

Urban Archeology of Kolkata: Geo-Archaeological Perspective and Relevance

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Abstract : *This paper presents the results of a survey of archaeologists' perceptions about urban society their heritage, nature of settlements and as well as its cultural, ethnological sequence, trade, architecture, public outreach and education, also known as urban archaeology. The results obtained indicate that archaeologist views on urban society. Definitely, such initiatives can keep the public interested in archaeology and history, geoarchaeology in the future. This is a review of current work and research priorities in several areas of Kolkata urban archaeology. It is part of the research program initiated by the ASI, Calcutta Circle (2001-2003) and two summary reviews of the decade of archaeological research which followed (CBA 1976; Schofield & Palliser 1981) Urban archaeology is both, archaeology "in the city" and "of the city." Archaeology in the city studies a wide range of prehistoric, 18th- and 19th-century CE sites which, because of their urban environment, are partially disturbed by more recent building or are buried by the dynamic process of building and rebuilding, depositing fills and re-depositing fills which characterize the city. Archaeology of the city studies the process of urban growth and the ethnic or social histories of individuals and families who lived and died in the city. Urban Archaeology requires the experience and expertise to recognize the importance, or lack of importance, of urban features when they are exposed. Nowadays the "Urban Archaeology" provides a way to protect historical buildings and heritage for the future generation based on an honorific past, therefore these Heritages give meaning and identity to the city. In the current research, the scholars firstly introduce the significances of urban archaeology and its characteristics in Kolkata.*

Keywords : *Excavation, Antiquities, Cultural heritage, Archaeological Survey of India*

Introduction

According to Tim Schadla-Hall defines it as “anything that disagrees with the generally accepted facts that archaeologists use to explain and reconstruct the past” (Schadla-Hall:2004). Introducing a definition of Archaeology does not help at all. Moreover, we all know there is not a single archaeological truth and discussion is the best way to create knowledge. So the answer to the initial question is very simple; Alternative Archaeology exists because there is not ‘An Archaeology’, and things that we assume today as truly become ‘alternative’ tomorrow, or a common figure (Eller, 2003). The public, that cannot easily access ‘traditional’ Archaeology, feel free to imagine and use ‘their’ Archaeology as a way to enjoy and participate in something they value.

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Looking into the archaeological wealth of our country, the consciousness for archaeological studies and research on a local and regional basis is gradually dawning upon archaeologist, museologist, scientist, scholars working in the field. It is with this aim that the Archaeological Survey of India has now launched a “Village-to-village survey scheme” of the archaeological remains throughout the country. That the archaeological departments of different universities in India are also developing research on similar lines is a happy beginning. The present article devoted to the study of the archaeological remains of the urban city of Kolkata is a modest attempt in the same direction.

In the effect of globalization and increasing archaeological research and development of archaeological studies, we have seen a different paradigm shift in the archaeological field. In this paper, alternative archaeology, new forms/domain of communication with the public and other professionals which is nowadays is a great asset for further research archaeological domain

In this paper, I also tried to highlight our relations with alternative archaeology or other disciplines of archaeology i.e. *Public Archaeology, Urban Archaeology, Administration archaeology, Geo-Archaeology, Zoo-Archaeology, Environmental Archaeology, Industrial Archaeology, Marin Archaeology/Underwater Archeology, Salvage Archeology, New Archaeology etc.* Urban Archaeology is the study of archaeology in context. This includes social, political, economic and intellectual contexts: a big responsibility for a little sub-discipline. Archaeology is produced and consumed by studying these processes in all their dimensions urban archaeologists are the consciences of the discipline. An urban archaeology case study where communities make use of the past for their own needs in the present as we know Archaeology is the study of human societies through their material remains. One of the main goals of urban archaeology is to facilitate an understanding of archaeological techniques and the results of our excavations through a variety of methods.

The phrase urban archaeology is used to refer to the study of archaeology in towns or cities or of towns or cities. The former, which is a rather narrow definition, describes the practice of archaeology in urban places, particularly “living” urban places (as distinct from towns and cities which were abandoned in the past and are ruinous). Distinguishing it from other branches of the discipline are the particular challenges posed by working in such contexts: excavation is usually in response to development – or redevelopment, more frequently – rather than research-driven, so the locations of sites for excavation and the areal sizes of those sites are determined by the agencies of development; the timetables are often restricted; the stratigraphies are usually very deep, even in cities of modern origin; and preservation is generally by record only. Urban archaeology thus defined is most commonly practised in countries where legislation protects potential.

While arguing the basic parameters of the Heritage Maintenance Programme related to our cultural inheritance, the concepts of ‘Heritage’, ‘Ancient Monuments’, and ‘Antiquity’ come to the forefront. Different Acts passed by the Parliament of India have modified our vision of the above concepts. Public consciousness remains active stimulus in the restoration of the cultural and natural heritage and the living traditions. It is true that our mental reflexes are tuned to the unconditional

submission to our common heritage. We are equally aware that the transmissions of our heritage are manifested through time and space, by living traditions. Public apathy regarding the inner essence of heritage remains a major hurdle for its survival and continuity. One is still in a dilemma regarding the role played by the National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (under the mentorship of the Archaeological Survey of India) in the conservation and documentation of different cultural properties including monuments and antiquities. Since its inception on 15th August 2003, this Mission is yet to validate its desired objective.

It is a measure of the progress made since 2003 that this excavation could now be undertaken. In 2003 urban archaeology was in its infancy, largely unaware of the New Archaeology and preoccupied with problems relating to the need for more financial support, legally supported access rights, surveys of the archaeological potential of towns and architectural and documentary research linked to excavation strategies (progress as filtered and reflected by the ASI). Financial support is always likely to be a matter of concern in urban archaeology, but the other considerations now constitute lower priorities. The archaeologist's right of access to the most important urban sites is now at least partly secured by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, and surveys of the archaeological implications of development have now been undertaken for many individual towns. The need for architectural and documentary research linked to excavation strategies is still important, but now would often be considered as part of a wider approach to investigate aspects of urban society archaeologically, the equal emphasis being placed on the rigorous analysis of many other categories of data.

Aims, Objective and Relevance of Urban Archaeology of Kolkata

Robert Clive house perhaps one of the oldest existing buildings of Bengal, which is steeped in history and mystery and Traveling Back to the Early Days of the British in India. The cultural heritage of each society and did cities have to demolish their cultural heritage in order to develop welfare and modern social life. The effort is to make people aware of the importance and significance of the locality on the city's fringes. This paper tries to find out these questions why do Indian archaeologists ignore the role of the city in archaeological research and why they left this issue to the sociologists, economists, architects and urban planners and civil engineers. So, it is very essential that besides development city preservation of cultural identity in the perspective of Urban Archaeology. It needs a fresh initiative to protect much of its built heritage. It is such kind of place where attract many students and scholars of Indian history for their research works who is kin to desire colonial period history. The renovation work recently stopped due to some unknown reason. Nowadays the traditional archaeological methods are not enough to preserve the cultural heritage of cities. This issue became an important conflict, for many large cities of the world, between protecting the past identity and heritage and the need to be modernized for the future. The state of West Bengal has a distinct culture that has its roots in Bengal's history, literature, music, arts, drama, food, festival and cinema. Each of these components of culture is preserved in the museums and heritage sites in West Bengal. Therefore, before discussing the museums and heritage sites in the state, the form and content of culture and cultural tourism are required to be understood. Since

time immemorial so many rulers came to Bengal and ruled throughout a long period, their thoughts and cultures influenced the states of art and architecture scenario to a remarkable extent. In West Bengal, the architectural heritage has varied styles and enriched with beautiful terracotta works especially in the temple architecture, which is widespread throughout the State. The large numbers of beautiful temples, mosques, churches, monasteries etc. represent nearly all varieties of structural forms of temple architecture.

On the very first view, its look like wondering whether it could be called a historical site or a haunted house, because It was built on a mound surrounded by large trees, a playground and a small temple behind it. From some sources, I came across some interesting facts. Firstly, the house and the mound existed before Clive, but no one was sure when or who had made them. No authentic account of the origin of this building can be found. It is probably one of the oldest existing buildings of Bengal. In 2001, a shard of the pottery taken from the mound attracted the attention of the chief of the Archaeological Survey. His trained eyes detected its immense age, and excavations began. The findings were all set to revolutionize the history of South Bengal. They revealed remnants of civilization over 2,000 years old. History will have to be rewritten because nobody knew this area had a flourishing civilization so long back.

We talked to a few nearby residents, and they were really excited to tell their version. "The house used to the internal portion of the house has also collapsed due to non-maintenance. It needs rapid attention; Kolkata has a lot of historic buildings, including Clive House, which was the country home of Bengal's first governor-general. His Excellency Governor of West Bengal Sri Gopal Krishna Gandhi, in his address to a recent workshop on Dalhousie Square, had made his views known on conservation and restoration. To quote him verbatim: "We Indians cherish our history but neglect our heritage. We commemorate, but do not conserve. We substitute the responsibility of caring with the exhilaration of celebrating. We decorate where we should restore, we? Beautify? Where plain cleaning is called for, preferring to renovate, refurbish, rename and even to replace rather than repair, renew, restore.

Now, depending partly on conjecture and partly on the structure revealed after clearing away the debris, the ASI has made an effort to? Restore? The unoccupied portion So, while the windows on the side facing the playground have been sealed with tin sheets, and water still falls in spurts from a pipe attached to an occupied chamber, the? Restored? The section looks brand new. It has the unreality of a film set. Sri Bimal Bandopadhyay, superintending archaeologist, ASI, Calcutta Circle, Once ready, artefacts from *Chandraketugarh* belonging to a private collections are displayed there.

Significance of the Study

It's a First Government House site to which the excavator conscientiously draws attention throughout the excavations by ASI. The significant factor is that its first urban sites, is the increasing frequency of site events, a key characteristic of sites undergoing changes in the density of settlement. Intensification of land use - and hence city site activity - is a primary indicator of the urban process

at work, and its systematic analysis provides an important focus for the site's interpretation. In a Heritage site Robert Clive house like, where written records are limited, archaeological ex-cavations have to play a major role to discover material evidence to recon-struct its past history. Scientific analysis and systematic interpretation of these remains may shed light on the activities of past societies, to reconstruct the his-tory of its city, people. This excavation was one of the first urban sites undertaken in the City of Kolkata. This excavation entailed the expansion of the City of *Chandraketugarh* Shaft features containing artefacts from the eighteenth century through the early twentieth century that were encountered during the excavations. It is found that richness of archaeological remains and cultural heritage. There is a need for their systematic study to under-stand the past in a better perspective. Though an effective legal framework is needed for any branch to function effec-tively but Implementation of legislations alone cannot protect the heritage of a society. Heritage is created by people and it survives among them. It can also be preserved for future generations with the coopera-tion and active support of the people.

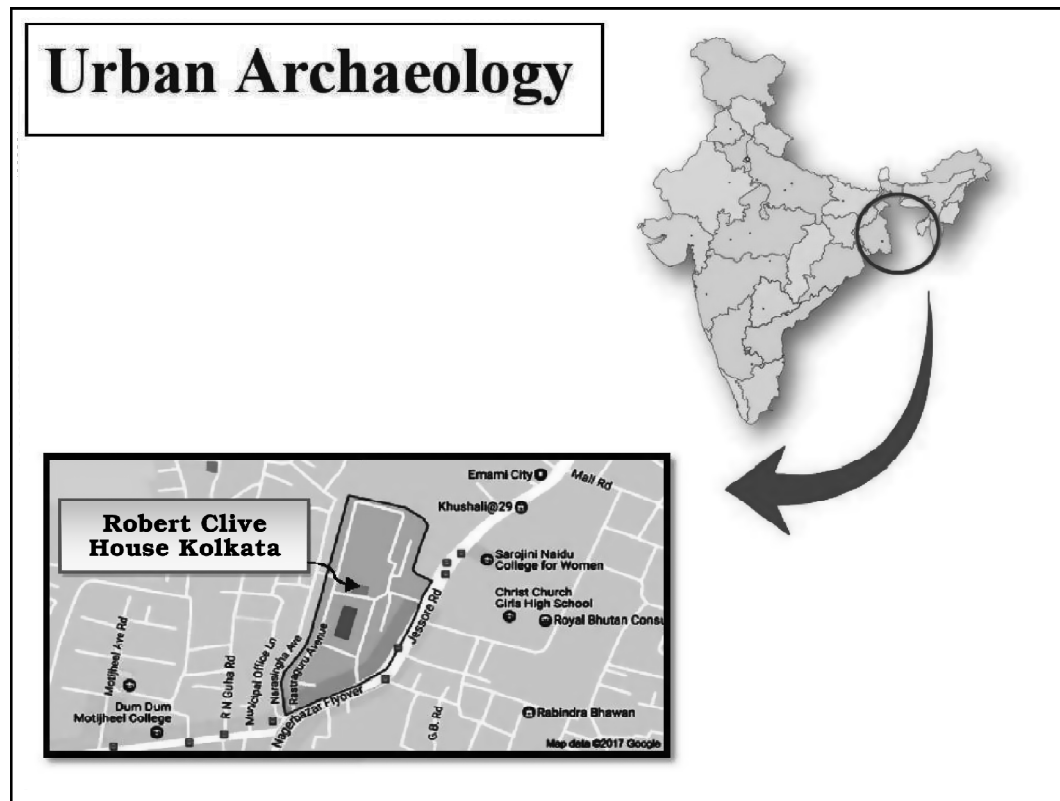


Fig 3. Map of the greater Kolkata showing the mound adjacent of Robert Clive House one of the largest urban excavations undertaken in West Bengal ASI in recent years; now the site of the Robert Clive house, in which some of the mound structures and the artefacts from them are displayed at Calcutta Circle ASI.

Archaeological Development, Findings and Analysis

Clive House (Dum Dum): The locality of the mound just beside the Clive House is situated in the south² 30° 25' N; 88° 45' 37" Clive House (Dum Dum) on the northern extremities of Kolkata. The mound with an extensive scatter of potsherds and other habitational remains had for long been investigated by the local inhabitants as well as historians, amateur archaeologists, and scholars.

In the old days, before the country has been drained, the Great Salt water lake, which lies to the east of Calcutta, ran up as far as Dumdum. At that time the jungle grew, shores of the lake were the haunt of tigers and other wild beasts and its water of duck and teal and innumerable birds. Now it is a wide treeless stretch of low lying level land, the clay soil dry and cracked in the winter months, but flooded in the rainy season, when it springs into verdure and for mile upon mile the rice crop of the villages' waves green. Just beyond this low land lies Dumdum and Dumdum House. (Blechynden 1905:195; see also B. Bandyopadhyay 2016).

Historically, the Dum Dum region along with the old habitational mound of Clive House is associated with the Islamic and colonial periods. The region also has an association with the rise and growth of old Calcutta, and Clive House was actually the collectorate of the local Zamindar. It was already in existence before the sack of Calcutta by Nawab *Siraj-ud-Daula* in 1756, and, much before the arrival of Clive, it served the purpose of a Dutch or Portuguese warehouse in the late 17th and early 18th century. In the context of early historic–early medieval settlement it is apparent that the location of Clive House was suitable for permanent settlement. The low-lying Gangetic delta with patches of the elevated landscape was suitable for settlements, the site of Clive House was possibly one such instance. The adjoining areas of North 24-Parganas particularly towards the north and northwest have also witnessed the spread of old settlements contemporary to Clive House.

The mound at Dum Dum was excavated by the Kolkata Circle, Archaeological Survey of India, under the directorship of S.B. Ota and subsequently by B. Bandyopadhyay during the field season of 2000–1 (IAR 2001–2002). Excavation conducted in four trenches unearthed habitational remains which have been assigned by the excavator to two major periods. Seven layers were identified (ASI, Kolkata Circle, Excavation at Dum Dum Mound 2001–2003)¹²¹. Period I, comprising layers 3 to 7, was assigned by the excavator to a time span ranging from the 2nd century BCE to the 11th–12th centuries CE. According to the report, there is a gap of about three centuries after which the site was reoccupied as evident from period II (comprising layers 1 and 2) assignable to a time frame starting from the 15th–16th centuries CE to the present (ASI, Kolkata Circle, Excavation at Dum Dum Mound 2001–2003). Period I yielded successive floor levels without any evidence of brick or mud walls. The ceramic assemblage comprises BRW, redware, with or without slip, dull redware, grey ware of polished and plain varieties, black ware, and a 'degenerated' variety of NBPW. All the wares are of medium to fine fabrics and different shapes have been encountered. Most of them are

wheel-made while a few are hand-made as well as moulded. Some of the potsherds bear incised decorations comprising horizontal lines, disc or sun motifs, oblique strokes, wavy lines, and so on. A few stamped sherds were also unearthed. Other findings from period I comprise bone discs, antlers, terracotta animal and human figurines, other terracotta objects such as hopscotches, wheels, toycarts, medallions, seals and sealings, plaques depicting animals, mithuna plaques, stoppers, sling balls, lamps, pendants, bangles, amulets and moulds, beads of semiprecious stones, cast copper coins, punch-marked coins with tree, solar, and other symbols, copper antimony rod, iron nails, and arrowheads. 'Some of the terracotta plaques and figurines are exquisite works of art and they bear close affinity with the *Sunga* and *Kushana* styles. Some of the terracotta plaques and figurines show religious affiliation also. One terracotta seal in Kutila Brahmi script of the 8th century CE contains an individual's name—"Samapasasya". (IAR 2001–2002). A stone icon of *Mahisamardini* datable to the 9th–10th century CE was also unearthed (B. Bandyopadhyay 2002) This icon had been carved on a small stone plaque and the entire coastal region of West Bengal has yielded a large number of such small carved stone distribution of sites/settlements and occurrences 89 plaques, mainly depicting the icons of *Visnu* or *Mahisamardini* or *Surya*. Some of the plaques from the Dum Dum mound bear holes. This period also yielded bones of turtles, fish, and birds along with charred rice and pulses. Three skeletons were found from the earliest level of period I. These human remains have been assigned to the 2nd—1st century BCE by the Anthropological Survey of India. Period II did not yield any mud or brick walls; however, different floor levels mainly made of rammed earth, sometimes with lime coatings, were encountered. The ceramic assemblage from period II is more extensive than period I and includes redware, dull red ware, black ware, grey ware, and porcelain wares of diverse shapes. The fabric of the wares generally varies from medium to thick and the wares are mostly devoid of any slip. Other findings include terracotta figurines, plaques, and other terracotta objects, beads of semi-precious stones, iron nails and other objects, and coins issued by the East India Company. The excavation at Dum Dum mound proved the existence of a flourishing urban settlement; possessing characteristic features comparable to Chandraketugarh, a well-known early historic urban centre of West Bengal (see B. Bandyopadhyay 2016).

The excavation has proved that Kolkata was inhabited by civilized people who used materials normally found in an urban settlement. The discovery of various things bearing a close resemblance to many artefacts that hints that the settlement was an extension of *Chandraketugarh*. Source Excavation at Dum Dum Mound 2001-2003, ASI, Kolkata Circle, p.16. P.K Mishra (Mishra, 2014) Director (Eastern Regional) of ASI stated in news "Our findings reveal Kolkata was not a creation of Job Charnock, but it was there much before his arrival, as traces of urban settlement have been found that bears a close resemblance with those found in an urban settlement at *Chandraketugarh*." Clive House and Bethune College are indeed two important sites which yielded a good number of antiquities related to the cultural heritage of ancient Kolkata. Unfortunately, both the sites remained ill report. It is very difficult to reconstruct the past history of these most important sites and their bearing with the other sites of coastal Bengal including their association with port towns of *Gange*

(generally identify with site *Chandraketugarh* and *Tamralipta* (modern Tamluk). On the other hand, we have to know the antecedent stage of the ancient villages of *Gobindapur*, *Sutanuti* and *Kolkata*. both sites are yet to be scientifically investigated and their archaeological potentiality perspective of *Urban Archeology*.

Excavation proceeded By ASI from 2003-2018, with a substantial part of the house, courtyard, and outbuildings and stable excavated and recorded. In the final season investigation of the domestic areas behind the west wing revealed a privy and drain packed with domestic glass and ceramics from both the Jamison and post-Jamison periods of Regentville's occupation. The richness of this of the field of colonial consumerism to be added, especially in the

It was partly due to his efforts that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) took over Clive House in these parts in 2003. Standing on a mound, which was once surrounded by a moat, Clive House on Rashtraguru Avenue is one of the oldest buildings in Bengal. In earlier times it was known as Dumdum House, later it came to be known as *burra kothi* or the grand house. For many years the heritage structure had remained shrouded in obscurity. And even post ASI intervention, things are not vastly improved. And yet, it needn't be so. Robert Clive was an important figure. During his first governorship (1755-60) he won the Battle of Plassey and, in a sense, laid the foundation of British dominion over the subcontinent.

We strain our eyes to see the house through the jungle of concrete and overgrowth. A neighbourhood club formed in 1951 has taken over the grounds adjacent to the mound. The neighbourhood itself is choc-a-bloc with multistoreys. Photographs from the early 1980s bear evidence that the locality was sparsely populated. In Clive's time, it must have been even more so. There are suggestions that this is why he chose the house.

In his 2015 speech at the Oxford Union, Shashi Tharoor said of Clive - "...the British had the gall to call him Clive of India as if he belonged to the country when all he really did was to ensure that much of the country belonged to him." This house too was in a way, loot.

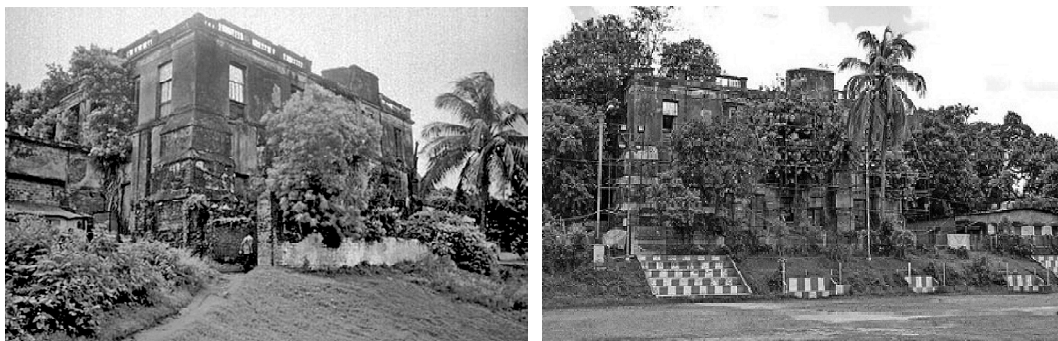


Fig. 1. Clive house on the mound as it used to look earlier

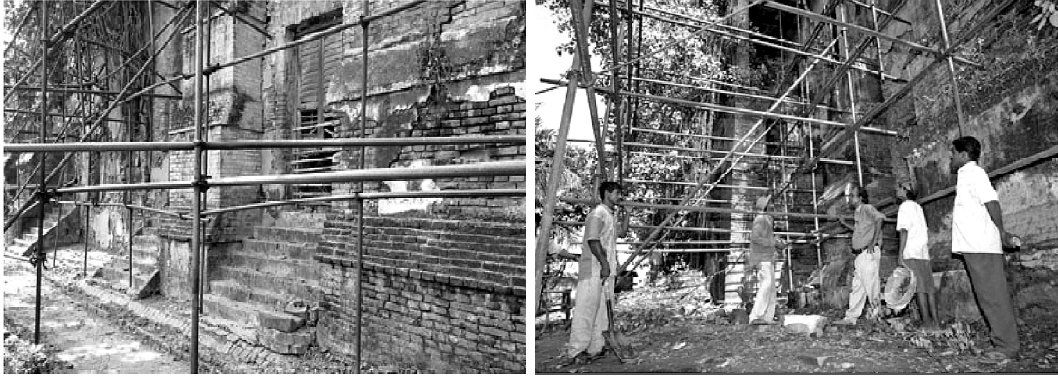


Fig. 2. Restoration work in progress in 2004



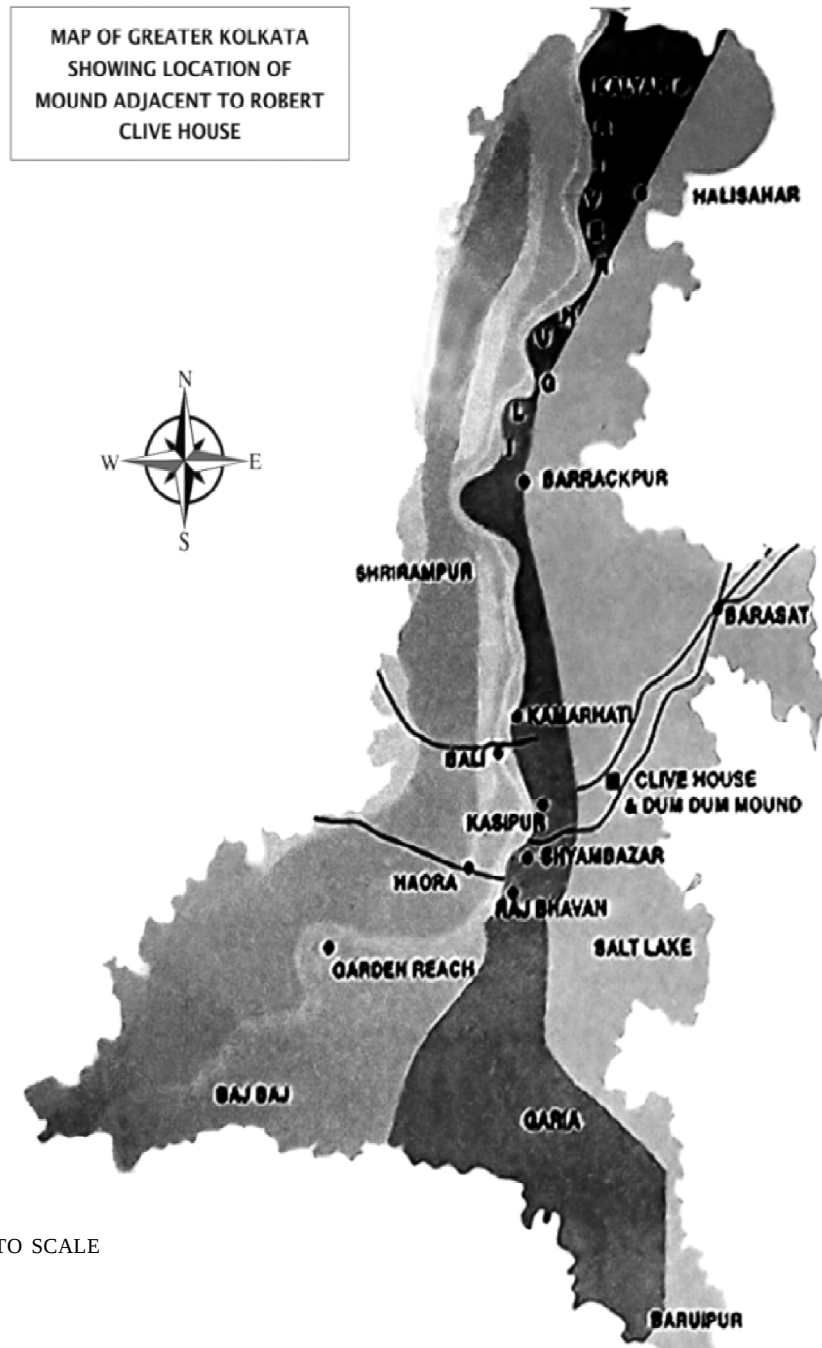
Fig. 3. Materials found, figuring (a skeleton, 2nd Century BC, a miniature stone-carved, *Mahishasuramardini*, 9th/10th Century CE. a sealing, 8th Century CE, with the *Nagari Script* inscription) are discovered from the Dum Dum mound. W.B



Fig. 4. Curating and cleaning of excavated objects at Dumdum mound, W.B



Fig. 5. Excavation is in the progress of the Dumdum mound. ASI, Kolkata, 2001.



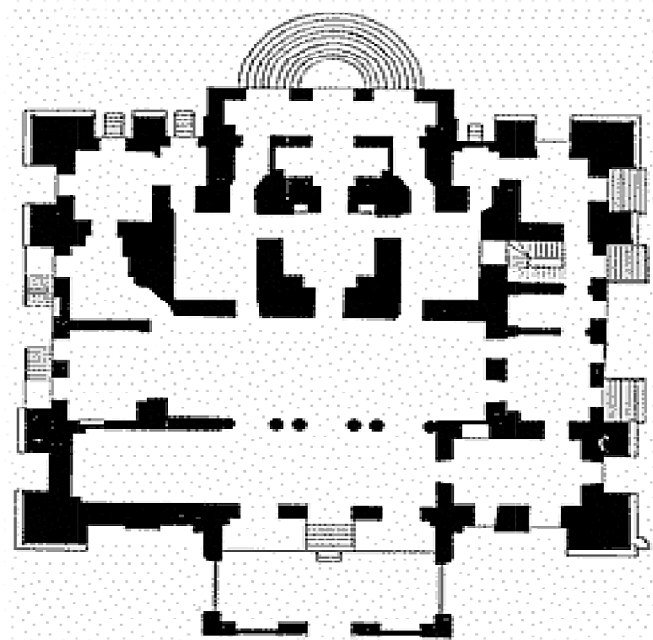


Fig. 6. Showing the mound adjacent to *Robert Clive House* one of the largest urban excavations undertaken in Kolkata ASI and Diagram ground floor plan of *Clives House* dumdum, Kolkata scale-1:100.

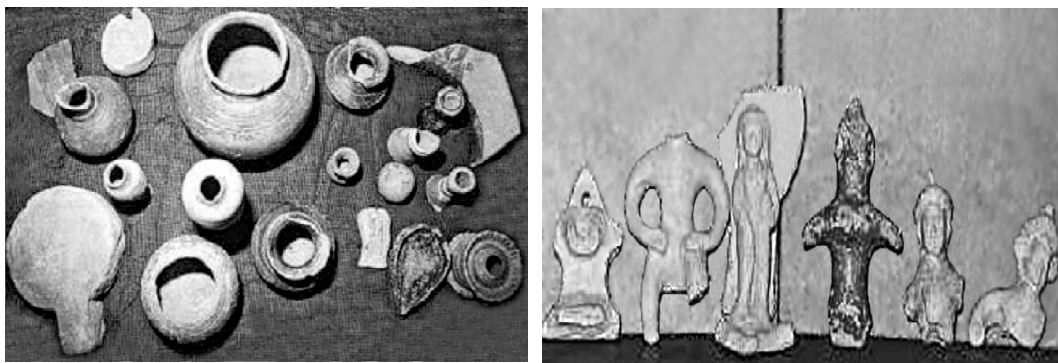


Fig. 7. Pottery, figurines and other artefacts of the 7th-8th Century CE excavated from the *Bethune College* premises, Kolkata 2014 [Photos credit: Sushanta Patronobish]

“Excavation of Dumdum mound can be considered as a milestone so far history and antiquity of Kolkata are concerned. That Kolkata did not suddenly spring up has been proved by this excavation”. According to Moulick, Clive spotted the structure on his way to Nawab *Siraj-ud-Daullah*’s camp and sent his men to order the occupants to vacate by the time of his return. In The

History of the War in Bengal, first published in 1798, Robert Orme writes about the mound on which the house is built. Lore has it that the mound was built overnight. Which Hercules did it is not known, nor the details of who constructed or owned Clive House before it became so. But a study has revealed that the bricks date to a period between the late 17th and the early 18th century. That has ruled out the theory that the original house may have been a Dutch or Portuguese factory or go down. Artefacts found in the mound point to a civilization 2,200 years old. The articles unearthed belonged to the *Sunga - Kusana* and the Gupta and post-Gupta periods.

Clive used this building as his country house from 1757 to 1760, during his first term in Bengal. What is known, however, is that the house was originally a single-storey structure equipped with underground chambers or cellars. It even had an underground tunnel leading up to another house in the modern-day Mall Road area. Clive added a floor and extended the house. On the ground floor was his office, and on the first floor, the residential quarters and a *Nautch Ghar*. He also extended the grounds, laid out a manicured garden and added a portico to the new southern entrance. Moulick points out that most of the houses Clive lived in had their entrances to the south - if they didn't, he made sure they did. The debris concealing the semi-circular stairs leading to the entrance at the north was cleared and the stairs renovated by the ASI. "They have cleared other things too," grimaces Moulick. Pointing at the arched doorways he says, "Two varieties of bricks - the original arches and the ones used to block them - were clearly visible." The ASI removed the latter and has put up bamboo barriers instead.

At some point, post-Independence, along with the colonial narrative, the Clive House narrative also got overlaid. Biswadip Dutta and brother Dibyadip, old residents of the area, remember running on the parapets and flying kites from the terrace as children. Moulick tells us, and it is common knowledge too, that after the British left, 20-25 families from erstwhile East Bengal took shelter here. Some still live on the peripheries, while others moved out when parts of the ceiling collapsed in the 1990s. An Air Training Institute had taken over the first floor at one stage, it's not there now.

In 2006, Bimal Bandopadhyay, the then superintending archaeologist of ASI, Calcutta Circle, had told The Telegraph they hoped to complete the task of restoration of the house in two years. The building was to be turned into a museum. But there has been no sign of any work for several years now. In recent times Indian daily News '*The Times of India*' reported that there could have been more revelations if the ASI could complete the excavation. An extensive excavation is required for the rediscovery of the city's history. The remains of an early settlement in Kolkata were previously found on the Bethune College campus from the trenches dug for a different purpose. Dum Dum mound may rewrite Kolkata history when it comes to the origin of Kolkata ^[19] our discussions revolve mainly around the arrival of Job Charnock or the three villages — Kalikata, Sutanuti and Gobindapur. But artefacts unearthed during a recent excavation at the famous Dum Dum mound, which houses the Clive House, take the city's history back to the 2nd Century BCE. "*The excavation revealed that Kolkata did not spring up suddenly. Traces of urban settlement found during the excavation bore a close resemblance with those found in an urban settlement at Chandraketugarh,*"

said ASI regional director (east) P. K. Mishra. There could have been more revelations if the ASI could complete the excavation. “Who knows, an entire city could have been unearthed. But thanks to encroachment and congested residential blocks all around the mound, the excavation could not be completed.

The raised ground towards the north of Clive House has yielded remains of an urban settlement dating back to the 2nd Century BCE. The site, significantly, remained in occupation almost till the modern time, with a break during the 12th to c.14th Century CE. Excavation had not been carried out in this mound earlier because its importance was understood only in 2001 by a chance location of the site by the Kolkata Circle of the ASI. The third to seventh layers of soil marked as Period I belong to the early historic period 2nd-1st Century BCE to c.11th Century CE. The total habitation deposit is approximately 3.5 meter from the surface, said ASI superintendent (Kolkata Circle) Ashok Kumar Patel. Archaeological excavations may rewrite the history of Kolkata’s origin¹²⁰ Artefacts unearthed during a recent excavation take the city’s history back to the 2nd Century BCE Kolkata: Recent archaeological excavations at the Dum Dum mound could very well rewrite the history of the origins of this city. The city, as was always known, had come into existence with the arrival of Job Charnock who consolidated the three villages of Kalikata, Sutanuti and Gobindapur to create the urban centre known as Kolkata or erstwhile Calcutta.

However, recent excavations, at the raised ground towards the north of Clive House — the oldest building in the city — have yielded remains of an urban settlement dating back to the 2nd Century BC. The site remained in occupation almost till the modern time, with a break during the 12th to 14th Century CE. Speaking to *Gulf News*, P. K. Mishra regional director (east) of Archeological Survey of India (ASI) said: “Our findings reveal Kolkata was not a creation of Job Charnock, but it was there much before his arrival, as traces of urban settlement have been found that bears a close resemblance with those found in an urban settlement at Chandraketugarh.” Artefacts from the excavation are various and include exquisite terracotta plaques and figures from the 2nd and 1st Century BCE to 8th-9th c. Century CE. Though archaeologists are keen for further excavations, much progress could not be made as the site is surrounded by a densely populated urban centre and further excavation could risk damaging nearby buildings. “*An extensive excavation is required to understand the real history of the city. But whatever we have found is enough to rewrite the history of the city,*” claimed Mishra. The excavation has proved that Kolkata was inhabited by civilized people who used materials normally found in an urban settlement. The discovery of various things bearing close semblance at many artefacts that hints that the settlement was an extension of Chandraketugarh.

Archaeologists are keen to continue digging as many believe that the revelations will not only give a complete understanding of the origins of Kolkata, but they may as well unearth a whole city. “We must continue the excavation, as not only we will know about the history of the origin of the city but also of the country and its early settlers. The habitation deposits are approximately 3.5 metres from the surface and we have not yet reached half the distance,” said Ashok Kumar Patel

superintendent of ASI. Though evacuation of this site started as late as 2001, ASI officials came to understand its importance by chance, when a telecom company digging for laying cables dug up a plaque with inscriptions.

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