

THE SITUATIONAL RIVALRY: THE BRITISH COLONIAL INTERVENTIONS IN THE INDO-PORTUGUESE HERITAGE IN THE NORTH KONKAN (1774-1947)

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ABSTRACT

The Portuguese Estado da India and the English East India Company were engaged in a series of confrontations from the beginning of the 17th century in India till an alliance treaty between the Portuguese and English monarchies in 1661 made them neighbours in a contested coastal territory in the North Konkan region of Maharashtra. Situational conflicts over territorial, religious, taxation matters continued between them until the extinction of the Portuguese Province of the North (*Província do Norte*) in the hands of Marathas in 1739. Before the Portuguese could realise their plan to reconquer their lost territory, the English East India Company had occupied it by 1774 only to emerge hegemonic after subduing the Maratha Confederacy in 1818. How the Portuguese structures and monuments were treated – first in the Maratha and the subsequent British period –, how the English perceived the Portuguese colonial remains and heritage in the North Konkan from the latter half of the 18th century to the first half of the 20th century, and what was their response to the demand and need for heritage preservation of the monuments of Indo-Portuguese origin in the North Konkan are briefly dealt with in this article. A methodology of conducting detailed archaeological fieldwork and consulting primary and secondary Portuguese, Maratha and British period documents and reports is adopted for this purpose.

KEYWORDS

Portuguese Province of the North | East India Company | British Raj |
Archaeological Survey of India | Documentation

THE PORTUGUESE AND ENGLISH IN THE NORTH KONKAN: A BRIEF HISTORY OF TENSED RELATIONSHIPS

The relations between Portugal and England on the western coast of India were far from being cordial from the beginning of the 17th century. The Portuguese Estado da Índia, which claimed the monopoly of the Indian Ocean trade and enforced it vigorously with the cartaz system, found its hegemony threatened by the new European entrants in the Indian subcontinent – the Dutch and English. It was in the Gulf of Cambay and principally in the port city of Surat controlled by the imperial Mughals that the initial faceoff between these two European marine powers took place in 1612 and 1615 respectively in which the Portuguese suffered defeats. This humiliating debacle before the Mughal governor of Surat had dented the Portuguese claim of marine supremacy and influence in the Gulf of Cambay (Bocarro, 1876; Rawlinson, 1920: 62-63). It led to the establishment of English and Dutch trade factories at Surat in 1612 and 1615 respectively (Akhtar, 1987: 251; Ashfaque, 2006: 271). The next major joint naval action of Dutch and English against the armada of Portuguese naval commander Nuno Alvares Botelho brought them to Portuguese occupied Mumbai in October 1626 and in which the Mumbai Island was ransacked and pillaged (Rawlison, 1920: 67-68). However, the further confrontation between the English and Portuguese was avoided due to the pragmatic approach shown by the then Portuguese Viceroy of India, Dom Miguel de Noronha, who concluded the treaty of peace between the two warring parties in Goa in 1635 (Foster, 1911: 89-99).

Despite this formal treaty of peace, both Portuguese and English engaged in open hostilities on many occasions in the North Konkan of which the beginning can be taken from the formal transfer of the Mumbai group of islands to the English crown by the Portuguese monarchy in 1661. The new Viceroy of Estado da Índia, António de Melo e Castro, who travelled to India onboard the English royal naval fleet and delegation tasked with taking possession of Mumbai, not just formally complained of the ill treatment and disrespect shown to him by the English during the sea journey to the Portuguese monarch Afonso VI and the English king Charles II but also delayed by all possible means the handing over of Mumbai and its dependencies to the English delegation. Waiting for the formal handover of Mumbai, the representative of the English king, Sir Abraham Shipman died in ignominy on a desolate Angediv island, in the south of Goa in 1664. It was not until 1665 that Humphrey Cook, the successor of Sir Abraham Shipman formally took possession of Mumbai, Sion, Mahim and Dharavi islands from Portuguese control (Khan, 1922).

On finding the commercial unviability of retaining the Mumbai group of islands, King Charles II, transferred its possession to the East India Company in 1668. Besides taking possession of Mumbai in 1668 the East India Company also shifted its headquarters from Surat to Mumbai in 1687. Hence, from 1668 to the extinction of the Province of the North in 1739 it was the English East India Company that neighboured Portuguese in the North Konkan. The unresolved issues of managing the huge estates owned by Portuguese *fidalgos* (noblemen) and the Catholic religious institutions, the revenue, taxation and trade duties in the bordering region of English controlled Mumbai and Portuguese controlled Sashti (Salsette) group of islands and Karanja island invited frequent violent clashes between English and Portuguese in the 17th and 18th centuries (Campbell, 1882). The issue took a serious turn when on the instructions of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, Siddi Yakut invaded English controlled Mumbai in 1689 and the English somehow managed to save their possession by offering forgiveness to the Mughal emperor and by paying a hefty fine.

The English governor suspected Portuguese assistance behind the invasion and confiscated the properties of Jesuits in the Mumbai group of islands in 1691 much to the resentment of Portuguese authorities of the Province of the North. The Portuguese responded by imposing an economic blockade over English controlled Mumbai which put the population therein in great distress (Edwardes, 1909).

Apart from the routine frictions in Mumbai and Sashti group of islands over the jurisdictional, economic, religious and trade disputes, matters worsened to the extent of English naval commander Commodore Thomas Matthews thrusting his cane into the mouth of General of the Province of the North, António de Casco e Melo over the Portuguese inaction in the joint Portuguese and English military expedition against Kanhoji Aangrey in 1721. The Portuguese Viceroy Francisco José de Sampaio e Castro also did not escape from the anger of Commodore Matthews at the end of this failed military raid against the Maratha sea strongman Kanhoji Aangrey in Alibag. The English squarely blamed the Portuguese for their betrayal in this military expedition (Downing, 1737: 59). According to the Portuguese version of the incident, angered over the Portuguese betrayal, Commodore Matthews slapped the General of the Province of the North (Mendiratta, 2012: 154). It resulted in the English confiscating all Portuguese properties in Mumbai and Portuguese imposing a commercial blockade of Mumbai which virtually brought them into an open war in 1722. The English specifically complained against the bellicose actions of the General of the Province of the North, António de Casco e Melo to the Portuguese Viceroy Francisco José de Sampaio e Castro which ultimately resulted in the replacement of the General in February 1723 (Downing, 1737; Biker, 1885: 244-342).

The Maratha threat over the Province of the North made the English offer situational assistance to the Portuguese as the increasing power of the Marathas would have been detrimental to their existence in Mumbai. The active English mediation between Portuguese and Marathas came after the latter's invasion of the Province of the North in 1730. The English secretly aided the Portuguese which helped them to retain Thane and Sashti islands against the Maratha attack. A treaty of peace was concluded between Portuguese and Marathas through the English intervention in 1732 (Lobato, 1965: 117-121).

The next English intervention came during the final and conclusive Maratha attack on the Province of the North under the command of Chimanaji Ballal (Chimaji Appa), the younger brother of Peshwa Bajirao I from 1737 to 1739. In this protracted war, Portuguese made allegations of English covertly aiding Marathas against Portuguese by supplying arms, ammunition and war experts, which resulted in the death of General of the Province of the North Pedro de Melo when he was attempting to reconquer Thane from the Maratha control in December 1738. According to the Portuguese, the East India Company was eyeing the Portuguese-controlled Sashti and was in secret negotiations with the Marathas to get its possession following the Maratha victory (Pissurlekar, 1983). The English assistance to the Portuguese in this fateful war was supplying gun powder, manpower for the protection of the fortified Jesuit college in Bandra apart from lending loans. There was heated correspondence between Portuguese and English in which the interim Governor of the Province of the North, João Xavier Pereira Pinto sternly reminded English of how the Maratha idolaters are the common enemies of both Portugal and England in Asia, besides accusing English of aiding Marathas (Forrest, 1885: 25-27). Despite fervent requests for help, the English chose to stay neutral and ultimately witnessed the Portuguese surrendering Vasai to the Marathas in May 1739. Besides providing refuge to surrendered Portuguese forces in Mumbai, the English acted as a mediator in concluding the treaty between Portuguese and Marathas in September 1740. The Portuguese managed to keep Daman fort but had to give up Revdanda and Korlai Forts to the Marathas (Pissurlekar, 1975: 164).

The Portuguese nursed the ambition of reconquering the lost territory of the Province of the North from the Marathas but seldom put in any action to realise this task. In between, changing geopolitical circumstances in the Indian subcontinent had favoured the English East India Company to pursue openly imperialistic ambitions. The Maratha debacle in the Panipat War (1761) and the internal disputes within the Maratha Confederacy paved the way for the English takeover of Sashti and Vasai in 1774 (Campbell, 1882). It is exactly at the same time that the Estado da India was preparing to retake the Province of the North and had deputed an armada under José Sanches de Brito for this task. But Brito could do nothing but protest and witness the English conquest of Sashti and Vasai (Forrest, 1885: 180-181).

The Portuguese continued to express their displeasure towards the English annexations in the North Konkan till 1780 but without any success (Cunha, 1993: 155-156). Except for getting the possession of Nagar and Haveli for the maintenance of Daman from the Marathas in 1783 and 1785 respectively, no further advancement was made to re-conquer the lost territory of Vasai and Sashti by the Portuguese (Pissurlekar, 1983: 229-231).

THE NORTH KONKAN IN THE MARATHA AND THE EARLY BRITISH PERIOD (1739-1818)

The Marathas after conquering the Province of the North carried out alterations, additions, restrengthening and repairing of the older Portuguese fortifications. The signatures of Maratha structural interventions in the major Portuguese fortifications and bastions at Thane, Arnala, Ghodbandar, Tarapur, Shirgaon, Madh Island, Vasai, Kelve-Mahim can be thoroughly read and all are well documented. The European travellers such as Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (a Frenchman), James Forbes (a Scotsman) and Dr. Anton Hove (a Pole) visited the North Konkan in 1760, 1774 and 1788 respectively. These travellers in their respective travelogues described the Portuguese period churches, chapels, large buildings mostly in ruins, and some in active function (Duperron, 1771; Forbes, 1813; Hove, 1855). Anquetil-Duperron specifically wrote about religious tolerance during the Maratha rule and the continuance of Catholic religious practices in Vasai and Sashti islands. He also notes the Maratha construction of a fort in the Danda-Kelve creek and repairs to Tarapur fort during his visit in 1760 (Duperron, 1771: 389).

Vasai, the former capital of the Province of the North, even though conquered by the English East India Company in the first Anglo-Maratha war in 1775 was returned to the Marathas soon, while the other conquered possessions of Sashti, Karanja, Elephanta and Hog island remained with the English (Aitchison, 1909: 21-39). Vasai fell again to the English in 1780 and remained in their control till the Treaty of Salbai was concluded between the English and Marathas in 1782, ending the first Anglo-Maratha war (1775-1782) (Aitchison, 1909: 40-46). The English too, in their rule over the Sashti Island, carried out the structural additions and restrengthening of the fortifications such as at Madh Island. It was garrisoned by the English force from 1774 to 1818 (Campbell, 1882). The Thane fort which was completed and enlarged from the original but incomplete Portuguese fortification by the Marathas in 1738-39 was remodelled and restrengthened by the English and kept in the highest order of defence (Forbes, 1813: 284-285; Hamilton, 1820: 622).

The English conclusively took Vasai along with the other possessions held by the Peshwa following the defeat of the Maratha confederacy in the third Anglo-Maratha war (1817-1819) (Aitchison, 1909). Revdanda which was then included in the dominion of Aangrey of Colaba, formally came under the English rule after the lapsing of the Kolaba State by the East India Company in 1840 (Campbell, 1883). All these possessions in the North Konkan remained under British control till the independence of India in 1947.

1. The fort is now called Pankot and it is situated at the mouth of Danda-Kelve Creek in taluka and district of Palghar in Maharashtra.

THE INDO-PORTUGUESE REMAINS IN THE NORTH KONKAN IN THE EARLY ENGLISH RULE: RECORDS AND DEPICTIONS (1774-1857)

The English possession and rule of the former Portuguese Province of the North can be divided into three phases, the Early period (1774-1818) and the Later period (1819-1857), both under the English East India Company and subsequently the British Colonial period (1858-1947) when the English crown directly ruled over the Indian subcontinent following the Indian rebellion of 1857.

It is during the East India Company's initial rule over Sashti, Karanja, Elephanta and Hog islands and the temporary possession of Vasai that we encounter the first visual and textual recordings of the Portuguese strongholds in the North Konkan coming from the Early period of English occupation (1774-1818). The Vasai Fort features prominently in these depictions as we have the first known drawing of the fort right from the English attack on Vasai in 1780 drawn by Captain Charles Reynolds of the East India Company. The pen-ink and wash drawing² titled "View of the North Face of Bassein at Surrender. December, 11 1780" is of importance as it shows the condition of the fort on the day of its surrender to the English forces on 11th December 1780³.

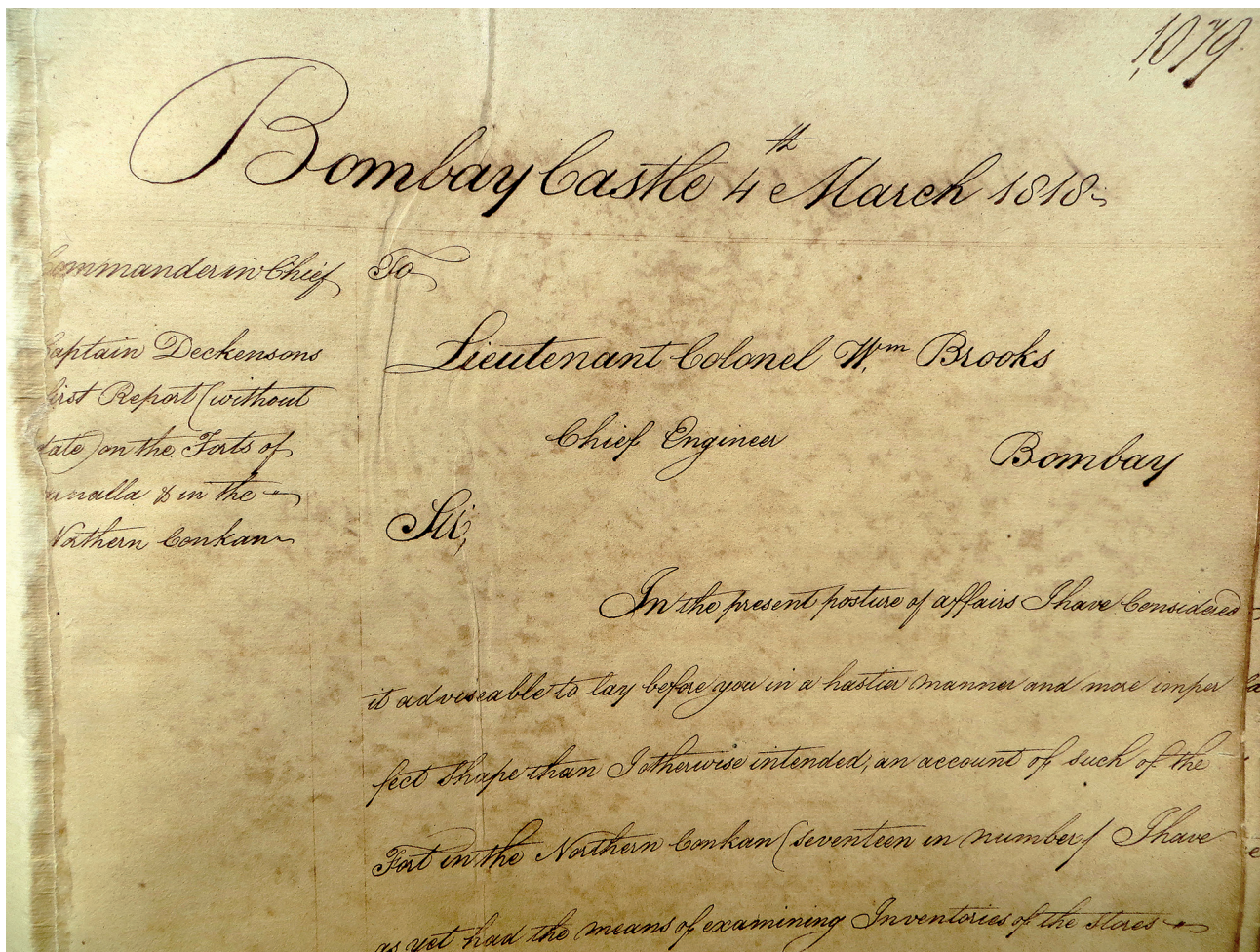


Fig. 01. Lt. Captain Thomas Dickinson's Report on the Forts of Northern Konkan, 1818 (source: British Library, London).

2. Shelf mark – WD4165, Item Number – 4165, the British Library, London.

3. THAKARE, Mayur – *In Ink, Paints and Photographs: Vasai Fort as Seen by the Portuguese and the British from 17th to 19th centuries*, 2014. In: <https://deccancollege.academia.edu/MayurThakare> (Access in 2024).

Following the complete conquest of the North Konkan by the English in 1817, Captain Lieutenant Thomas Dickinson of Bombay Engineers was tasked with surveying and recording the fortifications in the North Konkan in 1818. The report⁴ of Captain Dickinson [fig.01] records in much detail the fortifications⁵ in the North Konkan from his field survey and it is the first of its kind produced during the Early English period. It gives a rare first hand insight into the then existing Indo-Portuguese fortified cities (Vasai), coastal forts (Dahanu, Tarapur, Shirgaon, Kelve-Mahim, Arnala, Parsik, Belapur), towers (Umbargaon, Chinchani, Sopara), the hill forts (Segvah, Asheri, Asava, Kohoj, Takmak) and wooden stockades (Sopara). Among these listed fortifications, the ones at Umbargaon, Nalasopara and Parsik do not survive anymore in their entirety, owing to multiple reasons. The primary being the rising urbanism and reclamations in the British and the subsequent post-independence period. According to this report, most of the forts were in neglected condition for over twenty years before their takeover by the English. Dickinson mentions that apart from Vasai, Tarapur and Mahim forts were of considerable strength and dimension. Curiously, he recommends converting the Vasai fort into a prison. Therefore, this report is important to understand the state of condition of the Indo-Portuguese structures during the formal beginning of the English rule in the North Konkan and the subsequent alterations that they went through. Subsequently, considering the strategic value of Vasai, Arnala and Tarapur forts, they were garrisoned for a short time during the English rule but were soon abandoned (Nairne, 1894).

However, it is in the Later period (1819-1857) of East India Company's undisputed expansion in the North Konkan that we have the varied depictions of the Portuguese forts, church and chapels existing then in the former Province of the North in the medium of paintings and the earliest known photographs. The Vasai fort was subjected to elaborate artistic documentations and we have beautiful paintings and drawings of the fort drawn by the East India Company officials such as Captain James Barton⁶ (1820), George Boyd⁷ (1821) and William Miller⁸ (1828)⁹. However, from 1824 onwards, Vasai Fort was kept in a locked condition and it was in ruinous condition (Hamilton, 1828).

Bishop Reginald Heber during his tours to Mumbai and surroundings, visited Ghodbandar in 1825 and noted that the imposing Portuguese period church existing on the nearby hillock opposite the fortified manor house at Ghodbandar was converted into an occasional residence of the English Governor of Mumbai and his friends. His travelogue contains perhaps the first known depiction of the church and the fortified manor house drawn by him and is titled "Gorabunder" [fig.02] (Heber, 1828: 187-188). According to the report of the Collector of Thane from 1859, this church was not used for the Catholic religious worship since the English conquest of Sashti island and was repaired in 1823. During the repairs, it was supplied with doors and windows (Campbell, 1882). The second depiction of these Portuguese period ruins comes from the watercolour painting drawn by Captain Thomas Postans in 1843 (Santos, 2015). Nevertheless, this early record of repairs did not extend to all Portuguese period ruins as it is from 1833 that the English started dismantling the inner portions of Thane fort to start to use it as a prison from 1838. The outer fortification, anyhow, survived the extensive remodelling with the demolition of inner buildings inside the fort for the construction of barracks and facilities for the prison. The inner portion consisted mostly of the Maratha period structures but also had Portuguese period remains. This imposing alteration was completed by 1876 (Campbell, 1882).

4. Military Diary 314 of 1818, p. 1079-1180. The first report is undated from 1818, the second is dated to 6 February 1818.

5. In total, thirty-one coastal, inland and hill forts are described. Presently, the ruins of Umbargaon tower falls in Umbargaon taluka of Valsad district in Gujarat. The rest are: Dahanu is in Dahanu taluka; Chinchani, Tarapur, Shirgaon, Kelve-Mahim, Segvah, Asheri, Asava are in Palghar taluka; Arnala, Sopara, Vasai, Takmak are in Vasai taluka; Kohoj is in Wada taluka of Palghar district; Parsik and Belapur are in Thane district of Maharashtra.

6. Paintings titled, "Bassein Fort" (Shelf mark – P158, Item Number – 158) & "View in Bassein Fort" (Shelf mark – P158, Item Number – 158), the British Library, London.

7. Pencil drawing titled, "Bassein" (Shelf mark – WD247, Item Number – 19), the British Library, London.

8. Coloured lithograph titled, "Pagoda and Church in Fort of Bassein" (Shelf mark – P2894, Item Number – 2894), the British Library, London.

9. THAKARE, Mayur – *In Ink, Paints and Photographs: Vasai Fort as Seen by the Portuguese and the British from 17th to 19th centuries*, 2014. In: <https://deccancollege.academia.edu/MayurThakare> (Access in 2024).

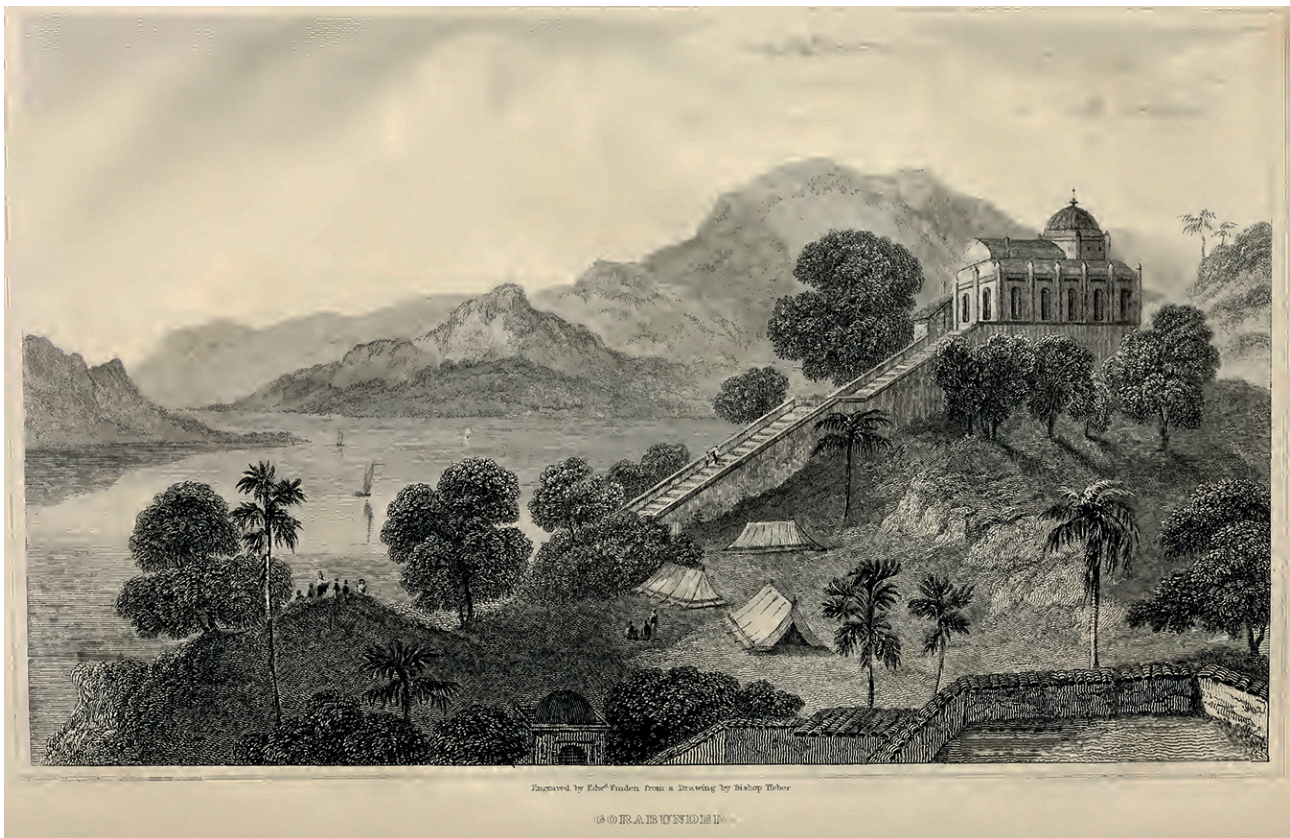


Fig. 02. "Gorabunder" (Ghodbandar), 1825 (source: Heber, 1828).

The first systematic recording and scholarly treatment of the Portuguese ruins comes from W. M. Hearn, who worked as a clerk in the office of the Political Agent in Alibag. In his detailed *Statistical Report of the Colaba Agency* submitted to the Court of Directors of the East India Company in 1851 and published in book form 1854 we find the first detailed descriptions of the ruins and antiquities of Portuguese forts at Revdanda and Korlai. Despite both these localities then falling under the jurisdiction of the Thane district, Hearn gives an elaborate description of them in Part XVI – Antiquities of the report, apart from recording the community benefits granted to the Bhandari community in the Portuguese period. He documents and records fourteen inscriptions in Revdanda and Korlai forts, besides providing their English translations. Moreover, he provides the first available drawing of the Franciscan church and convent of Santa Bárbara with its splendid tower [fig.03]. He writes that the tower was then 96 feet (29.250 meters) high and notes seeing the chapel with its intact arched roof containing sculptures of the crucifixion, the ascension and the incarnation in 1844. The said roof had fallen by 1851. Interestingly, he records about the existence of the round tower which belonged to the wall surrounding the fortified town of Revdanda. The inscription on the said tower recorded its construction in the year 1688, during the viceroyship of Francisco de Távora. From this description, it is apparent that one of the towers belonging to the Portuguese period fortified church of Madre de Deus in the camp of Chaul was in existence when Hearn wrote his report (Hearn, 1854: 110-113). Some of the inscriptions and monumental ruins mentioned by Hearn are not traceable in the present and thus, this epigraphic data provides valuable information about the structural evolution and expansion of the Revdanda fort in the Portuguese period.

Meanwhile, the English authorities attempted to revive industry in Vasai fort by leasing the land inside the fort for a sugar factory first in 1830 and second in 1852. In 1852 the Portuguese period church of the Nossa Senhora da Vida (Our Lady of Life) was converted into a sugar factory. However, on both occasions, this enterprise failed and the place was left desolate. The space between the Maratha period temples and the above-mentioned church was dug up to build an L-shaped water reservoir for the purpose of a sugar factory. Coupled with these structural

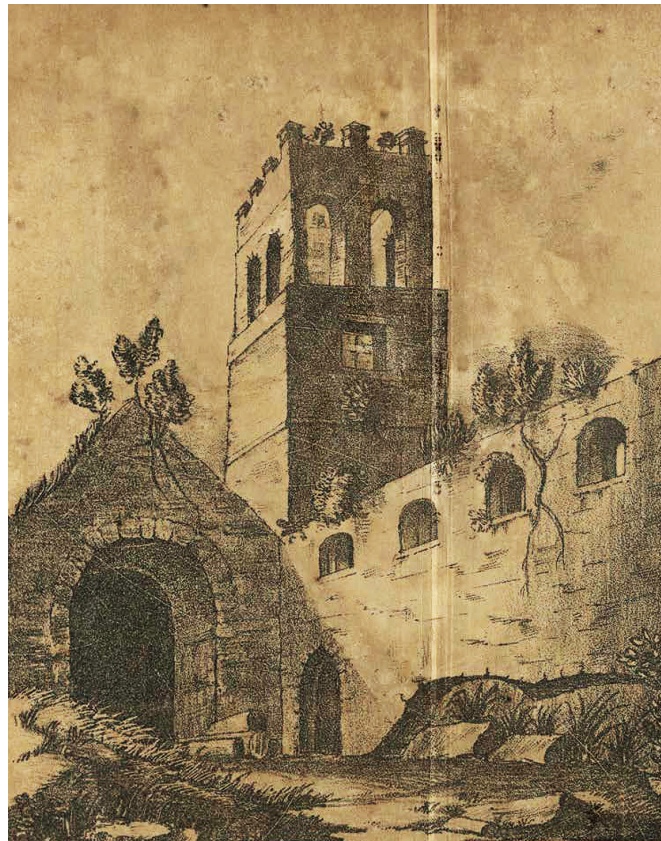


Fig. 03. “Steeple of the Principal Chapel in the Fort” (Revdanda), 1851
(source: Hearn, 1854).

interventions, in 1856 the fortification was bisected on the North-Western and South-Eastern sides respectively to make a road leading to the coastal landing place (Campbell, 1882). Both these structural interventions carried out under the rule of the East India Company in the fort can be seen even today. It is important to note that there was no standard policy or legal framework for the protection or preservation of the cultural heritage in the Bombay Presidency back then¹⁰.

The last years of the East India Company rule in India witnessed the introduction of photography as an advanced method of recording and documentation, especially for antiquities and ancient monuments. The colonial Bombay, being one of the epicentres of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent, had openhandedly welcomed and embraced this new technique and even as early as 1854 had the Bombay Photographic Society with two hundred members (Desmond, 1985: 52). It is during this last phase of East India Company’s rule that we start finding the extensive photographic documentation of the Portuguese ruins in the North Konkan taken up by the photography enthusiasts and officials of the Company. The pioneering work in this regard was done by Charles Scott of the Bombay Engineering Department who captured the first known photographs¹¹ of Vasai fort in 1857. His photographs present the dilapidated and vegetation-covered ruins of St. Thomas Cathedral, Jesuit College and Church, Church and Convent of Augustinians and Church and Convent of Franciscans inside the fort¹².

10. Comparably, the Bengal and Madras Presidencies had enacted Bengal Regulations XIX of 1810 and Madras Regulation VII of 1817 respectively which are considered the first antiquarian legislations in the country. According to these legislations, the British Government could intervene if it sees any public building under a threat of misuse. However, it could not act in the case of a private property.

11. Charles Scott made eight photographs of the ruins of Vasai fort and the surroundings. Presently, they are in the collection of the British Library, London.

12. THAKARE, Mayur – *In Ink, Paints and Photographs: Vasai Fort as Seen by the Portuguese and the British from 17th to 19th centuries*, 2014. In: <https://deccancollege.academia.edu/MayurThakare> (Access in 2024).

UNDER THE BRITISH CROWN RULE (1858-1947): DOCUMENTATION, PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION

Following the debacle of the 1857 rebellion in India, the rule over the Indian subcontinent was taken over by the British crown. In the British Raj, the prolific photographic documentation of the monumental ruins in Vasai and Chaul continued. The next set of photographs¹³ of Vasai fort comes from William Johnson who belonged to the uncovenanted civil services of the Bombay Government. He is also perhaps the first to photograph the Portuguese ruins at Ghodbandar¹⁴. This overall photographic work of William Johnson spans from 1855-1862 and appeared in his three volume work *Photographs of Western India*. In Vasai fort, Johnson photographed the ruins of the Church and College of Jesuits, Church and Convent of Franciscans, Church and Convent of Dominicans, St. Joseph Cathedral apart from the entrance to St. Sebastian fort, the Maratha period Vajreshvari temple, the L-shaped water reservoir, the palace of the General of the North which appeared in photographic form for the first time¹⁵. Whereas in Ghodbandar, the Portuguese period church which by this time was converted into the residence of the Collector of Thane, was clicked from the backside. More striking are the ruins of the fortified manor house and the Maratha period bastion [fig.04] which existed on the hillock on the North-West of the church. Here we see that the structure has become roofless and has an impressive arched colonnade at the front. The careful observation of William Johnson's photographs of Vasai fort and those that appeared of the same monument in the book of Goan Historian J. Gerson da Cunha in 1876 shows that Cunha used the photographs of Johnson's in his pioneering work on the history of Chaul and Vasai (Cunha, 1876). However, it is during the similar time (1850-1870) period that another collection of photographs of Vasai fort ascribed to the famous English photographer Francis Frith¹⁶ emerges. It is not known if Frith had photographed the ruins through his firm or had simply acquired these photographs from a now unknown collaborating photographer. A closer comparative study of the photographs of Johnson's and Frith's collection reveals that the collection of Frith is of a later date¹⁷. It appears that Cunha had utilised some photographs of the Vasai fort in his book from the Frith's collection too¹⁸. This initial curiosity in documenting the Portuguese ruins in the North Konkan, however, did not necessarily mean any serious urge of the British authorities to protect or preserve them. And by 1860 we see that the interior of the Vasai fort was leased for a period of thirty years to Major Littlewood in 1860. The lease opened the commercial cultivation inside the fort (Campbell, 1882).

With the individual efforts in full sway to make sense of India's age-old culture and civilization in which Europeans and Indians participated with equal zest, the British government was made to sensitise and be responsible for the preservation of the country's heritage, resulting in the enactment of "Act XX" of 1863. Section XXIII of the said act authorised the Government to intervene to "prevent injury to and preserve buildings remarkable for their antiquity or for their historical or architectural value". However, it was not until the foundation of the Archaeological Survey of Western India under the stewardship of Dr. James Burgess in 1874 that a definite step by the Bombay Government towards recognising the archaeological potential of the region was taken. This scheme of archaeological survey of the Western region was initially sanctioned for the period of three years at the annual cost of Rs. 13,000/-.

13. William Johnson clicked eight photographs of the various monuments in Vasai fort. At present, they are in the collection of the Southern Methodist University, Dallas, United States of America.

14. Three photographs of Ghodbandar and two specifically of the Portuguese period church and the fortified manor house were taken by William Johnson. In present, they are in the collection of the Southern Methodist University, Dallas, United States of America.

15. THAKARE, Mayur – *In Ink, Paints and Photographs: Vasai Fort as Seen by the Portuguese and the British from 17th to 19th centuries*, 2014. In: <https://deccancollege.academia.edu/MayurThakare> (Access in 2024).

16. Sr. No. 4406 – 4412, Presently in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

17. For example, the stone paving of the water reservoir's embankment near the Maratha period Vajreshvari temple is fairly in good order in the Johnson's collection whereas in the Frith's collection, it appeared to be broken and in disorder.

18. Compare: 1) Frith's Collection Photo nos. 4408, 4409, 4410 & Bassein – One of the Squares of the Jesuit's Monastery, Bassein; 2) Ruins of the Chapel of Misericordia in Cunha's Chaul and Bassein – Ruins of the Captain General of the North's Palace Garden.



Fig. 04. "Gorabunder, near Bassein, View near Collector's Lodge" (Ghodbandar), 1855-62 (source: Southern Methodist University, Dallas).

The duration of the operation was extended for another two years though (Roy, 1953: 19). Before this, despite the existence of Bombay Literary Society¹⁹ and the presence of many notable cultural and heritage enthusiasts and scholars in Mumbai, there was no institutional setup founded by the provincial government of Bombay to look specifically after the cultural heritage of the area. Just three years before, in 1871, the British Government of India had established the Archaeological Survey of India under the leadership of Major-General Alexander Cunningham²⁰, who served as the organisation's founder Director General. But the newly founded organisation didn't enjoy exclusive jurisdiction over the entire country. Instead, a confused arrangement of administration and policymaking resulted in the formation of separate archaeological surveys in different parts of the country, the northern region under the direction of Cunningham himself, the Western now under Burgess and the Southern Archaeological Survey founded later in 1881 and placed under the charge of Burgess. Surprisingly, these early institutional formations had no place for conservation of the monuments but had the survey and explorations in the most priority list (Keay, 2011).

19. Founded in 1804 by the initiative of Sir James Mackintosh. In: <https://www.asiaticsociety.org.in/index.php/about-us/history-asiatic>.

20. Alexander Cunningham was first appointed as the Archaeological Surveyor for the Archaeological Survey of Northern India by the Government of India in 1861. This contractual appointment continued till 1865.

Following the basic principles of making detailed inventories of the archaeological sites and monuments with their plans, illustrations and photographs, Burgess plunged into action after he received orders from the Government of India to prepare the list of antiquarian remains in the Bombay Presidency, Sindh and Berar in 1875. But in reality, to execute such mammoth tasks, he had no assistant or staff trained in Archaeology or Architecture or History as no permanent staff was sanctioned to him by the Bombay government. He had to coordinate with the local administration (principally the Revenue and Education Departments along with others) to receive necessary details from respective areas. How much he had to struggle to extract relevant information for preparation of the list can be read from his lively introduction in *Antiquarian Remains in the Bombay Presidency* published in book form in 1885. In this list, we see that there were twenty Portuguese period monuments featuring from Kolaba²¹ and Thana²² districts apart from six sites²³ temporarily occupied by Portuguese in Thana and Surat²⁴ districts. But at the end, Burgess noted that “only a small proportion of these monuments is conservation or restoration desirable or possible” (Burgess, 1885: i). Meanwhile, the Government of India had enacted the “Treasure Trove Act 1878” to put a stop to rampage treasure hunting prevalent in the subcontinent. Pressed for the deplorable state of historical monuments, the Government of India also independently appointed Major Henry Hardy Cole as the Curator of the Ancient Monuments for a period of three years in 1881. He was tasked with offering the “Government of India and the local governments the advantage of professional advice concerning the restoration and conservation of ancient monuments throughout India” (Roy, 1953: 16). Cole provided the framework for the classification of monuments, which became the standard criteria adopted by the regional Archaeological surveys and ultimately by the Archaeological Survey of India from 1882-83 till 1919. In 1919, the classification was slightly modified to meet the changed circumstances (Ghosh, 1953: 30). It is for the first time that conservation and restoration of monuments featured so prominently in the policy framework of the Government of India which by then was content with relegating the authority for this task (along with arranging funds) to the local provincial governments. Major Cole had classified the monuments in the following categories (Burgess, 1885: ii):

- I. – Those monuments which from their present condition and historical or archaeological value ought to be maintained in permanent and good repair.
- II. – Those monuments which it is now only possible or desirable to save from further decay by such minor measures as the eradication of vegetation, the exclusion of water from the walls, and the like.
- III. – Those monuments which from their advanced stage of decay or comparative unimportance, it is impossible or unnecessary to preserve.

The monuments in the classes I and II were further sub-divided:

- I (a) and II (a) – Monuments in possession or charge of the Government, or in respect of which Government must undertake the cost of all measures of conservation.
- I (b) and II (b) – Monuments in the possession or charge of private bodies or individuals.

However, it was in the tenure of Henry Cousens as the Superintendent of Archaeological Survey of Western India (1890-1910) that the first concrete steps towards documentation, protection and preservation of the Portuguese monuments in the North Konkan formally began. In 1897 the “Revised List of Antiquarian Remains in the Bombay Presidency” was published by Cousens based on the original compilation done earlier by Burgess. In this revised list,

21. Korlai and Revdanda forts.

22. Salsette taluka – Ghodbandar (St. John church, monastery and fort), Montpezir/Mandapeshwar (Old churches, watchtower, convent and caves), Dharavi (fort), Madh/Versova (fort), Bandra (old aguada/fort); Bassein taluka – Bassein/Wasai (fort and churches), Jivdhan (fort, tanks and caves), Mandvi (fort), Agashi (fort at Aranala), Kharbao (fort); Mahim taluka – Kelve and Shirgaon (old forts), Asheri (fort), Tarapur (old fort); Dahanu taluka – Chikhli (old fort), Dahanu and Umbargaon (old forts), Sanjan (fort), Katalwara (old fort), Uran taluka – Uran (two small forts and old churches).

23. Mahim taluka – Kaldurg, Tandulwadi, Takmak forts, Dahanu taluka – Segwa fort, Wada taluka – Kohoj fort, Panvel taluka – Karnala fort.

24. Valsad taluka – Parnera fort.



Fig. 05· Shell Bath, Bassein Fort, 1898 (source: Cousens, 1898-1905)

the monuments were accorded the categories devised by Major Cole and we find that except for Bassein fort which was granted II (a) and Mandapeshvara with II (b), all other monuments were put in III category. The revised list no longer contained the Portuguese structures in Uran²⁵ (Cousens, 1897). As early in 1882 it was reported by W.B. Mulock, the Collector of Thane that the cultivation inside the Vasai fort by the family of Major Littlewood had made the preservation of monumental ruins entirely impossible (Campbell, 1882). When Cousens visited Bassein fort in 1898, the son of Major Littlewood was holding the lease of the entire interior of the fort who, according to Cousens, lived on the spot and took great interest in the buildings. Cousens photographed the monuments²⁶ inside the Vasai fort and wrote in detail about the exquisite Sind tile work in the church of the Jesuits and praised the remains of Shell Bath [fig.05]. The ruins, according to him, were interesting but were fast falling into decay and only the principal ones could be kept in good repair (Cousens, 1898).

After John Marshall took up the leadership of the formerly fragmented Archaeological Survey of India in 1902, this organisation acquired a more centralised character with the ample institutional support of the Viceroy Lord Curzon. With the enactment of "Ancient Monuments Preservation Act" in 1904, the department was now armed with the legal power to protect the monuments and to make provisions for their preservation and conservation,

25. It seems that Portuguese fort at Uran was considerably damaged by 1882 and, according to an entry in the *Gazetteers of the Bombay Presidency – Thana District*, it was broken for building material by Mr. Manuel De Souza, the Mamlatdar of Salsette island in 1850, for construction of Bhimala Pond.

26. Dominican Convent, Jesuit Church, Shell Bath, Franciscan Church, Entrance to St. Sebastian Fort, Sr. No. 1556 – 1563, the British Library, London.

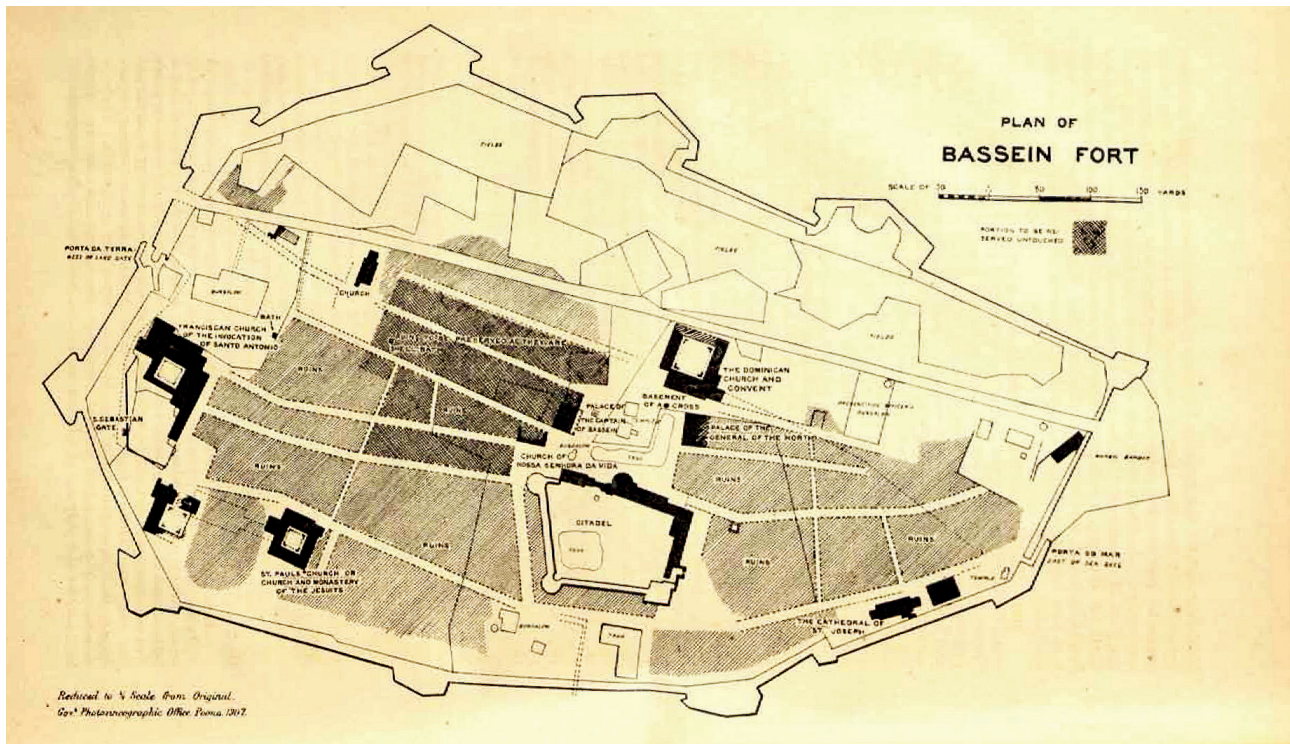


Fig. 06- Plan of Bassein Fort, 1906 (source: Cousens, 1906-10)

to make acquisitions in certain cases of ancient monuments and of objects of archaeological, historical or artistic interest, and to exercise control over the traffic of the antiquities and over excavation in certain areas (Ghosh, 1953: 33). In the following year (1905), Cousens repaired the gateway of the Portuguese fort at Bandra (Cousens, 1905: 14). From 1906 to 1907, Cousens was making tours to Bassein, Revdanda and Korlai and was guiding the officials of the Public Works Department of Bombay Government and the district collectors for the safe preservation of the ruins. In 1906, the first scaled map of Vasai fort [fig.06] was prepared by the Western Circle of Archaeological Survey of India and photographs²⁷ of the monuments in Revdanda and Korlai forts were taken in 1907 (Cousens, 1907). The Agriculture Department of the Government of Bombay was planning and executing a project to convert the interior of the Bassein fort into a botanical garden and Cousens took enough precautions to not let the Agriculture Department do any possible harm to the old buildings inside the fort. With the supervision of the Cousens, six monuments²⁸ in the fort were selected for conservation and estimates amounting to Rs. 7,494/- prepared by the Public Works Department of Thane were approved by the Western Circle in 1907 (Bhandarkar, 1912: 11-12). But owing to a lack of funds, we see that the execution of the project was done in parts and it lingered on up to the next decade. In Revdanda, following the inspection of Cousens in 1908, the proposal of the Collector of Kolaba district to remove the inscriptions in the fort for their safe custody was rejected by Cousens, who undertook special repairs in the Revdanda and Korlai forts (Cousens, 1908: 21). In pursuance to the recommendations made by Cousens to the Government of Bombay that even the monuments classified in the categories of II (a), II (b) and III should be included in the list of protected monuments, the Bassein fort and old Portuguese churches, watchtower and caves in Thane district were declared protected and accorded I (a) and II (b) categories respectively, in 1909, followed by Revdanda fort and monuments²⁹ within the fort in 1910 (Cousens, 1909; Cousens, 1910).

27. Church of the Jesuits, Church of the Dominicans, Ruined building besides the fort, Church of St. Xavier, St. Barbara Tower from South-West and North-West, Inner South or Sea Gate, Inscription in wall of Sea Gate, Sculpture outside the Sea Gate, Korlai fort and inscriptions; Sr. No. 2702 – 2712.

28. i. Franciscan Church ii. St. Paul's Church iii. Nossa Senhora's Church iv. St. Joseph Cathedral v. Dominican Church vi. Palace of the Captain of Bassein.

29. St. Francis Xavier Chapel I (b), Dominican Church and Convent II (b), Walls of the fort II (b), Church and Convent of the Augustinians II (b), Jesuit Monastery II (b), Kothi II (b), the Castle II (b), Porta do Mar & Porta do Terra I (a), St. Barbara Tower II (a), One Buruj II (a).

The successors of Henry Cousens in the Western Circle such as A.H. Longhurst (1911), D.R. Bhandarkar (1912-1917), R.D. Banerji (1918-1923) took serious interest in the protection and conservation of Portuguese monuments in the North Konkan. In Bassein fort, it was the cutting of dense jungle that preoccupied the Survey's initial activities, followed by the debris clearance which resulted in the exposure of the side chamber containing paintings in St. Thomas Cathedral and of the Dominican Convent which was inaccessible earlier in 1912 and 1913 respectively. Whereas in Revdanda and Korlai forts too, removal of vegetation and debris was accorded a priority (Bhandarkar, 1912; Bhandarkar, 1913). Korlai fort was declared protected in December 1913 (Bhandarkar, 1914). The Assistant Superintendent of Western Circle, J.A. Page, who was chiefly appointed for conservation work, made tours to Ghodbandar and Revdanda fort in 1915 and prepared an elaborate report for conservation of the structures therein (Bhandarkar, 1916). In 1916, Bandra fort was declared a protected monument in II (b) category. During the tenure of R.D. Banerji as the Superintendent of the Western Circle, he pressed for the urgent need for regular inspection of the protected monuments by the monument in-charge of the Public Works Department³⁰ after he reported that the protected caves of Mandapeshvar were used as a stable and store room by the padre of the church during his visit in 1919 (Banerji, 1919: 50-51). He also reported that due to continuous neglect, the vaulted roof of the Dominican church partly collapsed in 1921. Simultaneously, a large portion of the fort was freed of the vegetation and trees after the Public Works Department was provided with funds (Spooner, 1924). Exercising better authority to prevent vandalism, on being reported to the Collector of Thane and the Executive Engineer, Public Works Department, Thane about the destruction of remains in Bassein fort for quarrying the building material by the labourers of the local contractor; the contractor was fined one thousand rupees in 1921 (Blankiston, 1927: 170). The annual maintenance and repair works of Bassein fort in the form of vegetation and debris clearance featured in the annual reports³¹ of Archaeological Survey of India till 1928-29. It is not possible to exactly pinpoint the nature of conservation and maintenance work carried out in these protected monuments from 1938 to 1947 due to the absence of the annual reports. Nevertheless, it seems that the routine maintenance and repair works continued till 1947 on all protected monuments like Bandra, Revdanda, Korlai forts and Mandapeshvar caves despite the fund crunches and staff reductions in Archaeological Survey of India during the economic recession of 1931 and the World War II years.

EPILOGUE

From the individual efforts to investigate and document the monumental remains in their immediate surroundings to the colonial government formulating policies and taking the lead role in the protection of heritage of the colonized nation, a long and tedious process was underway in the British ruled Bombay from the first decade of the 19th century, before a definite cognisance was taken in the latter half of the 19th century by the Bombay government. Braz Anthony Fernandez, the author of the much acclaimed work *Armas e inscrições do Forte de Baçaim* cited in the introduction of his book the wanton destruction of the monumental remains of the Franciscan church and monastery, the Captain's Palace and other buildings in the Vasai fort by the unfazed workforce of a contractor in 1921 (Fernandez, 1957: 2). Unlike in the 19th century, when the archaeological sites and ancient monuments were open to plunder and reckless digging, it is described in the earlier segment of the article how the perpetrator was booked for his crime this time by the British government authorities under the relevant sections of the Archaeological Acts enacted for effective protection of the cultural heritage in the then British India.

30. The responsibility of execution of conservation works was given to the Public Work Departments of the respective Provincial Governments and in the Bombay Presidency, it was only after 1945 that Archaeological Survey of India took upon the direct responsibility of conservation and repairs on the protected monuments.

31. The Annual Reports are available up to the year 1936-37.

This incident itself was an indicator of the formative journey of the organisation called Archaeological Survey of India which was established in the 19th century just to list the archaeological and historical sites and monuments but eventually grew up in the 20th century as the national custodian and caretaker of India's cultural heritage spanning from the prehistoric to the early modern period. Protecting the Portuguese monumental remains in the British Raj was itself a sign of mature appreciation of the past, which despite being chequered with centuries old geopolitical rivalries, could not deter the ruling colonial power from preserving the remains of the bygone colonial power. John Keay is right in observing that the British government in India was far ahead even of European countries, except France, in extending statutory protection and the creation of the Archaeological department cum survey to supervise the protection of India's monuments way back in the 19th century (Keay, 2011: 17). The above-listed monuments are still inscribed in the list of nationally protected monuments of Archaeological Survey of India except the Bandra fort, which was declared a state-protected monument by the Government of Maharashtra in 1984³².

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