customs* (collector) under the Danish East India Company, while his brother Ramnarayan became the official money-lender to the *factory*. They were very successful and acquired vast landed property. On this basis the Goswami family founded an aristocratic colony at the western side of the town and became among the most influential people in Serampore.

One of the most successful Danish merchants at the time, C. W. Duntzfelt (1762-1809), was born in India and became employed at the Asiatic Company's administration in Serampore. After his return to Copenhagen he started his own company and became the leading figure of the Danish trade with India and one of the wealthiest citizens in Copenhagen at the time (DSD). His father-in-law, Frédéric de Coninck, likewise earned a fortune on the Indian trade, enabling him to purchase a large town house in Copenhagen, 'Moltke's Palæ', and in 1783 to build the magnificent manor, Næsseslottet (Dronninggård), in the countryside north of Copenhagen. In the large romantic park the most esteemed sculptor of the day was commissioned to set up statues, most remarkable the column for trade and navigation by J. Wiedewelt (DSD).

The palmy days of Danish overseas trade largely coincided



The frigate Frederik VI owned by the Danish Asiatic Company painted in 1829 with Kronborg Castle in the background (MMD).

with the service of Ole Bie as Head of the *factory*, serving from 1776 to 1805 with only a few interruptions (Larsen 1908, appendix C). His abilities, cunning entrepreneurship and personal ambitions brought prosperity to Serampore, resulting in a considerable building activity. In 1779 Ole Bie proudly reported to the Government:

‘...when I arrived, the place had no more than 3 to 4 brick-built houses, now almost every street is flaunting with both European as well as native, handsome brick buildings and warehouses, among which I myself have erected a stately house and godowns...’ (DNA, 967, Dispatch 24 Nov. 1779. Authors’ translation from the Danish).

Most significantly a new brick wall around the Danish compound was erected in 1780 and he had the Danish Government House enlarged twice in 1778 and 1781. He also arranged for the construction of a new, and according to the standards of the time, very modern *catcheri* (prison), which is still in use today. During his later years he took the initiative to build the Protestant Church by public subscription and it is hardly accidental that the building was inaugurated in the name of St. Olav (Norwegian for *Ole*), a saint canonized in his native country Norway.

Decline and sale 1845

When Ole Bie was forced to surrender Serampore to the British in 1801, the formal event was ordered by the Governor-General, the Marquess Wellesley, to be carried out ‘in a manner consistent with those sentiments of respect and consideration, which I entertain for your Excellency’ (Rasch 1967, p. 180). The dependency and close relations with the British were eminent throughout the Danish period in Serampore, even at the time when Denmark maintained a neutral position. But conditions changed abruptly in 1801, when Denmark became part of the war as allied to the Napoleonic France. England laid claim to Serampore for a short period in 1801 and as the conflict in Europe aggravated, the whole Danish fleet

was seized in Copenhagen in 1807. When this news reached India, the British took possession of Serampore and Tranquebar, as well as the smaller Danish *factories*. The occupation lasted until 1815 when Serampore was restored to Denmark, but the lucrative trade had ceased and never recovered to its previous level.

In the period following the restoration of Serampore to Denmark, the early industrialization in England largely extinguished the trade in Indian hand-woven cotton and silk textiles because of the introduction of the power looms, further adding to the decline of the trade in India, and after 1815 only one Danish ship arrived directly at Serampore (Ray 2004, p. 13). During these years of economic recession, many of the well-to-do merchants abandoned the place and the buildings were badly neglected (Rasch 1967, p. 210). This unfortunate situation was exacerbated by intensified sedimentation and the formation of sand banks in the river, impeding the navigation of large sailing ships, mostly of three masts, up to Serampore. The increased transshipment charges made it more attractive to arrange loading and unloading of the cargo further down the river, which favoured Calcutta in British India, and Serampore came increasingly under British influence (Feldbæk & Justesen 1980, p. 272).

By the end of the Danish period in Serampore, it was reported that ‘about one hundred of the houses are designed for Europeans, but nearly half of them are empty’ (Malcom 1839, p. 43). Another source from 1836 refers to a specific number of brick-built houses amounting to a total of 572 of which 111 are uninhabited (Rasch 1967, p. 210). Serampore was eventually sold to the British in 1845 and the Danish presence in Bengal came to an end. In 1927 the Serampore College Magazine gave a somehow nostalgic picture of the bygone days:

‘The palmy days of Serampore under the Danes are over. The political importance of the town is at an end. The commercial

1845. The Danish artist Poul August Plum visited Serampore in 1845 as part of the Danish scientific world expedition with the corvette Galathea. During the short stay, his focus seems to have been on the Indian architecture and houses (MMD).





1845. Aquarelle by Poul August Plum of a house in Serampore (MMD).

prosperity is a thing of the past. The bare ruins of the flag-house from which the Danish flag used to fly for ninety years are visible on the riverside. The extensive warehouse of the Danish settlement with its high enclosing walls has been pulled down and has become the site of Sub-Divisional Officer's residence. The Government House, which once rang with the sound of salute guns and echoed with the cheers of royal guests, has been converted into a Criminal Court. Gone are those days Serampore was most popular with Calcutta residents as a holiday resort and generations "of the ladies and gentlemen of Fort William" used to resort to Parr's famous "Denmark Tavern". The once exceedingly neat elegant and bright town Serampore, as described in the books of travel, presents a different picture today. The very thoroughfares have been renamed. Almost everything of historical interest has vanished out of sight or been hidden under the white-wash of an indiscriminating Municipality. Nothing serves to remind the visitor of the once powerful Fredericksnagore except the monogram of King Frederick VI, which lingers over the Jail, the Church and the fine gate-way of the Court-house and some memorial tablets raised over the graves of Danish Governors, who lie peacefully in the Danish Cemetery' (L.M.M. in *The Serampore College Magazine*, December 1927, quoted from L. Mitra 1950, p. 114).

If this quotation expresses a nostalgic feeling about the missed opportunities that were offered during the Danish colonial period, the regret is certainly not providing a true picture of Serampore today. The place has become a bustling town, forming part of Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA), the largest urban agglomeration in eastern India. Certainly the feeling of the place has changed during the intermediate time. It is no longer the large tree masts merchant ships that anchor in the river. The railway station has become the new centre of traffic to and from Serampore, and the streets are busy with cars and busses. However, the rich heritage is still a vivid part of the townscape with regard to the town plan and the many individual buildings that give Serampore a distinct historic character and quality.

Topography and urban development

When the Danish East Asiatic Company acquired land in Serampore, it was largely a rural area dotted with ponds and gardens, scattered houses and small villages. The development of the town can be followed in some detail from three historic maps originating from 1827, 1841 and 1860 respectively. In a sequence of chronology, the maps provide information on the topography and changing building patterns during the 19th century.

The structure and organisation of the early settlement is best understood from the topographical map by Charles Joseph (1841), which shows three distinct built up areas along the river front and a more open green settlement further away from the river, where the great majority of the Indian population was settled. The three areas, which are still evident in today's town plan, are as follows:

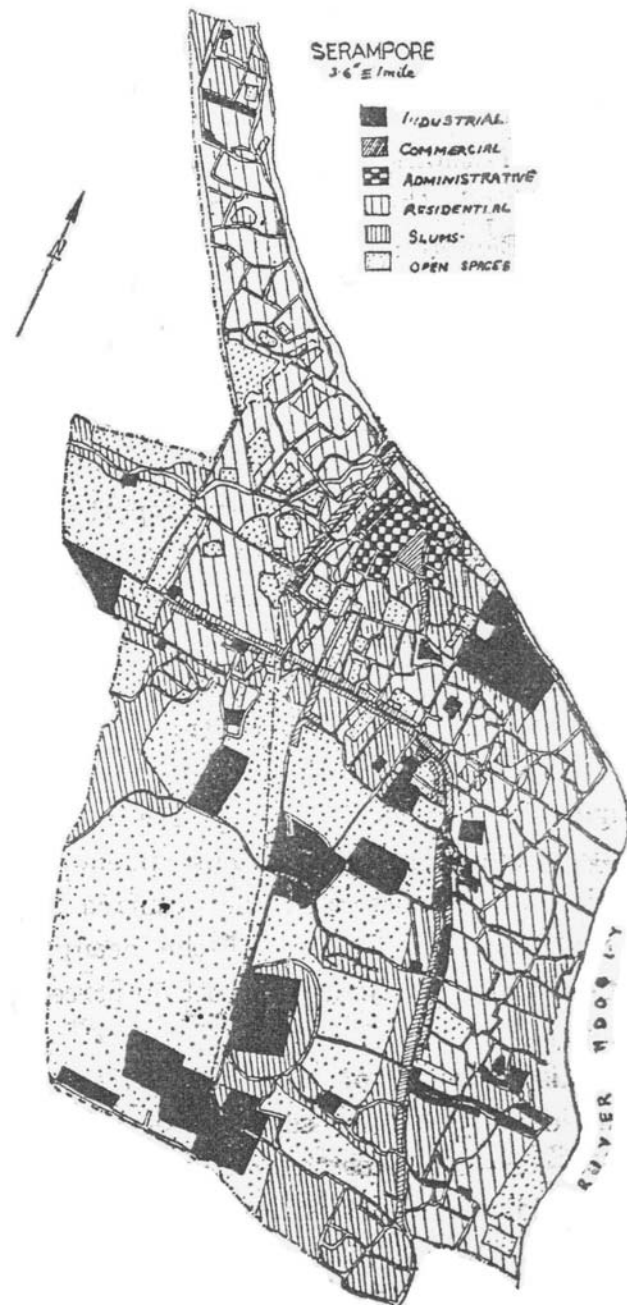
1. **To the east** Serampore College and the related activities, representing the academic and religious segment of the township with the buildings situated within a green open environment. Later the eastern area in addition developed into the industrial centre with the establishment of the jute and cotton mills.
2. **In the centre** the Danish administrative and commercial area with the Danish compound as the seat of the Government and St. Olav Church as the most significant landmark. This densely built-up area was bordered to the west by the 'Danish Canal', which was constructed in 1781 to drain the swampy areas of Perapour, and to serve as a demarcation of the western boundary of the Danish Government property (DNA, 2042, 1 August 1781).

1841. Section of topographical map by Charles Joseph (MMD).



3. **To the west** of the 'Danish Canal' the area where the Indian landlords were residing. The Goswami family acquired land here and built two large palatial houses as the home for the extended family during the later part of the 19th century. At this time their residences were still mainly surrounded by open fields.

The early sketches and paintings originating from the Danish period in Serampore are depicting the silhouette of the town with St. Olav's 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 in Europe and a shared aesthetic attitude with a preference



1954. Map of Serampore indicating the building pattern as it was registered in 1954 (taken from Guha & Chatterjee 1954).

for the neo-classical architectural style. This shared fashion among the Europeans is reflected in the buildings and the arrangement of the town, and the architecture is strongly influenced by the development in British Calcutta.

In 1803 a contemporary traveller described the buildings as follows: ‘They were in themselves picturesque being white, with expensive porticoes to the south, and the windows closed by Venetian blinds painted green’ (George Annesley cited from Nilsson 1968, p. 27). In spite of the evident decline of the town, the view towards the river was maintained for a long period of time, as it was reported by a connoisseur in 1839:

‘The view of Serampore from the river, is exceedingly attractive. The same architecture which prevails at Calcutta, gives the houses the appearance of elegant marble villas; and the huge college, with its superb columns, confers dignity on the whole scene. The river is here about eight hundred or a thousand yards wide, placid, and full of boats’ (Malcom 1839, p. 39).

This organisation of the town remained largely intact until the railway connection from Calcutta to Howrah was constructed in 1854, bringing new opportunities to Serampore. Subsequently commercial activities developed in the railway area, resulting in a marked shift of orientation of activities away from the river towards the new railway station (Ray 2004, p. 19). During the late 19th century industrial development progressed fast with the establishment of the first Jute Mill in 1866 at the site of the former botanical garden and the Baptist Mission press next to the College. Along with the mills, many other subsidiary factories grew up in the rural areas at the fringes of the town, resulting in a further segregation of the town from the riverside.

In 1840, at the closing stages of the Danish period, the first census of the total population of Serampore was prepared by the Danish Government (DNA, 303). Religious affiliation, caste, age, occupation and gender were registered for each citizen, and fur-

thermore short descriptions of their houses like ‘*straw hut*’ or ‘*puckab building*’ were included. The total population was 11,955, classified in the following sub-groups:

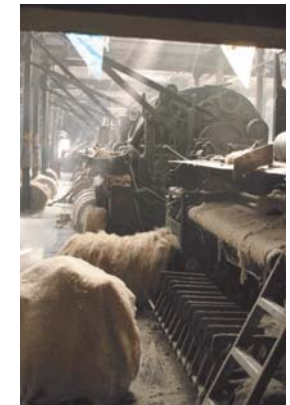
Census 1841	Male	Female
Hindus	4970	4838
Muslims	902	846
Protestants	98	82
Catholics	86	132
Armenians	1	-
Total	6057	5898

After 1845 the increasing need of work force attracted labourers from the nearby provinces and the continuous migration of rural people entailed a fast growing urbanisation. Between 1866 and 1915, four more jute mills were established in the Hooghly district and the local landlords, *thikadars* and mill-owners made arrangements for the habitation of the labour force around the factories. Due to the arrival of migrant workers, the population in Serampore increased from 24,440 to 44,451 between 1872 and 1901 (Ray 2004, p. 18). This figure had grown to 197,857 in 2001, indicating the imminent demand for housing, new schools, social improvements and provision of other amenities to serve a fast growing population (Census of India).

2009. *The India Jute Mill - industrial heritage of Serampore.*



Interior of the India Jute Mill.





1810. A view of Serampore from the river showing the long row of stately villas (1810. Hammer).

The municipal development planning

The Bengal Municipal Act 1998 requires that the municipalities prepare adequate plans to guide future development. The Draft Development Plan (DDP) for Serampore from 2005 provides detailed analysis of the current situation and outlines the future planning objectives.

The demographic analysis of the population shows that the rate of the migrated population in some wards is as high as 67.3% (DDP). The high rate of migration indicates the growth rate of the total population, which will create an immense pressure on the infrastructure services and housing requirements in the future.

The majority of the population is in the low income range, putting a high demand on the municipality for the creation of more work opportunities and improvement of general living standards. The challenges of providing adequate social infrastructure at a reasonable standard regarding health, education and housing are evident, but also issues relating to heritage conservation, creation of recreational open spaces, as well as preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the landscape are being addressed in the plan. Three priority areas in the plan especially refer to heritage: i) Increase in the percentage of open spaces and green cover; ii) Conservation and restoration of historic and heritage buildings and; iii) Improvement of the river banks by way of river front development projects. 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 Indo-Danish history provide an exceptional rich potential for Serampore.

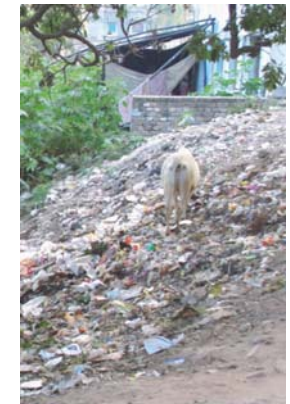
2009. Housing for the workers and their families is situated immediately next to the Jute mill.



Drying of cow dung to be used as fuel (left).



Solid waste management, drainage, sewerage and sanitation are major challenges to the Municipality (right).





The French Institute in Chandernagore holds a museum about the town's history and its role in the Bengal freedom movement (left).



Barrackpore opposite Serampore is a favourite picnic spot with its pleasant green areas (right).

Potential for cultural heritage tourism

The Indo-Danish heritage constitutes a considerable asset for the development of cultural heritage tourism. Two independent studies of the potential for tourism development along the Hooghly River have been conducted in recent years:

- *Europe on the Ganges* is a study carried out by INTACH, The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, with support from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. It describes the heritage assets at seven sites along the Hooghly River from Kolkata to Bandel, including Serampore.
- *Ganga heritage river cruise circuit* is another study carried out at the initiative of West Bengal Tourist Development Corporation Ltd, with the aim of developing tourism related infrastructure, including jetty and river front 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 to Murshidabad.

These studies form a sound basis for subsequent planning of heritage tourism, which will be attractive to local and international visitors. Marketed internationally the Indo-European heritage along the Hooghly River would most certainly become an attraction in line with the Darjeeling Railway, the Sunderban National Park and similar well-known tourist destinations in West Bengal. So far several travel agencies have taken up organizing river cruise tours on the Hooghly River with Kolkata as starting point. On some tours Serampore is visited shortly as part of a stopover in Barrackpore across the river. However, most river cruises skip Serampore and proceed instead to the former French settlement, Chandernagore, which so far provides better facilities for visitors.

Heritage management strategy

The economic development in West Bengal entails a rapid urban expansion and construction of new buildings. Conservation of heritage resources is an important element in the development process, aiming at the improvement of the aesthetic and recreational qualities of Serampore, as well as the enhancement of local identity based on the specific history of the town.

The rich cultural and architectural heritage of Serampore is rightly acknowledged and appreciated by the Indian authorities, as it is reflected in the current Draft Development Plan and Vision 2005. Additionally there are several plans and proposals for the development of tourism along the Hooghly River, focusing on the Indian and European heritage resources as well as the attractive landscape along the river. Realization of these plans and ideas would put new focus on the heritage resources for the benefit of local residents and visitors to Serampore.

The area along the river, with the ancient *ghats* and the fine views to the river and beyond, has a special appeal and recreational value to all citizens. Within the town, the layout and the historical development give reason to single out three distinct heritage zones, representing the original organisation of the early settlement in the 18th and 19th century:

1. ■ The academic and religious segment of the township centred around Serampore College in the eastern part of the town.
2. ■ The historic administrative core area around the former Danish Government compound with St. Olav Church as the most significant landmark.

Identification of three distinct heritage zones (the demarcation is shown on 1827. Thompson).



3. ■ The western area including the palatial residences of the former Indian landlords.

In a longer perspective efforts may be extended to include heritage buildings relating to the early industrial development from the later part of the 19th century onwards.

The three historic zones represent the most valuable heritage resources of the town and it is of vital importance to ensure that the historic houses and the character of the streetscape are preserved. There is a need to put focus on the built heritage and raise general awareness among ordinary citizens and owners of historic houses by issuing relevant information in English, Bengali and Hindi.

The Government of West Bengal and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) have taken some important steps in regard to preserving the rich heritage in the State of West Bengal. In 2001 the West Bengal Heritage Commission was established 'for the purpose of identifying heritage buildings, monuments, precincts and sites and for measures for their restoration and preservation' (West Bengal Heritage Commission Act, 2001). In 2009 a graded list of 917



*Before and after renovation.
Architectural details happen
to disappear or are interpreted
in a new, modern way.*

heritage buildings from Kolkata was prepared by a special heritage conservation committee and published by the KMC. The Heritage Commission Act provides the formal criteria for statutory designation of heritage buildings according to grade I or II, and stipulates the specific obligations that follow by the listing. Furthermore, in order to help the property owners maintain and preserve the historic buildings, a booklet has been published entitled ‘Guidelines for the owners of heritage buildings’.

A similar comprehensive registration of heritage buildings in Serampore has so far not been prepared, but this would certainly be a valuable tool in the future preservation work and furthermore raise public awareness of the town’s unique history. The rich heritage in Serampore is under threat from lack of maintenance and urban development pressure, allowing old buildings to deteriorate, 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 have been identified, documented and appreciated.

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 complete information about the remaining historic buildings worthy of preservation throughout the town. A comprehensive survey should also aim at identifying the heritage relating to the later historic periods under British colonial rule and subsequent Indian independence, including the industrial heritage and worker’s quarters.

With the aim of putting focus on heritage as a resource for improvement of the qualities of 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 historic precincts and to identify the most valuable heritage buildings. Subsequently, the buildings and the heritage zones should be put under formal protection under the government heritage act as part of an overall integrated conservation strategy for Serampore.

Related links:

West Bengal Government, Department of Municipal Affairs
http://www.wbdma.gov.in/htm/MUNL_HeritageConservation.htm

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation
<https://www.kmcgov.in/KMCPortal/jsp/HeritageBuildingHome.jsp>

Danish Government buildings

The Danish Government compound

The Danish Government compound dates back to 1755 when the Asiatic Company established their trading post in Serampore. Due to the political unrest in the area at the time, the Company felt it necessary to surround the small estate by a protective wall. Within this wall, the government house was erected together with a powder magazine, a guardroom, a jail, a kitchen, a henhouse, a godown and quarters for the staff and officers (DNA, 1510. List of Danish government buildings in Frederiksnagore 1772-73). The compound and all the related structures were laid out according to a north-south axis leading from the Nishan Ghat with the flag staff at the river bank onwards through the northern main gate to the government house and to the southern gateway building.

Today many of the architectural features are still preserved and the compound has maintained the former importance as the administrative centre of Serampore due to the continued use by Hooghly District Sub Division, the police and law courts. The continued importance and prestige of the site is further testified by the construction of a new court building completed in 2009.

C. 1830. The compound in front of the Government House. Behind the low wall on the left was a garden used as a retreat for the Danish Governor and the higher ranking officers. (Painting by Mary Hoblenberg, MMD).

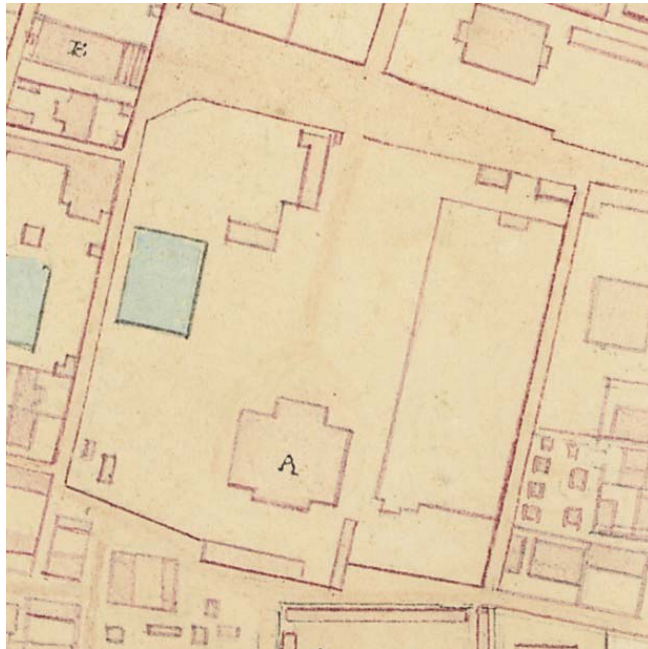


2009. The compound is still used for public celebrations e.g. on Republic Day.

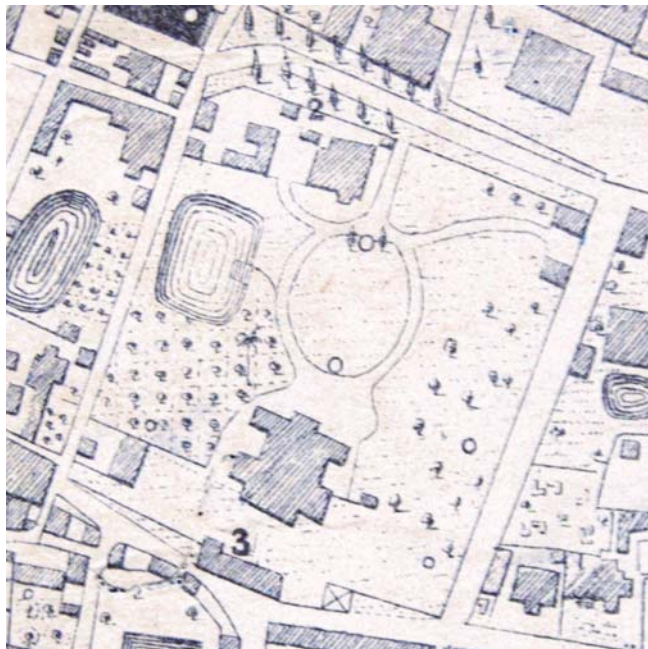


2009. The new court building under construction within the former Danish compound.

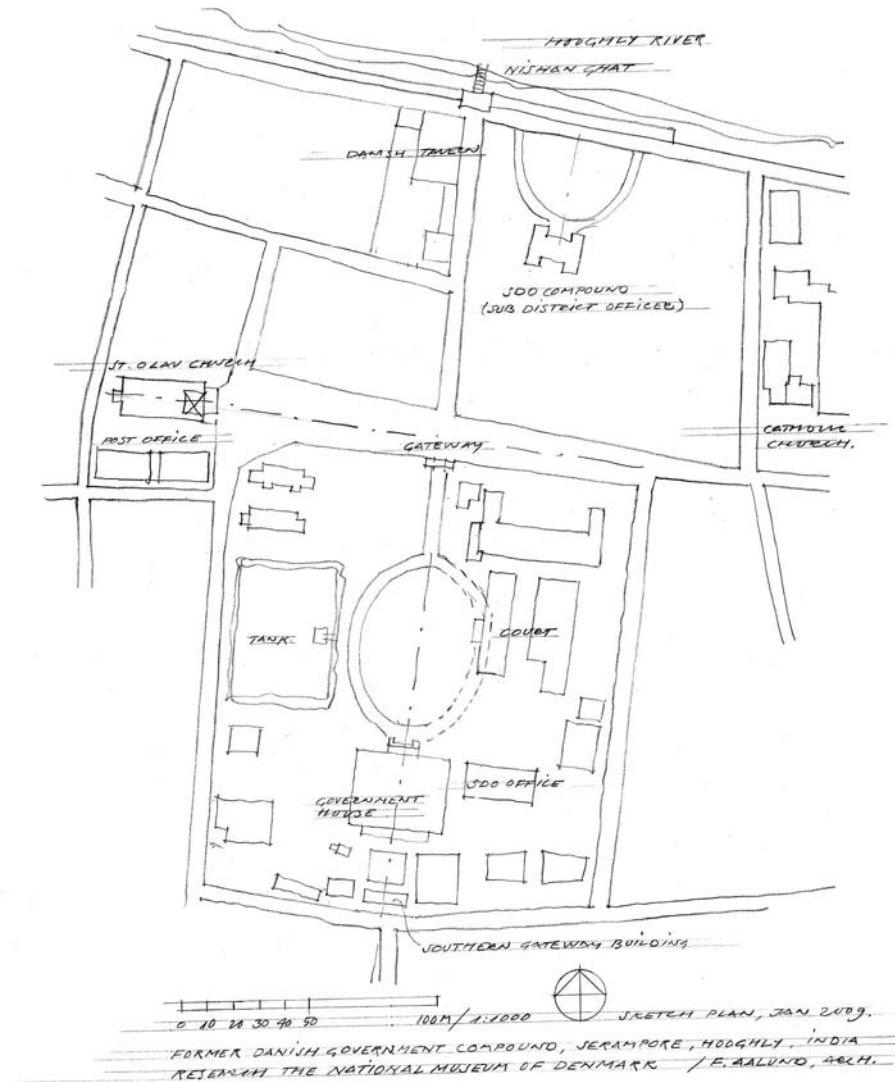




1827. The Danish government compound (1827. Thompson).



1860. The Danish government compound (1860. Gastrell).



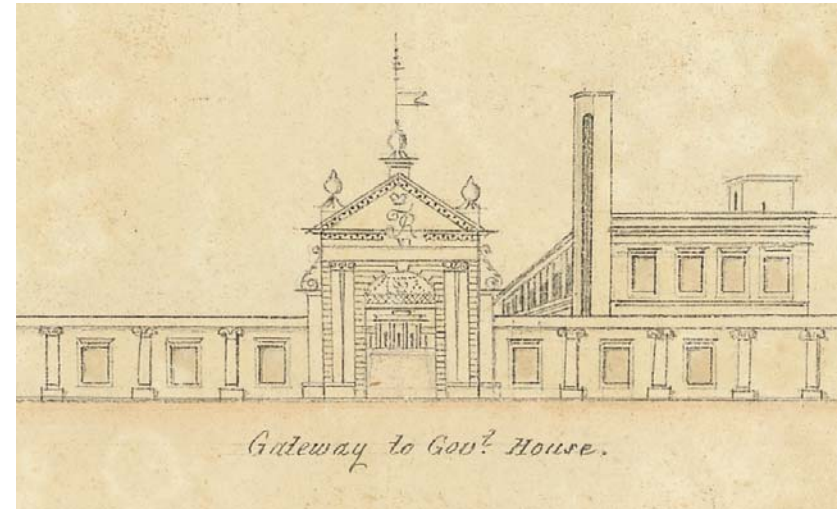
2009. Plan of the government compound.

The main gate

A brick-built gate on the northern side of the compound is first mentioned in the records in 1772 and parts of the original structure are possibly incorporated in the present gate (DNA, 1510. List of Danish government buildings in Frederiksnagore 1772-73). Shortly after the British occupation of Serampore 1808-15 the gate was rebuilt with paired pilasters headed by Ionic capitals and a triangular pediment (Nilsson 1968, p. 74; Larsen 1908, p. 60). A drawing from 1827 shows this impressive and richly ornamented gate with a monogram of the Danish King Frederik VI, who ruled Denmark 1808-1838. This design is confirmed by later photographs.

The gate no longer displays the original aspects and it is a mutilated vestige only of the original prestigious gate. The upper part is missing together with most of the original ornamentation and there are only a few traces of the apertures opening up to the former guardroom at the western side of the gate. Overshadowed by large trees and partly hidden behind a public drinking water service, market stalls and local rickshaws waiting for customers, the main gate is no longer exposed as it has been originally towards the main avenue leading down to the river. However, it still functions as the main entrance to the offices within the compound.

1827. The gateway to the Government compound. The apertures in the wall indicates the guardrooms. (1827. Thompson).



The main gate to the Danish government compound with the monogram of King Frederik VI. Behind is the two-storied guardhouse which no longer exists (Undated coloured photograph. British Library).





Undated photographs (The Royal Library, Copenhagen).



1930. (Photograph by Holger Rosenberg, NMD) (left).

1949. (Photograph by Nanna Andersen, MMD) (right).



2009. The main gate behind a public drinking water service and local rickshaws.

The compound wall

The first wall around the compound from 1755 was erected in clay and straw and needed repeatedly repair during the monsoon. In 1780, on the initiative of Governor Ole Bie, the mud wall was replaced by a more durable brick wall at the total length of approximately 600 m of which large parts are still preserved (Nilsson 1968, p. 72).

The western part along Church Street is approximately 150 m long with a thickness of 0.72 m and a height of about 3.20 m. Apparently this section is original and preserved to its full height, but the condition is critical and about 1 m of rubbish is accumulated at the interior side adding to the rising damp in the masonry. The other sections of the wall are lower and partly obscured by the many vendor stalls that are set up all along the exterior perimeter of the compound.

2009. Condition of the western part of the compound wall along Church Street.





1934. The water tank with the government house behind (MMD).



2009. The overgrown water tank.

The water tank

On the western part of the compound, the town engineer Götting dug out a new water tank in 1786 and constructed the brick-built steps leading down to the water (DNA, 2042. Accounts, 1 August 1786). The original bricks have been partly replaced during repair, but its original form is retained. The tank is now overgrown and the original size is no longer discernible, however, the tank is shown at a photograph dating from 1934, where the rectangular form appears bordered by a sloping bank side. The tank provides an attractive element of water and greenery forming a very important part of the compound and the pleasant environment.

The southern gateway building

Immediately to the south of the Danish government house, the compound contains a ruined but highly interesting gateway building, which was probably constructed some time after the British occupation 1808-15, as it is shown on the map from 1827. In 1832 it is described as a 'detention consisting of two rooms with a passage in between' (DNA, 2047. Valuation report on the royal buildings of Frederiksnagore 1832-33).

During the Danish and the subsequent British period the building functioned as a detention and safekeeping for stolen effects seized by the police. When the orientation of the town shifted away from the river towards the new railway station after 1854, this southern gateway probably became the preferred entrance to the compound and the government house, which was reconstructed and turned into a law court by adding a new structure facing towards this entrance from the south.

The small building is very well proportioned with a perfect symmetrical lay-out around the middle axis of the compound. The richly ornamented northern façade have paired pilasters with Ionic capitals and triangular pediments of the classical order above the window openings. To the south, facing on to the Bhadubi Sarani street, the gateway is emphasised by rusticated masonry, however the façade is obscured behind the vendor stalls all along the street and the whole building is in ruin.

A new intermediate storehouse constructed with cement blocks and corrugated iron roofing is situated in between the government house and the gateway building obstructing the view to the ornate façade of the gateway and further depreciating this hid-

2009. The gateway building seen from north.



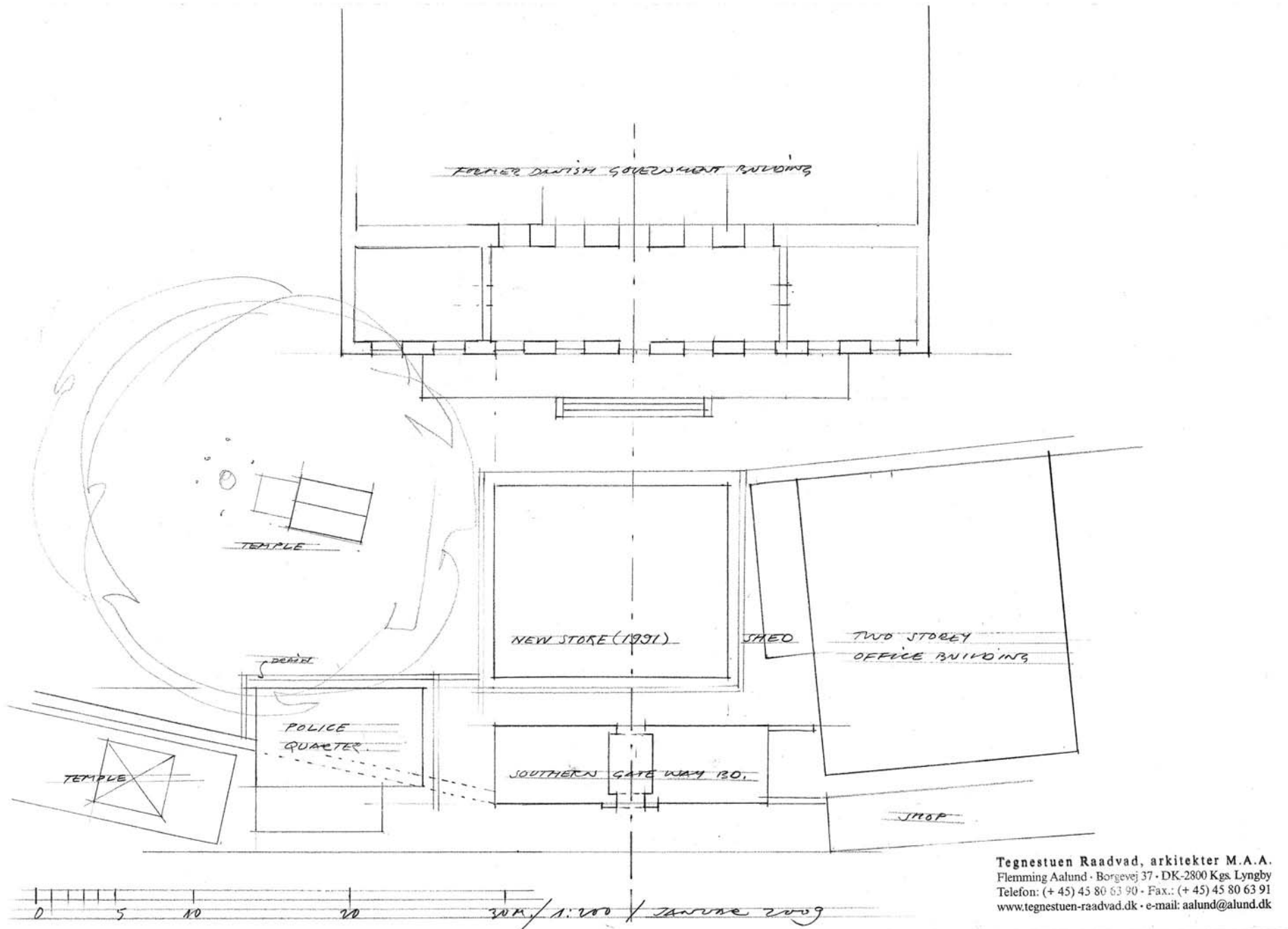


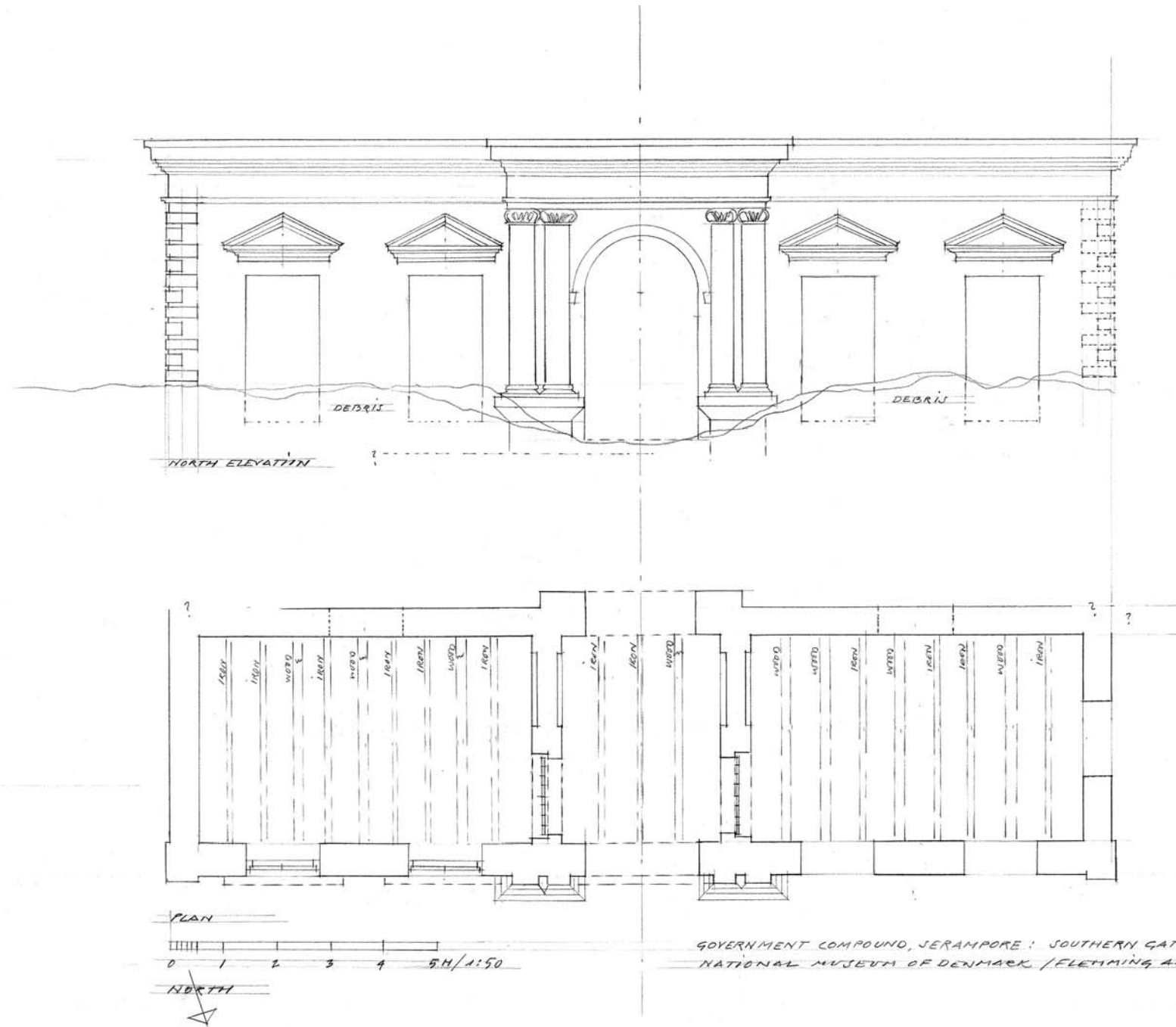
The gateway building partly hidden behind shops on the southern side.

den corner of the compound. Restoration of this southern gateway and the demolition of the storehouse would have a specific bearing on the government house and greatly improve the immediate surroundings.



The intermediate storehouse that obstructs the view to the southern gateway building.





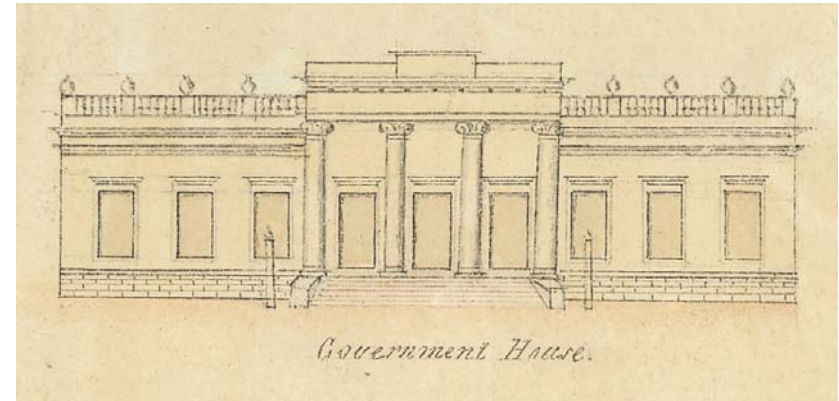
The Danish Government house

The Danish government house was from the establishment in 1755 the centre of the Danish administration, as well as the private residence of the Head of Serampore. Initially the government house was a simple mud and wattle construction with a thatched roof consisting of a hall, four large rooms, two small rooms, two verandas and one godown (DNA, 1360b. Letter to the council of Tranquebar from the council of Frederiksnagore January 8, 1771). The major part of this building collapsed during a dinner party on 2nd December 1770, where the members of the council and their wives saved their lives by a narrow escape through the windows. The remaining part was demolished and in 1771 the Danish Head of Serampore, Johan Leonard Fix (1770-1773) began the construction of a new brick-built government house consisting of a hall, two rooms and a veranda.

The successor of J. L. Fix, Andreas Hiernøe, added two rooms with verandas in 1773. This house was taken over by Ole Bie, the new Head of Serampore, in 1776 and he asked the Board of Directors of the Asiatic Company in Copenhagen for permission to further add two rooms and a veranda (DNA, 219-221. Letter from the council of Serampore, January 12 1778). In 1781 funds were allocated for the construction of the new veranda, built as a monumental front portico in the Ionic order, and two rooms were added at each side of the building, extending the whole length of the façade. The government house had now become a stately building with lofty proportions, suitable for the ambitious Ole Bie, and a mark of the time of prosperity in Serampore.

Probably as part of the overall repair work of the dilapidated property after the British occupation of Serampore 1808-1816, the

1827. (1827. Thompson).



C. 1830. *The Government House.* (Painting by Mary Hoblenberg. MMD).





1934. The Government House viewed from the tower of St. Olav's Church. (Unknown photographer. MMD).



1960. Unknown photographer. (The Royal Library, Copenhagen).

house was further extended with more rooms and a large veranda to the south. In 1832 the Government House was reported to contain 4 large rooms in the centre, 5 smaller rooms with open verandas to each side, as well as a large veranda to the south with a terrace above (DNA, 2047. Valuation report on the public buildings of Frederiksnagore 1832-33). The same year two additional rooms have been fitted up at each end of the southern veranda, most likely by adding two new partition walls inside the veranda. In 1842 and 1843 an upper story was added with a roof pavilion rising above the facade below, thereby creating the proportions of an Italian palazzo (Elberling 1845, p. 6). The two airy rooms on 1st floor were originally built for sleeping apartments. When the building was transferred to the British in 1845 it thus consisted of three large rooms and eight side rooms on the ground floor and two rooms on the upper story (Ibid.).

Extensions and modifications of the original building after 1845

The Government House maintained its position as the centre of the administration when the British took over Serampore and acquired all public buildings in 1845. Put in use as law courts and offices, the building was further extended to the south with a large gallery/hall in the whole width of the building sometime in the mid nineteenth century (most probably sometime after 1860).

Whereas the outer walls of the Danish Government House in average measure about 82 cm, it appears from the inspection that an additional curtain wall, measuring about 46 cm, was constructed against the original, external south façade of the Government House and thus concealing the former exterior facade. The new addition was planned in agreement with the symmetrical layout around a centre line through the middle of the building. The whole southern façade is richly decorated with profiled door frames around the five centre doorways and two windows at each side, as

well as double pilasters between the doorways crowned by capitals. The capitals are unfortunately only partially preserved in a few places at the western part due to the later construction of an open veranda of inferior design along the south façade.

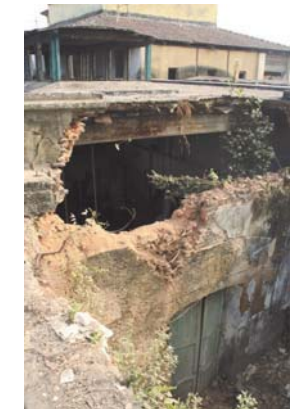
The architectural design of the addition is immediately discernable at the two gable walls decorated with arches and half columns in Palladian style that obviously became part of the eclectic architecture of the time. To the interior the hall is adorned with a rich decoration of half-columns with capitals in the Ionic order. Apparently the hall ran for the whole width of the building. Two partition walls however have been added at a later time, separating the hall into three compartments with a large hall in the centre, serving as a vestibule for separate courtrooms at each end, with the doorways designed as classical Greek portals, possibly to inspire respect for the law courts.

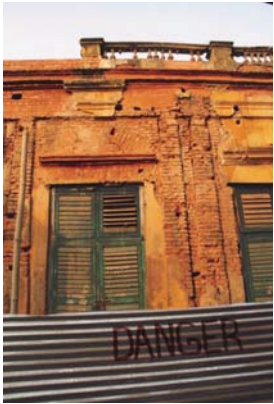
The symmetrical layout and the rich classical decoration of the interior has unfortunately been partly obstructed and impaired by the later subdivision of many rooms in order to meet some urgent needs for office space and archives for the court. These changes have caused the subdivision of the central hall to the south by three partition walls and the partly closure of some of the high doorways. One of the rooms has been adapted as a strong room for the treasury, and an inserted floor in reinforced concrete has been added to another room. Furthermore, the many extensions to the original structure have reduced the natural light and ventilation in the central halls and the adjoining rooms. These adverse conditions have been partly compensated by adding skylights to the three central halls, however, these later modifications do not harmonise well with the character and architecture of the building.

The transformation of the building has taken place over a period of about 200 years and each building phase reflects the varying style and fashion of the day. The many alterations and exten-

Dec. 2008 – Jan. 2009.

Condition of the Government House at the beginning of the restoration work.





sions give the building a special character and immense importance as one of the oldest buildings in the town, reflecting the history of Serampore through the Danish, British and Indian periods of government.

After the collapse of part of the roof in 1999, the building was abandoned and left without further maintenance and upkeep until a project for restoration was launched in 2008 in a cooperation between Serampore Sub-Divisional Offices (S.D.O.), Serampore Municipality and the West Bengal Heritage Commission. Funds were allocated for the first phase, which include the structural parts of the building as well as the repair and replacement of doors and windows. The restoration project scheduled for completion in 2009 will preserve the building from further decay. However, the subsequent phases of the interior restoration have not as yet been determined, and there are no definite plans for the future use of the building.

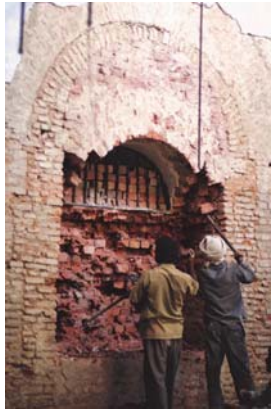
For more details please refer to separate reports concerning the building chronology and details about doors and windows:

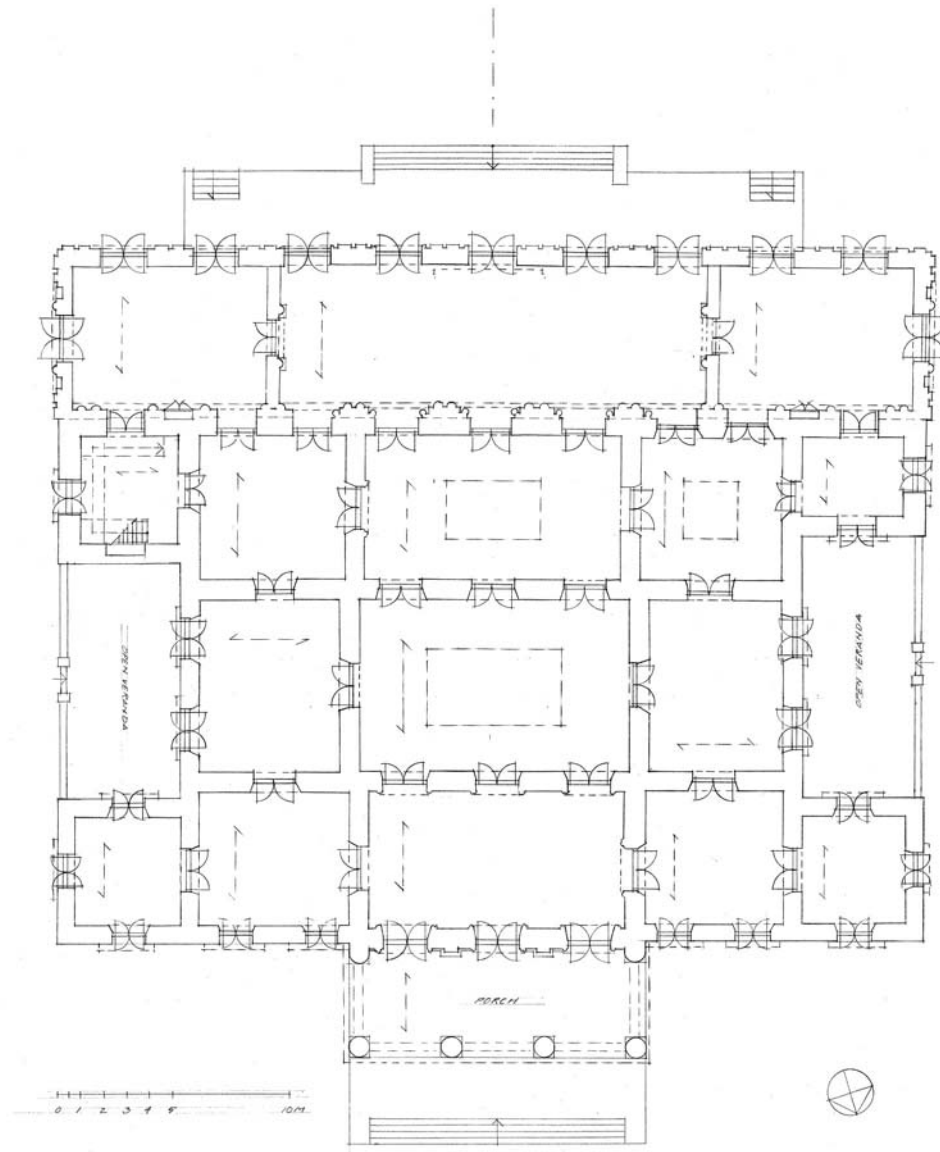
- Danish Government House building chronology/Simon Rastén - Flemming Aalund/ revised March 9th 2009.

- Danish Government House, Interim report on doors and windows/ Simon Rastén - Flemming Aalund/ March 10th 2009.



Jan.-April 2009. Ongoing restoration work.





Plan showing the structural development of the government house

- 1771-1773
- 1781
- 1816-1832
- British period



THE FORMER DANISH GOVERNMENT HOUSE
SERAPPORE, HOOGHLY, INDIA
RESEARCH BY:
THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF DENMARK

PLAN BASED ON SURVEY BY 'THE DESIGNERS'
KOLKATA 22.12.2005, SUPPLEMENTED AND
DRAWN JAN/JUNE 2009 BY:
FLEHNING MALIND, ARCHITECT MAA.

PLAN 1:100 SHOWING CONDITION AFTER DEMOLITION OF LATER PARTITION WALLS, SHEDS, OPENING UP OF BLOCED DOORS AND SHIFTING SKYLIGHTS TO SYMMETRICAL POSITION 23.05.2009

The jail and court building (Catcherie)

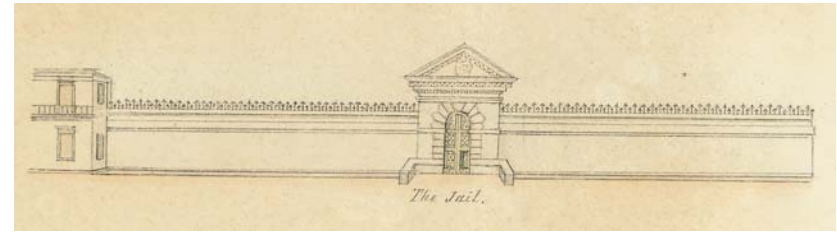
The Danish administration of Serampore was very limited in terms of both staff and financial means. Still the Danish Governor had the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the town, which implied the dealing with all kinds of criminal cases as well as religious disputes. A court house and jail, or *Catcherie** as it was termed at the time, was therefore a necessary measure of the Danish judicial system.

The first Danish jail in Serampore was a single building, containing two rooms only with a veranda and a surrounding brick wall. Considering that the population of Serampore in 1800 was about 11,000, it is not surprising to find that the jail is described as being rather unpleasant and insufficient in size (Larsen 1908, p. 47. DNA, 969. Valuation report on the public buildings of Frederiksnagore 21 September, 1779; 2050. Assorted accounts 17 August, 1781; 2042. Accounts 31 July, 1787; 2129). In 1787 some attempts were made to improve the existing jail by extending the open backyard and by adding a new bathroom. However, during the British occupation 1801-1802 the building was not maintained properly, and the whole complex became hereafter dilapidated and not considered worthy of renovation.

A new plot was bought in 1803 and the Danish engineer and Major, B. A. von Wickede, who was subsequently also supervising the construction work at Serampore College and St. Olav's Church, prepared a plan for a new jail or *Catcherie*. The new jail was

* Catcherie, also spelled Cutchery, is a Danish loan word and stems from the Hindi word *kachahrī*, signifying an office of administration or a court house (Yule 1903).

(1827. Thompson).

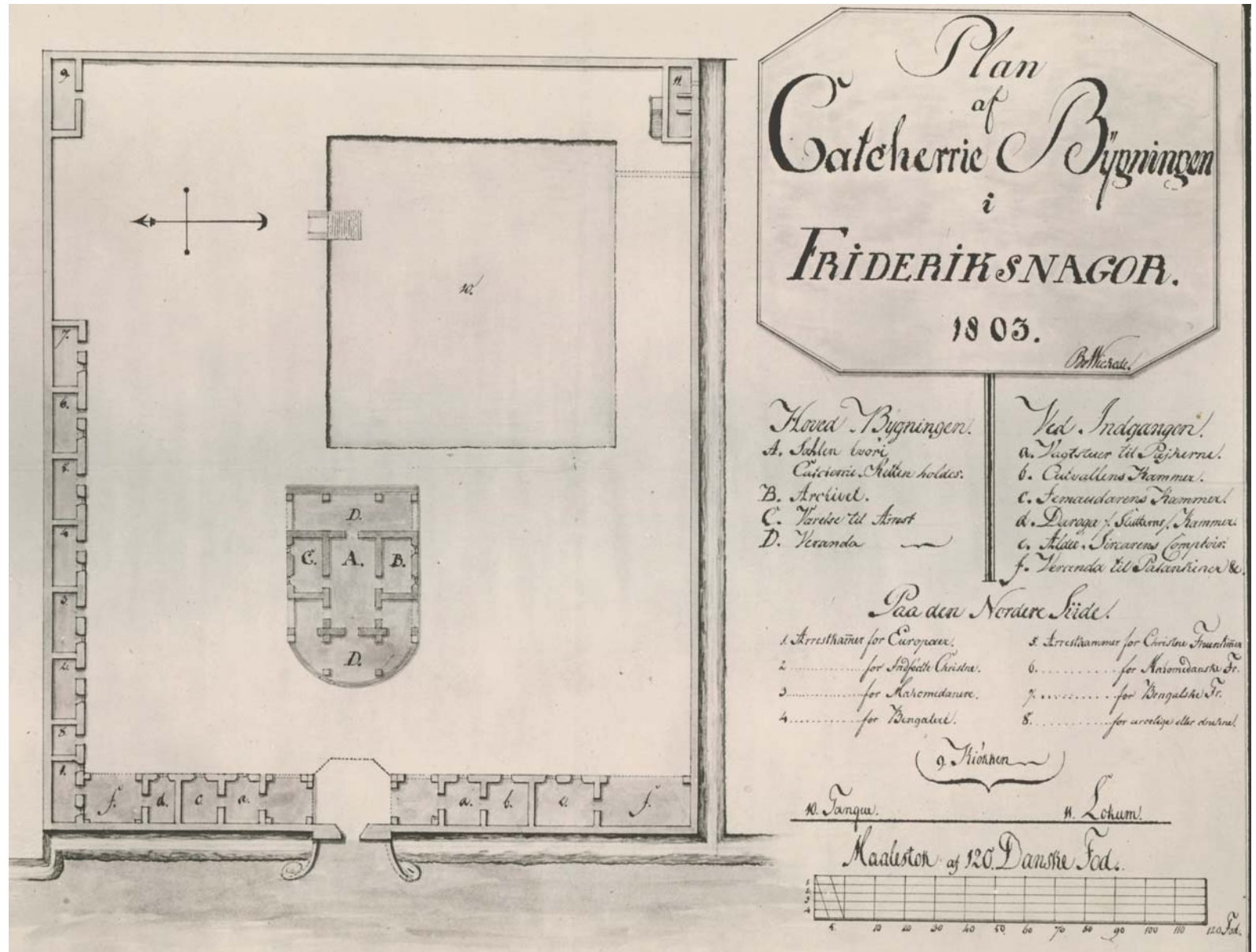


inaugurated the same year and apart from a court house it consisted of a number of separate gaols for the different ethnic and religious communities. In 1832 the prison was further extended with a new ward for women and a wall surrounding the adjoining courtyard (DNA, 2047. Valuation report on the public buildings of Frederiksnagore 1832-33). Yet another brick building, 9 feet by 60, in which convicts were kept at night, was added later, as it appears on a description from 1845 (Elberling 1845, p. 6).

The segregation of the prisoners was probably both a preventive measure against violent disturbances as well as a well-intended initiative to improve the poor physical conditions in the jail. The council of Serampore for instance noted that the prisoners were formerly held 'mixed, without any distinction between castes, in small, unhealthy and damp holes, which were plenty to make them lose their health and even kill them, whose acts did not deserve death sentence' (Translation from the Danish. DNA, 2033. Letter from the council of Serampore November 25, 1803). At the time of construction the jail was considered a modern institution based on both humanistic ideals and experiences of the colonial administration in dealings with the local population. The Danish council of Serampore was definitely proud of the new *Catcherie*, which they described as being better and more beautiful than any other found in the surrounding European colonies (Ibid.).

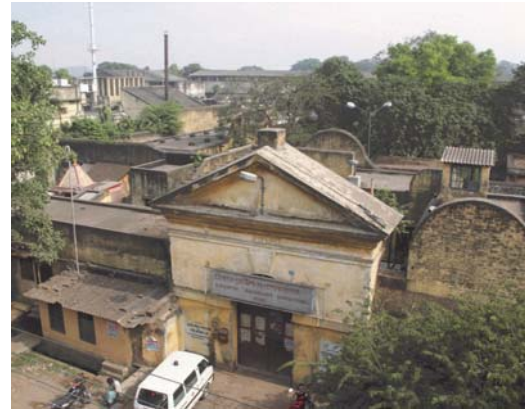
The jail still functions as Serampore Subsidiary Correctional

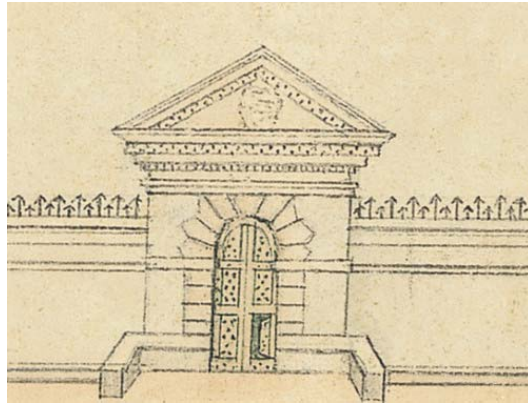
The original plan by Major B. A. von Wickede provided for separate gaols to Europeans, women and each of the native communities divided into Christians, Muslims, Bengalis as well as a scratch group referred to as the 'turbulent or drunken'. A court house with a hall, two rooms and two verandas was situated at the centre, whereas the guard's rooms and offices were located to both side of the main gate. Also a large tank was situated within the compound to serve the religious demands of the faithful Hindu and Muslim inmates. (DNA).



Home under administration of the Sub Division Officer. The original court house has been demolished in favour of a new administration building and a new partition wall is adding further security, but the surrounding wall, the main gate and the tank is preserved and the original gaols are still in use. Access to the site, however, is restricted and the ordinary visitor can only view the jail from the street. Now gone is the Royal Danish coat of arms, which originally adorned the pediment of the main gate, as it appears from older drawings and photographs, only the date '1803', the year of construction, is still visible on the frieze above the keystone of the arched classical portal.

2009. Serampore Subsidiary Correctional Home.





*1827. Main gate of the jail
(1827. Thompson).*



*1949. (Photograph by Nanna
Andersen. MMD).*



*2009. The entrance to
Serampore Subsidiary
Correctional Home*

Mission buildings, churches and cemeteries

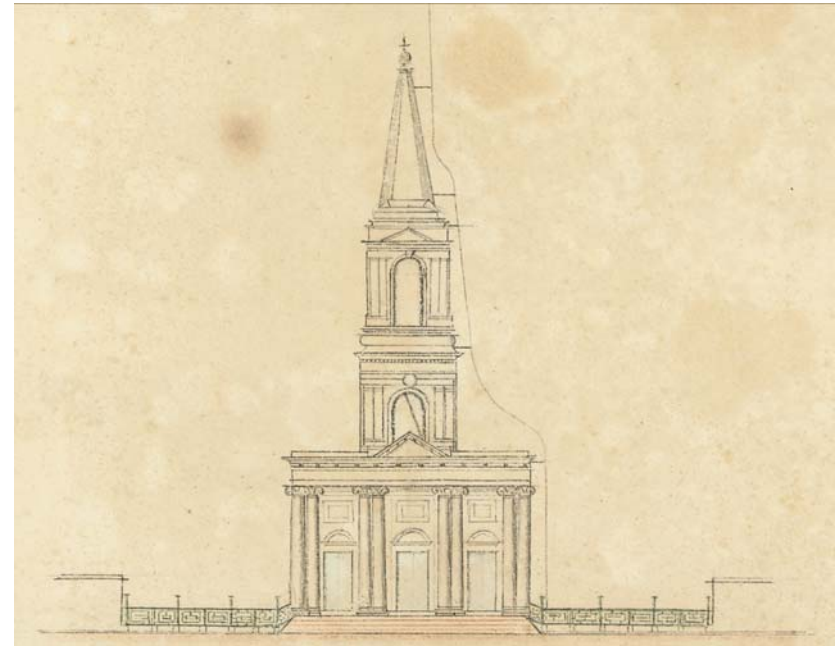
St. Olav's Church

Funded partly by private subscription in Denmark and Serampore and partly by public grants, the construction of St. Olav's Church was initiated in 1800 by the Danish Governor Ole Bie. The nave was completed in 1806, a year after the decease of Ole Bie, whereas the portico and the bell tower were completed in 1821 (Nilsson 1968, p. 75). The church became a 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 opposite side of the river. This view from Barrackpore was especially appreciated and commended upon by the British Governor-General of India, the Marquis Wellesley, who is said to have missed the distant view of a steeple from his country residence to give the right romantic associations with his mother country (NN 1845, p. 504). The completion of St. Olav Church had a significant impact on the perception of Serampore as a Danish settlement. However, due to the small number of resident Danes, the services were performed by the English Baptist missionaries and never by any Danish priest (Elberling 1845, p. 3).

Many of the churches in British India were inspired by St. Martin-in-the-Fields of central London that became well known from a reproduction in the *Book of Architecture*, published 1728 by the architect James Gibbs (Nilsson 1968, p. 75). The design of St. Olav's Church thus shares many similarities with the churches of St. John and St. Andrew in Kolkata, but also with that of Vor Frue

1827. (1827. Thompson).



1851. (Hand-coloured print. Photograph taken by Frederick Fiebig. British Library).





1949. *St. Olav's Church and the memorial ground.*
(Photograph by Nanna Andersen. MMD).



1826. *View from Barrackpore Park across the river to Serampore. The newly built bell tower of St. Olav's Church is shown behind the ship on the right side.*
(Aquatint by James Baillie Fraser. British Library).

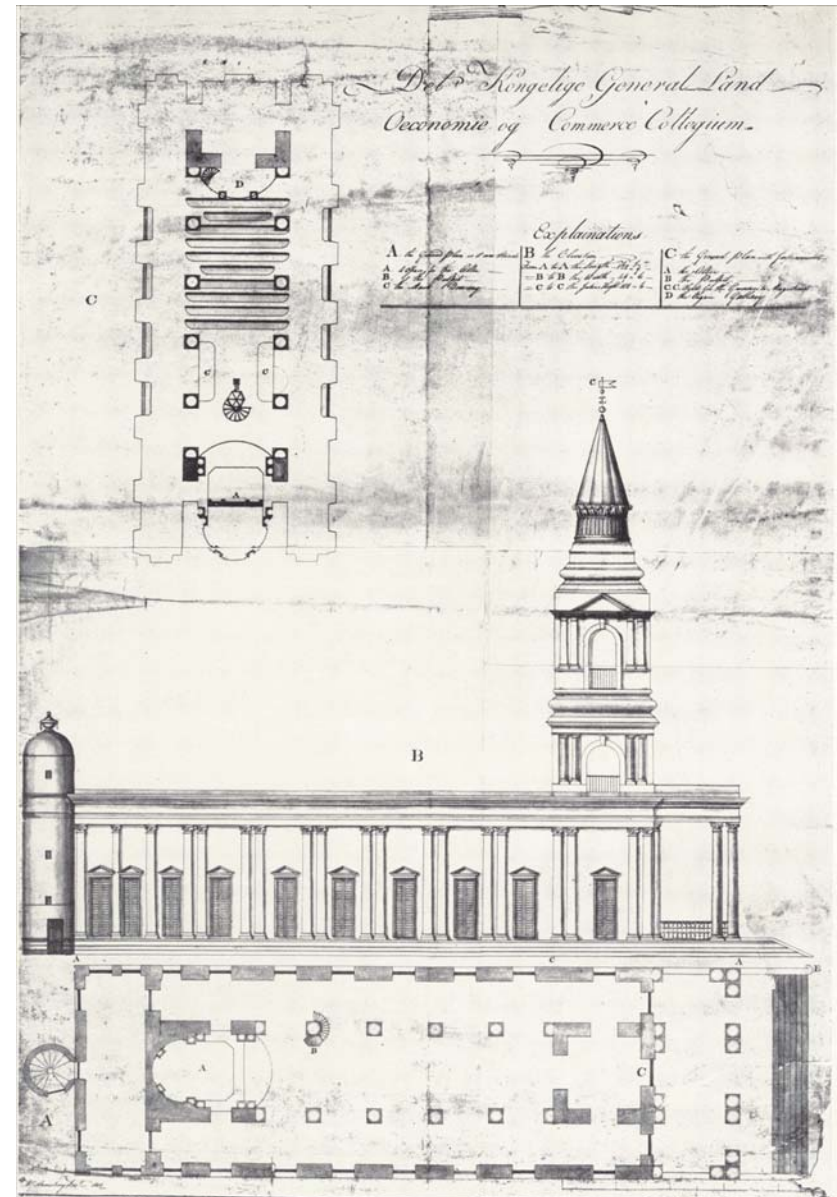
Kirke (Church of Our Lady) in Copenhagen (Ibid., p. 75). The original drawing from 1806, signed by the English lieutenant Alexander Armstrong, shows the plan, elevation and future internal organisation of the church. Planned as a three aisle building with a flat roof and an open portico the design was later modified by adding a pediment with a broken cornice featuring the royal monogram of the Danish King Christian VII.

The interior is sparsely decorated with some stucco work high on the walls in the choir. Otherwise there is no adornment apart from six commemorative tablets along the southern aisle wall. Three of them honour the former Danish heads of Serampore: J. O. Voight, J. S. Hohlenberg and L. T. Ole Bie. The remaining tablets are put up in memory of Juliane Marie Wallich, William Wollen and in collective memory of the British missionaries William Carey, Joshua Marshmann and William Ward. At the steeple are two bells of European origin, but none of them is in use anymore. The smaller one bears the inscription 'FREDERICKS VÆRCK ANNO 1804' and the inscription on the bigger bell reads 'CHRISTIAN VOGT STUTTGARD 1853'. 'Fredericks Værck', today Frederiks-værk, was an important iron foundry north of Copenhagen and most of the Danish cannons used in India also derived from this foundry

St. Olav's Church is now under administration by Church of North India, but the day-to-day use and maintenance is taken care of by Serampore College. Except for the space behind the choir that gives room to a government child-care centre (Anganwadi), the church is not in use at present due to the precarious condition of the roof construction. Traces of white ants indicate that the strength of the wooden beams may be affected. One of 17 beams in the main nave has been exchanged in favour of an iron beam, but an assessment of the condition of the remaining wooden beams requires a detailed inspection. The interior has been regularly maintained with lime wash in blue colour, but there are signs of salt ef-

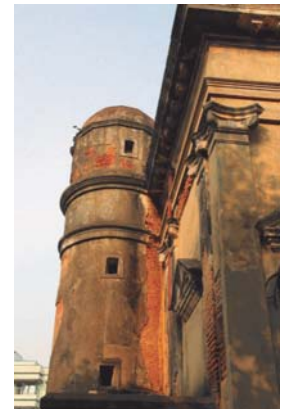
florescence at the lower parts of the walls and the condition is generally damp and humid. The lower part of the southern facade has been renovated fairly recently by the use of cement plaster that already shows traces of salt efflorescence. The northern facade is in a deteriorated condition with large patches of missing plaster. However, the original lime plaster is maintained on 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 the use of cement plaster. It now appears in a light greyish colour with a 'hard' and smooth finish, in parts with blackish and reddish patches of lichen growth.

Architectural drawing by Lt. Armstrong dated 1806 (DNA).

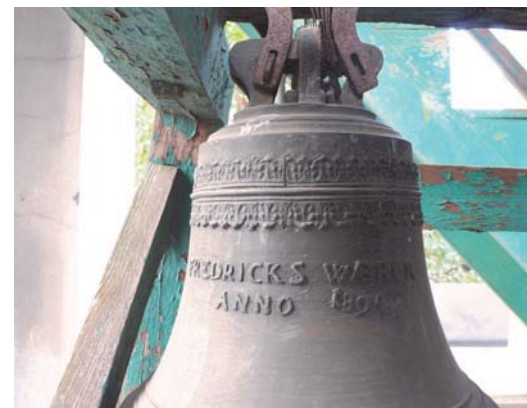




2009. Condition of St. Olav's Church. The church holds a number of commemorative tablets along the southern aisle wall, e.g. one of Governor Ole Bie. The bell produced in Frederiksværk in 1804 is still hanging in the bell tower.



SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
HIS EXCELLENCY
LT. COLONEL OLE (OLAVE) BIE
GOVERNOR OF FREDERICSNAGORE
BORN AT TRONDHJEM, NORWAY IN FEBRUARY, 1733
DIED AT SERAMPUR, 18TH MAY 1805
COLONEL BIE WAS A DISCIPLE OF
SWARTZ OF TRANQUEBAR
HE RECEIVED AND SHELTERED THE
BAPTIST MISSIONARIES IN 1799
AND BUILT THE CHURCH HERE.



The Catholic Church

Built 1776 the Roman Catholic Church is the oldest church in Serampore. The building replaced a chapel dating from 1764, which had become too small to serve the growing Catholic community. Auxiliary buildings were constructed on an adjoining piece of land in 1780 for the accommodation of the priest. The buildings were further extended in 1841 and a second story added to it (Elberling 1874 p. 3, 5).

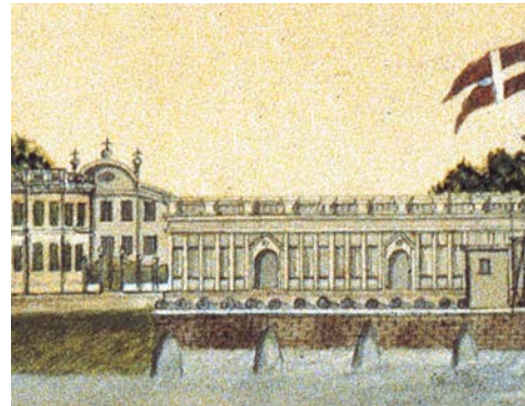
The increasing number of Catholics was especially due to immigrants arriving from the French territories. The Catholics probably outnumbered the Protestants in Serampore during most of the Danish period as confirmed by a census taken in 1835 providing a total figure of 446 Christians, of which 207 were Protestants, 234 Catholics and 5 Armenians (Elberling 1874 p. 2). The fact that the Catholic community was welcomed by the Danish government in Serampore, at a time when Catholicism by law was prohibited in mainland Denmark, suggests that the administration of the settlement was more concerned with developing the trade and attracting new inhabitants than with sustaining sharp boundaries between different religious groups (Frendrup 2008 p. 7). This benevolent attitude by the council likewise motivated the arrival of the Baptist missionaries and the establishment of Serampore College in 1818.

On the painting by Peter Anker from 1790 the church appears as a low building with a large semi-circular pediment spanning the whole width of the gable facing on to the river. The subsequent depiction of the river front by J. Hammer in 1810 shows a building in two tiers but likewise dominated by the large fronton. The Danish officer and Secretary to the council, F.E. Elberling de-

1790. (Section of painting by Peter Anker. Historical Museum, Oslo).



1810. (1810. Hammer).



1827. (1827. Thompson).





2009. Condition of the church.

scribes in 1845 the church as a 'handsome building'.

In 1994 the church was renovated compromising the original design by adding an additional floor in reinforced concrete inside the nave to serve as a meeting hall as well as adding a new wing for the accommodation of the priest and other auxiliary functions of the community. However, the large segmental pediment supported by four half-columns in the Doric order is still the dominant feature of the church, although the finials and other architectural details have disappeared.

Since 1957 the place has housed a Cheshire Home for physically and mentally disabled people, supported by the international Leonard Cheshire organization and run by Catholic sisters.



The prayer hall (left) and the newly built meeting hall upstairs (right).

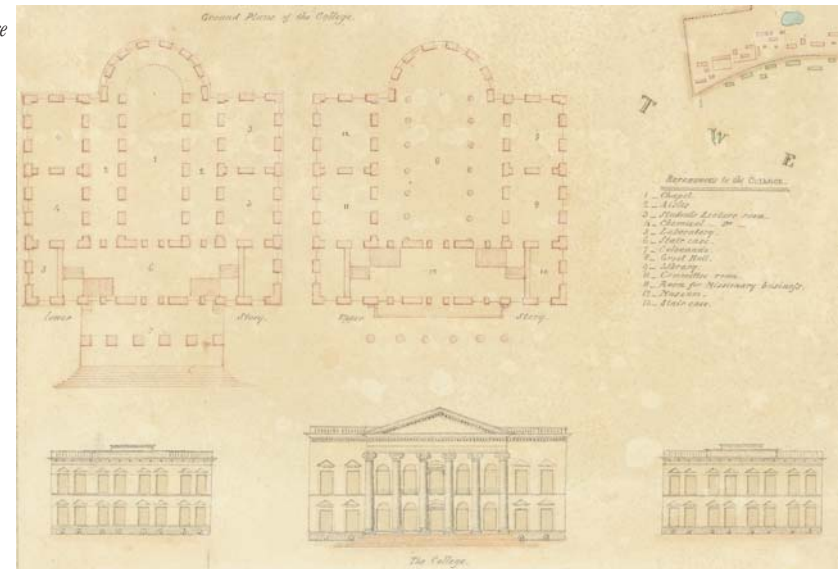
Serampore College

For many years the British East India Company prohibited all missionary activities in their territories, fearing that differences in belief would disturb the trade and cause public unrest. Because of this restrictive policy, the first British missionaries to India sought protection under the Danish Crown and were welcomed in Serampore by the then Head of the Danish settlement, Ole Bie. William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward of the Baptist Missionary Society were the first Baptist missionaries to arrive along with their families in 1799 (Wenger 2006, p. 2).

Apart from propagandizing the gospel, the missionaries showed strong interest in education and natural science. In 1800 a botanical garden was laid out at the ground of the present India Jute Mill and soon after a printing house and paper mill were founded, introducing the first steam-driven factory in India. In 1801 the New Testament was translated and produced as the first printed book in Bengali. The mission press developed fast and was in 1816 recorded as the largest printing house in India (Göbel 2004, p. 30).

The three Baptist missionaries had a marked influence on the development of Serampore and beyond in the sphere of education, language and natural science. William Carey in particular was an extraordinarily gifted linguist, succeeding in translating the Bible into more than 10 Indian languages, and in addition to this even into Burmese, Persian and Chinese. As a by-product he also wrote grammars and dictionaries in a large number of local Indian languages, highly contributing to the advancement of their use. Between 1800 and 1832 the Serampore press printed books in 48 languages of which 45 were Bible translations. 37 of these were trans-

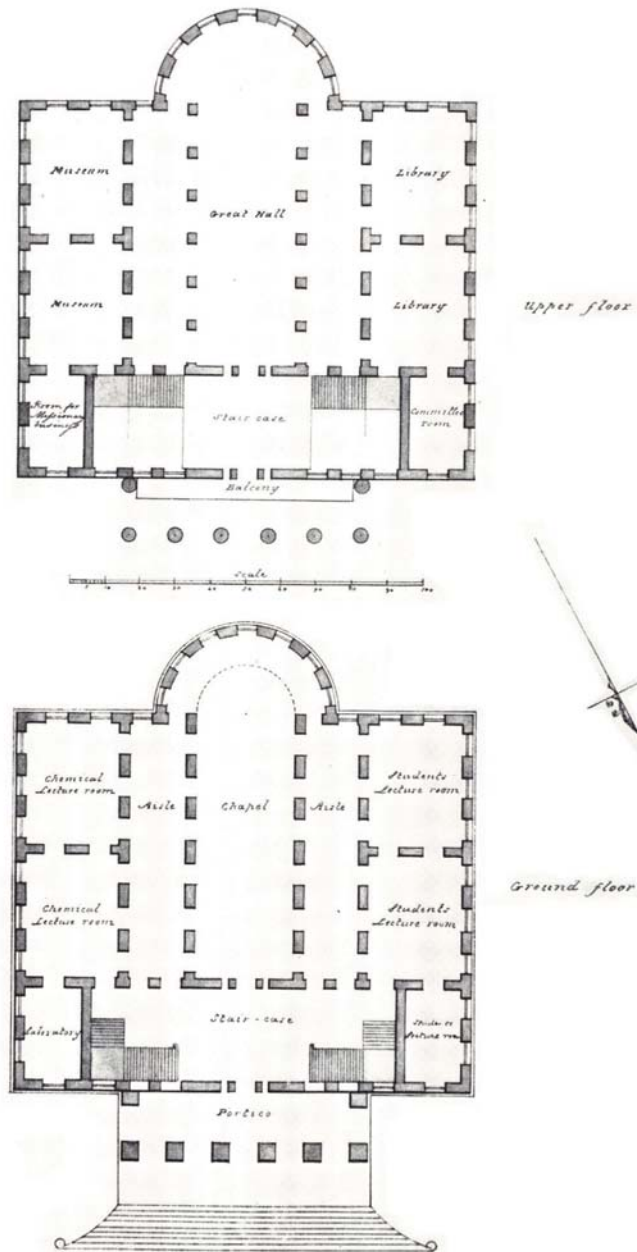
Plan and elevation of Serampore College (1827. Thompson).



Architectural drawing of the main building of Serampore College. (DH).



Plan of the main building of Serampore College (DH).



lated by the Serampore Mission and Carey alone had produced the 35 (Østergård 2005, p. 215).

Serampore College was founded in 1818 and soon after the construction of a new building was initiated at a large site close to the river, adjoining the botanical garden and the printing house. By a Royal Charter issued on 23rd February 1827, the College was officially recognized and offered similar rights of conferring degrees in all subjects as enjoyed by the Danish universities in Copenhagen and Kiel. In 1845, when the Danish settlement was transferred to the British, the treaty of acquisition included provisions for maintaining the rights and immunities granted to the College by the Royal Charter of 1827. Serampore College is now affiliated to Calcutta University and it has earned a great reputation in providing opportunities for higher education not only in West Bengal, but also in the whole of India since its establishment in 1818.

The main building

Situated within a pleasant and well kept green area, the main building of Serampore College and the former residence of William Carey as well as the ancillary buildings are major landmarks of Serampore today.

The original drawings of Serampore College, including two plans and an elevation of the main façade, are kept in HM the Queen's Reference Library in Copenhagen. However, the drawing techniques of the two plans are quite different from each other and cannot originate from the same architect. According to the drawing showing the elevation of the main façade, the College was originally conceived as a central building with an additional building situated symmetrically at each side and connected to the central building with low structures. The plans are only showing the central building and in fact, only this building and the east wing were erected, appearing as two separate structures. Built to a square plan in two sto-

ries, the main façade towards the river is dominated by a giant portico in the Ionic Order with a perfect symmetry around a middle axis. The rear side was originally finished by a semi circular apse which was later destroyed in an earthquake (Nilsson 1968, p. 91).

The spacious double high entrance hall is furnished with a large double staircase executed in cast iron, just as the main gate of the compound, which opens towards the river. All these elements were produced in Birmingham and granted to the College as a special gift from the Danish King Frederik VI in appreciation of the work carried out by the mission for the good cause of Serampore (Stewart 2006, p. 17).

The construction of the College building started in 1819, most probably under supervision by the Danish major Bernard August Wickede, who was in charge of the public building activities at the time. After having served in Tranquebar and taken part in the exploration of the Nicobar Islands, Wickede in 1804 was appointed as supervisor of public buildings in Serampore and his service is associated as well with the construction the *Catcherie* and St. Olav Church.

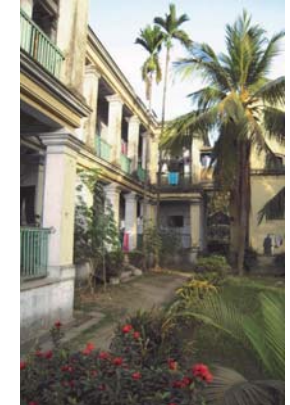
Carey Library and Resource Centre (the CLRC building)

William Carey Library and Resource Centre is housed in a new concrete building situated within the College compound close to the river. Constructed in 1993 as a joint donation by the Norwegian and the Danish Government, the building contains a conference hall, a library and a museum. The memorial museum exhibits artefacts, documents, pictures and paraphernalia that illustrate the personal life of the missionaries and the history of the Baptist mission in Serampore. Among the treasures on display in the museum is a replica of the Royal Charter issued in 1827 signed by the King of Denmark, Frederik VI (the original copy is kept safe elsewhere at

2009. The main building of Serampore College (left). View from the veranda towards the river (right).



The garden and student's quarters.



2009 January 6th. Inauguration of the portraits at the Carey Library and Resource Centre after done restoration. To the left the portrait of King Frederik VI (left). Opening speech by the Danish Ambassador to India, Ole Lønsmann Poulsen. Seated in the background the principal of Serampore College, Rev. Dr. Lalchhungnunga (right).





The interior of the College.

the College). The lecture hall displays among other easel paintings the portraits of King Frederik VI (r. 1808-1839) and Queen Marie Sophie Frederikke. Both paintings originally hang in the Governor's house in Tranquebar from where they were transferred and donated to Serampore College in 1845 (Stewart 2006, p. 17). The paintings have been restored in 2008 with support by the Royal Danish Embassy in New Delhi.

Serampore botanical garden

William Carey started a botanical garden, which soon developed to become a very attractive and agreeable horticultural garden. The place became generally known as Dr. Carey's Garden and it still appeared on Col. J.E. Gastrell's Survey of 1861 immediately to the west of the College, however the garden was later discontinued and the site taken up by the India Jute Mill.

The following description provides a vivid picture of the site as it appeared in 1839:

“Behind is the extensive botanic garden, where that wonderful man [William Carey], by way of relaxation, gathered a vast collection of trees, flowers, fruits, and vegetables, from every part of India, and from whence he diffused a taste for natural science, which is now yielding invaluable results” (Malcom 1839, p. 44).

William Carey's dedication to natural science inspired other people to study botany. Especially two Danish surgeons, Nathaniel Wallich (later founder of Indian Museum in Kolkata) and Joachim Otto Voight, became involved in the upkeep of Serampore botanical garden and deeply engaged in botanical studies. Subsequently they functioned as superintendents of Calcutta Botanic Garden and both published scientific botanical books about the plants in India.



Condition of the main gate.



The Mission Cemetery

The cemetery of the Baptist mission is situated close to the present Dey Street, which at the time of establishment was on the outskirts of Serampore. For the use of the land, the mission society paid an annual rent to the Danish government (Elberling 1874, p. 4).

The ground is now maintained by Serampore College and three monuments of the prominent missionaries William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward have recently been restored under supervision by INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage), Kolkata.

2009. The restored monuments of J. Marshman and W. Ward.





1960. The cemetery was restored in 1960, apparently with Danish help. (The Royal Library, Copenhagen).



2009. Condition of the cemetery.



The Danish Cemetery

The Danish cemetery in Serampore was reserved for Protestants and adjoining to it, separated by a low wall, was the burial ground of the Roman Catholics. In the early period the ground was only fenced by a living hedge, which was replaced by a brick wall in the 1770s.

A total of 33 burial places can at present be immediately identified of which 16 seem to be listed by number. Unfortunately, only few gravestones with inscriptions have been preserved. The three most notable commemorative epitaphs are of Factor Casper Top and the two Governors of the Danish possessions in Bengal, Ole (Olave) Bie and Jacob Krefting.

The Danish cemetery is listed as a Protected Monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958 and is maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India. The site is protected by a surrounding wall and the iron gate at the entrance is only open by appointment. Recently new trees have been planted and the caretaker is weeding and keeping the site neat and clean. Almost all the masonry tombs have been renovated by the use of cement plaster and only few original details and ornaments have been preserved.

Private dwellings

'The Denmark Tavern and Hotel'

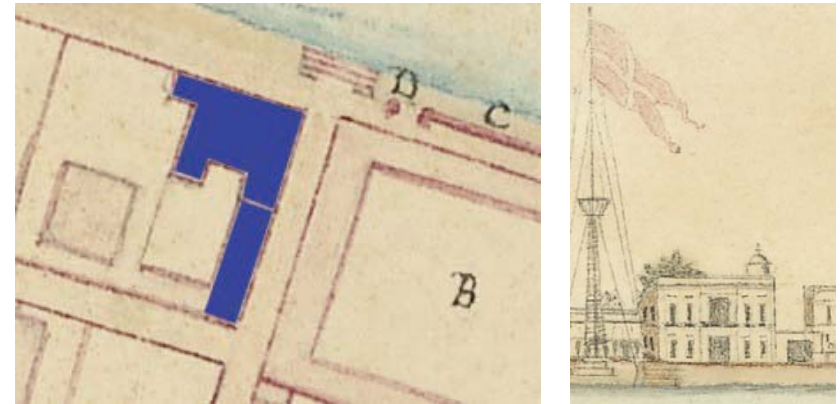
The peaceful, yet urban, atmosphere of Serampore attracted a number of well-to-do inhabitants from Calcutta during the Danish period. With the easy access by boat on the Hooghly River and its proximity to Calcutta, Serampore offered a pleasant interruption from the busy city life and functioned as a kind of recreational area. The British Governor General's country residence was situated in Barrackpore, just on the opposite side of the river, further increasing the number of visitors to Serampore.

From an advertisement in the Calcutta Gazette on March 1786 we know that a Mr. Parr, formerly owner of London Tavern, opened the 'Denmark Tavern and Hotel' in the 'new upper-roomed house near the flag-staff in Serampore'. The advertisement further states that he had,

fitted up the same in an elegant and convenient manner, both as an Hotel and Tavern. Gentlemen passing up and down the river may be accommodated with breakfast, dinner, supper, and lodging, and may depend on the charges being very reasonable, as his terms are ready money (...). Dinners dressed and sent out at short notice; also liquors sold by the single dozen, for ready cash. A good Billiard Table and Coffee-room, with the Newspapers, etc. (Seton-Karr 1864, Advertisement March 16, 1786).

The undertaking seems to have been successful, considering that only two years later another advertisement mentions the place as

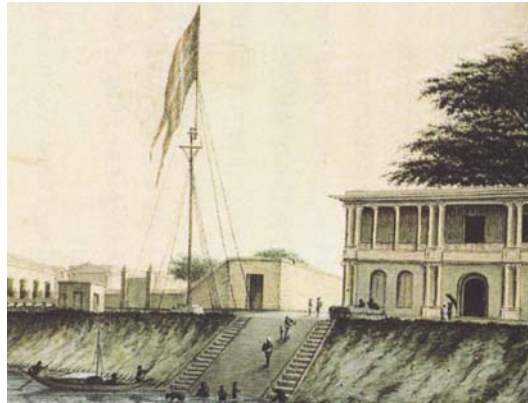
1827. (1827. Thompson).



'established and well-known'. Again it addressed the gentlemen passing up and down the river as possible customers:

John Nichols, who formerly kept the Harmonick Tavern in Calcutta, has taken that established and well-known Tavern in Serampore, lately kept by Mr. Parr, and provided a good Larder and the best Liquors, etc. The gentlemen of Cantonments, or parties going up and down the river, and all others who may honor Mr. Nichols with their countenance, may depend on the utmost civility and every endeavour to give satisfaction and very moderate charges (Seton-Karr 1864, Advertisement April, 1788).

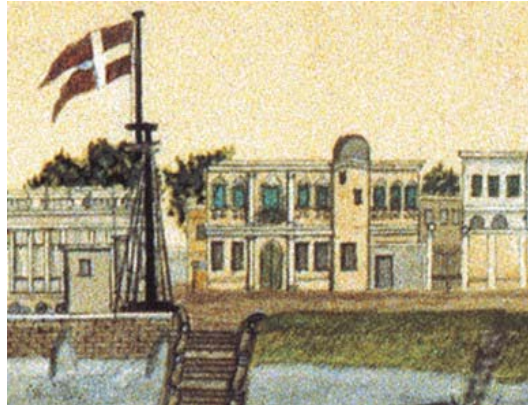
The mentioned 'new upper-roomed house' is most likely the still existing house on the corner of Nisan Ghat Lane and Mahatma Gandhi Road. The building has a very prominent location, just at the former main access from the river to the Danish Government compound, and it is known from several contemporary paintings. In 1790 Peter Anker, the Danish Governor of Tranquebar and an enthusiastic amateur painter, visited Serampore and painted the view from the river. Next to the flagstaff, the saluting canons and the Government godown, the Tavern building can be seen in the



1790. Section of painting by Peter Anker. (Historical Museum, Oslo).

right side of the painting. It is not known for how long the place functioned as hotel, but the overall decline in nineteenth-century Serampore probably resulted in the closure of the establishment.

As it appears from the drawing by Peter Anker, the northern part was built in two stories with an open portico facing on to the river. Today the building has more or less collapsed with only two pairs of double columns in the Tuscan Order still standing to the full height of the façade. The remaining part of the facade is in ruin and the structure behind is in a poor condition and declared 'not for use by order of P.W.D.' The southern part of the complex is partially in ruin, but still occupied by Serampore Emergency Force Line under the West Bengal Police and only the gateway with a stone seating to each side and the gate piers, delicately adorned with flower decorations in height relief at the fascia, give evidence of the former prominence of the place.



1810. (1810. Hammer).

In spite of its ruined condition the building has an extraordinary significance as one of the very few existing examples of the fine eighteenth-century buildings that originally characterized the prominent riverside during the heyday of the Danes. Contemporary sources give a vivid description of the social life of the Europeans in Serampore and a detailed building archaeological investigation may provide evidence for a possible complete reconstruction of the original appearance of the building.



2009. Condition of the building.

Cluster of villas at T. C. Goswami Street

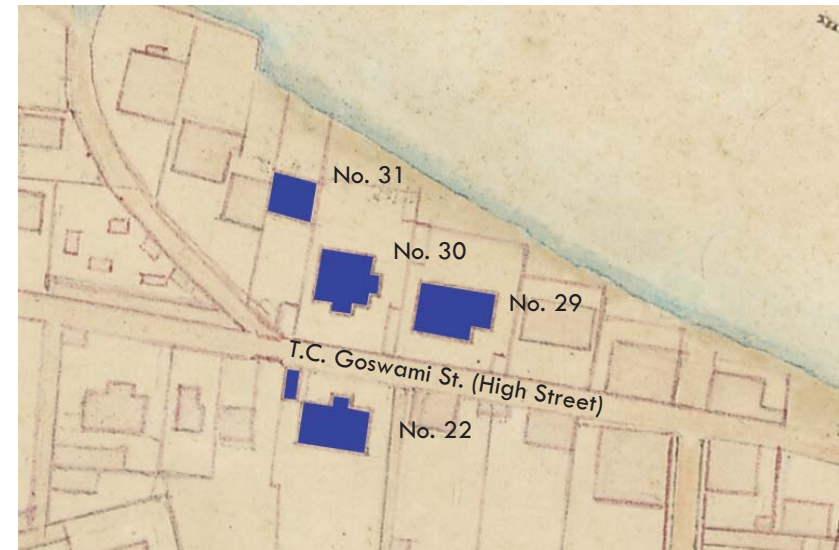
The T. C. Goswami Street is stretching eastwards from the triangular square in front of St Olav Church and continues in the William Carey Road along the riverside. Known as High Street during the Danish period it was the most prominent street of Serampore lined by the rich brick-built European villas. The neo-classical architecture was characterized by the plastered and whitewashed facades giving a stately appearance of the villas situated within large gardens and surrounded by protective walls marked by decorated pillars at the gateway.

Many contemporary travellers noted the pleasing order of the streets and the fine villas, adding a specific character to Serampore. The Bengali traveller, Bholanath Chunder, who visited Serampore in 1845, wrote for instance:

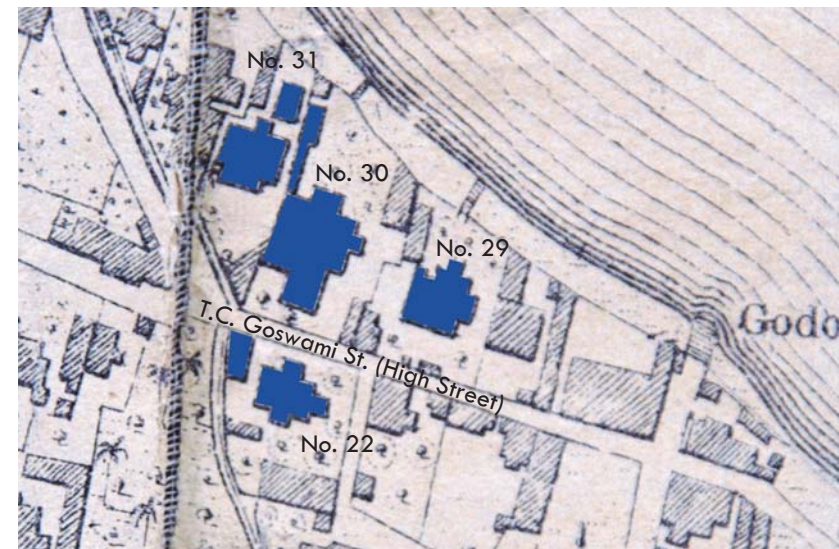
‘Serampore is a snug little town that possesses an exceeding elegance and neatness of appearance. The range of houses along the river makes up a gay and brilliant picture. The interior keeps the promise which a distant view has given. It is the best-kept town in India. The streets are as brightly clean as the walks in a garden’ (Chunder 1869 p. 6).

One example of the 18th century European villas was documented by the Danish architect Ib Andersen in 1949 as part of a survey of Danish architecture in the former Danish colonies (see Brøndsted 1952). Described by Sten Nilsson in 1969 as ‘the House with the Monkey’ named after the last inhabitant, the house was later demolished to give way for the construction of a new Post Office next to the St. Olav Church (Nilsson 1969 p. 73). Built to one storey with a perfect symmetrical layout and a colonnaded veranda along the façade, the house represents a functional design that is

1827. (1827. Thompson).



1860. (1810. Hammer).

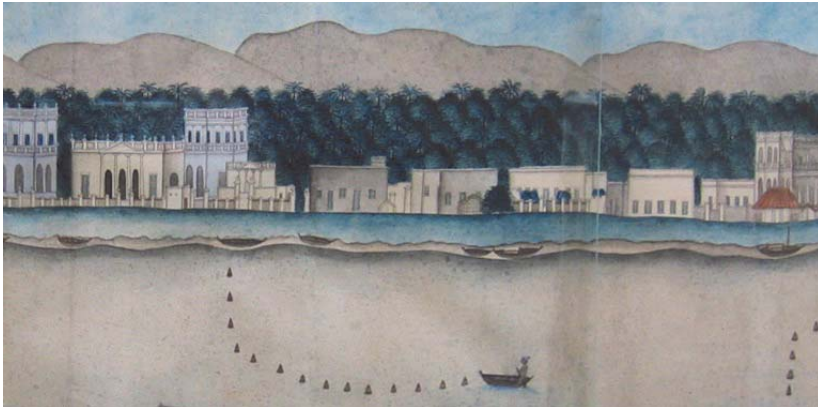




1827. (1827. Thompson)

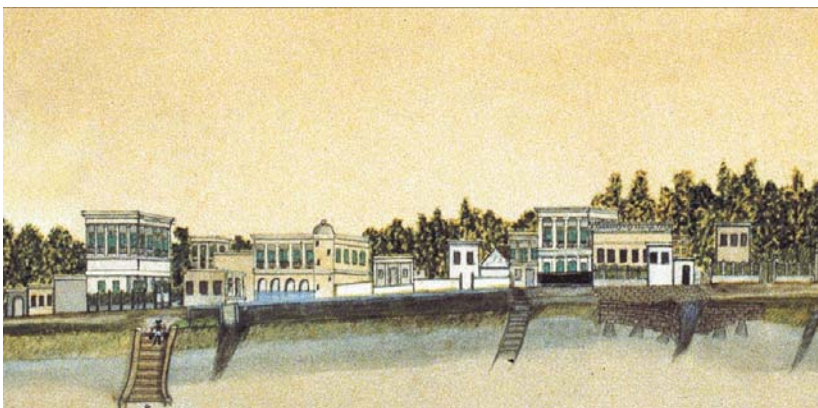
well adapted to the tropical climate. The architecture also resembles the original design of the Danish Government House before it was enlarged.

Most of the 18th and early 19th century European villas have been completely demolished over the past 30-40 years. The buildings have become obsolete for one reason or another and they have been abandoned or redeveloped by their owners. As a result of speculation in property development, and due to the demand for new housing to the fast growing population, many of the villas have been replaced by new apartment blocks or public buildings.



C. 1800. Section of coloured drawing by unknown artist (MMD).

However, wedged between the 4 to 5 storied concrete buildings some fine examples of colonial architecture can be found in different parts of the town. Despite their ruined condition, especially four villas situated along T.C. Goswami Street provide a vivid impression of the character of the original townscape in the early 19th century, and together they represent an architectural and historic ensemble of high significance that qualifies for conservation, including the outside areas that are an integral part of the setting.



1810. (1810. Hammer).

It is known that the villas were built and taken up primarily by European merchants, coming from the surrounding areas of British Calcutta and French Chandernagore, however, to give a detailed history including identification of ownership of each house requires a thorough research of the extensive records at archives in India, Denmark and Britain. Therefore, the following description focuses on the present condition of the houses and adds little to the history of the individual buildings.

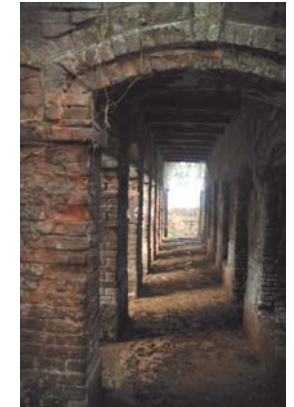
T.C. Goswami St. No. 31

Coming from the Government Compound and walking down T. C. Goswami Street, the first house is located at the corner of Mahatma Gandhi Road. The plot is rectangular and facing on to the river. The house has a colonnaded veranda at the front facing towards the street. The front part is used as quarters for the local traffic police and the remaining part is in ruin while the garden towards the river and the side wing is used as a cow shed. On the neighbouring plots immediately to the west is a large, new apartment block that diminishes the original qualities of the open garden. The main structure of the villa probably dates back to the early 19th century. It appears on Thompson's map from 1827 as a two storied building and it is built with the large brick size that came in regular use in Serampore from about 1800.

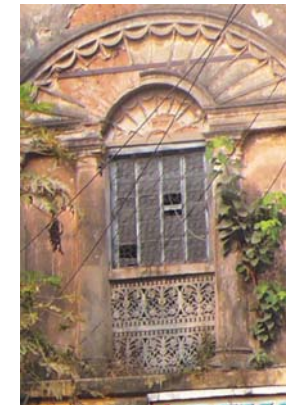
T.C. Goswami St. No. 30

The adjoining villa to the east, T.C. Goswami St. No. 30, is situated at a long, narrow plot facing on to the river. Now accommodating several families the original design has been compromised by alterations and later additions. The 1827 map shows the original plan of the house with square plan and verandas to two sides. A prospectus from the same map shows a large two storied house situated within an open, green garden. Later the house was further enlarged by adding a new wing, which can be seen on the plan from 1861. Still the villa contributes to an attractive historic environment together with the neighbouring houses.

2009. Condition of the building on T. C. Goswami St. 31.

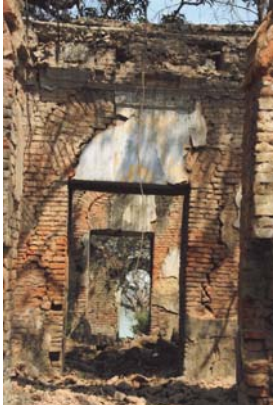


2009. Condition of the building on T. C. Goswami St. 30.





2009. Condition of the building on T. C. Goswami St. 29.

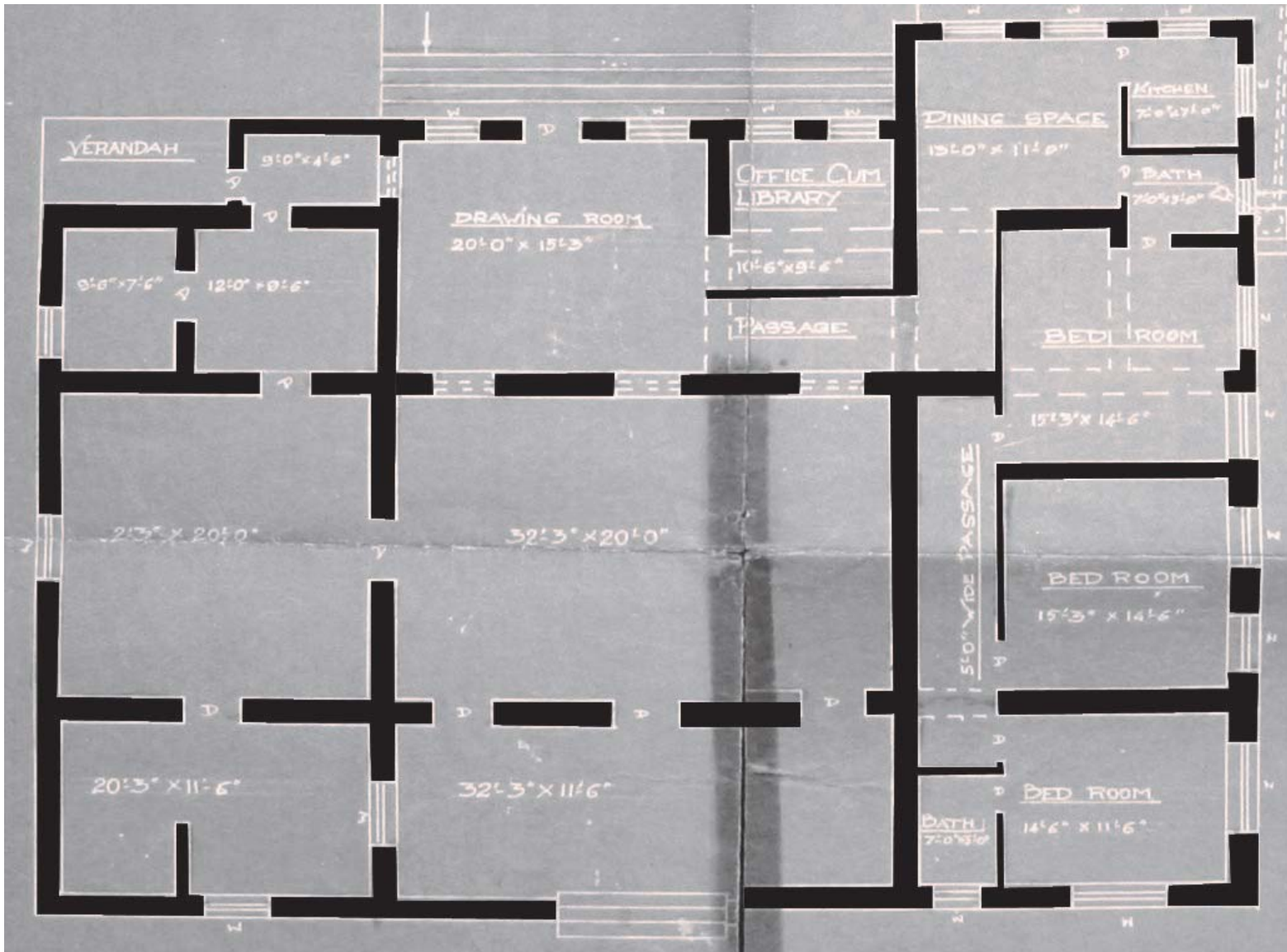


T.C. Goswami St. No. 29

The villa on T.C. Goswami Street 29 has at least since 1947 been the private property of the Goswami family and occupied first by the principal of Bengal Textile College and later the by the women's department of the same college (Serampore Municipality Records, 'General Revision of Assessment List in the year 1947-48'). The house is now in ruin and only a handwritten sign in Bengali indicates the former use as an educational institution.

The building, with its simple symmetrical plan in one storey, is one of the best examples of colonial architecture in Serampore dating from the second half of 18th century. The prospectus from 1827 indicates that the house has maintained its original appearance, representing a fine example of the modest European houses of the early colonial period as compared to the later mansions of a more ornate design in two storeys. The layout with a central hall, two side rooms and a veranda is very similar to that of the former Danish Government House when it was built in 1771.

The property has recently been parcelled out and parts of the plot have been sold to the neighbouring boarding school, the Holy Home. The future of the remaining property including the ruined building is uncertain.



Plan of the villa on T. C. Goswami St. No. 29. The plan was drawn in connection to some proposed alterations and additions of the building probably sometime in the 1990s. (Print in private ownership).



2009. Condition of the so-called Bore House on T. C. Goswami St. No. 22.



T.C. Goswami St. No. 22

The so-called Bore House at T.C. Goswami St. No. 22 is situated at a large site to the south of the street. According to the Municipality Records, the house was occupied by Albert, Norman, George, Samuel, Daisy, Steela and Grace Bore in the period between 1947 and 1974 (Serampore Municipality Records, 'General Revision of Assessment List in the year 1947-48; 1953-54; 1973-74').

The large mansion is shown at the map from 1827 and with some alterations also at the map dating from 1861. Parts of the structure are built with the small size *lakbore* bricks, indicating that the construction of these parts originate from the 18th century. There are two gateways, both with decorated pillars, that made it possible for carriages to enter directly at the main veranda and leave again without turning around. The impressive house is in a ruined condition and the large garden serves as cricket field for the youngsters. All the architectural elements have, however, been preserved and the building has maintained its authentic architectural qualities that would qualify for restoration.

Indian buildings

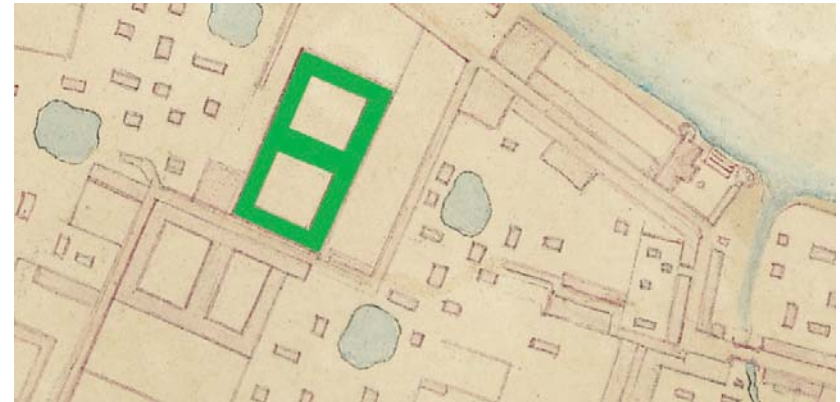
The Goswami Rajbari (palace)

The open land to the west of the Danish canal was developed into a residential area with the arrival of the Goswami family in mid 18th century. Being the most influential Indian landlords in Serampore, they built large residences for the extended family. Surrounded today by the dense urban fabric, especially three significant building complexes originating from the Danish period are preserved with an authentic appearance that qualifies for conservation.

The Goswami Rajbari (palace) was built around 1800 (construction work was possibly started in 1794) by Raghuram Goswami, who had earned a large fortune on private trade. His father, Harinarayan, had laid the foundation of the family's wealth when he had functioned as the *Diwan of Customs* (collector) under the Danish East India Company during the heyday of the trade in Serampore. When the Danish King planned to sell Serampore, Raghuram is even said to have offered to buy the town for 12 lakhs of rupees, however, this was not allowed by the British Government (O'Malley 1912, p. 317).

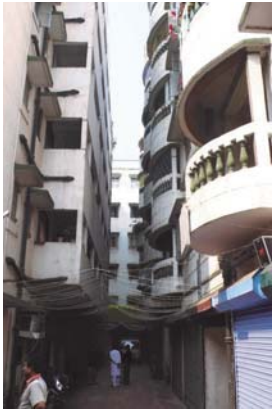
On the 1827 Serampore map the Rajbari appears as two interrelated structures including four large open courtyards. Originally used by the extended family, the complex had about 400 rooms and the building was extended whenever it was required. According to the family story, it seems that various family members

1827. (1827. Thompson).



2009. The 'Shila Ghat' immediate to the west of the 'Danish Canal' is preserved in spite of encroachment from high-rise apartment buildings. The ghat is shown above on Thompson's map from 1827 (see above).





2009. New constructions on the site of the former palatial house, 'Rajendra Smriti'/'Bhagat House', that was previously owned by the Goswamis (left).

Demolition of one of the 19th century buildings on the western side of the 'Danish Canal' (right).

came into disagreement and subsequently moved out of the common family residence in favour of building their own individual homes in the neighbourhood. Some of these large mansions, built in an ornate style according to an eclectic taste heavily influenced by a mixture of European and Indian architectural elements, still exist; others are demolished to give way for new concrete apartment blocks.

Apart from its function as residential house for different descendants of the Goswami family, parts of the Rajbari is rented out to institutional use, e.g. an English medium school and a computer school. The large open space in front of the building provides a recreational space for the public and serves as a playground for the schools nearby. In 2008 the Rajbari was declared a heritage building by the West Bengal Heritage Commission, which means that no alteration or demolishing of the building are allowed without prior permission (Serampore Municipality Records. 'Heritage Listing 2008').



2009. Examples of still existing mansions in the former Goswami area. New apartment blocks are constructed where the open gardens use to be and tend to obstruct the view to the older buildings.



The Rajbari northern complex

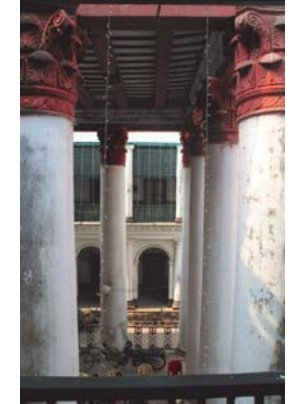
The front part of the northern complex seems to have been changed at different times with each addition representing varying classical architectural styles ranging from plain Tuscan to a more elaborate composite order dominated by fluted shafts and rich ornamental capitals of Corinthian order. The interior is even more elaborately enriched with multiple mouldings and stucco decorations.

The main entrance leads to a courtyard that has been turned into a hall with the addition of a roof supported by masonry columns of the Corinthian style. The hall, called *Chandini*, serves as a community space for marriage functions and festivals. To the north is a well known temple housing the deities *Radha-Madbav Jen*. On the first floor a room is preserved as a sort of family memorial museum, exhibiting easel paintings that portray some of the ancestors of the Goswami family.

2009. Condition of the northern complex of the Rajbari.



The 'Chandini' hall.



The temple (left) and a portrait of family members at display in the Goswami memorial room (right).





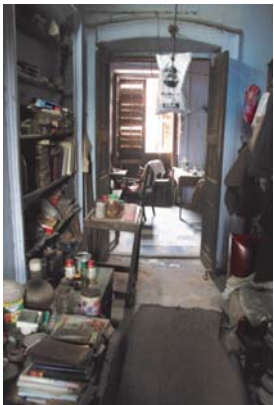
2009. The main façade of the southern complex of the Rajbari.

The Rajbari southern complex

Only the front wing and the main façade of the southern part of the complex are preserved, while the rear parts have collapsed, leaving heaps of debris in parts of the former courtyard. 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.



The remaining part of the open courtyard in the southern complex.



A room in the southern complex (left).

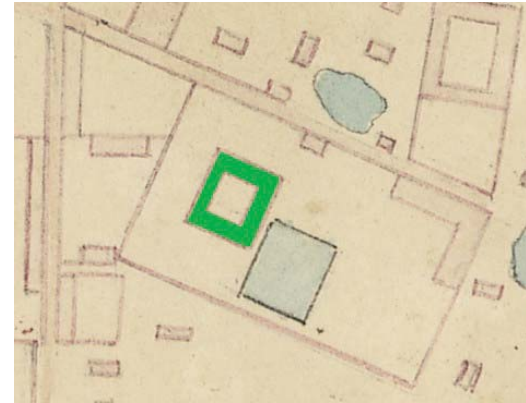
The open courtyard and the collapsed part of the western wing of the southern building complex (right).

The Goswami courtyard house

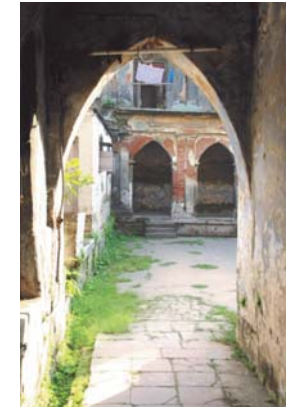
Situated to the south of the Rajbari, this beautiful courtyard house in two stories has maintained a unique authenticity in its completeness as well as in detail. The location with an open space in front of the building and green space with a tank to the rear is exceptional in Serampore due to the otherwise high density of buildings.

The organisation of the house with an open, covered space for worship and public gatherings inside the private house represents a rare type of building. The present condition is precarious, however, and the stability of the construction is under threat from weak foundation that will require special efforts to ensure a timely conservation.

1827. (1827. Thompson).



2009. Condition of the courtyard house.





1827. (1827. *Thompson*).

The Dey residences

The Dey family was, together with the Goswamis, among the prominent families in Serampore during the Danish period. The Deys founded their wealth on private salt trade with the East India Company and acquiring of landed property (O'Malley 1912, p. 316). Several interesting houses dating to the colonial period and still owned by the family are located along the present Dey Street in the south-western part of town.



2009. *Condition of some of the Dey residences on Dey Street.*



Miscellaneous heritage features

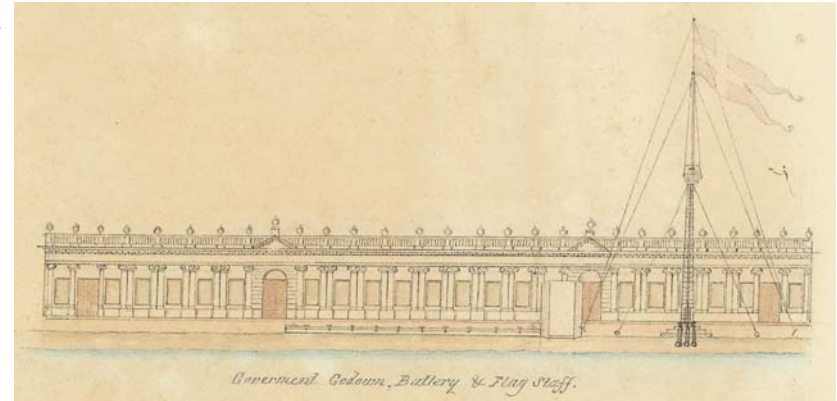
Nisan Ghat: Saluting battery, flag staff and guard house

The many *ghats* (ramps and steps leading down to the river) along the riverside provide a specific quality to the environment in Serampore, fulfilling both a practical function as well as providing an aesthetically appealing sense of the close relationship to the river.

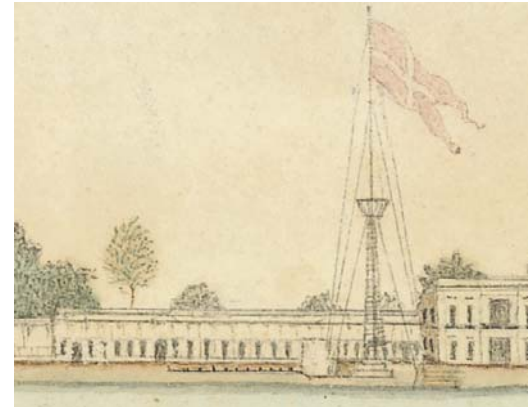
The most prominent *ghat* during the Danish period was today's Nisan Ghat. This functioned as the main landing place for merchandise and provided the direct connection between the river and the former Danish Government compound. Located immediately behind the *ghat* was the Danish government godown, as it appears from the early maps and drawings. This large 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 (see plan on page 25). On this a series of mural paintings from the 1990s depict sceneries of Serampore's history, providing a popular reading of past events that collectively form the specific identity of the place (see Ghosh 1996).

The significance of the Nisan Ghat in the Danish period was further emphasised by a battery of saluting cannons, a flagstaff and a guard's house. The battery was used exclusively for ceremonial purposes on special occasions, as it was witnessed by a local correspondent in 1818 and reported to the British press:

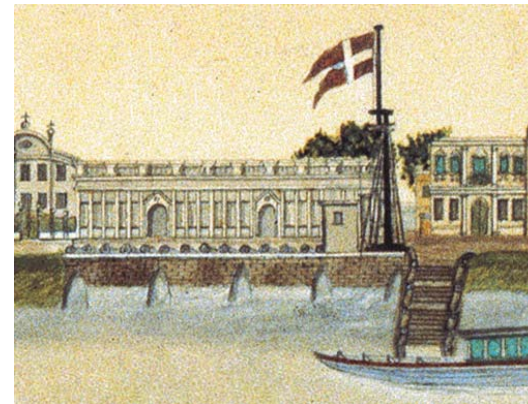
Elevation of the Danish government godown, battery and flag staff (1827. Thompson).



Prospect of the government godown, battery and flag staff (1827. Thompson).



1810. (1810. Hammer).





2009. Nisan Ghat with the pavilion situated where the Danish flag staff once was.

‘On the 28th ult., being the birth day of his Danish majesty, the hon. Gov. Krefting gave a most splendid ball and entertainment at Serampore, where previous to several other toasts, the health of his Danish majesty and those of the most noble Marquis of Hastings and of the hon. vice-president, were drunk under salutes from the battery’ (NN 1818, p. 543).

This piece of intelligence also provides an insight into the close relationship that developed between the Danish settlement and the British in Calcutta.

The Nisan Ghat itself still exists, whereas the other original 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. The original cannons from the battery have been moved and are kept today inside the memorial ground in front of St. Olav’s Church. A reinstatement of the saluting cannons and flagstaff to their original position would re-establish an important heritage characteristic of Serampore and restore the close connection between the river and the government compound.



A view from the pavilion. Two large trees take up the place of the Danish saluting battery.



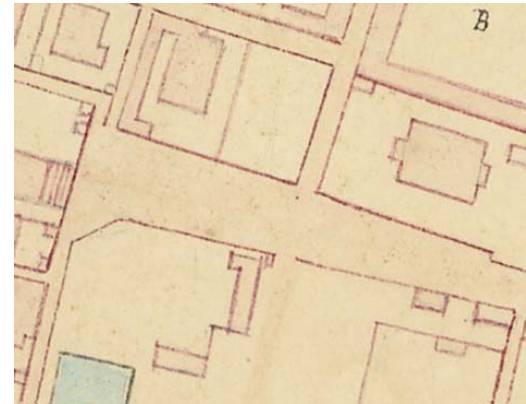
A mural painting on the wall to the SDO bungalow, depicting two guards in Danish service.

Square in front of St. Olav's Church

The funnel-shaped square in front of the gate to the Danish Government compound and St. Olav's Church gives associations to a typical Danish market town. Situated between Nisan Ghat, the main landing place at the Hooghly, and the Danish Government compound, the square formed the central space of the town during the colonial period. It is likely that the layout was planned in conjunction with the construction of St. Olav's Church, considering that the open space provides a full view of the church. The perspective view was further emphasised by an alignment of trees to each side of the square as it appears from early photographs and plans.

Today the square is taken up by Serampore's busy bus terminal and an enclosed memorial ground immediately in front of the church, possibly dating from the 1930s. Apart from the wall around the Danish compound, Serampore had no fortification and the small battery at the riverside was used for salutation only. When the British took possession of Serampore in 1845, the cannons were abandoned until they were finally moved from their original position and put up inside the new memorial ground in front of the St. Olav's Church, where they are still on display. Quite recently the fencing has been changed and the layout transformed into a heart shape including a water basin with full size dolphins and floodlight. The high fence and the tall trees together with the general urban development have blurred the former view of the church. Especially the post office 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.

1827. (1827. Thompson).



1860. (1860. Gastrell).



The funnel-shaped square in front of the main gate to the Danish Government compound and St. Olav's Church gives associations to a typical Danish market town, e.g. the town plan of Aarhus 1796. Plan by C. Heinen (DNA).





1930. The view to St. Olav's Church before the establishment of the memorial ground (Photograph by Holger Rosenberg, NMD) (left).



2009. The bus stand in front of St. Olav's Church and the former Danish government compound (right).



1960. St. Olav's Church and the first layout of the memorial ground with a low fence. (The Royal Library, Copenhagen) (left).



2009. The new memorial ground with the Danish cannons inside (right).



1930. A Danish cannon used as decoration in front of a house before it was placed in the memorial ground (Photograph by Holger Rosenberg, NMD) (left).



2009. The new heart shape memorial ground viewed from the church tower.

Gateway pillars

A number of colonial style gateways, dating from both the Danish and British periods, are preserved throughout today's Serampore at the entrance to various houses. Especially four large gateways along T. C. Goswami Street, with richly ornamented pillars at both sides, are of interest, since they represent the former luxury of the European streetscape.

If restored the gateways would enhance the visual appearance of this section of the street and possibly initiate more awareness and concern for the conservation of the individual historic properties along the whole length of this historic street.

2009. A selection of gateways worthy of preservation.



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