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**Producing the province:
colonial governance and spatial cultures in district
headquarter towns of Eastern India 1786 - c.1900**

Tania Sengupta

School of Architecture and the Built Environment

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**PRODUCING THE PROVINCE:
COLONIAL GOVERNANCE AND SPATIAL CULTURES
IN DISTRICT HEADQUARTER TOWNS
OF EASTERN INDIA 1786 - c.1900**

TANIA SENGUPTA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Westminster
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DECLARATION

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Tania Sengupta

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Anglo-Indian	Briton living in India. Usage later changed to mean Eurasian (person of 'mixed race')
<i>Amin/ Ameen</i>	Surveyor
<i>Amla</i>	Middle level officer or clerk
<i>Bhadralok</i>	Bengali term meaning 'respectable people'
Cantonment	Military station
<i>Chappah</i>	Thatch
<i>Chuprasee</i>	Uniformed office messenger
<i>Cutcherry</i>	Office, work-space; Also, government offices and law courts collectively
<i>Dak</i>	Post
<i>Dewan</i>	Finance or accounts officer
<i>Darogah</i>	Head constable
Division	Administrative unit above District
<i>Diwani</i>	Rights of revenue collection.
<i>Harkara</i>	Long-distance post deliverer. Messenger
<i>Kutchra</i>	Temporary, provisional, made of less-durable materials
<i>Mahakuma</i>	Sub-divisional unit of a District (administrative unit)
<i>Maratha</i>	Resident of Maharashtra (western India); Brahmin agriculturalists and warriors of the Maratha Confederacy
<i>Mokhtar/ Mokhtear</i>	Representatives of native elites, middle-men
<i>Mufassal /Mufassil/</i>	Provincial area; Hinterland of provincial capital/headquarters
<i>Mofussil/ Mofassal</i>	
<i>Munshi</i>	Persian interpreter and account keeper
<i>Munshikhana</i>	Clerical or accountancy office
<i>Munsif</i>	Native judge in lower courts in interior areas
<i>Nawab</i>	Governor (deputy) in charge of Mughal province
<i>Peshkar</i>	Presenter at District courts
<i>Pucca</i>	Permanent, made of durable materials.
<i>Ryot</i>	Peasant
<i>Sadar</i>	Chief, main. Headquarters.
<i>Sadar Ala</i>	Sub-Judge in District courts
<i>Sadar Amin</i>	Native Assistant Judge in District courts
Sepoy	Indian soldier
<i>Verandah</i>	Built space around buildings with open sides and roof above
<i>Zamindar</i>	Land-holder and tax-farmer; Land-owner in Bengal after the Permanent Settlement of 1793
<i>Zilla</i>	District (administrative unit)
<i>Zilla sadar</i>	District headquarters (civil station)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PWD	Public Works Department
IOR/ BL	India Office Records at the British Library
WBSA	West Bengal State Archives
NAI	National Archives of India
WBSSL	West Bengal State Secretariat Library

ABSTRACT

By looking at the spatial cultures of provincial governance in district-headquarter (*zilla sadar*) towns of colonial Bengal from the late-eighteenth to the turn of the twentieth century, my thesis argues that colonial spatial landscapes in provincial areas were far more complex than the simple binary frameworks centred on categories such as black-town/ white town, dominant/ dependant spaces, native/ sahib areas that much of post-colonial studies have postulated. The thesis demonstrates that the very mechanics of evolution of colonial provincial governance through what was, by necessity, a trial and error process, in effect created a pluralistic and heterogeneous spatial culture - both at the level of individual buildings as well as the overall urban form of the towns in question. While the thesis shows that governmental architectural conceptions in provincial Bengal clearly became increasingly deterministic and normative from the early to the late-nineteenth century, it also shows how, in practice, these ideas continued to be tempered by forces that resisted homogeneity and singular authoritarian encoding of space. Analysing provincial administrative buildings as the core of the study, but extending this to the reading of related domestic and public spaces and the overall urban form of the *zilla sadar*, the study also demonstrates the complex nature of overlap between spatial and functional categories like work, home and leisure in the provincial context. It argues therefore that it is these various aspects that made the spatial culture of *zilla sadar* towns a fluid one, which was distinct from, but also calibrated between metropolitan centres like Calcutta on the one hand and a vast rural hinterland on the other. In order to capture the complexity of the subject, I have used a variety of methodological approaches, culling together tools from a number of disciplines such as architectural/spatial studies, historical studies, cultural studies and cultural anthropology, combining extensive field-work with detailed archival research.

Introduction

I. Statement of topic and background

This thesis looks at the architecture and urban patterns of everyday administration, domestic and public life, created around the central function of governance in provincial administrative towns of colonial Bengal (Eastern India) under British rule, in the period from the late-eighteenth to the turn of the twentieth century. The chronological span incorporates the transition of the English East India Company from a commercial venture into a territorial power, and finally the institution of imperial rule in India. The research specifically focuses on architecture and urban form as built records of the complex historical processes that informed colonial governance, urbanisation and spatial cultures in provincial areas of Bengal. As such, the study illuminates a wide variety of conceptual themes such as colonial governance, provincial spatial practices, urban-rural relationships and cross-cultural flows in spatial production.

The research project is situated within the broader discussions of 'identity' in current architectural theory in India. The enquiry accepts and is based on the main thrust of post-colonial thinking, which is that a huge part of India's present spatial thought and practice continue to be dominated by the colonial experience, and that one of the strongest sources of identity in

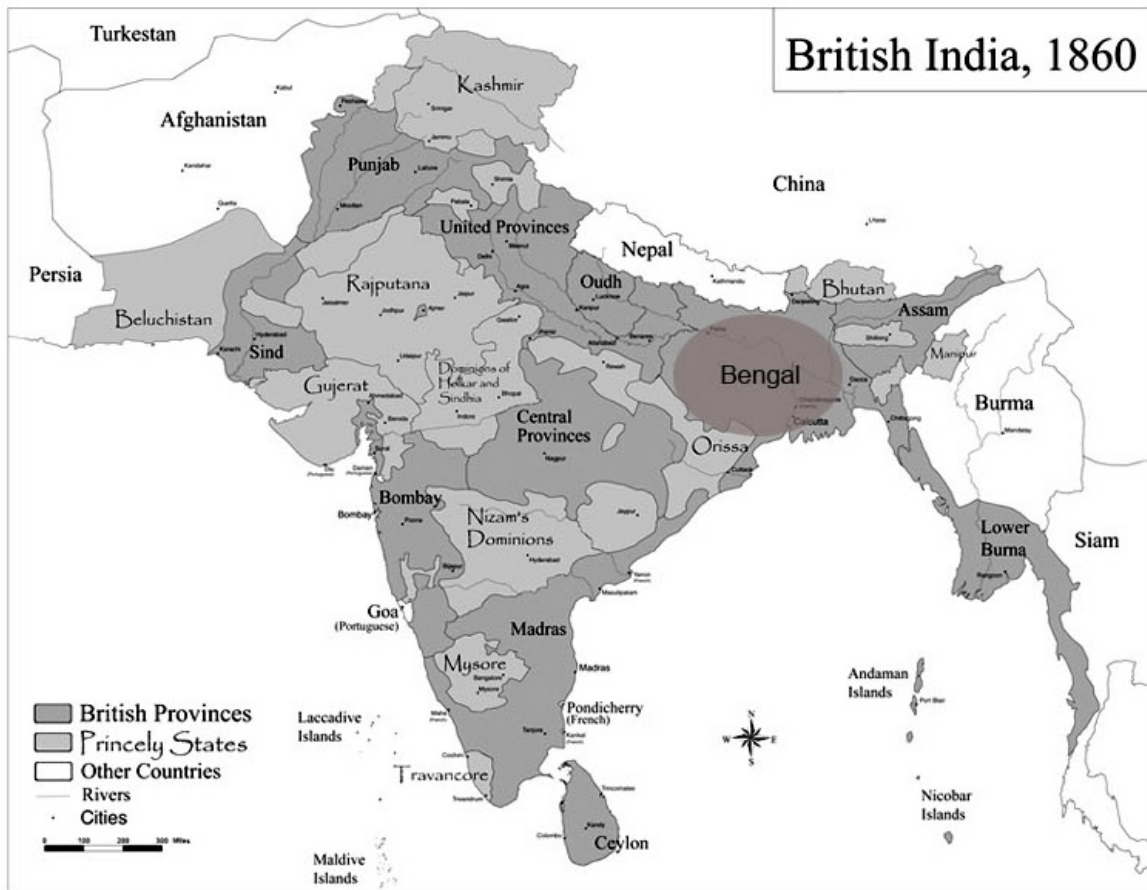


Fig. 1 Bengal within British India



Fig. 2 Grant of the *diwani* by Shah Alam to Robert Clive,
Benjamin West, 1818
Source: British Library Images Online

modern Indian architecture and urban space is its colonial past.¹ This is especially evident in the domain of governance, since many colonial governmental structures and their associated spatial formations continue to exist in India till today, explicitly or implicitly. This is one of the key reasons why a systematic enquiry into the structures and spaces of colonial governance is so relevant to the study of contemporary Indian architecture.

The research focuses on the district headquarter towns (*zilla sadar*) of colonial Bengal (Fig. 1), particularly in terms of the architectural and spatial activity that accompanied their everyday functioning; in turn, this established real and symbolic power relationships between different agencies such as military and civil, executive and judiciary, district officers and central authorities, native² elites, local groups and the various limbs of colonial administration. The English East India Company operated primarily as a trading agency in India up to the mid-eighteenth century. After this, following continuing frictions with Nawab Siraj-ud-daula (the provincial governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa), the Company finally won a decisive victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 under the leadership of Colonel Robert Clive. In 1764, further ground was gained by the East India Company with another victory over the rebellious Nawab Mir Qasim at the Battle of Buxar. These developments ensured a huge strengthening of the Company's position in the region. In 1765, the East India Company was granted the 'diwani', or the sole rights of agricultural revenue collection, for the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam (Fig. 2). For the logistics of revenue collection and administering justice in this vast tract of land, the territory was divided into revenue districts by the Company. The 'District' thus became one of the most significant territorial units of British revenue administration machinery, and later on – after the assumption of full governance of India by the British Crown in 1858 – it also served as the basic political-administrative unit for imperial governance itself. The district headquarter town or *zilla sadar* (or simply *sadar*, as it was often known in common parlance)³ represented a space between the main city of Calcutta and the Bengali region, and hence sat between the urban and the rural, as well as between central government and sub-divisional offices (Fig. 3). These *sadar* towns were virtually the *sadar darwaza* or main gateway – the point of entry – into each district, and from there into the wider rural hinterland of Bengal.⁴ In most regions, the *zilla sadar* occupied the pivotal administrative

1 A number of contemporary critics have discussed the colonial lineage of contemporary Indian architecture and planning. See e.g. Jon Lang, Madhavi Desai and Miki Desai, *Architecture and Independence: The Search for Identity - 1880 to 1980* (Oxford and New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); A.G.K. Menon, 'Rethinking Architecture', *The Hindu Folio*, Aug (1999), 53-59; K.T. Ravindran, 'Colonial Routes', *Seminar*, 372 (1990), 70-76; Swati Chattopadhyay, 'A critical history of architecture in a post-colonial World: A view from Indian history', *Architronic* 6, no. 1 (1997); Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (London: Routledge, 2005).

2 It is important to clarify here that although the expression 'native' was used in colonial India by the British population to refer to Indians mostly in a pejorative sense (as connoting inferior, uncivilised and backward), in this thesis it has been used to denote local and more indigenous ownerships and practices, and thus simply to distinguish between European and Indian agency.

3 The term '*sadar*' (or *sadr*) – literally meaning 'chief' – referred simply to the chief seat of power or 'headquarters'. It was applied as a generic term within the nested hierarchies of colonial administration. For example, Calcutta, the headquarters of the Bengal Province and up to 1911 of all of British territories in India, was the *sadar* for district headquarter towns like Burdwan or Krishnanagar, which in turn were the *sadar* for other smaller sub-divisional towns and villages that they served. However, in common parlance, the district headquarter town or the *zilla sadar* (*zilla* – district) was also often simply called *sadar* by people of that district. Unless otherwise specified, in this thesis the term *sadar* refers to the district headquarter town.

4 I am making a reference here to the practice in Bengal of calling the main entrance or gateway of domestic



Fig. 3 Berhampur: *zilla sadar*, Murshidabad District

location in the landscape; they were where local people reported for paying taxes, where litigation was pursued in district courts, where men moved to from villages as they became increasingly employed in administrative offices, where networks of professionals and businessmen grew, and where ever newer forms of institutions flourished. Centred on the core function of governance, and being poised between different hierarchies of administration and scales of urbanity, these towns came to embody an alternative way of living and working compared to previous practice in India, and constituted a key intermediate space between countryside and city.

As noted, the district administration system was set up by the British primarily in response to their new role in Bengal centred on revenue collection and administration of justice. It was, in that sense, conceived originally as a revenue administration system, not a political one. The consolidation of power in the office of the 'District Collector' – in charge of each revenue district (earlier called 'Collectorships') – along with the clear delineation of boundaries of about twenty four districts in 1786, marked the formal beginning of the district administration system in Bengal.⁵ By the end of the eighteenth century, a large network of officials was already in place, and other significant offices such as that of the District Judge had been introduced. Commissioners in charge of Divisions (larger areas consisting of a few districts) were appointed in 1829, and posts of Deputy Collectors in charge of Subdivisions or *mahakumas* (sub-units of districts) were created during the tenure of the Governor General William Bentinck (1828–36) as the system became more established in the nineteenth century. After the assumption of governance of India by the British Crown in 1858, the system of administration in Bengal had to be adapted to transform it from being a revenue-collecting mechanism into an imperial administrative apparatus.⁶ It evolved thereafter as an intricately hierarchical system, branching out from an apex body at the top-most level – i.e. that of the whole Presidency under the Government of Bengal – to the various local

premises the *sadar darwaza* or *dorja* (*sadar*: chief, *darwaza*/ *dorja*: entrance or gate).

⁵ Since 1765, with the granting of the *diwani*, revenue administration was continuously experimented with. There were also territories like Burdwan, Chittagong and Midnapore that had been ceded before 1765 which also demanded administration of revenue matters. In the initial years it was not thought prudent by the British authorities to assume the actual conduct of revenue governance fully, and so it was left largely to the charges of native officers. In 1769, European 'Supervisors' were appointed in charge of revenue districts. In 1772, following reports which stated that there had been numerous abuses by the officers, the Court of Directors of the East India Company decided to stand forth formally as the *diwan* and instructed the British administrators of Bengal to assume all revenue charges. The post of Collector was then forged from the post of the earlier Supervisor. However, much of the governmental power was still heavily centralised in Calcutta. The allocation of power underwent numerous shifts between 1772 and 1786, continuously moving between attempts to centralise and decentralise revenue administration. It was not until 1786 that the administrative apparatus was finally substantially decentralised and the Collector invested with a huge amount of administrative power. It was also in 1786 that a large number of districts – 24 in all – were actually delineated afresh, based on earlier Collectorships. For a detailed account of these shifts in administrative policy, see F.D. Ascoli, *Early Revenue History of Bengal and the Fifth Report* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1917); H.A.D Philips, *Our administration of India – being a complete account of the revenue and collectorate administration in all departments, with special reference to the work and duties of a district officer in Bengal* (London: W. Thacker & Co., Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., Bombay: Thacker & Co., Lim, Madras: Higginbotham & Co., 1886); William H. Morley, *The Administration of Justice in British India; its past history and present state: comprising an account of the laws peculiar to India* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1858).

⁶ The shift in the nature of colonial interest in India from mercantile to industrial has been discussed by Pacione, who cited Drakkakis-Smith's model explaining such a transition. Michael Pacione, 'Urban Geography In the Third World', in *Urban Geography – A Global Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2001). D. Drakkakis-Smith suggested a model for stages of colonial urbanisation in Asia, starting from around 1500 with mercantile colonialism, moving to industrial colonialism around 1850, to late-colonialism around 1920 as characterised by intensification of colonial morphological influence and ethnic segregations, followed by the early-independence period in the 1950s, and finally the new international division of labour from 1970s onwards (Smith, 1987). Francis Hutchins has discussed the transition of colonial interest from trade and industrial, evangelical and utilitarian finally to imperial control. Francis Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

sub-hierarchies. Horizontally, an elaborate network of administrative departments (e.g. revenue, judicial, military, secret, foreign, financial) accompanied this vertical structure. The departmental structure was characterised by constantly shifting constellations – with new departments being formed and re-distribution of parts of earlier departments taking place on a continuous basis.

Moving between a range of scales from urban pattern to individual buildings, this thesis simultaneously interrogates two distinct but related strands: firstly, the spatial cultures of colonial governance; and secondly, the intersections with notions of provinciality in colonial Bengal. Contrary to the assumption in many post-colonial studies of colonial architecture and urbanism in India that colonial power operated and manifested itself chiefly through major centres of governance such as Calcutta, Bombay, Madras or New Delhi,⁷ this thesis calls for a shift of focus to ‘peripheral’ provincial administrative locations – which were far more numerous and which in effect constituted the more widespread landscape of colonialism in India. The province⁸ (*mufassal*) has been – and is till today – a key conceptual and operational category in the social, economic, spatial, political and administrative landscape of India. It assumed particularly significant connotations within the colonial context. Literally meaning ‘opposite to the *sadar* [the chief seat of government]’,⁹ the word *mufassal* was used – by the British as well as the native population in the big cities – to denote provincial regions; by association, the connotation was of somewhat peripheral and backward areas apparently untouched by flows of modernity. *Zilla sadar* towns in Bengal, which constituted pivotal nodes in the *mufassal* landscape, have hitherto, by extension, also been seen as marginal locations which exhibited a similar inertia to change. Contrary to such notions, this thesis instead reveals the *zilla sadar* as a dynamic entity in which numerous spatial and cultural paradigms were continuously being negotiated to produce newer, eclectic and more modern forms.¹⁰ Key to this was the fact that the *sadar* acted as a crucible where colonial governmental structures intersected with provincial culture. Following from this, the study also interrogates the specific relationships between spatial categories like ‘work’, ‘home’ and ‘leisure’ that such intersections of colonial governance and provinciality created, as well as looking at how these compared with the prevalent ideas on these aspects in large urban centres like Calcutta or in metropolitan Britain.

II. Site of enquiry and time period of study:

Importantly, this study is located in *zilla sadar* towns of Eastern India – and more precisely, those of the province of Bengal. The stronghold of Bengal played a crucial role in the consolidation

⁷ This is a recurrent theme in much of post-colonial studies on colonial architecture and urbanism in India, and will be discussed in greater detail in the literature review section of this introductory chapter.

⁸ Unless otherwise stated, the term ‘province’, for the purpose of this thesis, refers to the more generic category of provincial areas at large, and as such is distinct from its usage for political-administrative divisions such as the ‘Bengal Province’.

⁹ In this case this refers to the more generic meaning of the *sadar* as being the central governmental headquarters – i.e. Calcutta, and not the *zilla sadar* or the district headquarter town.

¹⁰ The literary critic Amit Chowdhuri has discussed, for instance, how *mufassal* towns were ‘at once glamorous and banal – these two unrelated qualities converging in them as they did in several aspects of not just modernity, but what the social scientist Partha Chatterjee calls “colonial modernity”’. Amit Chowdhuri, ‘Returning to earth’, *Outlook India*, Jun 27, 2008, <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?237757>, accessed Sept 10 2008.

of British power in India in the period between the granting of the *diwani* in 1765 and the early-nineteenth century. Bengal also subsequently acted as the vital territorial anchor for the expanding British-colonial presence in India between 1800 and 1856, as a number of other areas such as the North-Western Provinces (1801), Delhi (1803), Sindh (1843), Punjab (1849), Berar (1854) and Oudh (1856) were gradually annexed to the British territories.¹¹ When the Governor General, Warren Hastings, transferred the *diwani* [civil] offices from Murshidabad (till then the capital of Bengal) to Calcutta in 1773, the latter gradually emerged as the capital of British India.¹² In effect, it was from Bengal that the British ruled India from that point, a situation that carried on through the assumption of governance by the British Crown in 1858, and until the final shifting of the capital to Delhi in 1911. Bengal also served as the key site for setting up and experimenting with the district administration system itself, the learning from which was subsequently actively harnessed for administration of other areas of India. Even in terms of actual architectural designs of governmental buildings, the prototypes were often built and tested in Bengal and only later found their way into other regions of the country. Culturally, too, Bengal represented a region in which there were continuous attempts – both by the British colonists and the local population – to forge a hybrid identity between multiple paradigms, and it was, interestingly, an active ground where dissent and nationalist resistance against British rule also took root in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

Although in a strict sense this thesis is based on the Province of Bengal (known in the pre-colonial Mughal era as *Subah Bangla*), such a territorial delineation has however needed to be used in a somewhat flexible manner. This is because Bengal itself did not remain a fixed designation or have fixed boundaries throughout British rule. In any case, along with other provinces like the Central Province or the North-Western Province, it formed but a part of the Bengal Presidency¹³, and building practices in different locations within the larger region of the Presidency were often had close connections with each other. The expression ‘Bengal Province’ was also, at various points of time, interchangeably used with expressions like the ‘Lower Provinces’¹⁴ which came to include the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Hence this thesis is based essentially on the province of Bengal in its strictest sense, but needs occasionally to include parts of Bihar and Orissa in the wider sense.

Thus defined, Bengal can be seen to have formed a particularly interesting case to study the spatial cultures of colonial provincial governance, for the following reasons:

- Politically, it represented both the initial formation and the subsequent consolidation of British power in India.

11 P.J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead, Eastern India 1740–1828*, Series: The New Cambridge History of India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); See also C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Series: The New Cambridge History of India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

12 Calcutta was formally made the capital of British India in 1801. But the centre of gravity of colonial administration had actually started shifting when the civil courts had moved to it in 1773.

13 One of the three presidencies – Bengal, Madras, Bombay – into which British India was divided, and each of which had their own local governments.

14 The ‘Lower Provinces’ was a designation particularly in use in the imperial era after 1858.

- Governmentally, it represented the initial formation of and experimentation with the elaborate British colonial system of district administration.
- Culturally, it represented a land where the regional sub-cultural identity was increasingly filtered through a nationalist imagination¹⁵ – a process in which the Bengali intelligentsia and urban bourgeoisie played a key role and which, in turn, played a significant role in shaping provincial spatial culture.

In terms of time period, this study begins in 1786 with the formal delineation of revenue districts by the East India Company and the formation of the post of the District Collector – a key moment that triggered off organised provisions of provincial governmental infrastructure. At the other end, the study builds up to a cluster of changes and shifts in the nature of provincial architecture in the early-twentieth century. These were accompanied by the colonial state's increasing preoccupations with visual representations of imperial authority, the formation of local self-government bodies and a pursuit of eclectic architectural paradigms, as well as by the emergence of local resistance movements and their associated spatial formations. This latter period also served as the backdrop for the partition of Bengal by the imperial government in 1905, the subsequent outbreak of the *Banga-bhanga* movement (which saw widespread rebellion by local groups against the partition of Bengal) and the eventual relocation of the capital of British India to Delhi in 1911.¹⁶

III. Literature review of post-colonial discourse and texts on colonial spatial patterns in India

This section discusses the conceptual premise of the thesis in respect to existing post-colonial literature in general, and then with respect to specific work done in the domain of colonial architecture and urban form in India. It subsequently looks at a few different theoretical frameworks or models that have addressed spatial production and its relation to social and power structures. Based on this analysis, the subsequent section attempts at deriving a heuristic conceptual framework as a tool to understand the spatial culture of colonial provincial governance in the district headquarter towns of Bengal.

¹⁵ For a detailed account of this point, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-colonial Narratives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). For an account of the way nationalism played out in the formation of architectural identity in colonial Calcutta, see Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 101–154.

¹⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century, resistance against British rule had taken deep root in Bengal – this followed the increasingly totalitarian measures taken by the colonial state to curb freedom of the vernacular press or the rights of Indian judicial officers to try Europeans in provincial areas on one hand, and the emergence of the Indian National Congress as a voice for Indians, and of numerous smaller resistance organisations, on the other. The momentum was so strong in Bengal at the turn of the century, that in 1905 the British authorities decided to partition Bengal into two sections – East and West – to hinder the consolidation of such resistance movements. However, this only fuelled further dissent and rebellion (the *Banga-bhanga andolan*, or literally, the 'partition-of-Bengal movement'), and eventually precipitated the shifting of the imperial capital to Delhi by 1911.

Conceptual premise in relation to post-colonial discourse

The condition of colonialism provides cues to much of our present-day identity in various spheres of cultural existence. Colonialism involved the interface of diverse cultures to produce new paradigms of cultural practices and cultural artefacts (architecture of course being one of them). It also generated specific formations of power structures and knowledge systems in societies¹⁷ which were, in turn, simultaneously embodied in and produced through their spatial and material environment. These are just some of the reasons why the colonial phenomenon at large merits in-depth investigation in architectural academic engagement.

Interestingly, even though considerable work has been done on colonialism and culture in India within a number of disciplines, research within the disciplinary framework of architecture is still relatively limited. This lacuna is of some concern since, as mentioned earlier, the production of much contemporary architecture in post-colonial India is deeply rooted in colonial legacies. Moreover, this is not merely an issue relevant to post-colonial societies – architectural production in contemporary globalised times worldwide also finds important parallels in previous colonial patterns¹⁸. Hence, the dimensions of colonial architecture and urbanism in India in terms of spatial production, representation and practice require far greater attention than hitherto received in architectural scholarship.

The domain of governance, along with spaces directly or indirectly related to it, is an especially apt ground to investigate these issues, given that – in the colonial context – governance was clearly one of the key instruments through which the culture enjoying formal authority attempted to establish mechanisms of controlling the other. The apparatus of British colonial governance was actively harnessed in attempts to manage, reshape and indeed ‘reform’ Indian society. However, while the overall power equations may have been tilted in favour of the colonisers, the process was hardly just black-and-white – instead, it involved many negotiations and ‘gives and takes’. Governmental and other related spaces in the domestic and public domain provided the physical ground in which these operations and power structures of governance and societal functioning were encoded and sometimes institutionalised. On the other hand, the buildings and spaces produced were also used often by different groups of people as tools to subvert apparently obvious power equations. This thesis thus attempts to decode some of these interrelationships in order to interpret them.

The need for this study also arises from a general concern about the dominant tendency of the architectural community to see architecture as primarily a physical, form-based entity.¹⁹

¹⁷ Bernard S Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1978/2003).

¹⁸ In this connection, see the work of Jane Jacobs and the more recent works of Anthony King. Anthony D. King, *Spaces of Global Cultures: Architecture, Urbanism, Identity* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2004); Jane M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁹ The preoccupation with formal attributes of building as largely a physical (and often visual) artefact has not only been the core of modernist traditions, but interestingly has continued to be the major thrust even of post-modern architecture. Perhaps as a reaction to this, in more recent times there has been a wave of critical writings that have tried

This thesis is instead predicated on the premise that architecture is essentially, and fundamentally, a social and political product²⁰. It is based on the conviction that there is a need to engage with ‘processes’ (in this case, of governmental operations, of social and individual negotiations, of patterns of production and inhabitation) – which exist beyond the mere physical artefact – to understand the dynamics of social space. Equally, in a dialectical manner, the study also proposes to use the physical artefact to throw light on processes that inform such dynamics of space. The thesis thus intends to read the physicality of space through the practice of space, and is, in that sense, aligned closely to a fertile school of thought which lies at the intersection of spatial, social and cultural studies.²¹

Colonial governance in India was not singular in nature – even though, very often, the image of governance has been imprinted in the public imagination through singular and iconic buildings, building-complexes, grand imperial spaces and though the plethora of academic and popular discussions on them.²² Some of the examples of such iconic architecture or urban space include, for instance, the Governor’s House in Calcutta, the Viceroy’s Palace, and the elaborate landscaped spaces in New Delhi – which find frequent mention in demonstrating the nature and expression of colonial authority. Although such discourse has played a very crucial role in understanding the potency of architecture or urban space as representational devices and as consolidated instruments of power, it often tends to divert attention away from the more nuanced, networked, web-like functioning and manifestation of power. In reality, colonial governance took shape and operated not only through these iconic spaces – i.e. the symbolic top of the administrative pyramid – but also through a complex network of functions and spaces which constituted the overall colonial governmental apparatus. This means that while the iconic buildings (typically located in major urban centres) projected the imagery of colonial power and control, they were backed up in operational terms by a conglomerate of functions and spaces such as the provincial Collectorate²³, courthouses, treasuries, jails or police stations – all of which were spread over a much larger geographical area. The visible representation of colonial power was thus propped up by the practice of power through this machinery, and these two aspects were closely interlinked. This study therefore engages with this larger infrastructure of

to reclaim the value of human inhabitation of architecture and urban space, the social production of architecture and the politics of space-making. However, this still constitutes a relative minority of the overall bulk of architectural practice and academic studies.

20 Such a position has been articulated, for example, by the architectural theorist Thomas Markus, who says: ‘I take the stand that buildings are not primarily art, technical or investment objects, but social objects’. Thomas A. Markus, *Buildings and Power, Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types* (London: Routledge, 1993).

21 Some of the seminal works in this context are, for instance, those of Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, David Harvey and Doreen Massey. Lefebvre discussed how space is produced through the overlap of abstract scientific, social and physical or material spaces. Soja emphasised the importance of space in understanding political and cultural phenomena. David Harvey has discussed the intersection of the conceptual framework of Marxist socio-economic theory with spatial and geographical theory. Massey drew immensely significant connections between urban space and socio-economic parameters like poverty, welfare and wealth. See, for example: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (London: Blackwell, 1991); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso Press, 1989); Soja, *Thirdspace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1996); Doreen B. Massey, *For Space*, (London: Sage 2005); David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (London: Blackwell, 1998).

22 See, for example, the architectural and urban-design analysis of colonial buildings given by Lawrence Vale, Philip Davies or Robert Grant Irving. Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1992); Philip Davies, *Splendours of the Raj: British Architecture in India* (London: J. Murray, 1985). Robert Grant Irving, *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker and Imperial Delhi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

23 The district revenue office/s was/were also referred to as the ‘Collectorate’.

colonial governance which has hitherto received little or no attention in academic scholarship.

A strong impetus for the conceptualisation of this thesis comes from post-colonial writings that are founded on Michel Foucault's notion of power. Not only does Foucault's analysis articulate the innate nexus between space, power and knowledge,²⁴ it also defines the nature of power itself in a radical manner. The proposed study is closely linked to Foucault's argument that power is not as centralised as it appears to be – 'it is never monopolised by one centre', it does not 'function in the form of a chain', and it 'is deployed and exercised through a net-like organisation'.²⁵ Foucault's ideas about power being a net rather than emanating from a centre and power as operating at the most micro-level of social relations provides the ground for this study to shift attention to the interactions and networks that existed *between* and *within* European and native groups in *sadar* towns. Following on from this, the thesis looks at the relationship between the design of spaces and the negotiations between the key agencies that went into the making and functioning of those spaces. Fundamental to the research is thus a conception of colonial power structure and its spaces as a network of interconnected agencies and domains – not as singular power-centres or buildings. This has also been the driving force behind the emphasis on non-monumental architecture and on a larger network of spaces corresponding to middle-lower administrative hierarchies.

The overriding tendency in the architectural and urban historiography of colonial India until the late-1990s was to cast it primarily as a grand imperial narrative – i.e. of how heroic British efforts constructed the colonised cities, towns, buildings, monuments.²⁶ There have been, however, a few significant architectural writers in recent times challenging this viewpoint, who emphasise, for example, that:

... any serious attention to the historical evidence of late seventeenth and eighteenth century Bengal cannot fail to illustrate the precarious situation of the British East India Company during this time. Far from being able to predict future British control, the uncertainty of British enterprise was evident to British authorities, the same authorities whose deeds would be constructed into a story of uninterrupted success ... Not only were the complex choices and decisions made by the British and Indians simplified into a British winning strategy, the enormous contribution and resistance of the native population during the entire duration of colonial rule is effectively subdued as part of the city's [Calcutta, in this case] history.²⁷

In her work on urban domestic spaces in Delhi between 1847 and 1910, the architectural critic Jyoti Hosagrahar also expresses similar concerns:

²⁴ For a detailed account of Foucault's deliberations on geographies and power from a wide range of perspectives framed around his discussions with the French geography journal *Herodote* in the mid-1970s, see Jeremy W Crampton and Stuart Elden, *Space, Power and Knowledge: Foucault and Geography* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2007). See also Colin Gordon (ed.), *Michel Foucault - Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77* (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Power*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 2001), 98.

²⁶ See for example: Kathleen Blechynden, *Calcutta: Past and Present* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co, 1905); P. C. Bagchi, *Calcutta: Past and Present* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1939); Nemi Bose, *Calcutta: People and Empire* (Calcutta: India Book Exchange, 1975); Philip Mason, *The Men Who Ruled India* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 1992); Lawrence James, *The Making and Unmaking of British India* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

²⁷ Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny* (London: Routledge, 2005), 9.

The grand design of imperial New Delhi by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker has dominated architectural histories of modern Delhi, denying to indigenous inhabitants an active role in the production of modernist built form.²⁸

Within such a shift in the ideological and analytical basis of colonial spatial historiography, it becomes clear that the image of colonial power and governance in India as being necessarily consolidated, authoritative, singularly dominant, consistent, and refined,²⁹ itself needs interrogation. Rather, there was a process of accretion and modifications that characterised the evolution of a revenue administration system into that of imperial governance, and which involved numerous negotiations and experiments. Such changes were generally tentative, and offer perhaps a more nuanced premise to build on for the purpose of this study. Evolutions of administrative morphology or building form thus came up in response to such changing – often shifting – conceptions of governance, and in response to the demands posed by the changing administrative structure and by the various local forces acting on it.

Colonial governmental machinery in provincial Bengal also did not exist in isolation – in other words, British governance did not only operate through explicit mechanisms and spaces. As this thesis reveals, governmental functioning was intricately linked to and deeply dependent on a range of other spaces within the *zilla sadar*, far beyond the formal boundaries of the colonial provincial office. Although the basic cluster of administrative buildings, known as the *cutcherry* complex, did constitute the core apparatus of colonial provincial governance in *sadar* towns, it was in effect buffeted by an elaborate secondary apparatus that consisted of educational, cultural, leisure, entertainment, and various other civic and domestic spaces. As well as governmental provisions, there was, over time, the development – under native or European patronage – of various syncretic institutions (e.g. colleges, schools, clubs and town-halls). These were, on the one hand, the fall-out from the introduction of British education in India, and on the other, of increasing attempts by local actors to establish sovereign domains that could become a pivotal source of Bengali and Indian nationalist identity formation.³⁰ This secondary apparatus was an often contested domain, and usually co-produced by native and European agency. Interestingly, it was these syncretic institutions that provided the most fertile experimental ground for many

²⁸ Jyoti Hosaghar, 'Mansions to margins: Modernity and the domestic landscapes of historic Delhi 1847-1910', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 60, No.1 (2001), 2. It is important to note here that Hosaghar's and Chattopadhyay's work were also the result, within the field of spatial history, of a larger body of work by the Subaltern Studies Group, led by historians like Ranajit Guha. The Subaltern Studies Group emphatically stated the need to recover 'other', less heard, voices in the writing of colonial history and to shift attention from mainstream political history-writing to the domain of social history, local and micro-histories including those of peasant and lower-caste groups, labour, and women. See Ranajit Guha, ed., *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

²⁹ See the works of the following authors on colonial governance in India: D.N. Banerjee, *Early Administration System of the East India Company in Bengal* (London: Longman 1943); B. B. Misra, *The Central Administration of the East India Company, 1773-1834* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959); Ibid, *The Administrative History of India (1834-1947)* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1970).

³⁰ For discussions on the ideological foundations of the imperial state in India and development of various colonial institutions in terms of their architectural development, see: Thomas Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); Giles H.R. Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture: Continuity, Controversy and Change since 1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*. For discussions on colonial institutions and the public sphere see e.g. Mrinalini Sinha, 'Britishness, Clubbability and the Colonial Public Sphere: the Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India', *At Home in The Empire, The Journal of British Studies* 40, No.4 (2001), 489-521; Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Adda, Calcutta: Dwelling in Modernity', *Public Culture* 11, No.1 (1999), 109-145.

hybrid spatial formations and architectural styles, eventually feeding into the channel for the development of the 'Indo-Saracenic' architectural stream in the late-nineteenth century.³¹ In a broader sense, governance was also conducted through parts of residential domains since, very often, the provincial British officers as well as native tax collectors³² functioned from their home-offices, without which it is impossible to imagine the spatial structure of colonial administration. Thus, on the whole, in the colonial provincial context of Bengal, the political-administrative sphere and the domestic/civic sphere were not at all independent entities; the notion of provincial governance had necessarily to be far wider and complex than mere bureaucratic administration. Therefore, while this thesis focuses on the development of the provincial office complex in *sadar* towns through the course of the nineteenth century, it also looks at governance from this wider definitional perspective – and hence at administrative, domestic and civic spaces as a composite entity.

Of key importance here, and something that warrants fore-grounding, is the Indian response to British attempts at establishing colonial control, and the participation of the local actors in the creation of a composite provincial civic culture and space. This happened often in the form of fully-fledged buildings and hybrid architectural styles that came up under the patronage of the local elite or other local groups.³³ Mrinalini Sinha's work on social clubs and 'clubbability' in British India provides a revealing account of the evolution of the 'club' as a typical colonial social institution, and of how it gradually involved the participation of locals (though mostly elites) both in its production as well in its membership and social life.³⁴ There developed also other institutions such as town halls where the patronage and access was for more mixed, or even exclusively Bengali. That a civic architecture and a network of urban civic spaces – in effect a provincial colonial civic domain – was really being produced almost in conjunction, by the British and their Indian counterparts (e.g. by local landlords, *zamindars*, voluntary organisations or literary societies) – is arguably one of the most critical foundations of understanding colonial civic space in the regional context. On the other hand, British architecture in the colony also came to assimilate elements from local architecture rather than just use styles imported directly from the metropole, given the belief that designs needed to be adapted to suit the climate and customs of Bengal. As has been noted:

The absence or abundance of local forms in British architecture depended on the desired image that the rulers wished to project. The British never seem to have settled on a definitive Imperial style, but constantly searched for suitable ones as perceptions of their own role in India changed.³⁵

31 For authoritative works on the 'Indo-Saracenic' as an architectural development in colonial India, see: Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision* and G.H.R Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture*.

32 They were known as *zamindars* (explained in more detail in Chapter 1).

33 Some examples of this, for example, are the Raj College, Raj Collegiate School and Udaychand Public Library in Burdwan under the patronage of the Maharaja of Burdwan; Manindrachandra Bidyapith in Berhampur set up by the *zamindar* of Kasimbazaar; Krishnanath College in Berhampur adopted by the same zamindar family; The Town Library and Town Hall set up with contributions from Maharaja Srischandra of Krishnanagar and other elites of the town; the Town Hall built by the zamindar Bansagopal Nanda in Burdwan; and the India Club built under the patronage of the Maharaja of Koochbihar in Koochbihar.

34 Sinha, 'Britishness, clubbability and the colonial public sphere: the genealogy of an imperial institution in colonial India', *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4, At home in the Empire (2001), 489–521.

35 Banglapedia: Architecture. http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/A_0291.HTM accessed on Jun 10, 2008.

Or in the words of the architectural historian, Gwendolyn Wright:

Administrators hoped that preserving traditional status-hierarchies would buttress their own superimposed colonial order. Architects, in turn, acknowledging that resistance to new forms is often based on affections for familiar places, tried to evoke a sense of continuity with the local past in their designs.³⁶

According to Abdullah Ali Ibrahim, most post-colonial discourse, especially in the context of de-colonisation, seems to have taken two broad routes. The first consists of the recognition of the failures of colonialism. The second is a response to the powers of nationalism.³⁷ Usually, there has been an overemphasis on resistance, which again assumes clear binary categories like 'coloniser-colonised' or 'oppressor-oppressed'. However, 'constrained by conflicting local contexts, colonial administrations had to make ad-hoc adjustments',³⁸ which would suggest far more tentative power equations than such binary categories would indicate. The previous 'Manichean' argument had essentially been that of a deeply severed colonial state and native society, with even physical space being sharply and fundamentally divided into European and native quarters. The 'Revisionist' approach on the other hand criticises the Manichean paradigm for overlooking the hybridity of the colonial situation in which the coloniser and the colonised were held in a relationship of interdependence.³⁹ Colonial power, it is argued by the revisionists, was a production of this hybridity 'rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native tradition'.⁴⁰ On the whole, it is with such viewpoints – of a certain tentativeness of British rule (especially in its formative period), of multiple negotiations that had to be forged in the consolidation of its political system, of colonial culture and its spaces being founded on contributions from both the coloniser and the colonised people, of the multiple actors and networks behind the formation of these – that this study is aligned.

In a broader sense, this thesis intends to unravel the nature of East-West interaction in the context of regional architecture and urban form in Bengal. One of the most significant body of work – taking cue from Foucault's notion of power and knowledge systems, or from Jacques Derrida's scepticism about modes of representation⁴¹ – is Edward Said's seminal work on 'orientalism' and the discourse built up around it. Said suggested that the 'orient' was a European construct, a tool for dominance, and he showed how a body of (colonial) knowledge could involve the exercise of power.⁴² Much post-colonial theory, in turn, has taken its cue from Said. Said de-

36 Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 9.

37 Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim, 'Tale of Two Sudanese Courts: Colonial Governmentality Revisited', *African Studies Review* 40, no.1 (1997), 13-33.

38 C. H. Philips, *The East India Company 1784 – 1834* (London: Read Books, 2006), 11-12.

39 Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Culture, Theory and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

40 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge: London, 1994), 112.

41 Jacques Derrida's hugely consequential work provided a vital basis for post-structuralist and post-modern philosophy. Derrida questioned accepting forms of representation at their face value and called for the deconstruction of meanings to reveal the complexity of their production as well as to critique established and accepted social, political and other power structures. Though Derrida used textual analysis as his tool of investigation and demonstration, deconstruction has provided the fundamental ideological basis for much of post-colonial criticism.

42 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1979); Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Chatto and Windus: London, 1994).

constructed a large body of western literature to make his case that the East was depicted by the West as the irrational, weak, feminised 'other', contrasted with the rational, strong, masculine West – a contrast, he suggested, derived from the need to create 'difference' between the two. However, Said's position focuses on the creation of difference but does not recognise the fact that European power in the East was never absolute and remained heavily dependent on local collaborators or local forms of knowledge (which were frequently subversive of imperial aims). Said's theory thus emphasises the hegemonic dimensions and structures of colonial dominance but subdues the overlaps and dependence of the two cultures – something that has also attracted criticism from varied academic quarters, not least, the 'Revisionist' camp. Indeed, Fraser has also pointed out that Said modified his own position in later texts such as *Culture and Imperialism* towards a less binary construction.⁴³

One of the interesting contemporary pieces tracing architectural and artistic historiography engaging with Said's notion of orientalism is given by architectural writer, Stephen Cairns.⁴⁴ Taking a series of scholars of so-called orientalist architecture in India, the Middle East and Britain – namely, Thomas Metcalf, Mark Crinson, Zeynep Celik, Timothy Mitchell and John MacKenzie – Cairns shows how each of them represent varying degrees of mix of theoretical and empirical engagement, as well as how close or far each of them are from Said's central thesis of hegemonic knowledge and representation systems, and thus of 'irreconcilable difference' between the East and the West. What is interesting is that Cairns' analysis actually reveals considerable movement, departure or an ironical re-alignment – in one way or another – of each of these scholars from Said's basic premise. Metcalf, for instance, although he reinforces Said's arguments of hegemonic practices and the 'creation of difference', does this by a meticulous gathering of historical evidence into rich empirical material – methodologically quite different from Said's theoretical approach.⁴⁵ Crinson's approach is also largely empirical, and he clearly warns against the homogenising and reductive tendencies of Said's thesis – exposing us to the danger of simplifying all architectural material produced in a context of East-West interaction into 'orientalist' objects. Crinson also suggests using Nicolas Thomas' idea of 'projects' – which are simultaneously localised, politicised and partial as well as part of meta-narratives of historical developments – to address the issue of homogenisation that Said's orientalism suffers from. Celik and Mitchell primarily build on and reinforce Said's theoretical premise instead of a detailed engagement with the architectural artefact itself (in this case, exposition architecture) and its materiality. Mackenzie, on the other hand, demonstrates the evidence of 'positive continuities and invigorating hybridities'. However, the evidence that Mackenzie uses reinforces Said's essential thesis – of the western Self finding ways to exoticise and ossify the eastern 'other'.⁴⁶ One of the central issues that emerge through this comparative

⁴³ Murray Fraser with Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the Special Relationship: The American Influence on Post-War British Architecture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 15.

⁴⁴ Stephen Cairns, 'The stone books of Orientalism', in Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash (ed.), *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 51–65.

⁴⁵ Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁴⁶ Cairns, 'The stone books of Orientalism', 59.

historiography is the precarious relationship between engagement with theoretical frameworks and the materiality of the architectural artefact. On the whole, within such a historiographical discourse, it becomes fairly evident that Said's orientalism – albeit of immense significance in re-shaping the fundamental contours of post-colonial history writing – cannot be used as a blanket framework and needs to be necessarily more nuanced, modified and even radically altered while reading the specificities of each site and situation of colonial encounter.

Existing literature on colonial architecture and urban form in India

Specific studies on colonial architecture and urbanism in the Indian context have taken five broad directions over the past forty years. The first is a generation of work produced in the 1970s and 1980s by historians and travel writers like Sten Nilsson, Robert Irving Grant, Jan Morris or Philip Davies⁴⁷; these gave detailed accounts of British or European colonial architecture in India, but were, however, predominantly engaged with iconic and monumental architecture and their formal characteristics. The second, mostly seen from the late-1980s until the mid-1990s – typified by the works of academics like A.G.K. Menon, K.T. Ravindran or Jon Lang – was a body of post-colonial critique on colonial architecture and urban patterns in India, specifically tracing its role in the underpinnings of present day building design and city planning practices.⁴⁸ These, therefore, focussed on the continuities and links between colonial and post-colonial spatial patterns. The third strand consists of a body of chiefly art historical and stylistic studies starting from the late-1980s, centred on the works of Thomas Metcalf, Giles Tillotson or Andreas Volwahn, which actively engage with the relationship between representation and production of architecture including artisanship and patronage, and the mediations with local cultures that these involved.⁴⁹ Metcalf in particular has been engaged with the representation of the late-nineteenth century imperial state in India and its hegemonic framework. The fourth, represented essentially by Anthony King's work in the late-1970s, marked a major critical shift in the framework for analysing colonial architecture and urban development. In a pioneering study, King demonstrated the intersection between social theory and the writing of colonial architectural history.⁵⁰ King's work was later followed by a fifth body of historical work on colonial urban development, which included Narayani Gupta's work on the urban history of Delhi during the transition from Mughal to colonial rule, Pradip Sinha's work on the urban history of colonial Calcutta, Veena Oldenberg's work on the making of colonial Lucknow, and Norma Evenson's work on the development of the major colonial metropolitan centres in Madras, Bombay, Calcutta

47 Sten Nilsson, *European Architecture in India 1750-1850* (London: Faber, 1968); Robert Grant Irving, *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker and Imperial Delhi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Jan Morris, *Stones of Empire: Buildings of the Raj* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Philip Davies, *Splendours of the Raj, British Architecture in India* (London: J. Murray, 1985).

48 See for example: Menon, 'Rethinking Architecture'; Ravindran, 'Colonial Routes'; Ravindran, 'Why planning failed', *Seminar* 390 (1995), 45-50; Lang, Desai and Desai, *Architecture and Independence*.

49 Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*; Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture*; Tillotson, ed., *Paradigms of Indian Architecture - Space and Time in Representation and Design* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998); Andreas Volwahn, *Imperial Delhi: The British Capital of the Indian Empire*, (Germany: Prestel Verlag, 2002).

50 Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development - Culture, Social Power and Environment*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976).

and Delhi.⁵¹ The key thrust of this body of work was the identification of the colonial city in terms of colonial sociology and its stratified spatial characteristics such as black and white towns – tracing the precise historical processes behind the production of such landscapes. The past decade (beginning with the year 2000) has witnessed a clear shift from such radical and ‘Manichean’ interpretation of colonial landscapes (as postulated by King, for example) to those in favour of more complex, hybrid and heterogeneous readings. This has also been accompanied by an increasing interest in institutional and governmental history, social history, gender history and the complex role of multiple agencies – both European and Indian – in the production of a modern colonial landscape. Some of the key works in this context include the following: Stephen Legg’s work on Delhi’s urban governmentalities in the first half of the twentieth century; Swati Chattopadhyay’s work on the architectural and urban history of Calcutta; William Glover’s work on colonial Lahore; Peter Scriver’s work on the Public Works Department in the second half of the nineteenth century; Arindam Dutta’s work on the Institutional history of aesthetic change in the architecture of late-nineteenth century India; Vikram Prakash’s work on the precise translations between ‘copying and creation’ in the production of the late-nineteenth century Indo-Saracenic vocabulary; Prashant Kidambi’s work on the urban history of colonial Bombay; and Jyoti Hosagrahar’s work on Delhi’s urban landscape, modernity and indigenous agency during the early-twentieth century.⁵²

While Metcalf and Tillotson’s immensely significant works make critical connections between the ideology of the colonial state, interests of local Indian patrons, artisanship and the stylistic apparatus of architecture, the relationship between these aspects and spatial practice (including its inhabitation and use) is still a gap that needs to be filled. This study is based on the conviction that it is incumbent on the architectural community, whose very premise it is to look at the practice of space, to address this gap. Metcalf’s central argument is also that of an increasingly robust imperial state and its hegemonic practices in the late-nineteenth century. This thesis, on the other hand, is premised on the very instabilities and inconsistencies of the colonial enterprise. Norma Evenson in her book, *The Indian Metropolis*, effectively traces the development of the major colonial cities in a similar manner, but mostly focuses on city morphology and residential models. Again, her work is exclusively focused on larger metropolitan areas, nor, like the other writers cited above, does she provide any detailed studies based on individual building

⁵¹ Pradip Sinha, *Calcutta in Urban History* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1978); Narayani Gupta, *Delhi Between the Two Empires 1803–1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981); Norma Evenson, *The Indian Metropolis: A View Towards the West*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); Veena Talwar Oldenberg, ‘The Making of Colonial Lucknow 1856–1877’ in *The Lucknow Omnibus*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005); Pradip Sinha, *Calcutta in Urban History* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1978).

⁵² Stephen Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi’s Urban Governmentalities*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*; Peter Scriver, *Rationalisation, Standardisation and Control in Design: a Cognitive Historical Study of Architectural Design and Planning in the Public Works Department of British India, 1855–1901*. (Delft: Publicatiesbureau Bouwkunde, Delft University of Technology, 1994); William Glover, *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005); Dutta, ‘Strangers within the gate: Public Works and Industrial Art Reform’ in Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash, ed., *Colonial Modernities*, 93–114; Vikramaditya Prakash, ‘Between Copying and Creation: The Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details’ in Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash, eds., *Colonial Modernities*, 115–126; Prashant Kidambi, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis: Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay, 1890–1920* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2007).

types. Some excellent work has also been carried out by other scholars on capital cities or major urban centres in India. Narayani Gupta's book, *Delhi Between the Two Empires*, which traces the transitional urban history of Delhi from late-Mughal to colonial rule, is a significant example. Andreas Volwahn's work looks at the four cities of Madras, Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi in terms of their dominant stylistic content. Veena Talwar Oldenberg's and Rosie Llewellyn Jones's research into the making of colonial Lucknow meticulously record the superimposition of colonial urban structures onto what was a pre-colonial settlement.⁵³ However, even here, the engagement is with Lucknow as a grand political centre. At the more architectural level, reference to the monumentality of governance centred on individual buildings has been reasonably common,⁵⁴ but on the more 'ordinary' architecture of colonial governance it is virtually non-existent. An interesting piece of work that finds resonance with this thesis in its concern for the connection between governance and space is that of cultural geographer Stephen Legg on the making and operation of colonial New Delhi in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Legg provides an impressive analysis of the socio-political, legal, rioting and policing geography of the city. However, all these texts still represent the bias towards capital cities that accompanies colonial spatial studies, and in which regional and provincial narratives rarely find a place.

Some of the most useful precedents that this study hopes to complement are Anthony King's pioneering books on the sociology and spatiality of colonial settlements and the colonial bungalow,⁵⁵ and Peter Scriver's research into the architecture of the Public Works Department in colonial India.⁵⁶ King also discusses the colonial administrative set-up, including that of provincial areas. However, his interpretation of colonial cities and architecture in terms of strong binaries (e.g. dominant-dependent, coloniser-colonised, black town-white town) is radically different from the kinds of tentative governmental functioning, 'hybrid' space, and overlapping heterogeneity that this thesis analyses. Moreover, in his categorisation, King looked at three thematic types of architectural or urban form (viz. the bungalow, the cantonment and the hill station), and thereby omitted other building or precinct types including administrative towns and governmental spaces – which constitute the chief area of enquiry here. Scriver's focus on civilian rather than monumental buildings lies closer to the basic premise of this thesis. However, while Scriver concentrates on tracing the history of one particular pan-Indian colonial institution, the Public Works Department (PWD), and the spaces designed by it, the starting point of this study is clearly distinct in that the thrust is on the 'local' site. This research thus focuses on the *zilla sadar* in order to map the development of its spatial culture around governmental, domestic and civic spaces. As part of this investigation, the study also looks at how the overarching frameworks of the PWD actually played out in such local sites as the *sadar* towns. Further, Scriver concentrates on the time period from 1855–1901, given that the formation of the PWD is the core of his work,

⁵³ Oldenberg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*; Rosie Llewellyn Jones, 'A Fatal Friendship - The Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow' in *The Lucknow Omnibus* (Oxford and New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁴ Davies, *Splendours of the Raj*; Irving, *Indian Summer*; Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*.

⁵⁵ King, *Colonial Urban Development*; King, *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture* (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

⁵⁶ Scriver, *Rationalisation, Standardisation and Control in Design*.

whereas this thesis is also interested in the earlier period of formation and development of the district administration system and revenue administration. To my mind, while the high-imperial (mostly Victorian) era has received considerable scholarly interest within architectural and spatial studies, the period in which colonial power grew has not been sufficiently engaged with in colonial architectural and spatial studies. In that sense my work complements and overlaps with Scriver's work, but is also very different in its conceptual and empirical focus.

The aspect of colonial spatial culture as something co-produced both by the coloniser and the colonised – and the fact that the boundaries or domains of spatial production and inhabitation were often fuzzy – has been emphasised by Swati Chattopadhyay in her book *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny*, as well as in her earlier articles.⁵⁷ Chattopadhyay's work forms the closest conceptual base and inspiration for my proposed research, in that it grounds itself within this theme of co-production of an administrative and civic culture arising out of a range of social practices that were closely linked, but not limited to, mere governance. Such a premise again finds resonance with Foucault's contention that 'power is situated within a cacophony of social practices and situations'.⁵⁸ Such a notion also breaks down the notion of the polarities of the two cultures in question and places the emphasis, instead, on the overlapping of identities. In terms of analytical tools, Chattopadhyay's approach of spanning between physical scales (that of urban morphology and building typology), of looking at literary texts alongside the physical reading of spaces, and addressing the voices of a range of social groups rather than adhere to simplified categories like coloniser-colonised, all provide significant inspiration for the methodological orientation of this study.

Again, the most significant aspect of the enquiry here is its focus on regional and provincial areas rather than large urban centres, and on middle-lower administrative hierarchies rather than the more visible, grandiose centres of power. District towns, as cases for study, represent particularly interesting situations for academic scrutiny – they literally stood for the 'intermediate', the 'in-between'. This in-between-ness was not simply in terms of their intermediate location or administrative role, but also in terms of the simultaneous negotiations and consequently the constantly shifting constellations that such a role entailed. Firstly, they represented the middle-bureaucratic level within colonial administrative hierarchy – i.e. between the colonial headquarters at Calcutta on the one hand and the lower level administrative divisions (such as sub-divisions or *mahakumas*) on the other. Secondly, they simultaneously played a dual role. In one sense, they represented the 'periphery', the provincial, the *mufassal*, with respect to centres like Calcutta. In another sense, they were themselves the 'centres' and main reference points for their immediate hinterland. Thirdly, they occupied a space, both in terms of people's physical mobility and cultural perception, between the city and the country. For the city, they were the window to the country; whereas for the country they were the window to the city, and

⁵⁷ Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*; Chattopadhyay, *A Critical History of Architecture in a Post-colonial World: A View from Indian History*, 1997, URL <http://www.saed.kent.edu/Architronic/v6n1/v6n1.05a.html> accessed Nov 10, 2006.

⁵⁸ Foucault, *Power*, 98.

in turn, to a larger global world. It is in recognising such a contextual position of the *zilla sadar* that interrogating this intermediate middle-bureaucratic provinciality becomes such a central concern for the study.

IV Contribution to knowledge

The research aims to make new contribution to knowledge in the following ways:

1. *Conceptually*, it engages with
 - Spatial practices (physical spatial patterns, including negotiations involved in their production, inhabitation and perception) rather than a purely formal or stylistic discourse.
 - The architecture of individual buildings in relation to that of larger systems and networks – i.e. it offers a dialogical look at local, individual, micro-practices and larger systemic practices.
 - A mapping of the spatial history of provincial governance so as use this new reading of space as a tool to reveal newer dimensions of social and governmental history.
2. *Empirically*, it focuses on
 - A middle-lower tier of governance rather than the prominent centres of power.
 - Everyday bureaucratic, domestic and civic spaces rather than iconic monumental architecture traditionally understood to be the vehicles of colonial power.
 - Provincial areas instead of large urban centres.
1. *Methodologically*, it posits itself at the intersection of spatial, historical, socio-cultural and anthropological studies.

V Literature review of writings on space and power relations

Spatial production and its relation to social and power structures

In deriving a conceptual framework to understand the links between spatial production and social and power structures in the context of colonial spatiality, one of the pivotal sources for this thesis has been Henri Lefebvre, since he combined a concern for social constructions of spatial ideology with the importance of lived experience. For Lefebvre, a merely phenomenological approach to understand the making of space is inadequate – indeed he criticises phenomenology as being of a limited focus, constrained within the immediacy of the so-called ‘lived’ experience. In his book on *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre makes a strong case for space being at once a social product and a means of social production and control, an approach very obviously aligned to Marxist

thought.⁵⁹ What is interesting, however, is that Lefebvre does not discount the value of bodily experience, but rather calls for a reconciliation of ‘the lived’ and ‘the everyday’ with lessons from Marx, Nietzsche and Barthes. Hence what we get in Lefebvre’s view of spatial production is an engagement with spaces that arise out of the struggles between space for profit and space for play, between the simultaneous playing out of space as a social product or means of control, and space as pleasure or bodily experience. Lefebvre further fine-tunes his broad categories of ‘space as a social ideology’ and ‘space as lived experience’ into the categories of Practiced Space, Conceived Space and Lived Space.⁶⁰ ‘Practiced space’ is ‘the material and functional reproduction of a society, incorporating competence in everyday spatial routines’; ‘conceived spaces’ involve ‘the intellectualising of space through codified languages of planning schemes and design discourse’; while ‘lived space’ is ‘the sensual world of everyday life – the space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate’.⁶¹ Lefebvre’s categories open up some very interesting possibilities for looking at colonial provincial spaces. How the colonial provincial landscape accommodated negotiations by different social groups, of practiced, conceived and lived dimensions of spaces, offers a significant new reading of those spaces. In my analysis, the categories of ‘practiced’, ‘conceived’ and ‘lived’ space also offer a particularly suitable fit to the idea of a building or spatial cycle – the conceptual space *before* it comes into material existence, the *process* of actual material production, and finally the physical occupation or use of space and its perceptual re-construction by the user *after* it comes into material existence.

Another related discussion that Lefebvre engages in, also highly relevant to the reading of colonial spaces, is the notion of ‘appropriation’. He suggests that people often try or tend to appropriate spaces for play within spaces for profit. In this context, he calls for the ‘right to the city’ in two critical terms: a) the rights of access; and b) the rights of play and appropriation.⁶² Such an approach is significant in the context of this study in a number of ways. Firstly, using the notion of ‘rights’ to spaces as an indicator of the social potential of spaces bears tremendous promise in the understanding of colonial provincial spatiality. Secondly, the extension of the idea of ‘rights’ from mere access to spaces to the idea of their potential for play and appropriation gives us a much more developed and nuanced idea of the exercise of power through spaces. Natural questions arising out in terms of this study would be: which social group had how much and what type of rights over spaces in the provincial spatial landscape?; and to what extent, and in what way, even when denied direct access, colonists as well as the subjects used the tools of appropriation and play to lay some sort of a claim on buildings or spaces in the colonial provincial context? The basic categories of ‘profit’ and ‘play’ in the context of this thesis may be interpreted more flexibly – for instance, in terms of the formal instruments of spatial control

⁵⁹ Henri Lefebvre and Michel Trebitsch, *Critique of Everyday Life: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, John Moore, trans. (London: Verso, 2008), 49.

⁶⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 38–46.

⁶¹ Henri Lefebvre, as cited in Kim Dovey, *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999), 46.

⁶² Henri Lefebvre, *The Right to the City*, Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 384–385.

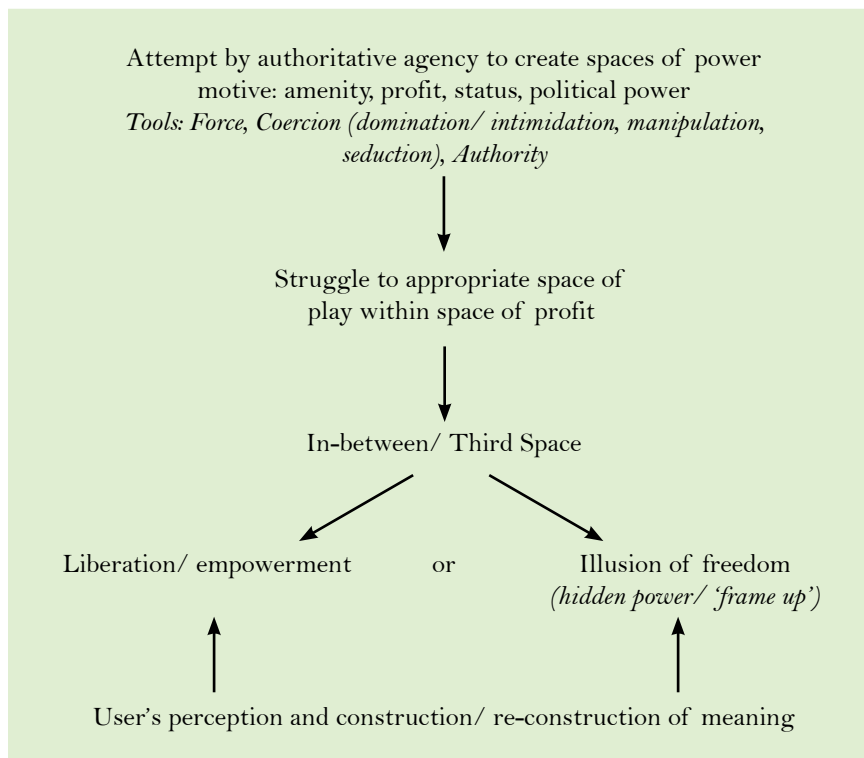


Fig. 4 Power and Play in Space-making

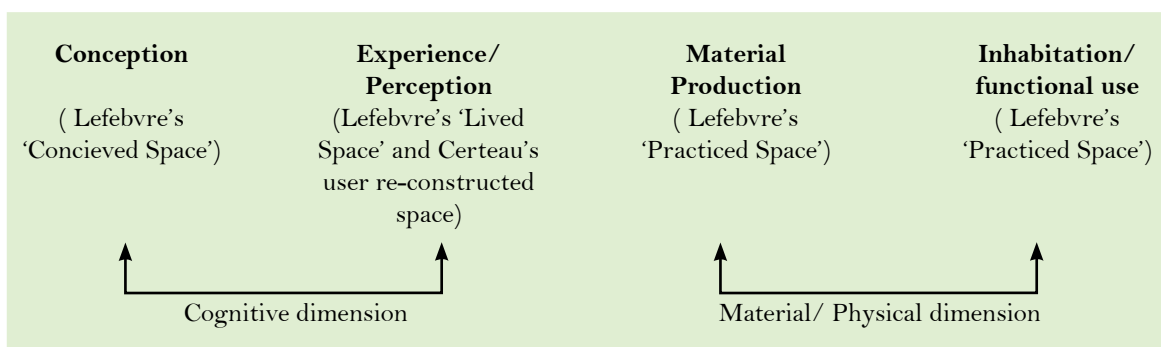


Fig. 5 Making of Space

on one hand and the mechanisms of their appropriation, modification or subversion on the other. Also, Lefebvre's notion of spaces arising out of the contestation between the space for profit and space for play seems to allude to a domain that is neither of the two in pure terms, but an 'in-between' condition. This seems to also be somewhat resonant with Edward Soja's conception of 'thirdspace' – i.e. those kinds of spaces that are simultaneously real and imagined.⁶³ This is particularly interesting in the context of this study, since one of its strands looks at how the *sadar* town's imagined space was pursued – by both native and European inhabitants – in terms of physical and material content.

A related body of theory in this context was that propounded by Michel de Certeau, who emphasised that meanings of spaces are continuously constructed and re-constructed – on an ongoing basis – through action in everyday life by the user.⁶⁴ The essence of Certeau's view of the mediation of power in space lay in the emphasis on the user, usage, the power of perception and the power of resistance. Building upon this, my study looks at how intended use and meanings of spaces in colonial Bengal were modified, altered or subverted and new meanings constructed by users through different spatial practices.

Two notable architectural theorists, Thomas Markus and Kim Dovey, have made specific connections between concepts of power and architectural design.⁶⁵ Markus discusses how buildings encode power through spatial arrangement for a number of building types such as hospitals, schools, or prisons. Dovey discusses the different forms that power can take (e.g. through force, coercion, seduction, or authority) and how architectural tools can be used to exercise each of these. Dovey also introduces the notion of 'frame-up' whereby certain deterministic mechanisms can be indirectly built into spaces without them being explicit and which may be mis-read by users as empowering. In some ways, this seems to find resonance with Lefebvre's notion of 'illusion of liberation/freedom' from control. It also seems to relate to Dovey's own analysis of 'hidden power' in which the subject is virtually unaware of the control exercised on him/her by mechanisms of power in space.⁶⁶ Based on the above theoretical ideas, a rough schema for understanding the mechanisms of power-play in colonial provincial architecture is shown in Fig 4.

VI Proposed conceptual framework

My proposed work hence finds itself conceptually on these theorists' work. However, I suggest a related but somewhat distinct framework based on a somewhat different grouping of the sub-categories (Fig 5). In my reading, the encoding of power in spaces (in this context, in colonial provincial spaces) involves two broad types of related mechanisms – the cognitive mechanism

63 Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

64 Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven Rendall, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

65 Thomas A Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types*, (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 3-28, and entire book; Dovey, *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form* (London: Routledge, 1999), 9 -15, 17-24.

66 Dovey, *Framing Places*, 71-86

and the material/physical mechanism. Thus there are aspects of space which exist and operate in the cognitive domain, and there are aspects of space which exist and operate in the material/functional/physical domain. Space imagined in the abstract intellectual mode by planners, designers or urbanists exists in the cognitive domain, as do spaces that users construct, by reading and interpreting built form in their mind. The former of these two corresponds to Lefebvre's 'conceived space', and the latter to his 'lived space', or to Certeau's notion of empowerment of the user by being able to construct and re-construct the meaning of space. On the other hand, the making of space in material terms, as well as the act of physical occupation and functional operation of space by users constitutes the material or physical dimension of space. Both these correspond to Lefebvre's 'practiced space'. Power in space-making can thus be exercised through multiple channels – cognitive as well as material. For example, the very conception of a building empowers the designer or other design decision-making agency, whereas how it is read and re-interpreted is how the user also exercises a kind of power, albeit through an abstract medium. The production of a building is dependent on specific channels of patronage or available artisanship – and this thus empowers the artisan or the patron also as agents who play a role in the way buildings and spaces are shaped. Similarly the ability to physically occupy a space, to manipulate, modify, appropriate or subvert its original intended purpose empowers the user also in the act of space-making in a broader sense. Such a view of space-making and exercise of power extends far beyond the immediacy of the building or space as a mere artefact and augments the notion of power to incorporate realms like production, inhabitation and perception. In that sense it connects a Foucauldian notion of power to a multi-dimensional notion of spatial practice.

Each of these aspects of production of space involves mediations of power between the different groups of actors in question. However, I propose to extend the notion of 'appropriation' beyond the struggles noted by Lefebvre between spaces for profit and spaces for play, to include also the negotiations between a range of possible categories characteristically used to describe colonial landscapes. I therefore propose to augment the scope of the notion of appropriation to the more general idea of *transgressions* – between categories like play and profit, work and home, work and leisure, time and space zones, city and country, European and native, or global and local.

In short, this study looks at how different agencies negotiated with each other in spatial production in colonial provincial Bengal, including the ways in which they assimilated, synthesised, appropriated or subverted the spatial culture of each other. It looks at these issues at the level of design conception, material production, experience/perception and inhabitation/functional use of spaces. It is important to note here that though the study is fundamentally based on a rigorous theoretical framework arrived at by engaging with a range of theoretical literature, it intends to use this framework only as a subtle and creative underlayer for excavating and analysing the empirical material. While it continuously uses the proposed framework throughout the study, it consciously stays away from overt references to theorists and jargons, one of the key intentions of the thesis being to explore newer, alternative and engaging techniques and language of building historical narratives in architectural studies.

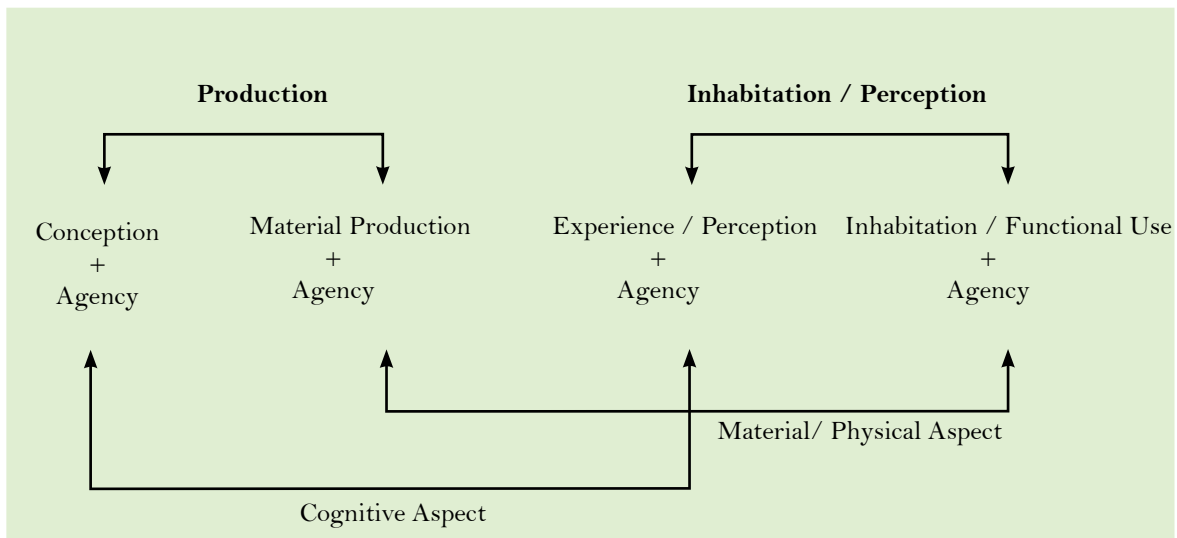


Fig. 6 Making of Space (modified scheme)

VII Research questions:

The over-arching question that the thesis sets out to answer is pivoted on the nature and transformation of the spatial culture of provincial governance in colonial Bengal from the late-eighteenth century to the turn of the twentieth century.

The more specific questions that the research attempts to address are:

1. How, as the nature of British colonial presence in India changed from trading to revenue administration and finally to imperial rule, did its spaces of governance in provincial Bengal evolve over time?
2. What were the precise intersections and connections between colonial governance and provinciality? In other words, how did provincial life affect ways in which governance functioned and the way its spaces were shaped? Likewise, how did colonial governance affect provincial life and its spatial culture? And how did these borrow or were distinct from large urban centres like Calcutta?
3. How did the centralised or normative structures of governance and its building practices intersect with local practice? Who or what agencies were these shaped by, and how?
4. How can we spatially imagine the networks of colonial governance and administrative geographies?
5. How did a larger spatial culture form in the *zilla sadar* around administrative spaces, and the other way round? And in connection with these processes, what were the nature of relations between work, home and leisure spaces?
6. How did the *sadar's* intermediate location between rural and major urban areas play out in the formation of its spatial cultures?
7. How do the findings from these inform our larger understanding of colonialism and the spatial cultures it produced?

VIII Methodology

Framework

The methodological framework for the study is derived directly from the conceptual framework, by breaking up the subject of the making of space into its cognitive and material domains. However, a slight re-arrangement of the sub-categories of cognitive and material aspects gives us a sequential analysis of the process through which space is produced (Fig 6).

The first two of these categories – conception and material production – relate as a

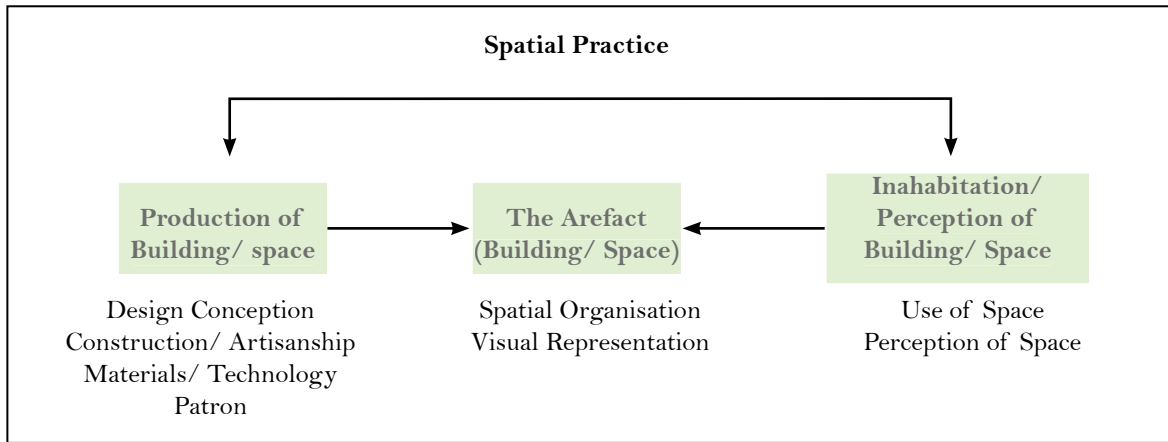


Fig. 7 Methodological Framework

couple to how a building or urban space comes into existence. The last two of these categories – experience and inhabitation – relate as a couple to how space is used, appropriated or modified, how it is perceived, and how it is then perceptually re-constructed in the user's mind. Thus, methodologically, the framework for the thesis translates directly into two distinct types of information on buildings and spaces:

- Production related – design conception, construction, materials, technology and patronage.
- Inhabitation and perception related – use and experience of space.

However, in addition, and along the lines of Dovey and Markus, I have introduced the reading of the artefact itself as text – i.e. as a form of discourse – to form a third category of information. On the other hand, along the lines of scholars like Swati Chattopadhyay, who emphasise that looking at a building as text is an important but inadequate tool,⁶⁷ I will also read texts on buildings as another form of discourse, especially in the sphere of production and inhabitation/perception of architecture and urban form. The methodological framework that results from all this is shown in Fig 7.

On the whole, this thesis tries to find these three types of information about architecture and urban patterns in district headquarter towns of Bengal. Again, it is of key importance to note here that the above structure is indicative, and has been used only as a conceptual basis for the enquiry. Rather than being a limiting deterministic tool, the framework and its parameters are expected to serve as subtle and malleable guidelines shaping the overall contours of the enquiry – which is essentially qualitative, and is conceived and presented as a historical narrative. Also, it is important to note, that in terms of logistics, it has not been possible to trace continuous threads through each of the above enunciated parameters for all aspects for all buildings, spaces or towns individually, given the constraints of data availability. Hence the study had to necessarily accept and work around such constraints. To clarify these disjunctions, the methodological decisions made will now be enunciated.

Nature of study

The study here is intended as moderately deep and of a reasonable geographic spread. This is firstly because the *zilla sadar* towns represented a generic typology of colonial administrative towns, as spread over a large geographical area. They shared certain characteristics, yet varied forces played out in individual instances in different ways. This study thus interrogates the general notion of the *zilla sadar* as a socio-spatial entity, while also aiming to bring out some of the specificities of individual cases. Such an approach necessitates a 'large canvas' approach to begin with, and hence it was felt not sufficient to concentrate on a single town or even just 2-3 towns. Hence, the above mentioned conceptual tools have been used to scan through a range

67 Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 15.

of situations in *zilla sadar* towns to understand patterns within a larger landscape. Individual empirical evidence as and where appropriate has been used to illustrate these, and to bring out commonalities and specificities. The point to be noted here is that reading a wide range of situations does not necessarily imply over-generalisation; in fact, the aim has been to understand and bring out the very specificities alongside tracing the more pervasive patterns.

The other reason behind the spread-out nature of the study is related to limitations in the nature of available data. My own reconnaissance visits and the subsequent fieldwork trips to these district towns revealed clearly that it was virtually impossible to get consistently comparable and exhaustive information that would cover all parameters, all categories of spaces and all towns. Therefore, the research process was necessarily dependent on collecting bits and pieces of information from a number of towns to get a reasonable picture of the overall landscape of the *zilla sadar*. For example, the patronage information for a particular building may have been available, but the design discussions may not have been. Or a building and a town may have been available as an artefact to be read, but information regarding who designed it, or how it was perceived in the public mind, may not have been. Also, certain types of information were available only at certain scales – for example, information about ‘agency’ in building activity were often not available for each individual building. Nonetheless, it was possible to build up a larger, more generalised picture of the issue of agency in provincial building activity. Following this, certain parameters had to necessarily be covered at these larger scales (through a range of specific examples) whereas other parameters had to be covered at more specific, individual scales – depending on the exact information that could be obtained. Documentary evidence, especially with regard to the two categories of production and inhabitation/perception, was also very fragmented and even town maps of the period in question were rare finds. This somewhat ‘patchy’ nature of evidence necessitated the piecing together of an analysis and argument from fragments – all not necessarily of the same piece of architecture or space, but often spread across a number of examples. This also meant accepting evidence at any scale ranging between those corresponding to individual buildings/spaces to those corresponding to overall scenarios. It therefore became a methodological imperative to rather use an assortment of examples from a number of different towns to build up a discussion along thematic categories.

Interestingly, although apparently presenting itself as a constraint, the very ‘patchy’ and unpredictable nature of information was actually felt by the author, along the way, to act as a particularly creative and constructive force. In many ways, it helped build a more fluid and rich narrative, which ‘consistent’ information across categories and parameters might have hindered and which may have encouraged a more mechanical format of study based on ‘consistent’ comparisons between towns and buildings.

Choice of towns

Partly because of the fact that the aim is to read larger patterns in the architectural and spatial

character of the *zilla sadar*, and partly because of the fragmented nature of evidence, the study refrains from adopting a traditional case-studies approach (which is usually based on looking at consistently comparable information across cases). For logistical reasons and the ease of data collection, the research work was conducted town by town, spatial category by category, but this structure has not been used directly for the actual thesis, which is laid out instead along thematic lines. The main consideration in terms of the selection of towns was to pick up a range of situations of colonial encounter. District headquarter towns rarely arose on a 'context-less' blank state or on completely virgin ground. Most of the time, the setting up of these towns were guided by considerations of existing political and geo-climatic factors. Also, because of its dominant role as a revenue collection centre, the *sadar* landscape was integrally linked with the presence of the native *zamindars* – appointed tax-collectors for the smaller tax estates that each revenue district was divided up into. Although they were attached to their own country estates, Bengali *zamindars* still had a huge presence in *sadar* towns. Certain towns were dominated by one substantial *zamindar* and others by a number of small *zamindars*. The *sadar* landscape was thus a result of the co-existence of these *zamindars* (or the dominant local agency) and the British colonial authority, the relationship between whom ranged from being collaborative or amicable to tenuous and hostile. This complex relationship thus served as a key criterion for the selection of towns.

The second criterion for the selection of towns was the relationships within the colonial state's own mechanism – i.e. between the various agencies and arms of administration such as military, civil, judiciary, executive, police, public health or civic governance. Opting to select towns which strongly or subtly reflected these relationships was based on the premise of the study that the colonial state was itself not monolithic, but rather an assemblage of different wings of administration which had their own dynamics with respect to each other. The third aspect that influenced the selection of towns was to do with the presence of public institutions and their role in the town. Although primarily administrative centres, most *sadar* towns also became sites where key colonial institutions such as schools, colleges, libraries, town-halls, clubs, and other public spaces flourished. Certain towns in particular developed an especially strong institutional presence, serving not only the town itself but the larger region and in effect becoming pan-Bengali institutions.⁶⁸ In such towns there was also a clear tendency to develop spatially distinct institutional zones which sometimes became synonymous with the idea of the town itself. An attempt has been made therefore to include such towns within the study. While not limited to these categories, the following types of towns have thus been key components of research for this thesis:

1. Towns which represent co-existence of one powerful *zamindar* and British colonial administrative authority (e.g. Burdwan, Krishnanagar, Jessore).
2. Towns which represent the co-existence of a number of smaller *zamindars* and British

⁶⁸ Some examples of these are K. N. College in Berhampur, Government College in Krishnanagar, and Bankura Medical College in Bankura.

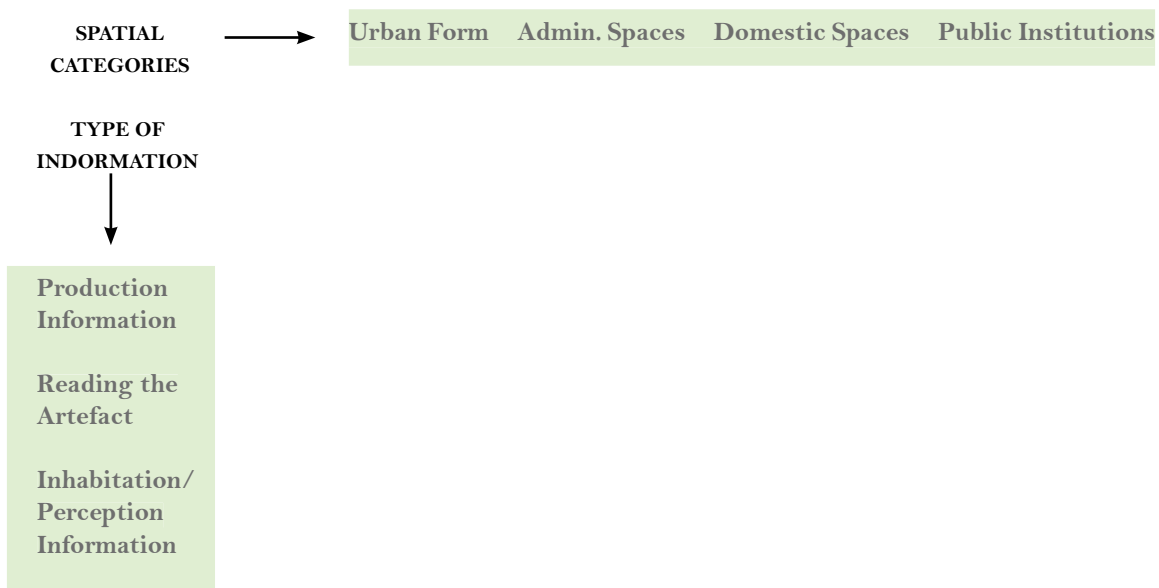


Fig. 8 Methodological Categories

colonial administrative authority (Bankura and Suri).

3. Towns which represent contestations between different internal factions within the colonial State (e.g. Baharampur, where there was an appropriation of military cantonment space by civil agency, and Krishnanagar, where the town form reflected the contestation between executive and judiciary agencies of administration).
4. Towns with a strong institutional presence (e.g. Baharampur, Burdwan, Krishnanagar, Barisal, and in varying degrees all the towns mentioned above)

It is also important to note here that the categories mentioned above are not mutually exclusive. The specific examples above illustrate quite clearly that each town often embodied one or more dimensions. The pragmatics of availability of visual and other material particularly useful in understanding and analysing the *zilla sadar* has also played a role in the choice of towns. For example, for a study of urban form, it became somewhat of an imperative to include towns of which archival town plans of the historical period were available. The key issue to keep in mind here is that the discussion is built up along thematic lines, and hence specific aspects of these different towns that help to illustrate a particular point have been harnessed for that purpose.

Categories of spaces

The choice of the spatial categories studied in each town is directly related to the concept and definition of governance as set out earlier in this introduction. The study, as discussed, is based on the premise that colonial provincial governance did not function from formal administrative spaces alone. Governmental functioning in district towns gave rise to a slew of functions and associated spaces which became integral part of the landscape of governance, and in that sense cannot be dissociated from it. In fact, so integral was this relationship, that seeing administrative spaces in isolation would virtually mean seeing them divorced from the crucible in which they were housed or the multidimensional space that they generated and became part and parcel of. One of the chief purposes of this thesis is thus to dwell on the connections and complexity of this landscape.

Due to the fact that the study looks at administrative towns that existed primarily because of, and then grew out of their governmental functioning, the key provincial administrative buildings in the *cutcherry*⁶⁹ complex form the core of the analysis, and the first category of space. Typically, in the *zilla sadar*, the *cutcherry* complex consisted of the Collectorate (District Collector's office), the District Court, the lower courts, the treasury, and the *mahafezkhana* or record room. However, work and home spheres in the districts often overlapped and it is virtually impossible to see the former in isolation. Domestic spaces (such as the officer's bungalow, the *zamindar's* house-cum-*cutcherry*, or the residential spaces of the clerical and service population)

⁶⁹ The word *cutcherry* is the generic term to denote an office or site of administration. In India it most commonly referred to public offices and law courts. However, it was also used to denote any office or workplace as such – small or big, governmental or private. The word is of Arabic origin, but came to be assimilated within the form of Persian used in Mughal India and also within the Hindustani language, and continued to be actively used during the colonial period.

often shared blurred boundaries with work spaces. Governance also spilled over onto these other spaces, and many governmental ideas such as local governance were mobilised from the public sphere and nurtured in libraries, schools, colleges, town-halls or other public open spaces. This larger domain of domestic spaces and sites of public life in the *sadar* towns thus form the second category of space. The over-arching category was then the general urban form of the town within which the former categories were housed and through which their relationships were mediated. Hence the broad spatial types (which also serve as the thematic categories along which the discussion is organised) used in this thesis are as follows:

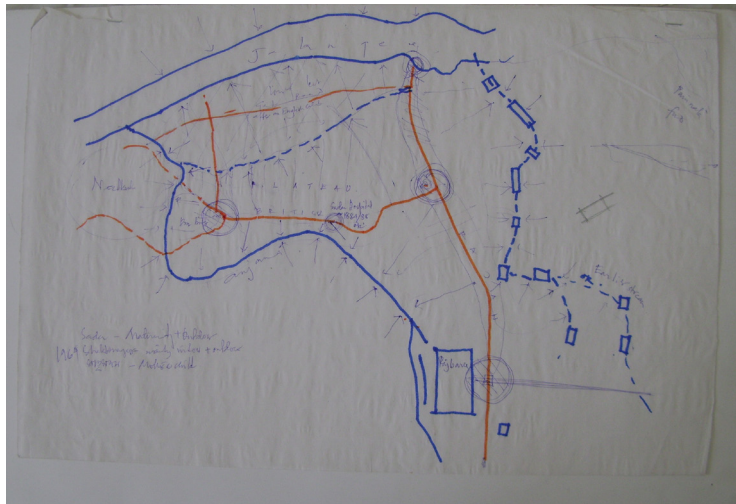
- Urban Form
- Administrative spaces
- Domestic spaces and sites of public life

These will each be discussed in the study in terms of spatial production, readings of the artefact itself, and the inhabitation/ perception of space, as set out by the methodological framework. The relation between the methodological categories is shown in Fig 8. Once again, this is intended as a conceptual schema and has not been used over-literally for the purpose of the study. In other words, there has been no attempt made to meticulously fill in the information for each grid of the matrix, since it was felt that this would come in the way of a more fluid engagement and understanding of these relationships. Instead, there has been an overall attempt to explore the manner in which the composite space of the *zilla sadar* – in terms of its urban form, administrative, domestic and public spaces – came to be produced, perceived, inhabited and shaped.

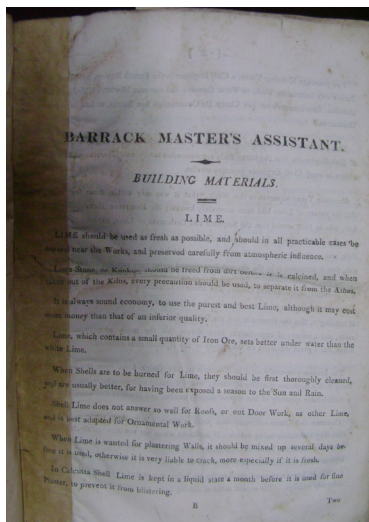
Methodological tools and disciplinary issues

The essence of the research is an intensive and rigorous empirical study. The conceptual apparatus discussed so far in this chapter provides the abstract under-layer for this analysis. One of the most challenging aspects of the field research has been the sheer difficulty faced in recovering historical data – for example, very few building drawings are actually available from Indian Government and State Government records due to the lack of good conservation and cataloguing practices. This, in effect, has meant laying a huge premium on extensive building surveys on site, then drawing up these surveyed buildings, and reading these alongside formal and informal archival material to build up a historical narrative. In all, almost 150 buildings were documented in varying degrees of detail (about 80-90 of which have been used for the final thesis). Period maps of only some towns were available from formal archival sources; those for the rest were generated by the author based on local historical texts, oral narratives of inhabitants, and detailed *in situ* surveys. Phases of urban historical development or incremental changes to buildings also had to be mapped in a similar fashion.

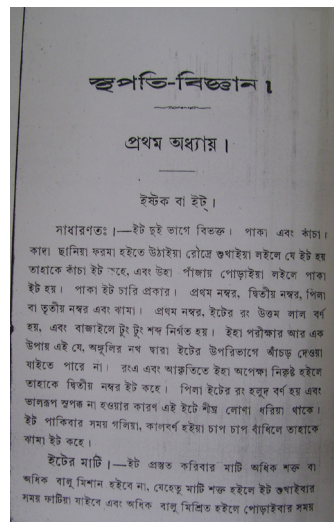
One of the thrusts of the study has been to concentrate, other than on local histories, on micro-histories (e.g. of individual families, buildings or spaces) to map a larger history of



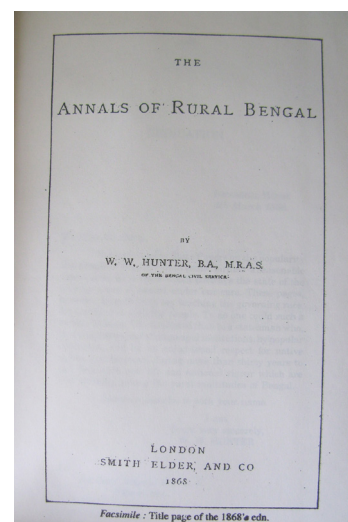
Physical reading of spaces by the author: Landform analysis, Krishnanagar



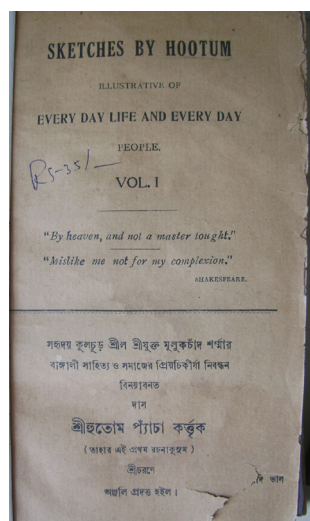
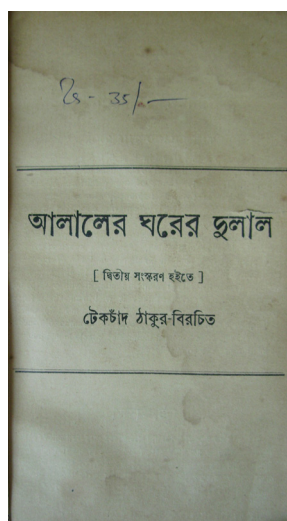
Governmental Construction Manual, 1823



Construction handbook by Bengali Engineer, 1880s



Private European Accounts: The Annals of Rural Bengal, W. W. Hunter, 1868.



Bengali Period Literature

1. 'Alaler Ghores Dulal' (The Spoilt Son), Peary Chand Mitra
2. 'Hutom Pachar Noksha' (Sketches by Hootum), Kali Prasanna Sinha

Fig. 9 Types of Sources

the spatial culture of the *zilla sadar*. Again, this was done largely by recording individual or family narratives in person, or by meticulously recording the physical evidence of a building's transformation, along with various official and private sources of documentary and oral evidence. The study also engages with the roles of a range of actors and agencies – both European and Indian, and including their internal heterogeneities – in the production of the spatial culture of the *sadar* towns. For all these reasons, the thesis by necessity uses a methodological hybrid culling together tools from a range of disciplines. It would have been virtually impossible to recover the complexity of the *sadar*'s spatial landscape and the intricate negotiations between the various actors that this involved, within the framework of a single discipline. The study therefore assimilates methodological tools from different disciplines in the following manner:

- Architectural/ spatial studies: reading and analysis of existing period drawings (e.g. maps, plans, paintings, photographs); physical measurement and drawings by the author and analytical observation of the buildings/ spaces; conjectural re-construction of buildings where parts of buildings were dilapidated, assigning dates to buildings based on style, material or construction technology or by comparative methods.
- Historical research: archival re-construction of physical evidence (of buildings/ spaces) and socio-political evidence (of processes involved) from sources like the West Bengal State Archives, National Archives of India, and India Office Records at the British Library. Governmental documents and private papers, period literature (officers' accounts, native accounts, biographies), visual material; recorded local/ urban histories, oral histories, family histories, life histories.
- Socio-cultural-anthropological studies: mapping family narratives and popular perceptions, textual readings to understand production, perception and use of space, concepts of power and agency and overlaying these on the physical or material reading of buildings.

Sources

The categories of sources thus referred to are (Fig. 9):

1. Physical sites of individual buildings and towns
2. Official documents such as gazetteers, letters between different governmental agencies, drawings and photographs, acts, codes, guidebooks, manuals, policy documents, compendiums, handbooks, private accounts of officers, etc.
3. Non-official handbooks, construction manuals, sanitary guidelines etc.
4. Period literature (personal accounts, memoirs, travelogues, biographies and novels).
5. Personal drawings, sketches, etchings, photographs.
6. Family documents and assorted background material from various sources.

IX Chapter structure

As noted, the heart of the thesis consists of a study of the evolution of provincial administrative architecture in *zilla sadar* towns. This is buffeted on one side by a study of the urban form of the *sadar* within which the *cutcherry* complex was located, and on the other by a study of associated domestic spaces and public institutions with which the *cutcherry's* operations were intricately bound. The thesis thus aims to look at colonial provincial governance as producing and being produced as part of a deeply interconnected and composite spatial culture.

Chapter 1 locates the *zilla sadar* within a larger colonial administrative geography in Bengal, and then analyses the context and considerations behind the selection of sites for these towns, dwelling on how they were perceived and imagined by the different groups of inhabitants. Chapter 2 looks at the historical development of the various constituent components of the *sadar* – administrative, residential and institutional – as produced and inhabited by these various social groups, both European and native, in the *sadar* town. Chapter 3, 4 and 5 trace the historical phases of administrative architecture in *zilla sadar* towns in Bengal, looking at how, as thrusts in central and provincial governance evolved or shifted, these spaces came to be shaped – i.e. were acted upon by a range of forces, actors and agencies. Chapter 6 traces how, while pivoted on the main governmental spaces, a wider domestic and public sphere came to be formed in these towns, and how all these worked together to produce its composite spatial culture. In doing all this, the thesis analyses the manner in which the *zilla sadar* gradually developed into a complex and heterogeneous entity in which a wide range of paradigms – urban and rural, European and Indian, governmental and non-governmental, public and private – played out in complex ways and produced a significant paradigm of colonial modernity, often thought otherwise to be the exclusive hallmark of large metropolitan centres. The conclusion will then draw all these strands together and suggest avenues for future investigation.

Chapter 1 ■

Colonial governance, provincial urbanisation
and the 'rurban' imagination

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the overall urban form of the *zilla sadar*. It engages with the role of the *zilla sadar* as an intermediate domain between different hierarchies of British colonial administration and scales of urbanity. The chapter first situates the *zilla sadar* within a larger administrative geography of colonial provincial governance in Bengal and as part of a city-town-country constellation. In doing so, it reads big cities, provincial towns, their own peripheries and interior villages as a composite space, in terms of the networks of functioning they were bound up with. It then analyses the considerations that informed the choice of sites of these towns by the colonial administrators. The chapter also looks at the imagination of the *sadar* as well as the meaning that it held in the minds of both European and native inhabitants, and the type of urban model that ensued from such conceptions.

1.1 The *zilla sadar*, colonial administrative geography and city-town-country constellations

The *zilla sadar* or district headquarter town, was part of a more generic category of colonial settlements known as 'civil stations'. Civil stations were quintessential products and key sites

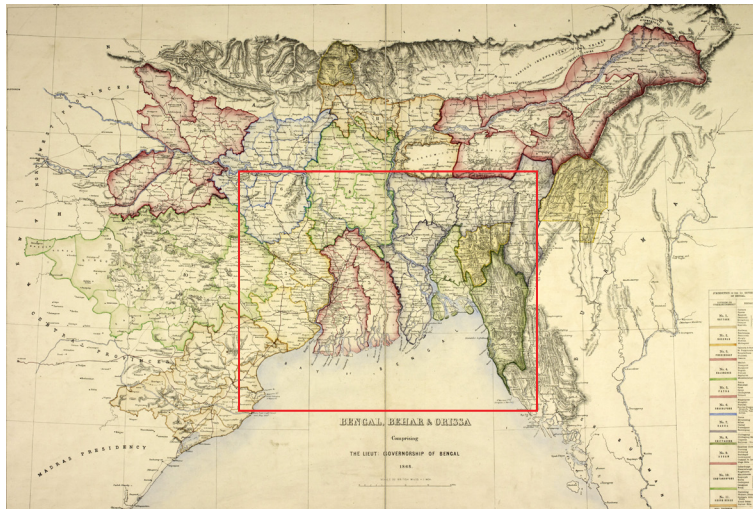


Fig. 1.1a Lower Bengal within the Bengal Presidency
Source: IOR, British Library



Fig. 1.1b Sadar towns in lower Bengal
Source (base map): same as above

of colonial provincial administration. The term 'station' in colonial India referred to specific governmental settlements – especially in provincial and interior areas – which housed either military or civil establishments. The expression 'civil station' was used to refer to centres of civil administration, as against the 'military station' (or 'cantonment') used for training and housing the army and its establishment. Taken together, these represented a territorial grip over a vast hinterland through a network of nodes of military or administrative control. As such, these locations came to represent the colonial government's actual and symbolic presence in a far-flung landscape. In fact, when applied to provincial officers, being 'at the station' formally meant being in a (virtually continuous) state of governmental duty. So potent was the association with the idea of being 'stationed', or fixed at the particular location, that the 'station' itself became a key reference point in conceptions of provincial governance – expressions like being 'in station' or 'out of station' were regular ways of referring to the presence or movement of officers in or out of these locations, and symbolically in and out of governmental responsibilities. Yet, as the chapters on administrative and domestic spaces will reveal later, in reality, much of the relationship between governmental space and governmental duties in the provincial context was fluid. District officers at a station often enjoyed non-official domestic leisure even during hours of work. On the other hand, they were routinely kept busy with official work even after office hours and in case of exigency, had to be readily available for call on duty even when 'out of station' and formally off-duty. The resultant nature of provincial governance and its relationship with the physical space of the *zilla sadar* was thus fluid and mutable. But the very concept of stations as being the stable anchors of colonial governance still retained immense logistical and symbolic value. As the headquarters of revenue districts, *zilla sadar* towns were the pivotal nodes in a hierarchical chain of civil stations (Fig. 1.1a, 1.1b and 1.2) – with divisional headquarters above and sub-divisional (or *mahakuma*) towns below them. Each 'Division' in Bengal contained a few 'Districts' and each District, a few 'Sub-divisions' (Fig. 1.3).¹ As described in the 'Introduction', after the grant of the *diwani* for the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the East India Company by the Mughal emperor in 1765, and more specifically after 1786,² the District came to be the most significant spatial unit for revenue collection within the colonial revenue administration machinery – and thus the level at which maximum power in provincial governance was placed.

Zilla sadar towns developed as headquarters of revenue districts within a landscape of other declining urban centres. In his analysis of provincial towns in nineteenth-century Bengal, M.S Islam discussed how the Permanent Settlement of 1793 caused the confiscation of *zamindari*s from a number of defaulting *zamindars* [tax collectors]³ and how this, along

1 The number of Sub-divisions was dependent on the size of the district, as well as other administrative issues. Typically, there were 3-6 sub-divisions in each district.

2 As mentioned earlier in the introductory chapter, in 1786, the post of the District Collector was formed and a lot of power in governance devolved to him. This was accompanied by the clear delineation of the territories of revenue districts. These developments followed a period between the grant of the *diwani* in 1765, and 1786 – one which was characterised by a lot of experimentation with revenue administration.

3 The Permanent Settlement of 1793 had set tax settlements for each parcel of agricultural land in stone and contracts for tax collection had been given to *zamindars* in perpetuity by the British East India Company, provided taxes



Fig. 1.2 Jessore town - *sadar*, Jessore district
Photo: Pradip Sen

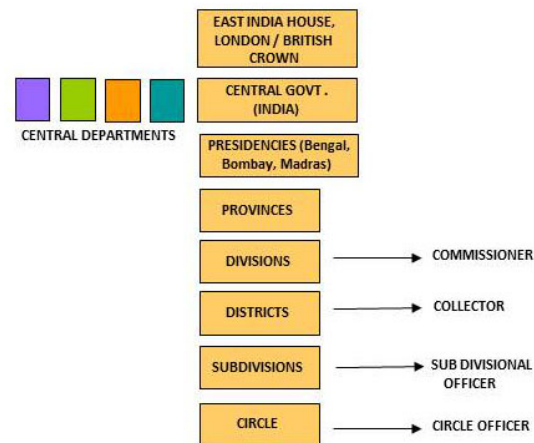


Fig. 1.3 Administrative and territorial hierarchies, British India



Fig. 1.4 Dutch factory, Chinsurah

Source: <http://www.deefholts.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/photos/hougli1665.jpg>

with the dismantling of much of the Mughal *nawabi* political structure, led to the substantial decline – during the early years of the Company's rule – of a number of existing towns (e.g. Dinajpur, Murshidabad, Dacca and to some extent Burdwan) built up under *zamindari* or *nawabi* patronage.⁴ Early-colonial settlements set up by various European powers in Bengal, including the British, were essentially commercial establishments known as 'Factory towns', built from the early-seventeenth century on rivers or marine locations (Fig. 1.4). These were centred on the 'Factory', a fortified area (containing warehouses, offices, residential, leisure and entertainment areas) that acted as a point of control for trade between European countries and inland areas of India. Sometimes fairly elaborate settlements developed around the Factories. Surat on the western coast of India, Kasimbazaar and Hugly in Bengal were Factory settlements of the British; Chinsura, Hugly, Chandannagar and Srirampur in Bengal were Factory settlements of the Dutch, Portugese, French and Danes respectively. Even major metropolitan urban centres like Calcutta, Madras or Bombay were originally Factory-settlements⁵. However, with the granting of the *diwani*, the working-thrust of the British East India Company gradually shifted from international trade to more localised revenue administration. Even the Factory-towns of the British themselves suffered because of the increasingly reduced commercial operations of the Company which formally stopped with the (British) Parliamentary Charter Act of 1833.⁶ The Factory towns of other European powers like the French or the Dutch, too, could not develop much because of the limited commercial freedom allowed to them by the British East India Company for political reasons. It was within such a context of declining existing centres that a new landscape of British-colonial administrative towns – the *zilla sadars* – emerged in Bengal.

A look at some of the demographic figures of *sadar* towns in the nineteenth century gives an idea of their levels of urbanisation during the period. Population of *zilla sadar* towns increased over the first half of the nineteenth century by leaps and bounds, drawing rural population – mostly surplus agricultural labour in search of new forms of employment in government establishments – into them. Town areas also grew typically to between 6 - 9 square miles by the early-twentieth century.⁷ However, quite a few *sadar* towns actually saw a decline in population in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. One reason behind this was the incidence of various types of disease (such as Burdwan fever), whereby either the town

were paid in time. This also resulted in the confiscation of *zamindaries* [tax-estates] – either in whole or part – from of a huge number of defaulting *zamindars*.

⁴ M.S. Islam, 'Life in the *mufassal* towns of nineteenth century Bengal', in Kenneth Balhatchet and John Harris (eds.), *The City in South Asia*, (London and Dublin: Curzon Press Ltd. and Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press Inc., 1980), 229 - 230.

⁵ Factory settlements in India have been studied in the context of colonial urban development by a number of scholars. See for example, Sten Nilsson, *European Architecture in India 1750-1850*, trans. Agnes George and Eleonore Zettersten (London: Faber, 1968); Partha Mitter, 'The early British port cities of India: their planning and architecture circa 1640-1757', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 45 (1986), 95-114; M. Kosambi and J.E. Brush, 'Three colonial port cities in India', *Geographical Review*, 78 (1988), 32 - 47; Norma Evenson, *The Indian Metropolis: A View Towards The West* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁶ In the Charter Act of 1833, the trade license of the East India Company was withdrawn altogether, though the administration of India still remained with the Company as part of British governance.

⁷ By 1876 the twin town of Hugly-Chinsura had an area of 6 sq. miles. By 1910, Krishnanagar had an area of 7 sq. miles, Burdwan 9 sq. miles. By 1908 Bankura had an area of 5.96 sq. miles. See *Bengal District Gazetteers* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1908-1910).

population was greatly wiped out, or else significant numbers of people moved to larger cities like Calcutta in the hope of better health facilities. The other reason behind this was the increasing development of Calcutta as a highly industrial city, and the concomitant exodus of labour from provincial areas to feed its labour needs. For example, while the population of Burdwan reached a high point of 53,927 in 1814, by 1901 it had fallen to 35,022. The population of Krishnanagar reduced somewhat from 26,750 in 1872 to 24,547 in 1901.⁸ Such reduction of population also hindered *sadar* towns from actually developing into fully urban areas; instead, it caused their continuing survival as semi-rural entities. The urbanism of the *sadar* towns of Bengal in any case cannot be understood within the usual framework of industrial urbanisation. Its patterns were rooted directly in, and dictated primarily by, its administrative role, buttressed subsequently by the growth of business areas and public institutions within it. The result was its curiously heterogeneous and hybrid lifestyle – a consequence, also, of its precarious existence between town and country, and between higher and lower administrative hierarchies.

Colonialism forged radical and contradictory connections, in the Bengal landscape, between previously less-connected locations. One of the key reasons was the strongly hierarchical character of colonial revenue administration. After the granting of *Diwani* in 1765, the first twenty years of the East India Company's administration was marked by a continuous dilemma as to whether administrative power should be largely placed in the Company headquarters in Calcutta, or whether it should be dispersed more at the district level. As a result of the reforms of 1786, a number of districts were formally constituted out of the former Collectorships (i.e. the territorial revenue-units formed in 1772) and the post of the District Collector was revived with a substantial allocation of power to him. By 1793, through a fresh set of reforms, provincial governance was shaped into a more decentralised, yet oligarchic form of district administration, with two crucial centres of power – the District Collector (in charge of revenue matters) and the District Judge (in charge of civil justice) – in every District. Magisterial power for the administration of criminal justice was at different periods of time combined either with the Collector's or the Judge's duties.⁹ However, even after this degree of decentralisation, the very nature of colonial administration – arranged hierarchically from the headquarters at Calcutta to the district headquarter and sub-divisional towns¹⁰, and then down to the tax collection estates in the countryside, entailed continuous movement of people between city, town and country. This

⁸ See J. Peterson, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Burdwan*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1910 and J.H.E. Garrett, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Nadia*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1910.

⁹ For a detailed account of early administrative history of British rule in India and Bengal, see for example, F.D. Ascoli, *Early Revenue History of Bengal and the Fifth Report 1812* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1917); L.S.S. O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service 1601-1930* (London: John Murray, first edition, 1931); John Henry Tull Walsh, *A History of Murshidabad District, Bengal, with biographies of some of its noted families* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1902). Contemporary critical works include C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, in series *The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); H. H. Dodwell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire: vols. IV and V, British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Jon E. Wilson, *The Domination of Strangers: Modern Governance in Eastern India, 1780-1835* (Hampshire: Macmillan Publishers, 2008); Philip F. McEldowney, *Colonial Administration and Social Developments in middle India: The Central Provinces 1861-1921*, University of Virginia Ph. D. Dissertation (Corcoran Department of History), 1980; Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: the British in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ 'Sub-divisions' or *mahakumas* were administrative units just below the 'District' in hierarchy. Each District consisted of a few Sub-divisions. Under the Governor General William Bentinck (1828-1835), Deputy Collectors were appointed in charge of sub-divisions. Sub-divisional towns or *mahakuma* towns were headquarters of sub-divisions.

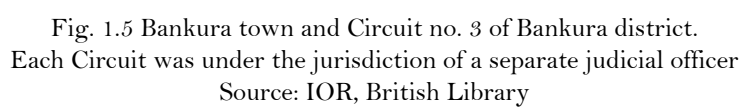


Fig. 1.5 Bankura town and Circuit no. 3 of Bankura district.
Each Circuit was under the jurisdiction of a separate judicial officer
Source: IOR, British Library

was further reinforced by the higher mobility brought about by a growing network of road, rail and water transport by the mid-nineteenth century.¹¹

The ways in which colonial governance virtually *necessitated* links between cities, towns and rural areas in Bengal were many and varied. The justice system, for example, was arranged in a strictly tiered manner. Appeals from the *munsifs*' courts [lower courts] in interior areas were heard in the district level *diwani* [civil] and *fouzdari* [criminal] courts that were located in *zilla sadar* towns, and those from district courts were heard first in provincial courts of appeal at Calcutta, Dacca and Murshidabad, and then in *sadar diwani* and *sadar nizamat* [chief civil and criminal] courts or High Courts at Calcutta. In any case, up to 1813, British and other European settlers in *mufassal* [provincial] areas could not be tried for any offence in *mufassal* courts, especially by native judges, and could only be tried at the Crown's court in Calcutta. From 1813, although they could be tried in *mufassal* courts, even up to 1836 Europeans in the *mufassal* could still appeal directly to the Supreme Court at Calcutta.¹² All this meant that in order to receive justice, people had to physically move between different spatial locations like villages, *zilla sadar* towns, and the headquarters in Calcutta. Other than this, the colonial justice delivery system itself also consisted of various mobile components. For example, in 1790, Courts of Circuits were established for Calcutta, Dacca and Murshidabad Divisions, from which judicial officers, on 'circuit'¹³, moved from town to town to settle cases related to serious offences (Fig 1.5). From 1829, the Commissioners of the various Divisions acted as Sessions Judges and the system of circuits of district towns continued. Even in terms of revenue administration, many sub-divisional towns did not, until the mid-nineteenth century, have proper treasuries to hold revenue, and so revenue was collected only at the *zilla sadar* level. By its very nature of functioning therefore, colonial governance involved multiple connections and mobility between a range of urban and rural locations. It caused lives to be split across and lived in many different locations simultaneously, and intermediate locations like *zilla sadar* towns, to acquire many different characteristics.

1.2 Site selection for *zilla sadar* towns

1.2.1 Strategic and logistical considerations

Central to the multiple characteristics of the *sadar* was the dichotomy of urban and rural identities and the notion of resources and quality of life associated with each of these. The alternative notions of resource and lifestyle that *sadar* towns stood for became apparent from the very process through which their sites were selected by the colonial authorities in the late-

11 This aspect of trans-location movements on an on-going basis between city-town-country and the resulting transience is reflected profusely in nineteenth century Bengali literature. Some of the significant works in this connection are novels by Saratchandra Chattopadhyay and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, poetry by Jibanananda Das, and autobiographies such as those of Jogeshchandra Roy, Kartikeyachandra Roy, Nabinchandra Sen and Pramatha Chowdhuri.

12 In 1836 Thomas Macaulay, appointed as the first Law Officer of India in 1833, introduced the bill proposing that Europeans in *mufassal* areas, like Indians, will also have to appeal to the *sadar diwani* [chief civil] court at Calcutta. The bill was passed, but with staunch resistance from Europeans in Bengal.

13 The 'circuit' was an important aspect of delivery of justice in Bengal. Every district was divided into judicial circuits which were under the jurisdiction of senior judges.

eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Far from being a simple process, the selection of site for *sadar* towns involved complex negotiations between numerous parameters and agencies. These ranged from the need for a central, well connected and strategic location within the district, to the role of the *sadar* as a political counter-site proximate to existing powers in the region – so as to keep them under vigilance and control. A letter issued in 1806 by William Blunt, the Judge and Magistrate of the Jangal Mahal district,¹⁴ to S.T Goad, Registrar to the *nizamut* [criminal] courts in Fort William, Calcutta, reveals the array of choices and negotiations involved in setting up *sadar* towns.¹⁵ Blunt put forth a strong case for locating the *sadar* of the Jangal Mahal district in the town of Bankura, firstly on grounds that it lay on the great military road between Calcutta and the North-western provinces. Secondly, given that Raghunathpur (which housed the existing offices) was deemed to be too 'distant from the same parts of the Pargannah of Bissenpore [Bishnupur]', the other possible option, Bishnupur, was also 'objectionable from being situated at too great a distance from the turbulent zemindaries in the south-west quarter of the district'. Indeed it was felt that 'the more effectual control and better regulation of the conduct of the police, zemindars would be in a great measure defeated if the residence of the magistrate were to be so far removed from their estates as it would be, were the *cutcherry* [office] to be established at Bissenpore'¹⁶ and that on this very ground, Blunt recommended Bankura as the site for the civil station. Thirdly, that 'to render the communication between the several estates of police zemindars and the magistrates *cutcherry* [cutcherry] as easy as practicable, with a view to a more speedy and secure conveyance of prisoners who may be apprehended by the zemindars in their capacity of police officers and upon this ground I [Blunt], would recommend Bancoorah [Bankura] for the station in preference to Bissenpore'.¹⁷ Fourthly, that 'Bancoora is [was] as situated that the inhabitants at the different extremities of the district will possess an equal facility of access to the Court, and that from his place the Magistrate will at all times, should occasion require, have it in his power to visit in person almost any part of his jurisdiction in the course of a few hours and I [Blunt] am [was] persuaded that this [was] an object of no inconsiderable importance in the establishment of a vigilant and well conducted police'.¹⁸ And finally, that it would be easier to rent or acquire land within a mile of Bankura than other locations, since the East India Company was mostly dependent on favours from local landlords or the *Nawab* of Bengal to acquire or lease land for building its administrative infrastructure. The choice of site for the *sadar* therefore involved a number of related strategic decisions with respect to tax-paying areas, vigilance over local rulers, surveillance of potential rebellion, effective policing and prisoner conveyance, the presence of existing infrastructure like a road network and connectivity, and the availability of suitable land and ease of negotiations with local rulers to acquire sites.

One or more of these parameters were instrumental in the setting up of other *sadar*

14 The Jangal Mahal district comprised northern parts of present-day Midnapur, western parts of Bankura and Birbhum districts.

15 West Bengal District Records New Series, *Bankura District Letters Issued 1802–1869*, letter from Blunt to Goad, 11 Jul. 1806.

16, *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.*



Fig.1.6 Location of Berhampur town with respect to Murshidabad, the seat of the Nawab of Bengal
Source: *The Bengal Atlas 1781*, James Rennell. IOR, British Library

towns as well. For example, the cantonment town of Berhampur, which later became the *sadar* for the district of Murshidabad, was formed in 1768 as a stronghold of the East India Company army to keep an eye on the *nawab* of Bengal.¹⁹ The site for the cantonment was therefore chosen on a piece of flat land along the Bhagirathi river, only seven miles downstream from the town of Murshidabad, which was the seat of the *nawab* (Fig. 1.6).²⁰ For the Company, it ensured a trade-off between being close enough to the *nawab*'s capital and being able to retain considerable independence in its military operations. In the case of the Jangal Mahal district in the south-western tracts of lower Bengal, the Choar rebellion in 1798 had found support from the *zamindar* of Bishnupur, and thus the town of Bankura was chosen as the site of its *sadar* – among the various other reasons cited earlier – due to its proximity to Bishnupur and the advantage it offered in terms of keeping its local *zamindar* under control.²¹ On some occasions the site of the *sadar* was directly founded on an earlier site of governance – either the Company's own, or of local rulers in the region. For example, the *sadar* of Jessore district was created in 1786 through the formation of a Collectorship in Murali (virtually within present-day Jessore town) which had already been a centre of the Company's judicial governance – with one of the 13 regional courts in Bengal being located there since 1781. Murali in turn had been the local headquarters of the region during the pre-colonial Mughal rule, since it was proximate to Chanchra, the seat of the main *zamindar* of the area.²² There were instances, therefore, where the *sadar*, as the local seat of British colonial provincial governance, directly reaped the advantages of an established base of pre-colonial centres of administration. In any case, centres of administration of local rulers or feudal landlords (pre-colonial or contemporaneous) served as key reference points for structuring the spatial network of colonial provincial governance – which were often either directly founded on such base, or situated at strategic locations with respect to them.

The other pattern that was legible in the choice of site for *sadar* towns was that of firming up existing military sites (both European and Indian), or the sites of early-colonial commercial Factories. The *sadar* towns of Bankura and Suri were both earlier military camp sites (located on the military road between Calcutta and the North-western Provinces) of the East India Company in the late-eighteenth century, set up originally to guard the western fringes of Bengal from Maratha attacks, and used subsequently to keep insurgent *zamindars* and the rebels

19 The *Nawab* of Bengal was the governor in charge of the Province of Bengal under Mughal rule. Since the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the *Nawab* was largely a titular ruler under the East India Company's control, but who nevertheless needed to be constantly watched, as the case of Mir Qasim proved. Despite being finally defeated in 1764 at the Battle of Buxar, the *nawab* Mir Qasim had in fact put up staunch resistance to the Company's authority.

20 The idea of locating a British stronghold near the *Nawab*'s seat to keep a watch and exert influence on the *Nawab*'s court had been clearly articulated even in an earlier plan of the Company in 1858, seeking the permission of the Court of Directors in England to erect a fort in Berhampur expressly for such purpose. The Company had been refused permission at that time, though the Court decided in favour later in 1765. Letter from the Court of Directors to the Council at Fort William, March 1759, as quoted in Bijoy Kumar Bandopadhyay, *Shahar Baharampur* (Berhampur: Nirmal Sarkar, Surjasena, 2003), 181.

21 In his work on the history of Bankura district, Rathindramohan Chowdhuri mentions the high level of influence of local *zamindars* on people in early nineteenth century Bengal and how the volatile climate of Bishnupur was likely to have conditioned the colonial government's decision to locate the district headquarters in Bankura. Rathindramohan Chowdhuri, *Bankurajoner Itihash Sanskriti* (Bankura: Bappaditya Chowdhuri, 2nd edition 2002), 181.

22 James Westland, *A Report on the District of Jessore – its antiquities, its history and its commerce* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1874), 24.



Fig. 1.7 Connectivity of Suri town within the region.
Source: *The Bengal Atlas 1781*, James Rennell. IOR, British Library

under check during and after the Choar Rebellion in 1798.²³ The *sadar* town of Midnapur was previously the site of a pre-colonial defensive fort belonging to a local *zamindar*, which had been used by the Commercial Resident of the Company as his seat. The twin *sadar* town of Hugly-Chinsurah developed on the complex layering of a Portuguese port, and later on an English Factory in Hugly, and a Dutch Factory in Chinsurah.²⁴ Existing eighteenth-century commercial Factory sites therefore often provided a natural starting point for sites of revenue administration in the early-nineteenth century. This trend of *sadar* towns – which developed from a base of older administrative, military or commercial sites (one or more of these) – persisted even as late as late-nineteenth century. The town of Khulna was upgraded from a sub-divisional (headquarter) town formed in 1842 within the district of Jessore, to a *zilla sadar* for the newly formed District of Khulna in 1882. But it had in any case since 1781, been the base for the East India Company's salt agency in the region. Often, there was also some affinity with indigo, sugar or silk plantations and Factory areas of private planters; as such the *sadar* towns sometimes evolved within an existing landscape of private plantations, and estates.

Connectivity to a larger region and most importantly with the other parts of the District – as evidenced in the Bankura communication quoted earlier – was obviously a critical criterion, since the very reason for the existence of the *sadar* was its role as a centre of revenue collection for that region. And faced as they were with the rather curious task of administering a largely unknown territory and stamping out crime within a still-experimental administrative system, to provincial officers, also important was the ease of policing and bringing in prisoners from *zamindari* areas. These factors, along with the logistics of tax collection, translated directly into the presence of physical communication networks. For example, one of the key reasons behind the choice of Suri as a *sadar* town – other than the existence of an army camp – was its connectivity to Deoghar (a significant town in the neighbouring province of Bihar) via Rajnagar (the seat of the most powerful *zamindars* in the region), which in effect connected this part of Bengal to the central and western parts of India (Fig. 1.7). Suri was also well connected to Calcutta via Surul and Burdwan, to smaller regional centres like Katwa and Ranigunj (in Burdwan district), and located on the important route from Rajnagar to Mushidabad.²⁵ Similarly, one of the key factors tilting the decision in favour of Bankura as a *zilla sadar* was its location on an existing military route. In many ways, this base-layer of a military network of roads and camp sites actually provided the skeletal map – the 'under-layer' – onto which *sadar* towns could conveniently be grafted.

Some sites of *sadar* towns were, however, the results of a search for autonomy within

²³ The Maratha attacks from the Maratha kingdom in western India (present-day Maharashtra) were arguably the strongest political threat to the Company in the Late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. The Company had to fight three major Maratha wars, finally gaining conclusive victory in 1817, which brought in substantial political stability for them. For an authoritative account of the role of the Maratha wars in late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century Bengal see e.g. P. J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead, 1740–1828*, The New Cambridge History of India, Vol. 2, Part 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

²⁴ See e.g. Akshaykumar Adhya, *Hugly Chunchurur Nana Kotha*, vols. 1 and 2 (Hugly: Hugly Sambad, 2005); W.W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Hugli (including Howrah)*, part of *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, vol 3, 1877.

²⁵ See Sukumar Sinha, *Shuri Shohorer Itihash* (Suri: Ujjal Sarkar, 2008), 1.

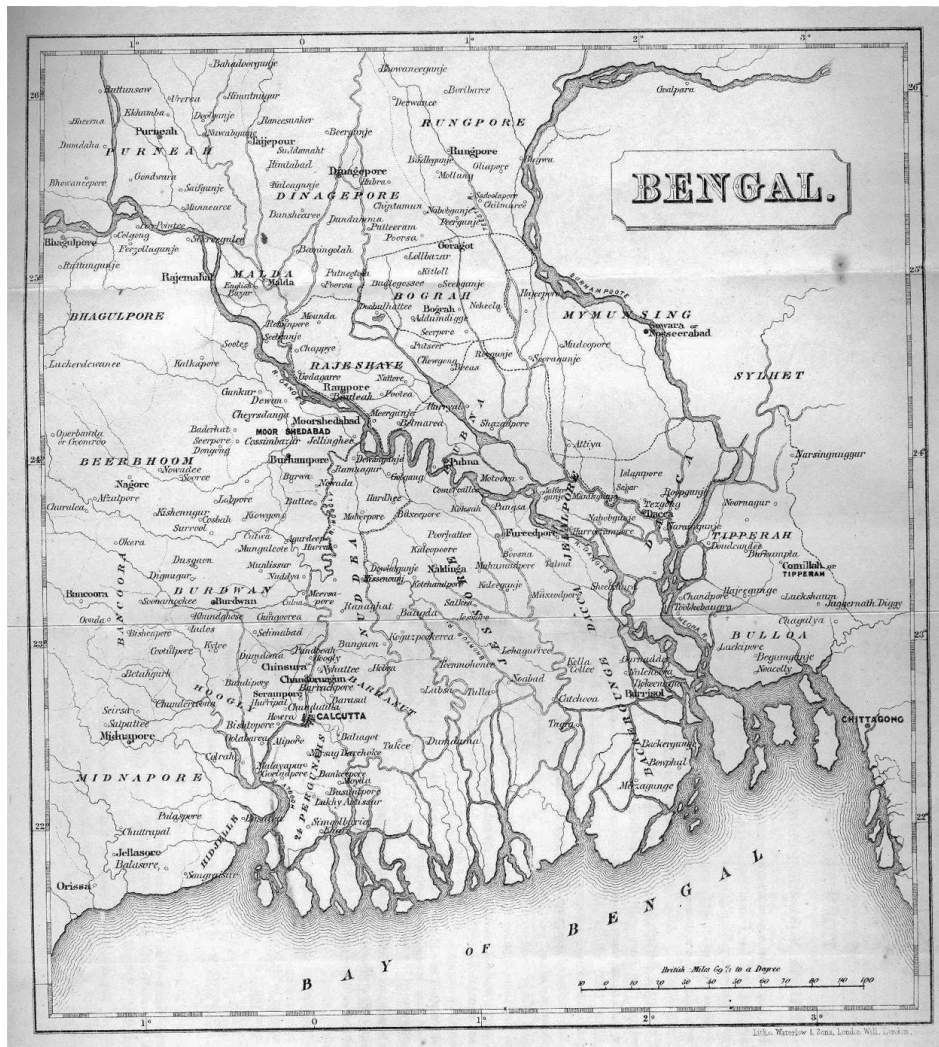


Fig. 1.8 Bengal: riverine landscape
Source: IOR, British library

the existing hierarchical structures of colonial governance, and were selected either to address the logistics of tax collection or to better administer local issues. For example, the Collectorship²⁶ for Jessore was negotiated by Judge Tilman Henkell in 1786 on the grounds that it was dependent on far away Calcutta for revenue matters and the town of Jessore was thus made its headquarters. Again, almost a hundred years later, the Khulna District was carved out of Jessore itself as a separate entity, and the town of Khulna made its headquarters or *sadar*, on similar grounds of autonomy and logistics – chiefly to tackle, with more localised control, the continuing conflicts between a European indigo planter and a Bengali indigo planter in the vicinity of the town.²⁷ This also draws our attention to the fact that, other than the larger scheme of revenue administration for a vast territory, often the site selection for *sadar* towns needed to be made in response to locally rooted issues. It thus involved, with varying degrees of success, a trade-off between larger interests of provincial governance and local and more immediate local concerns.

All the rational decisions regarding the choice of site however, had to be filtered through the pragmatics of availability of land – or more precisely, the ability of the East India Company officers to negotiate deals with local elites or *zamindars* in this respect. The site for the main *cutcherry* area in Bankura was bought from the *zamindar* of Chhatna by the Company; so was the *cutcherry* in Burdwan was built on the land of the all-powerful local *zamindar*. The site in Berhampur, an area of 400 Bighas (133 acres) had been donated by Mir Zafar, the *nawab* of Bengal.

1.2.2 Relationship with natural systems

Considerations of natural systems such as river systems or topography were crucial drivers behind the choice of site of *sadar* towns. Almost without exception, most *sadar* towns had a riverside location. Lower Bengal was an especially riverine land, with waterways criss-crossing and penetrating deep even into inland areas, typically characteristic of the alluvial plains and delta of the Ganges river (Fig. 1.8). This was particularly true of south-eastern Bengal (i.e. the southern tracts of present-day Bangladesh). In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, with the British introduction of the railways in most of the areas in question still a good 60 to 100 years away, and with a somewhat inadequate road network, water transport acted as a basic way of getting around the country. Even the native population routinely used an intricate system of waterways and canals, sometimes right from their private houses in interior villages to urban centres. *Sadar* towns like Barisal were typically characterised by such intricate waterways. A telling description of the role that these waterways played in connecting different hierarchies of settlements in colonial times was given by Mihir Sengupta, a resident of the town

²⁶ Each revenue district was under a Collector and hence, also referred to as a Collectorship.

²⁷ Cultivation of Indigo for commercial purpose in Bengal dates back to 1777. With the consolidation of British power in Bengal, Indigo planting became particularly profitable in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, fed by the demand for the blue Indigo dye in Europe. Indigo plantation estates and factories typically dotted the Bengal landscape. The cultivation and trade of Indigo however declined severely by mid-nineteenth century. The practices were heavily exploitative of plantation workers and in 1860-62 the workers rebelled against the blatantly oppressive cultivation practices. The Indigo rebellion also drew substantial support from the Bengali elite population. The production of synthetic Indigo dye in 1878 by the German chemist Adolf von Baeyer finally initiated the decline of Indigo trade in Bengal.



Fig. 1.9 The river as a key element in the life of *sadar* towns:
Barisal river next to Barisal town
Photo: Pradip Sen

of Barisal (Fig. 1.9). Sengupta also articulated the intimate relationship that the residents of the town, for generations, felt with the physical presence of these networks:²⁸

The thin canal skirted the edge of our estate – our relationship with it was intensely physical. Its course cut through houses, settlements, orchards on either side and merged into the big canal. The big canal, likewise, met the river. Ships and steamers would ply on the river. The big canal could only handle twenty or twenty five maund²⁹ boats; ships or steamers had no access there. And in the canal at the back of our house, only dinghies [small boats] plied. Still, we were deeply tied to this canal. We called it 'pichharar khal' [the canal at the back] ... Pichharar khal marked the boundary of our land. In our parlance – gorkhai, a moat. It was a favourite especially in our childhood. Even before twilight set in, water from the big canal would gush into it. We, the young lads of the house, would then jump naked into the murky tidal waters and splash away...³⁰

One of the key purposes that these canals and their network of tributaries touching the back walls of houses served was to enable easy escape in case of trouble. This was especially critical in the context of the re-configurations in the *zamindari* system that the Permanent Settlement of 1793 brought about, involving numerous and continuous disputes and feuds over agricultural land and other property. The other key use for the likes of *pichharar khal* was the discrete movement of women of the household – away from direct exposure to public eye – whenever they visited their ancestral places or relatives.

Water systems, in one way or another, formed a vital basis for the formation and subsequent development of most *sadar* towns. Some towns like Krishnanagar or Khulna actually grew up adjacent to, or based on, existing pre-colonial port areas (e.g. Goari in Krishnanagar and Sener Bazar in Khulna). There were others like the town of Chittagong, on the river Karnaphuli, which had been the site for the Porto Grande of the Portugese, prior to the British settlement or the twin town of Hughly-Chinsura on the Hughly river, which had been a Portugese port and then a Dutch trading post. Burdwan was located on the river Damodar; Bankura between the rivers Dwarekeshwar and Gandheshwari; Krishnanagar on the Jalangi; Berhampur, Hughli and Howrah on the Bhagirathi; Jessore and Khulna on the Bhairab; Barisal on the Barisal and Chittagong on the Karnaphuli. The riverfront was thus the key interface between these provincial towns and the world beyond. It also gradually grew, through the nineteenth century, into a diverse space – of local religious rituals and the arrival of colonial officers, of temples and industrial passenger-steamers, of markets, warehouses, and sometimes river-sand extraction areas for the intensive building activity that the *sadar* increasingly witnessed.³¹

The choice and shaping of land for inhabitation was also closely linked to European

²⁸ Mihir Sengupta, *Bishadbriksha*, 2nd edition, 3rd print (Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 2005), 9.

²⁹ 'Maund' was a unit for measurement of weight in India, and also in Afghanistan, Persia and Arabia. In British India, it was first standardised in the Bengal Presidency in 1833, where it was set equal to 100 Troy pounds (82.28 lbs. av.). This standard spread throughout the British Raj. After the independence of India and Pakistan, the definition formed the basis for metrication, one maund becoming exactly 37.3242 kilograms. Schedule 1 to the Standard Weights and Measures Act (No. 89 of 1956).

³⁰ Sengupta, *Bishadbriksha*, 9.

³¹ To varying extents, the riverfront also witnessed a certain degree of marginalisation with the growth of roads and railways in the nineteenth century and in some cases virtually became the backyard of the towns by the early years of the twentieth century. In other instances, like that of Barisal, being less connected by road and with no rail links, the riverfront continued to act as a vital thread of life and connectivity for the town.



Fig. 1.10 The dilemma of choice: the Bengal landscape



Fig. 1.11 View of Calcutta and its marshy landscape. James Princep, 1827.
Source: IOR, British library Images Online.

perceptions of the Indian climate, topography and their relationship with issues of health. Running parallel to strategic and logistical considerations, or connectivity through land and water systems, were the realities of provincial life that also set the parameters for choosing new sites for inhabitation in the midst of seemingly abundant countryside (Fig 1.10). Colonial officials were also driven by concerns for the health and constitution of Europeans in India,³² and consequently developed an obsession with healthy air and green environment. As a result, sites for *sadar* towns were invariably located on carefully chosen land – terrain that was flat and easily drainable, and preferably on a higher elevation. It is critical to note here that, for the colonial officers, the perception of provincial towns in Bengal was invariably filtered through, compared and juxtaposed with the physical experience of Calcutta,³³ which was the central seat of administration and a burgeoning metropolis. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, Calcutta was also gradually perceived to be a locational disaster for its unmanageable marshy landscape, “miasma”³⁴ ridden air, and its moist, termite-ridden soil (Fig 1.11).³⁵ Most provincial officers spent a good while in Calcutta before proceeding on their postings to interior areas – for junior Writers³⁶ of the Company the minimum time spent in Calcutta was about 3 months. Compared to their metropolitan counterpart Calcutta, provincial areas stood precariously between perceptions of luxurious ‘countryside’ living on the one hand, and the discomforts of a marginal and subordinate existence on the other. In addition, while it did seem to offer an alternative mode of life – of quality living on ‘good’, ‘abundant’ land – life in the province also involved a more direct exposure to the natural elements.³⁷ By extension, it necessitated a certain degree of understanding of a relatively unknown landscape, and a fair knowledge of management of that landscape. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the setting up of the first set of *sadar* towns largely coincided with an organised intensification of land and hydrological surveys by the colonial government in the late-eighteenth century (Fig 1.12a and 1.12b).³⁸ A close look at the

32 European response to Indian climate and topography and how this shaped colonial governmental policies has been extensively studied by historians like David Arnold and Mark Harrison. See David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Mark Harrison, *Climates and constitutions: Health, race, environment and British Imperialism in India, 1600-1850* (Delhi, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999). There have also been studies on how the management of the European body and its corporeal rituals became central to European life in India. See e.g. Elizabeth Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).

33 For most provincial officers in Bengal, Calcutta was invariably the first port of call, where they spent a minimum of 3-6 months before being sent to interior postings. Even while posted in provincial areas, Calcutta served as a constant reference in the perception of the provincial towns. Other than through first-hand experience, ideas about Calcutta also filtered into the provincial areas through visits from friends and family, newly appointed officers, newspapers etc.

34 ‘Miasma’ referred to a noxious vapour that caused diseases. Miasma theory of diseases was formed in ancient Greece, and remained popular in Europe through the middle ages and up to the mid-nineteenth century. It was particularly profusely used to explain diseases in tropical colonies like India.

35 Documents like the ‘East India Vade Mecum’ (an information handbook issued to Company servants before their arrival in India) are rife with descriptions of such environmental conditions and instructions to Company employees on ways of dealing with them. J.B. Gilchrist, *The General East India Guide and Vade Mecum: A digest of the work of the Late Capt. Williamson, with many Improvements and Additions* (London: Kingsbury, Parbury and Allen, 1825).

36 The term ‘writer’ was used in colonial India to refer to the junior clerks in the employment of the East India Company. Their work involved recording all aspects of the Company’s business operations, director’s decisions, accounting details, minutes of meetings and information from ships’ log books.

37 Such exposures to the natural elements in provincial areas also contributed to the later, more rampant practice, by mid-nineteenth century, of casting India within the wild, ‘tropicalist’ framework that for example, critics like David Arnold have analysed. It was to directly influence imperial policies of use and improvement of land from then onwards. See David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze: India, landscape and Science 1800-1856* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2006).

38 Expenditure of the survey department of the Bengal government was raised from 5,000-10,000 Rupees per month in 1768 to 2.3 million Rupees by 1784. Major James Rennell was appointed as the Surveyor General of Bengal



Fig. 1.12a Survey map of India, Major James Rennell, 1779
Source: <http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps1150046-31567.html>



Fig. 1.12b Map of Bengal and Bahar [Bihar], Major James Rennell, 1781
Source: <http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps1150050-31571.html>

typical 'towns and environs' maps presented in James Rennell's atlas of Bengal between 1779 and 1781 reveal a reasonably detailed recording of topographical features like ridges, valleys, agricultural fields, vegetation areas or water bodies.³⁹ Although Rennell's endeavour was more closely linked to colonial territorial expansion and military inroads into interior areas, the sheer thoroughness of his surveys is likely to have provided a vital information-base for the selection of sites of *sadar* towns – about twenty-four of which were formally set up in and after 1786. Such 'scientific' processes of knowing, identifying, assessing and managing land for the purpose of 'ideal' habitation perhaps made the vulnerability to the elements in provincial areas appear somewhat more negotiable.

Though the British construction of a 'medical topography' of India, and its categorisation in terms of 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' areas, began more concretely only after 1800 – and found heightened intensity especially after the Revolt of 1857⁴⁰ – even by the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, there were evidently clear conceptions of what constituted a 'good site' for a settlement. In contemporary Britain, many like William Farr felt that diseases like cholera were caused by bad air or vapour, arising from decayed organic matter or *miasmata*, which had higher concentrations in areas at lower elevations.⁴¹ Locations which had higher elevations were automatically thought to offer considerable immunity from this. The location of the *cutcherry* and court complexes, and key officials' quarters in *sadar* towns in Bengal in fact point to judgements in the selection of land that were far from arbitrary. For example, the Collector's *cutcherry* and the Judge's *cutcherry* complex in Krishnanagar were located at the intersection of a principal ridge and two secondary ridges. The institutional spine, which developed from 1830 onwards, took shape on the longest ridge itself (Fig. 1.13). In Bankura, the *cutcherry* complex and the Collector's bungalow were located at the highest point of the town, and again, the key institutions were strung along the longer ridge. (Fig. 1.14) In Chittagong, just about all the prime land – the flatter areas on top of the numerous hills – were appropriated for colonial *cutcherries* or British officers' bungalows (Fig. 1.15). Similar choices appropriating prime, elevated areas also come through in the description of Suri by W.W. Hunter – 'the town and station are situated upon the summit and immediate extremity of a gravel-covered ridge'⁴², which indicates that the civil station occupied the highest areas of the town, being located on a ridge. In Midnapur, where the land sloped from the north-west to the south-east down to the river Kasai, the European habitations were

in 1764, and during the next 13 years he intensively surveyed and mapped Bengal, culminating in the production of the 'Bengal Atlas' between 1779 and 1781. Andrew S. Cook, *Major James Rennell and A Bengal atlas, 1780 and 1781* (London: HMSO, 1978). Offprint from: India Office Library and Records, Report for the year 1976.

39 James Rennell, *A Bengal Atlas - containing maps of the theatre of war and commerce on that side of Hindoostan* (London: James Rennell, 1781).

40 For a detailed and authoritative account of the role of and European attitude to climate of India from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century in India, see Harrison, *Climates and Constitution*. Harrison has in particular detail discussed the impact of the Sepoy Mutiny on the perceived relationship between health of European soldiers and Indian geo-climatic conditions.

41 William Farr was one of the strongest supporters of the 'miasma' theory that developed during early to mid-nineteenth century in England. He was the Assistant Commissioner for the 1851 Census and a career employee of the government's General Register Office. The alternative theory of disease was the germ theory of John Snow, which was at the time received with much cynicism. By 1866, however, medical opinion had changed to support the germ theory of cholera and its waterborne transmission and even Farr changed his position in its favour.

42 William Wilson Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal, vol. IV [Districts of Bardwan, Bankura and Birbhum]* (London: Truebner and Co., 1877), 31.

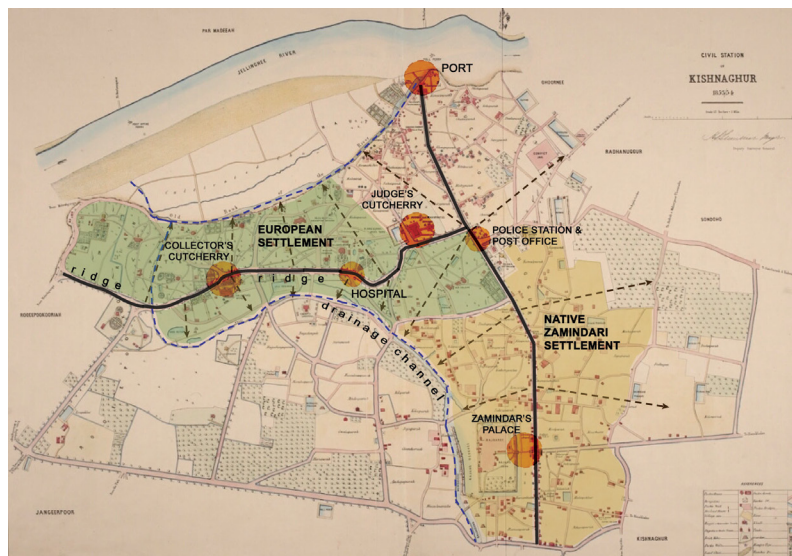


Fig. 1.13 Landform analysis, Krishnanagar.
Source: Base map - IOR, British Library; Analysis: author

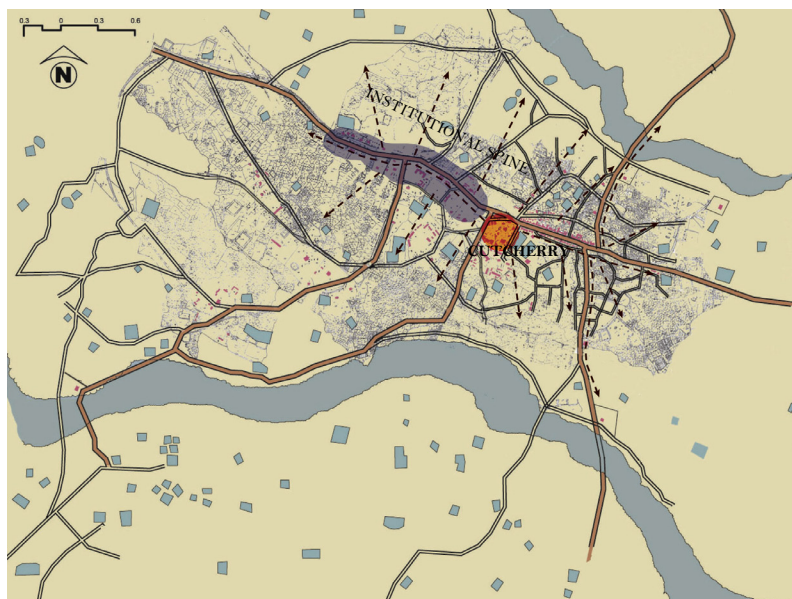


Fig. 1.14 Landform analysis, Bankura.
Source: Base map - IOR, British Library; Analysis: author

located at the western end, in the highest areas of the town and on dry, lateritic soil with good natural drainage – as compared with the low-lying land on which the indigenous settlement was located.⁴³ As seen in all these instances, the perceived correlation between high altitude and health was thus a key driver behind the choice of locations for European habitation in the *sadar*.

It was not infrequent however, that such understanding or control of land in *sadar* towns was realised as being grossly inadequate, and that these perceptions, along with the physical realities, changed in the course of time. Berhampore, described in its initial years as being especially pleasant and healthy, came to be described in 1808, within 40 years of its establishment, by Mrs. Sherwood, a resident, as being frequently waterlogged, totally unhealthy and grossly unsuitable for European inhabitation.⁴⁴ Elaborate engineering of its drainage systems in the mid-nineteenth century had to be devised to make the town habitable. Despite the fact that its prime locations were all appropriated by colonial *cutcheries* and British officers' bungalows, with 'a European house surrounded by casurina trees' on each hill, the station of Chittagong was reported as being unhealthy even in the late-nineteenth century by John Beames, the Commissioner of the district.⁴⁵ The station of Jessore too was perceived to be unhealthy and ridden with recurrent illnesses and relatively high mortality rates amongst its early Collectors. It was described by a Collector in 1800 as damp and unkempt: 'all jungles trees and bamboos, the bazar [*bazaar*] and the roads covered with unhealthy vegetation...The Bhairab river too was...a source of malaria, for it was almost dry in the hot season. The place in fact retained for a very long time a reputation as an unhealthy station'.⁴⁶ The introduction of a new drainage system around 1854 by Mr. Beaufort, the Magistrate, was supposed to have altered its perception thereafter. So fundamental was the perception of the link between problematic location and well-being, that the entire headquarters function of the district of Backergunj was removed from Backergunj town and relocated to the town of Barisal in 1801, purely on grounds of health.⁴⁷ Such continuous struggles with geo-climatic systems were common to provincial governmental functioning, and a perceived vulnerability to natural-systems perpetually threatened the attempt to forge stability of provincial inhabitation. Despite engineering efforts to manage, tame and 'improve' the land (intensifying into the municipal urban drainage, conservancy and water supply schemes of the late-nineteenth century), and thereby control its associated disease-environment, a full understanding of this issue seems to have eluded the colonial administrators and even the technocrats of later years.⁴⁸ This, however, still did not preclude – and in fact directly fed into

43 L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers –Midnapore* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1911), 254.

44 See F. J. Harvey, ed., Capt. Sherwood, *The life and times of Mrs. Sherwood (1775-1851) from the diaries of Captain and Mrs. Sherwood* (Wells Gardner: Darton, 1910).

45 John Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal civilian* (London: Eland Publishing Ltd., 2003), 276, 277, 292. First published by Chatto and Windus, 1961. The town of Chittagong is also described in municipal reports of the period as being extremely unhealthy, and 'as regards conservancy and sanitary precautions in a very backward state.' British Library, India Office Records, Bengal Municipal Annual Report 1873/74 – 1875/76, IOR/V/24/ 2850, 42.

46 James Westland, *A Report on the District of Jessore: Its Antiquities, its History, and its Commerce* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1871), 148.

47 Henry Beveridge, *The District of Bakarganj: Its History and Statistics* (London: Truebner, 1876), 75.

48 Managing the land through urban engineering was taken up actively by provincial town municipalities from around mid 1860s. But there seems to have been immense struggle in coming to grips with this till late nineteenth century. See Bengal Municipal Annual Reports, IOR/ V/ 24/ 2850-55, India Office Records, British Library.



Fig.1.15 Chittagong town, 1859-60: location
of European bungalows on top of hills.
Source; IOR Map Collection, British Library

– the increasing conception of the 'modern' town as a health-and hygiene system by the late-nineteenth century and urban land-engineering under the custodianship of municipal bodies became its essential apparatus.

1.3 Imagination of the *sadar* and models of intermediate urbanism

In his account of a civil station in colonial Bengal, George F. Atkinson, a British civil servant, gave the following description in the late-nineteenth century:

...“our station” rejoices in the euphonious appellation of Kabob; it is situated in the plains of Dekchy, in the province of Bobarchy. Far from the busy haunts of a civilised world, and the traffickings of men, and plunged in the wild retirement of a luxuriant jungle, smiles Kabob, “the loveliest village of the plain”, basking beneath the rays of orient sun. Oh! If there be a paradise upon earth, - I suspect it must be this!⁴⁹

He then went on, in apparent contradiction, to describe the very same station as “a hotter and duller hole is not to be discovered by the most enterprising and enthusiastic tropical traveller - remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow.”⁵⁰ Although seemingly presented as a spoof, Atkinson’s account is telling of the contradictions that constituted colonial provincial stations. In the beginning he differentiated the station as being removed and different from the busy urban world of large cities like Calcutta, emphasising its essentially ‘rural’ character and the value of that in the context of intensive urban scenarios. The second part of Atkinson’s account is suggestive of the ordinariness and marginality of such places, of their subordinate role, and the sense of isolation and frustration arising from this. Atkinson was not being entirely original. As early as 1775, Robert Lindsay, a young civilian who was appointed as the Collector of Sylhet, noted his great disappointment at discovering that the provincial town was “only an inconsiderable bazaar or market place”.⁵¹ Around the same time as Atkinson, Prasannamoyee Devi, a middle-class Bengali woman, described another civil station, Krishnanangar, in terms of its green, idyllic and exotic environment.⁵² In the mid-nineteenth century Jogesh Bidyanidhi, an eminent Bengali academic, recalled his move as a child from his native village to the town of Bankura; Bidyanidhi viewed it clearly as a move to an urban area.⁵³ It is such contradictions, and the instability of perceptions, problems of description, and the gaps between imagined and experienced realities, that characterised the provincial civil station in colonial Bengal and made it many things at the same time – a sort of a schizophrenic entity that could be perceived very differently depending on the vantage of the viewer. The following section explores some of these impressions of the *sadar* by different groups of people through the nineteenth century.

⁴⁹ George F Atkinson, *Curry and Rice* (London: W Thacker & Co, 1911), 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ M. S. Islam, 'Life in the Mufasssal Towns of Nineteenth Century Bengal', in Kenneth Ballhatchet and John Harrison, eds., *The City in South Asia* (London and Dublin: Curzon Press Ltd., 1980), 224.

⁵² Prasannamoyee Devi, *Purbakatha* (Calcutta: Adi Brahma Samaj, 1917), 34.

⁵³ Jogeshchandra Roy, *Atmacharit* (Bankura: Ananda Kr. Roy, 2002), 13-17.



Fig. 1.16 Landscape, United Provinces. William Daniell, 1789-91
Source: Victoria Memorial Collections, Calcutta



Fig. 1.17 The Ganges at Bhagalpur, Robert Smith, 1814
Source: IOR, British Library Online Images



Fig. 1.18 *Sadar*: Town as ordered version of the country.
Source: *Curry and Rice*, George Atkinson, 1859.

1.3.1 'Town in the country', the ordered picturesque, and ideals of unity

For colonial officials in the provincial administration, the evolving ideological conception and imagination of *zilla sadar* towns from the late-eighteenth into the nineteenth century largely emerged from the overlap of a few related, but distinct, concerns. The first of these was the idea of *advantageous land* in terms of health, well being, and protection from natural hazards. The second, given that these were towns proximate to vast countryside, was the pursuit of a 'rurban' lifestyle.⁵⁴ The third was an increasing pre-occupation with *improving* and *ordering* land, in terms of both health and aesthetics. All of this coalesced, in effect, into an alternate notion of habitat itself. Married to the idea of capturing and managing 'good' land – and nestled within the pragmatic demands of an administrative town – was the notion of not just any town, but specifically, the 'town within the country'. In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, for Europeans, the countryside in the colony served increasingly as a ripe source for exploring Orientalist conceptions of the 'picturesque'; This typically took place through romantic depictions of native, virgin, untouched landscape (Figs. 1.16 and 1.17).⁵⁵ The colonial picturesque thus served as one of the filters through which the relationship between the process of settling and the environment was mediated. Situated within this larger context of colonial construction of the picturesque, in many ways, the *sadar* was imagined by the colonial officers as a somewhat ordered version of the country – a semi-urban, semi-rural picturesque, that arose out of man-made interventions on land which attempted to preserve and enhance its ecological and aesthetic integrity (Fig. 1.18). Although the inhabitation of the *sadar* and selection of sites for its key functions (like the *cutcherry* and the residential areas for European officers) seem to have been driven initially largely by pragmatic considerations of geo-climatic systems and a general vision of living in proximity to the countryside (as discussed in previous sections), by mid-to-late nineteenth century there were attempts to incorporate metalled roads, tree lined avenues and designed public gardens which suggested synthetic attempts to clearly 'order' and 'enhance' this landscape – apparently based on a presumption that virgin land could be enhanced by man-made interventions and that the colonial rulers were responsible custodians of natural systems (Fig. 1.19 and 1.20). The remoteness of provincial location and the 'free space' of provinciality (both literally and metaphorically) perhaps allowed such paternalistic custodianship of land and its associated systems to operate. A description of the town of Suri by L.S.S. O'Malley, a civil servant, revealed this perception of the town as representing the ordered picturesque:

⁵⁴ The expression 'rurban' is used in contemporary urban planning to indicate a condition that combines aspects of both rural and urban life. It seems to be a useful concept in describing the imagination of nineteenth century provincial urbanism in Bengal.

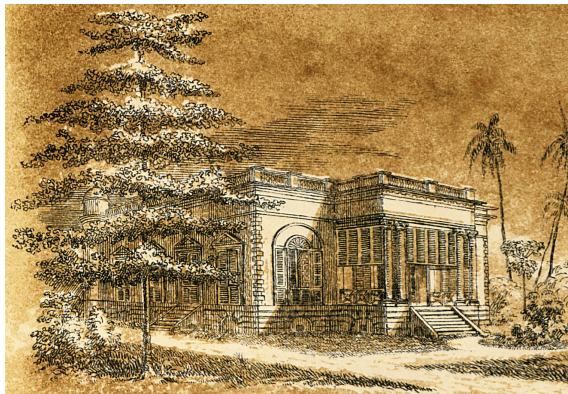
⁵⁵ 'Picturesque' representations of the countryside in India found expression in visual medium through the works of e.g. Thomas and William Daniell (1784–94), William Hodges (1793), Emma Roberts (1832), and in text, through those of e.g. Bishop Heber (1828), James Tod (1829) and Fanny Parks (1850). Other than being simply an aesthetic appreciation of landscape, the colonial picturesque has also been seen by critics as having *transformative* character – in that it aimed to improve and alter nature, as "a rhetorical transformation of primitive, wild, variegated India through British intervention". Pramod K Nayar, *English writing and India: colonizing aesthetics, 1600– 1920* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 96. See also, Arnold, *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze: India, Landscape and Science 1800– 1856* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2006).



Fig. 1.19 Riverside promenade at Berhampur.
Source: IOR, British Library Images Online



Fig. 1.20 Bottle Palm avenue, Krishnanagar.



Representation of the Bungalow.
Source: *Rural Life in Bengal*,
Colesworthy Grant



Representation of the native *Bazaar*.
Source: *Curry and Rice*, George
Atkinson.



Bungalow zone, Krishnanagar



Burra Bazaar, Bankura

Fig. 1.21 Bungalow and *bazaar* areas, *sadar* towns

The civil station is picturesquely scattered over a park-like rising ground on the west of the town – which extends along either side of the Dumka road. This road also passes for a mile through the European quarter, an open undulating neighbourhood with houses standing far apart surrounded by extensive grounds, and connected by network of broad metalled roads, lined by fine trees. In the centre of the town...is the chief bazaar of the place, and round it on the north a small but dense cluster of houses and narrow lanes forms the nucleus of the urban area.⁵⁶

What is also interesting is that the European enclave of the *sadar* town was differentiated in the account as being 'non-urban', compared to the *bazaar* area of the native enclave which was seen by Europeans as the 'urban' aspect of the *sadar* (Fig. 1.21). In fact, often when using the expression 'the town', Europeans were actually referring to the native settlement; the low-density bungalow zone housing their own residential quarters was considered to be *outside* the town, or at least only on the fringes of the urban area. In fact such bungalow areas were rather thought of as a part or an extension of the countryside. After all, as evidenced in the account of Atkinson cited at the beginning of this section, for British officers, a posting in the provinces clearly meant a move to the countryside away from densely urbanised areas like Calcutta. Even as late as the early-twentieth century, such perceptual distinctions existed – for example, in describing the new gateway being erected in the town of Burdwan by the *Maharaja* of Burdwan in 1904, J.C.K Peterson, a civil servant, wrote: "the only modern monument of any importance is the Star of India arch erected by the present maharaja at the entrance to the town [Burdwan] to commemorate Lord Curzon's visit".⁵⁷ Given that the Star of India gate was located right at the mouth of the dominantly native area (clustered around the *zamindar's* palace and *cutcherries*) and leading directly into it; the reference to 'the town' in this account seems to be clearly to the native settlement. It is also evident from O'Malley's description of Suri (referred to earlier) that the green, picturesque, country-like 'civil station' referred specifically to the European residential areas, seen as being distinct from the 'town'. More often, the *sadar* was seen as a curious hybrid of both – town and village – by its inhabitants, as reflected in the following observation by Pramatha Chowdhuri (an eminent early twentieth century Bengali writer), talking of his childhood days in Krishnanagar: 'Krishnanagar was a "village-like" town – meaning that it was half-urban, half rural.'⁵⁸ Niradchandra Chowdhuri, in his description of the town of Kishorganj, actually extended such reading to typify provincial administrative towns:

Kishorganj was only a normal specimen of its class – one among a score of collections of tin-and-mat huts or sheds, comprising courts, offices, schools, shops and residential dwellings, which British administration had raised up in the green and brown spaces of Eastern Bengal...altogether, the town did not mark too hard a blotch on the soft countryside. They creaked at almost every wind and one strong cyclone was enough to obliterate the distinction between country and town.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers. Birbhum*. Calcutta: West Bengal District Gazetteers, 1996 (reprint), pp. 143.

⁵⁷ J.C.K Peterson, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Burdwan*, Calcutta: K.R. Biswas, State Editor, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Higher Education Department, Government of West Bengal, 1997 (reprint), pp. 245. Originally published under the series *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1910.

⁵⁸ Pramatha Chowdhuri, *Atmakatha [My Story]* (Calcutta: The Book Emporium Ltd., 1946).

⁵⁹ Niradchandra Chowdhuri, *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, as quoted in Pradip Sinha, 'Rural towns in Eastern Bengal – A study in rural-urban reciprocity', *Nineteenth century Bengal – aspects of social history* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), 74.



Golap bag (rose garden) Burdwan, early nineteenth century



Dar-ul-bahar, pleasure pavilion, Burdwan, mid-nineteenth century.



Deodar avenue, Dilkhusa Gardens, Burdwan, mid-nineteenth century.



Sulipukur tank, Burdwan, early-nineteenth century.

Fig. 1.22 Landscape schemes, Burdwan

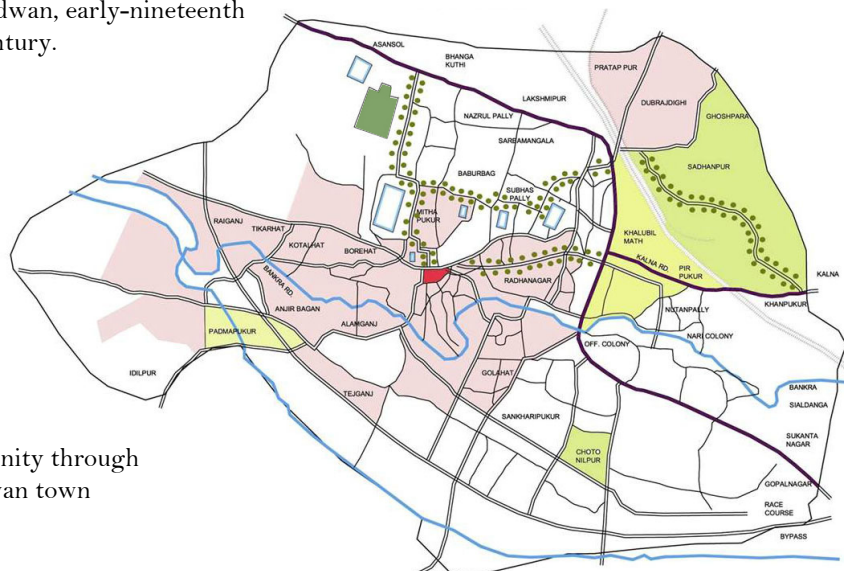


Fig.1.23 Schemes of unity through landscape, Burdwan town

Such a tentative identity of the *sadar* as an entity between town and country is a recurrent theme in descriptions of the *sadar* towns in the nineteenth century. But this very dichotomy also illustrates that the *sadar* – which consisted as much of one as the other – was seen simultaneously as the town and the country by different groups of inhabitants. It was a dichotomy that in fact constituted its very essence.

Attempts at ordering the landscape to create a unified and wholesome environment in the *sadar* did however not remain solely within the bastions of colonial administration; it was also actively pursued by native agency from mid-nineteenth century onwards, through various interventions even within native areas. A dramatic example of this was the Burdwan Raj⁶⁰ family's grandiose schemes to create pleasure gardens, tree lined avenues, foliage-edged water tanks, pleasure pavilions and zoological gardens as a way of shaping a distinctive townscape (Fig. 1.22).⁶¹ One of the channels through which such ordering of the *sadar* took place was by the pursuit of a certain unity in the spatial scheme. Often, avenues lined with the same tree species would be run through varied quarters of the town to bring about such visual unity (Fig. 1.23). In fact, the British planted lines of Rain-trees⁶² along the main arteries and within key sites of governance (e.g. the *cutcherry* precinct) in towns like Krishnanagar, Barisal and Bankura. Such attempts at modifying the climate, at image-making through beautification and ordering, were played out in a competitive arena between various indigenous and governmental agencies as statements of control in the socio-political landscape of the town. For British officers as well as upper-middle and middle-class Bengalis, the *zilla sadar* thus came to be seen and pursued as a unified, picturesque, 'pleasant' and green environment; this was epitomised in the following observation by Prasannamayee Debi, describing Krishnanagar in mid to late-nineteenth century:

The city of the erstwhile Raja [feudal ruler] Krishnachandra, Krishnanagar, is a particularly neat and tidy little town – nature's plentiful and green bounties and tall trees cast soothing shadows on its wide avenues.⁶³

1.3.2 Parallel paradigms – the *zilla sadar* and the Cantonment

O'Malley's account of 'fine [tree] lined' avenues and 'metalled roads' clearly suggests the pursuit of and preference for a certain degree of aesthetic order in the civil station. Examples of such ordering were also not far away. The military domain provided a ready reference for this. Cantonments like Berhampur, Dumdum and Barrackpur – set up from as early as the late eighteenth century – were classical examples of the use of synthetic arrangement and abstract geometric orders in planning to mobilise the rituals of military discipline. While the *zilla sadar*

⁶⁰ The Burdwan Raj refers to the *zamindars* of Burdwan, who were the highest tax-payers to the British colonial authorities by virtue of being the tax-collectors of one of the wealthiest tax estates in Bengal. The Raj family was immensely powerful and played a highly instrumental role within colonial governance in Bengal. It was also involved in active patronage of numerous development projects such as landscape schemes and institution buildings in the town of Burdwan and in the hinterland.

⁶¹ The author's own surveys and discussions with the Burwan Raj Family. See also Niradbaran Sarkar, *Bardhaman Raj-itibritto* [A historical account of the Burdwan Raj] (Burdwan: Sujata Sarakar, 2004).

⁶² The Rain-tree is a species of tropical flowering tree with a wide canopy.

⁶³ Prasannamayee Debi, *Purbakatha* [Old Times], (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, 1934), 102.



Fig. 1.24 Berhampur Cantonment.
Source: IOR, British Library Maps Collection

was developing as the dominant civil domain, the Cantonment town was developing as the key military space of colonial provincial governance. Berhampore, the first cantonment town in Bengal, was built between 1765–68 (Fig. 1. 24 and 1.25). It had a typical riverside location, and its chief purpose was to house the different grades of army officers and soldiers (both European and Indian) and to provide for their training and their disciplinary or fitness rituals. The entire urban scheme was organised around a square parade ground, called the Barrack Square, which formed the centrepiece of a literally abstract composition. One side of this square housed two-storey barracks for European soldiers, two other sides had single-storey barracks for native soldiers, and separate barracks for higher officers. The side opposite to the European barracks, also the linear tract directly abutting the river, housed the bungalows of the top army officials. Native *sepoys* were located in a completely segregated piece of land across a huge racecourse, at the diametrically opposite end of the composition from the top officials' bungalows and the riverside. Privilege was clearly graded and mapped out in receding layers away from the river and the Barrack Square. Similarly, the barracks, according to the hierarchy and race they represented, were designed with strictly graded space standards and material specifications. Berhampore was conceived as a completely self-sufficient settlement with its own church, military hospital, separate *sepoys* hospital, military jail, magazine and arsenal areas, library, club and even a designed and formally laid out *bazaar* area to service the settlement. Nearly identical geometric planning and disposition of functions was used for the subsequent military towns of Dumdum and Barrackpur as well.

The design of the Cantonment town was based on certain key assumptions distinct from that of the Civil station. The first of these was that, at least to begin with, the Cantonment needed to have a predictable, finite, fully-known 'people-set' – with its own defined and long-established hierarchies. It also possessed a set pattern of activities and rituals, such as parades, that had to be carried out within it. As such, the Cantonment represented a specific type of intersection and enmeshing of residential function with the regimes of military training.⁶⁴ To add to all this, the physical territory of the Cantonment was meant to be a highly autonomous and self sufficient area where the framework of its functioning could be created and developed almost synthetically, without the degree of external influence and unpredictability common to *zilla sadar* towns. Self-sufficiency was the core ideal. In physical terms, this was achieved by using a finite and clearly delineated area to mark out the territorial base, then over-laying this with a strong abstract order to spatially mobilise and control its institutional rituals, and a highly stratified and hierarchical set of built structures in terms of levels of provision and their locations. While the basic building block of the cantonment was the barrack or the collective residential unit for European and native soldiers, it was also as much about the differentiation between the different types of barracks (Fig. 1.26). In fact the Cantonment was the arena with

64 In fact, it was mostly in the colonies that Cantonments referred to *permanent* military stations as against its common use in the western world at that time where it referred only to temporary or semi-permanent military quarters. The word *cantonment* is derived from the French word *canton* meaning *corner* or *district*. Other than South Asia, in United States military parlance, a cantonment is a permanent residential (i.e. barracks) section of a fort or other such military installation. URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantonment>



Fig. 1.25 View of barrack blocks, Berhampur
Source: IOR, British Library Images Online
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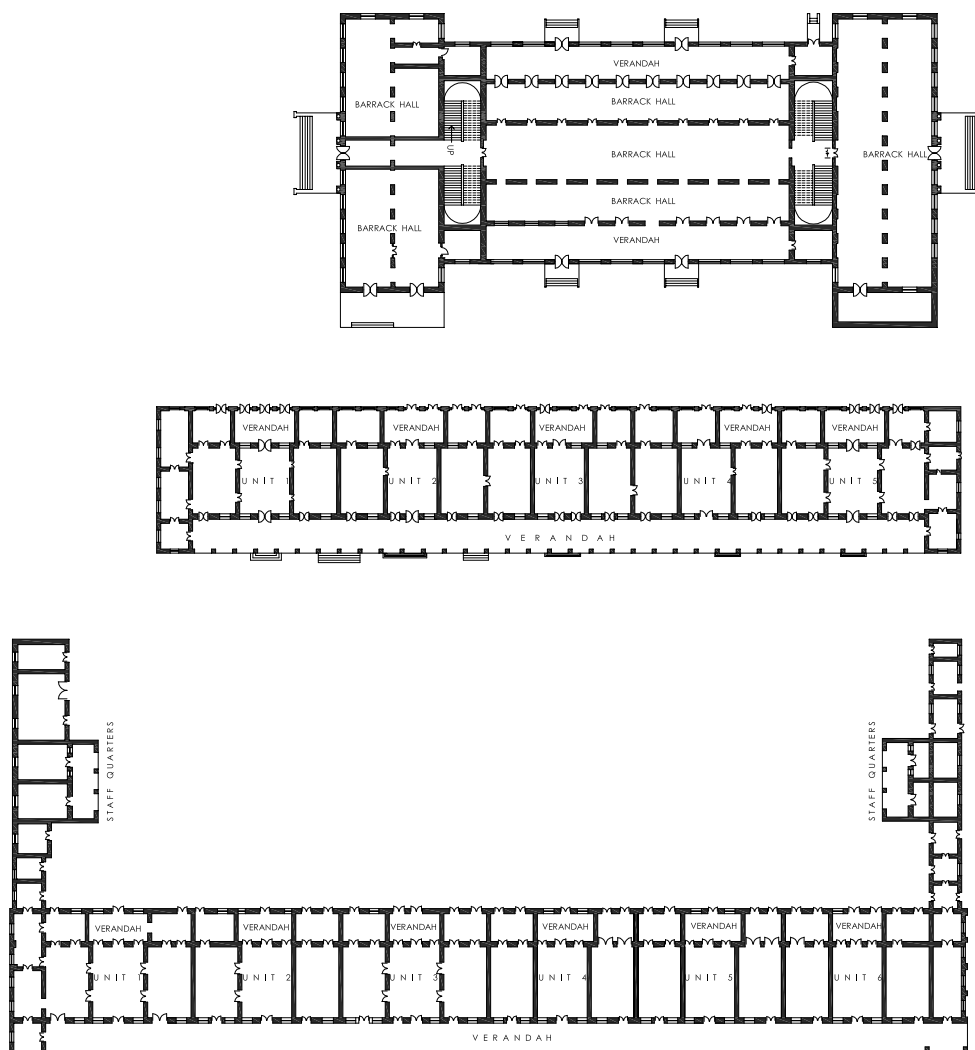


Fig. 1.26 Designs of different grades of barracks, Berhampur.

ultimate legitimacy to experiment with and implement standardised types of buildings. Unlike the *sadar* town, the cantonment was recognised as a domain that required prime provisions – e.g. the average building costs for the cantonment of Berhampore than three times higher than the norms prevalent even in the metropolitan centre of Calcutta⁶⁵, indicating that there were obviously far more stringent specifications and quality control for military buildings than for civil buildings.⁶⁶

The *sadar* in some ways was the complete anti-thesis of the cantonment, given its unpredictably growing urban population, its heterogeneous mix of social groups, its ad-hoc and provisional nature of functioning, its 'trial and error' approach. As a result, the overall form of the *sadar* could never be pre-determined – it grew incrementally and largely organically, in response to different forces at different points of time. Only limited aspects of it could be 'organised' or ordered in spatial terms at any point of time. Within such a context, the Barrack Square of the cantonment and through it military space *per se*, came to acquire an iconic value in relation to the civilian domain. It represented the 'ideal', the 'template', worked out systematically from the level of urban organisation through to building typology and construction technology, detailing and materiality. The cantonment thus became the demonstrative example of how to organise a strongly hierarchical formation, how to experiment with and implement typological designs commensurate with organisational hierarchy. It became the vital index of the correlation between discipline and abstract order, of the relationship between space and rituals, and in its sheer magnitude and geometry, of the authority of space as an ordering agent. There were efforts, in fact, especially in the late-nineteenth century, to structure some of the *cutcherry* precincts in *sadar* towns around large square spaces or water tanks, much along the lines of the abstract order of the cantonment. Most importantly, as will be seen in the later chapters on administrative spaces in *sadar* towns, the cantonment provided the civil domain with one of its most enduring building patterns – the barrack block itself. Also, even though in the first half of the nineteenth century, the civil domain in *zilla sadar* towns was much more independent of fixed designs, with much higher typological flexibility, it did not remain so. Somewhere, the lure of the military zeal of standardisation and hierarchical gradations began to rub off on it as well. On the other hand, the cantonment too, could not remain the autonomous, insulated, fully pre-determined entity it was imagined to be. Other than its designed provisions, Berhampur came to grow extended *bazaar* areas which in effect constituted a contiguous formation with a number of other settlements, and thus virtually functioned on a network of dependence-relationships.⁶⁷ Interestingly, the town also witnessed a certain redundancy of its military function, with most troops being moved to

65 The building of the cantonment in Berhampur was completed in 1767 for a cost of £ 302, 270. It was a key military location considered to be the northern frontier station of the Bengal Army. See William Wilson Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. IX (Districts of Murshidabad and Pabna)* (Delhi: D.K. Publishing House, 1877), 45.

66 Interestingly, there were major charges of misappropriation of resources brought against three top military officials in connection with the building of Berhampur. However, that still does not detract from the fact that its building costs were unusually high.

67 Gorabazaar was the designed *bazaar* area for the cantonment, but other *bazaar* areas like Kansaribazaar, Khagrabazaar in settlements adjacent to the core cantonment area also came to serve the extended needs of the cantonment over a period of time.

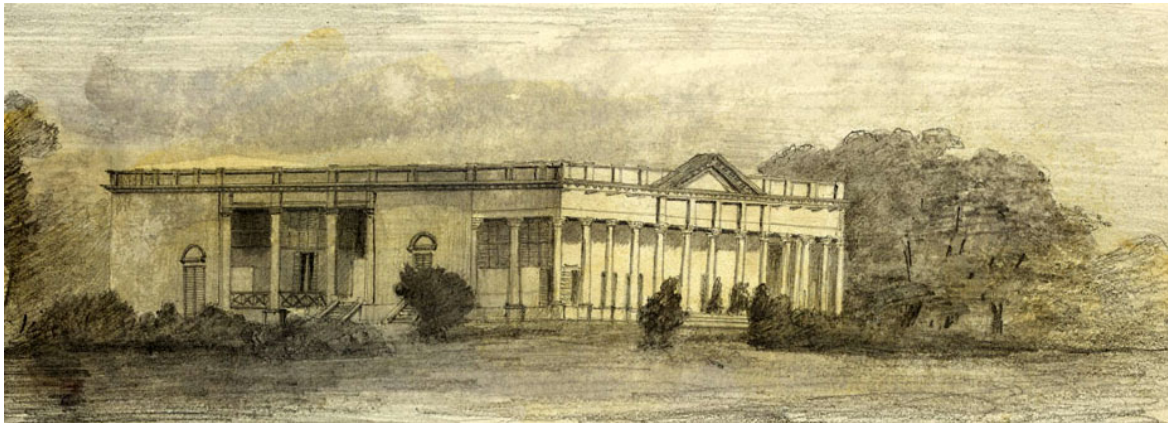


Fig. 1.27 The bungalow with its grounds, as a 'rurban' model
Source: IOR, British Library Images Online

Barrackpur after the Revolt of 1857.⁶⁸ While military establishments were being centralised into a few key sites like Barrackpur or Agra after the Mutiny – due to the perceived obsolescence of some cantonments or military sites – the larger landscape of military control sometimes came to be diffused into somewhat regular, 'everyday' towns. Bankura and Suri had thus lost their military function by the early-nineteenth century, Hughly in 1870. Berhampur was a classic case in point from where by 1870 the military function was totally removed and it actually morphed into a civil station, serving first as the headquarters of the Rajshahi Division and in 1870, was declared as the *sadar* town of Murshidabad district. Nonetheless, the ideas of abstract order, the green image, and the health-hygiene-sanitation standards laid down by the cantonment planning still continued to serve as a significant reference for *sadar* towns. This was especially manifest in urban engineering and urban-aesthetics projects taken up by the provincial authorities in *sadar* towns in the late-nineteenth century and will be discussed in greater detail later in the study.

1.3.3 The building blocks of green 'rurban' unity

Other than the broader landscape schemes in the town, the basic building block aiding the vision of the *sadar* as a homogeneous, 'green' entity, and virtually a country-like environment was the development model of the low-density European bungalow compound. Though there were just a handful of Europeans in any *sadar* town,⁶⁹ the size of their residential plots ranged from one to up to fifteen acres, and with built-up areas ranging between 2000 sq. ft. to up to 5000 sq. ft.⁷⁰ In the case of planters' estates, which very often formed peripheral regions of *sadar* towns, this figure was even higher.⁷¹ The senior officers in the District often owned huge tracts of land within the *sadar*, which housed their residential bungalows. For example, in the town of Bankura, the Collector Anderson, in 1870, owned 37.6 acres of land – in which his bungalow was located, and which came to be known as *andersoner bagan* [Anderson's grove] because of its largely unbuilt, wooded character.⁷² As mentioned earlier, the bungalow represented the epitome of country-living, and this imagination of the town was continuously pursued by European officers and non-official residents of the *sadar* in the model of dwellings. Large areas of the *sadar* thus constituted a low-density green zone virtually re-creating the countryside and attempting

68 The Sepoy Mutiny or the Rebellion of 1857 as it is known was arguably the most significant historical event in the British rule of India, whereby *sepoys* or Indian soldiers rose in revolt against the British authorities in the Cantonment.

It precipitated immense changes in governmental policies on varied fronts.

69 That the number of Europeans in *zilla sadar* towns was exceedingly low comes through in many accounts of European officers or travellers in these areas. According to Isaac Henry Townly Roberdeau, a young civilian posted in Mymensingh at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the entire European society in the town consisted of six people with their respective families, viz. the Judge and Magistrate, Registrar and his assistant, the Collector and his assistant and the Surgeon. Mrs Christiana Pringle, the wife of John Alexander Pringle, the Judge of Jessore, corroborates this in her account: "John has come here as Judge, Mr. Maxwell is Collector, and likely a Magistrate or Assistant will be sent, and there is a Doctor. That is all the society stationary here, but we are only 80 miles from Calcutta, and 70 from Dacca, which is a large station", as quoted in Abhijit Dutta, *Glimpses of European Life in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates Pvt. Ltd., 1995), 101. From late-nineteenth century accounts like that of George F Atkinson, it is apparent that there was a clear increase in the number and range of Europeans inhabiting civil stations, with up to 10-15 European families in some towns. The number was however, still miniscule compared to the overall town population (usually between 20,000-30,000). Atkinson, *Curry and Rice*.

70 Based on the author's findings from town surveys, mid-nineteenth century town maps and Cadestral Survey figures of 1918-23.

71 It was not uncommon for indigo planters in Bengal to have estates of sizes ranging from 30 to 50 acres, or higher.

72 Rathindramohan Chowdhury, *Bankurajoner Itihaash-sanskriti* [A historical and cultural account of Bankura] (Bankura: Bappaditya Chowdhury, 2000), 217.

Fig. 1.28 Rural habitat, Bengal.
Source: *Banglar Kutir* [Huts of Bengal], Ashok kumar Kundu and Indrajit Chowdhuri (eds.).

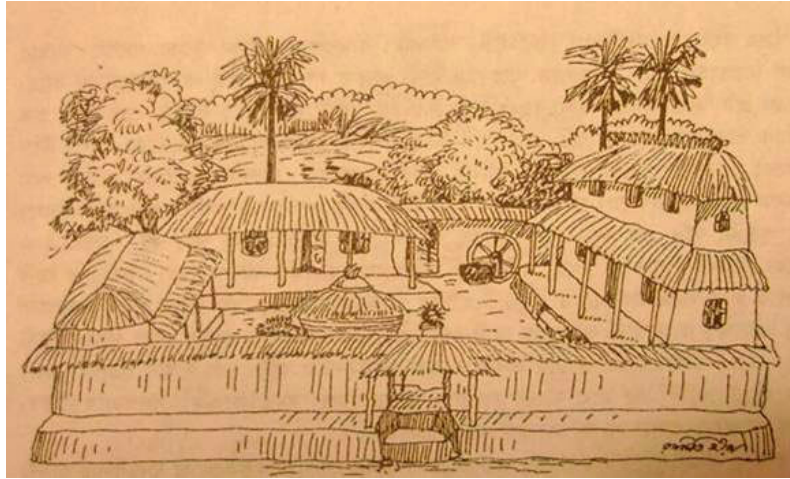
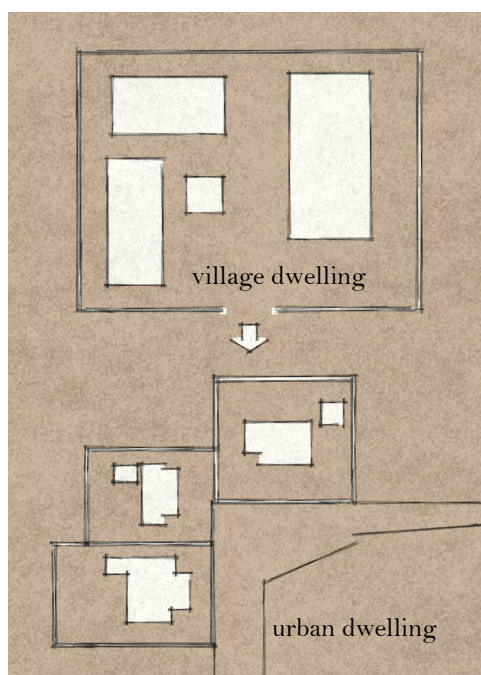


Fig. 1.29 Middle class urban house, Krishnanagar town, mid-nineteenth century.
Source: Personal collection of Amritendu Mukherjee.



Fig. 1.30 Apportioning of land into smaller, individual properties within the *sadar*



to be an extension of it.

For the Bengali inhabitant of the *sadar*, too, the move to it, mostly from ancestral villages in further interior areas, represented an alternative notion of habitat – but in ways distinct from that of European inhabitants. Due to the widespread incidence of cholera and malarial fever in lower Bengal in the early-to-mid nineteenth century, health issues also became important considerations for Bengalis in their choice of residence. Further, villages were characterised by paucity of education and limited work options.⁷³ In such a context, the *sadar* was seen as a place of privilege and provisions in the newly emerging development-landscape, which increasingly marginalised the more interior areas with regard to availability of work, healthcare and education facilities. The *sadar* also presented people living in rural areas with the possibility of redefining the attributes of their immediate habitat or the dwelling unit itself (Fig. 1. 28). A revealing account of this shift from rural to quasi-urban environment and the emerging concepts of provincial urban habitat in the mid-nineteenth century, was given by Kartikeyachandra Roy, the financial manager of the *zamindar* of Krishnanagar.⁷⁴ Kartikeyachandra moved from his native village to Krishnanagar, the nearest *sadar* town, and incrementally consolidated his dwelling there – first because of the pressures caused by his extended family living in a limited physical space in his native village and later on, because of the death of his son from an infectious disease and his consequent realisation of the limitations of the native village in dealing with such exigent circumstances. Kartikeyachandra described how, while the village offered abundant family land and healthy air, no-one in an extended family system ever wanted to give up possession of the ancestral house, which led to serious overcrowding and unhealthy living conditions within the dwelling unit itself. In his autobiography, *Atmajibancharit*, Kartikeyachandra articulated his preferences when choosing a site for his house in Krishnanagar: ‘a place which affords a bit of land attached to the house so that one could have a garden, and that at the same time is in the midst of a neighbourhood of kin-folks, is what I was looking for’.⁷⁵ For the Bengali urban middle class, which constituted a substantial proportion of the *sadar* population, living in the provincial town thus meant having one’s own dwelling unit, some land (albeit much smaller than the rural ancestral property), and a considerable autonomy in shaping one’s own environment. The likes of Kartikeyachandra thus became agents for producing a widely prevalent model of provincial urban dwelling that was typologically a single-family house with its own garden⁷⁶, but also part of a neighbourhood of relatives and other kinfolk so that the social ties of the ancestral village could be carried over into the physical fabric of the town (Fig 1. 29). Rather than sharing the same dwelling unit with one’s extended family on the same piece of land as in the traditional village, the provincial *sadar* town thus saw an apportioning of the land into smaller individual properties

⁷³ The increasing gap between the provision of healthcare and education facilities in rural and urban areas of Bengal is evident, for instance, in numerous nineteenth century Bengali novels and biographical and autobiographical accounts. Especially rich accounts of this are seen in the numerous works by Rabindranath Tagore, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Saratchandra Chattopadhyay or Bipin Behari Pal, to name a few.

⁷⁴ Kartikeyachandra Roy, *Diwan Kartikeyachandrer Atmajibani* [Diwan Kartikeyachandra’s autobiography] (Calcutta: Jitendralal Roy, n.d.).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁷⁶ As discussed later in Chapter 6/7, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries most of these towns, however, grew to accommodate continuous flow of members from the extended family in ancestral villages.



Fig. 1.31 The urban middle class 'house with the decorative garden' -
Manmohan Ghosh's house, Krishnanagar.

and dwelling units, clustered together by social ties (Fig. 1.30). It thus stood for a trade-off between autonomy of individual living, a healthy physical environment and a continuation – albeit in a modified form – of familial or other community ties and the social cushioning derived from such arrangements. The provincial town thus heralded a move from collective to nuclear living, became the formative ground for the emergence of space as an individual resource within the collective, and the carving out of a nuclear domain that addressed an individual's wish to control his own environment to a higher degree.

Within such a conception of individual space, the act of individuation becomes important. Other than the urban landscape schemes produced through governmental or elite patronage meant for the collective good, a typical characteristic of nineteenth-century provincial towns in Bengal was the individual garden with the house (Fig. 1.31). The provincial urban 'house and garden' marked an intersection of several forces; firstly, the relatively higher availability of land as a resource compared to dense urban sites like Calcutta and its role in healthy living; secondly, a move towards a growing autonomy and individual expression within collective living; thirdly, the emergence of new aesthetic ideas in the nineteenth century; and finally, the tools and techniques available to effect such changes. Kartikeyachandra's account of his garden powerfully expressed this shift:

Since my youth, I have always dreamt of fashioning a beautiful garden my own way...Initially, I tried making a garden in Baruihuda, my ancestral village. Using the Dutch technique to lay out flower beds, I planted various species of flowers in them...a few years later I embarked upon fashioning my own garden in the town. I incessantly read up on how to plant different fruit and flowering species, how to graft or make cuttings from them, how to look after them and collected cuttings and saplings of a huge range of indigenous species of fruit and flowering trees like mango, lichee etc. Subsequently, I made my own cuttings from these – planted some, gave away some and sold some...⁷⁷

Kartikeyachandra went on further to describe the heterogeneous mix of tastes in the gradually transforming urban scenario of the *sadar*:

The mango and lychee trees from the cuttings in the 'Company's Garden' in Krishnanagar had been planted by the British. None of the locals were really interested in such techniques of forming cuttings...The people of our land often create gardens for functional purposes, for consumption or to make profit, but very few use them towards an aesthetic purpose...Among the inhabitants of this town, Mr. Kalicharan Lahiri is very much interested in such pursuits. Even he, like me, has invested a lot of labour, love and money in his garden...⁷⁸

The emerging garden in the town dwelling was thus not just meant to be therapeutic, functional or productive, but also decorative in spirit. It established a premium on the non-building and non-productive aspects of dwelling and set it up as a visual and sensorial site. In this incarnation, the garden was a typically *urban* phenomenon, and one that could be sustained on a large scale only at the level of the intermediate urbanism found in provincial towns. Within the anonymity that urban living increasingly brought, it served also as a more explicit indicator

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 117.



Fig. 1. 32 The decorative garden within the bungalow grounds. Probably Bankura, 1870s.
Source: IOR, British Library

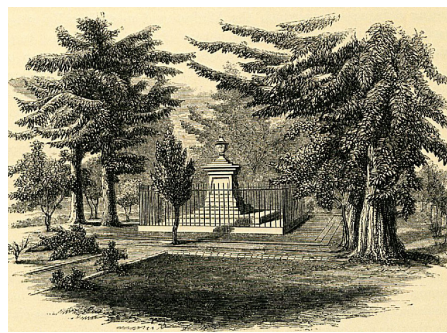
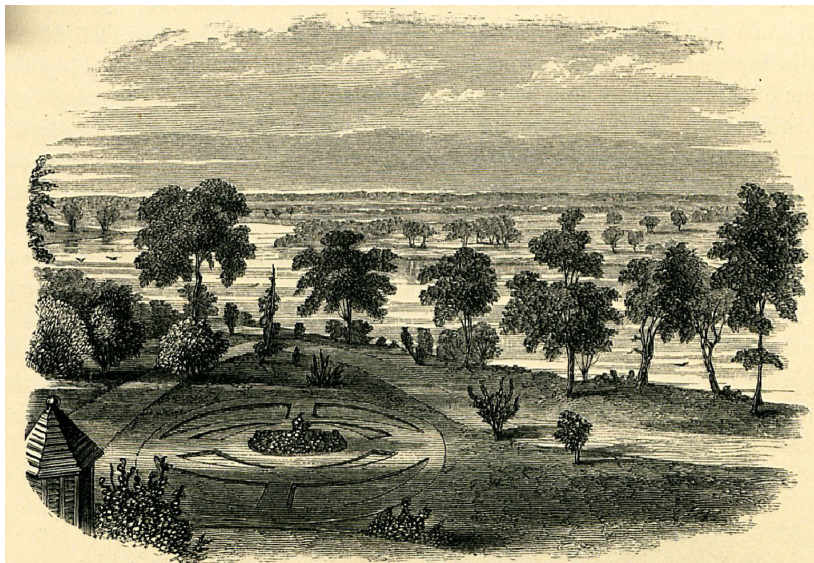


Fig. 1.33 The 'arranged' garden as part of more 'naturalistic' grounds. Planter's estate, Mulnath.
Source: *Rural Life in Bengal*, Colesworthy Grant, 1860.

of wealth, prosperity and taste.

The decorative garden thus caught the imagination of middle-class and upper-middle class natives, European officers, and commercial planters alike (Fig. 1.32, 1.33). From accounts like that provided by Kartikeyachandra, Prasnamayee Debi, or of Colesworthy Grant during his visits to European friends in provincial areas of Bengal, one gets a fair idea of the character of these provincial gardens. They used chiefly indigenous fruit and flowering trees, shrubs and creepers – the latter laid out in geometrical flower beds and topiary and *parterre* forms. The garden more often than not employed techniques like grafting or cutting that made species replication and hybridisation easier. Where space allowed, as in the vast bungalow compounds of provincial officers or well-to-do planters, the decorative garden formed an exotic part of larger, more loosely organised and naturally kept grounds.⁷⁹ Although figures like Kartikeyachandra and Kalicharan Lahiri were relatively rare in early-to-mid nineteenth century, they spearheaded a shift of priorities towards the production of a hybrid landscape that could combine indigenous species and their productive purpose with that of a new landscape aesthetic, backed up by new gardening techniques. By the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century the individual house with garden was a widely prevalent domestic form in provincial *sadar* towns. Designs such as the Dutch technique, fashioned on a geometrical arrangement that followed the French gardening styles, but scaled down to suit smaller spaces, offered a natural fit with the moderate availability of land in *sadar* towns. What is also interesting is that in the conception of the *sadar* harboured by colonial officials, as well as by the native middle class, health issues and ideas of spatial autonomy were thus getting directly or indirectly connected to an aesthetic conception of habitat and in turn, to the construction of an idealised image of the town.

Above all, not only was the house with the ornamental garden seen as a tool to beautify and enhance individual lifestyles, but it was seen as a development unit, that, when replicated, would lead naturally to an aesthetic and picturesquely arranged town. In expressing his irritation over the nuisance caused by stray cattle coming into his beautiful garden, Kartikeyachandra actually articulated this idea: '...if such cattle-grazing practices could be stopped, many a gentleman's houses could have ornamental fruit and flower gardens. Not only does that offer the prospect of profit for the owner, it also helps in the town itself becoming more beautiful.'⁸⁰ Individual identity and self-expression were thus automatically seen as legitimate ways of building up an aesthetic environment for the collective, and as such the remains of rural lifestyle like cattle-grazing – which still continued to some degree in provincial towns – were simply seen as deterrents to this ambition. One of the key sites buttressing such experiments was the *Companir Bagan* (literally translated as 'Company's Garden'). Mid-nineteenth century maps of towns like Krishnanagar and Berhampur reveal a specially designated piece of land belonging to the East India Company, which (as revealed in Kartikeyachandra's account) was evidently a site for growing indigenous

⁷⁹ See e.g. descriptions of Mulnath, an indigo estate, by Colesworthy Grant, *Rural Life in Bengal: illustrative of Anglo-Indian Suburban Life*, (London: Thacker and Company, 1860), 33-34.

⁸⁰ Kartikeyachandra Roy, *Dirvan Kartikeyachandrer Atmajibani*, 117.

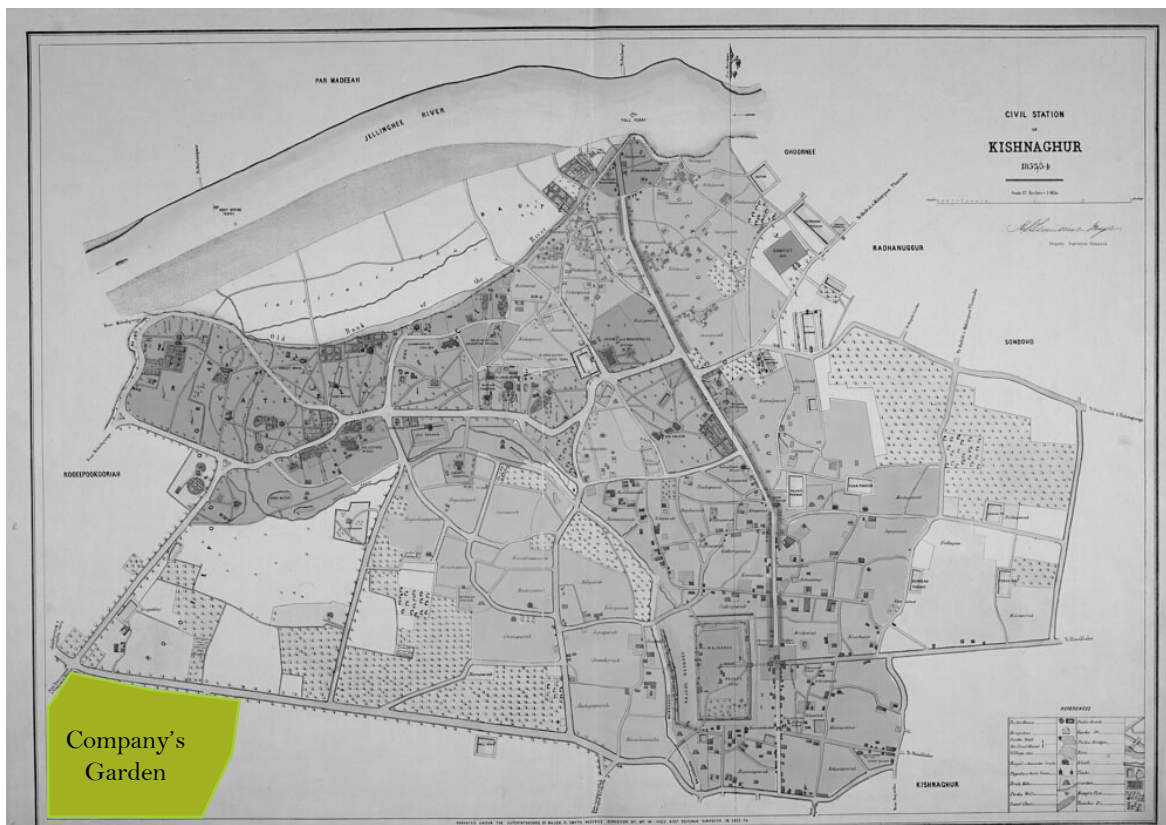


Fig. 1. 34 Company's garden, Krishnanagar

Source: base map - IOR, British Library. Site marked by author based on local historical accounts

trees – in the form of plantations and nurseries – but by employing westernised methods of cutting and grafting (Fig. 1.34). Saplings and cuttings from the *Companir Bagan* were quite clearly also being collected by the town's population for use in their own premises. Newer hybrid species from the Company's garden were thus spreading beyond its physical boundaries into private properties and the larger landscape of the town. Equally, private gardens themselves were also virtually turning into laboratories for experimenting with the possibilities of overlapping newer techniques with local plant species and varied design styles.⁸¹ Other than its utilitarian function, the *Companir bagan* also came to symbolise, especially for middle-class Bengalis, a site of intense aesthetic and sensory experience – related to a particularly modern notion of sensory visuality, as yet another reflection by Prasannamayee Debi reveals:

The mango orchard of the Companir Bagan is a crucible of beauty. Sitting or lying down there in the light of the morning, during the day or underneath the twilight-tinged early-evening sky – one gets completely lost in a dream world, forgets all joy, pain, celebration or despondency of worldly life, and finds deep peace. Perhaps God himself created such paradise on the face of the earth so one can experience such calm, such music of birds' songs, such un-inhibited beauty of one's inner-self.⁸²

In describing the presence of Diwan Kartikeyachandra, a much revered figure, in the neighbourhood, Prasannamayee Debi also wrote: 'every aspect of him emitted beauty – [himself], his house, his flower garden, his mango orchard, his creeper grove.'⁸³ Such a notion of human habitat, and at a more immediate level, human dwelling, being part of a continuum directly connected to one's own sense of inner beauty seems to have been a key force driving the nature of provincial urban habitat in the *sadar* in mid-to-late nineteenth century Bengal. The provincial middle-class 'house and garden' were seen as direct extensions of the self, and vice versa; beauty from one aspect was seen to infuse the other, resulting, in effect, in the pursuit of a calm, green, sensorial urban environment within the *sadar's* emerging aesthetic milieu.

1.3.4 The *sadar* as a place of provision

As clearly evident in Kartikeyachandra's account, the other fundamental perception of the *sadar* was that of a place of *provision* – of employment, healthcare and education facilities and by the end of the nineteenth century, of an even wider range of urban amenities. To begin with, it represented the move to a clearly 'urban' economy and occupational base. Kartikeyachandra's move to the *sadar* was triggered primarily by concerns of health and newly emerging notions of well-being, hygiene and improved space standards. This was also overlaid with the pursuit of a particularly 'rurban', hybrid conception of aesthetics and sensorial fulfilment that lay in-between Indian and European sensibilities. Jogesh Bidyanidhi's move to the town of Bankura as a child was linked to the availability of better education facilities, and of which the young male children

⁸¹ Interestingly, many ideas about tropical gardening also flowed back from colonies like India to Victorian Britain in the late-nineteenth century. Exotic plant species like the Bamboo or the Pampas grass were brought into England from the colonies and sub-tropical gardens were created, often inside glass nurseries, even within private homes. Such pursuits were not restricted to the nobility and upper-classes but were increasingly common amongst the middle-classes as well. For an account of these developments in gardening in England, see e.g. Anthony Huxley, *An Illustrated History of Gardening* (London: Paddington Press [for] The Royal Horticultural Society), 287-295.

⁸² Prasannamayee Debi, *Purbakatha*, 102.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 103.



Sadar Hospital, Barisal



Government College, Krishnanagar



Town Hall, Jessore

Fig. 1.35 The *sadar* as a place of provisions

in mid-nineteenth century Bengal were the lucky recipients.⁸⁴ The precise drivers behind the mid-nineteenth century rural-urban movement in Bengal, and the ensuing imagination of the *sadar* as a place that could address such issues of habitat at large – were evocatively described in the following observation by Kartikeyachandra:

By the time I attained youth, much had changed in terms of the quality of water and air, mode of education, behaviour and etiquettes, notions of hospitality and inter-personal relationships. Increasing environmental pollution makes it impossible for reasonable cure of ailments by traditional doctors, and the emerging systems of education virtually render lessons by the Guru or the Ustad irrelevant. Small pox has emerged as the new demon, incidence of fever is more than ever before, eating habits have transformed, English education is being introduced – in fact, just about every facet of everyday life has witnessed a radical transformation. On top of this, our financial situation has undergone massive deterioration. Surviving and making a living in Baruihuda [the ancestral village] is therefore each day becoming a herculean task... I have started actively to look for a suitable place to live in, in Krishnanagar [the nearest *zilla sadar* town].⁸⁵

By the late nineteenth century, these basic needs and provisions developed into more complex domains. For instance, *sadar* towns were increasingly seen by the new English-and-vernacular educated Indians as the location of progressive thinking, liberal values and a substantial urban public sphere – one that was centred on intellectual and cultural pursuits as well as bourgeois modes of entertainment such as literary readings, and newer forms of theatre and musical activities (Fig. 1.35). It is amply clear from the accounts of Nabinchandra Sen, Jogesh Bidyanidhi or Kartikeyachandra, and from the social, political and intellectual history of towns like Krishnanagar, Barisal or Bankura, that the movement to the *sadar* from rural areas was clearly seen as a process of upward mobility, and directly connected to a 'modern' conception of living. Further, Kartikeyachandra's account offers a telling narrative of perceived distinctions and negotiations between urban and rural, and European and Indian sensibilities. Provincial urbanisation thus became a significant channel for the emergence of a conception of 'modernity' that was centred on the forging of newer and eclectic value systems and spatial choices – and as such constituted a significant aspect of the overall landscape of early-to-mid nineteenth century urbanisation in Bengal. The *sadar* thus came to be imagined and pursued as a model of intermediate urbanism, heralding this transition to modernity. Its modernity stemmed from its curiously in-between location – being both rural and urban, and between European and Indian sense of aesthetics and lifestyle. Yet on the whole, unitary and homogeneous visions based on low-density healthy 'green' areas, tree-lined avenues, houses with gardens and urban landscaping, remained a fundamental way of spatially imagining the *zilla sadar* – both for the provincial officers as well as for the native elite and emerging upper-middle class.

⁸⁴ The movement of young male children of the family from village homes into *sadar* towns for education is a recurrent theme in nineteenth century Bengali literature. See, e.g. Jogehschandra Bidyandhi, *Atmajibancharit*; Nabinchandra Sen, *Aamar Jibon*; Kartikeyachandra Roy, *dirwan kartikeyachandrer atmajibancharit*; Pramatha Chowdhury, *Atmakatha*; Prasannamayee Debi, in her autobiography actually articulates such choices made by middle and upper middle class families: '...to facilitate the education of his sons, my father bought a house on the outskirts of Krishnanagar and arranged for my mother to stay there along with the children, while he was away on work.' Prasannamayee Debi, *Purbakatha*, 119.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

Chapter 2 ■

Negotiated spaces and heterogeneous urbanism



Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the disposition and interrelationship of administrative, domestic, institutional and other public spaces, as well as of European and native areas within the *zilla sadar* towns. It explores how urban models attempting to cast the *sadar* as a wholesome, unified and picturesque entity – as discussed in Chapter 1 – were continuously complicated by the inherent and necessary plurality of its functioning. In doing so, the chapter traces the manner in which, centred on spaces of governance and extending into spaces of domestic and public life, the *zilla sadar* gradually developed from the late-eighteenth to the late-nineteenth century into a complex and heterogeneous entity – the often disparate parts of which were tied up in relationships of interdependence. It subsequently focuses on certain key developments in the conception of the urban form of the *sadar* in the late-nineteenth century. As this chapter will reveal, straddling the intersection of colonial governance and provincality, the *zilla sadar* in effect became the crucible of a fluid spatial culture with a characteristic heterogeneity that was a result of negotiations – not just between urban and rural identities, or European colonists and native inhabitants, but also between different factions within the indigenous population and the colonial governmental apparatus itself.¹

1 Other than the more specific references that will follow, the urban historical and geographical analysis in this

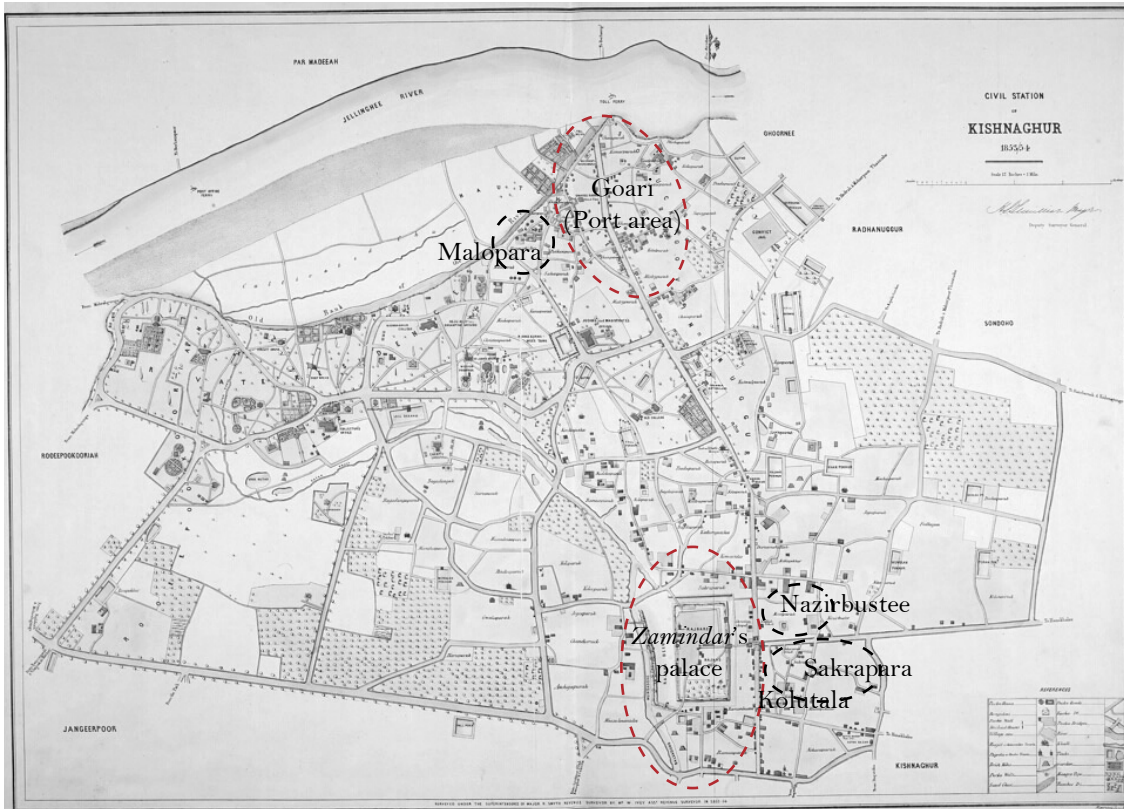


Fig. 2.1a Krishnanagar - pre-colonial settlements
Source: Base Map - British Library Maps Collection, IOR.

2.1 The development of the *zilla sadar* from early-to-mid-nineteenth century

2.1.1 Precolonial spatial heterogeneity

Colonial revenue districts had been largely forged from Mughal administrative territories such as the *sarkar*, *pargana* or *chalk*, and thus inherited a landscape of existing settlements from pre-colonial times.² Most of them arose in the inevitable proximity of minor, and sometimes major, settlements. Much of these pre-existing settlements later fused into the *zilla sadar* to form an integral part of *sadar* towns. Typically, these were small port areas, merchants' clusters, existing villages or populated settlements of a pre-colonial lineage of feudal landlords – often a fairly heterogeneous mix. For example, Krishnanagar had a well developed port area, Goari, as well as a medieval settlement built up around the *zamindar's* palace (Fig. 2.1a). Burdwan had a substantial settlement with the seat of the *zamindar* as its locus. Bankura had a few small settlements clustered around the intersection of two major routes³ and some strewn along the edges of the rivers Dwarakeshwar and Gandheshwari.⁴ There seems to have broadly been three

chapter, at a general level, is based on a large body of secondary literature on the local histories of the towns in question, oral narratives of earlier generation of residents, as well as the author's detailed physical survey of the towns. The following literature was particularly useful for the purpose: *Bengal District Gazetteers* (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1905–1938); W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal* (London: Truebner, 1875–1877); Hunter, *Annals of Rural Bengal* (London: Smith and Elder, 1897); Colesworthy Grant, *Rural Life in Bengal; illustrative of Anglo-Indian suburban life; more particularly in connection with the planter and peasantry ... Letters from an artist in India to his sisters in England* (London: W. Thacker & Co., 1860); J. H. Tull Walsch, *A History of Murshidabad District, Bengal. With biographies of some of its noted families* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1902); Henry Beveridge, *The District of Bâkarganj: Its History and Statistics* (London: Truebner, 1876); James Westland, *A Report on the District of Jessore: its Antiquities, its History, and its Commerce* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1874); H. V. Bayley, *History of Midnapore* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1902); Satishchandra Mitra, *Jasohar-Khulnar Itihash* [A history of Jessore and Khulna] (Khulna: Rupantar, 1914, 1992, 2001); Niradbaran Sarkar, *Bardhaman Raj Itibritto* [A history of the Burdwan Raj] (Burdwan: Sujata Sarkar, 2004); Jyotirindranarayan Lahiri, 'Bardhaman: Sankhipto Ruparekha' [Burdwan: a short sketch], in *Bardhaman Charcha* [Deliberations on Burdwan] (Burdwan: Burdwan Abhijan Gosthi, 2001), 59–88; Rathindramohan Chowdhury, *Bankurajoner Itihaash Sanskriti* [History and culture of the Bankura people]; Chowdhury, *Naya Bankurar Gorapattan O Bikash* [The making of modern Bankura] (Bankura: Gautam De, Pashchim Rarh Itihaash O Sanskriti Charcha Kendra, 2007); Girindrashekhar Chakrabarty, 'Bankurar Imarat Brittika', *Bankurar Kheyal*, 5 (2008), 54–85; Akhsay Kumar Adhya, *Hughli Chuchurar Nana Kotha vols. 1 & 2* [Tales of Hugly and Chinsura] (Hugly: Hugly Sambad, 2007); Sukumar Sinha, *Shiuri Shohorer Itihash* [History of Suri town] (Barrackpur: Ujjal Sarkar, 2008); Gaurihar Mitra, *Birbhumer Itihas* [History of Birbhum] (Suri: Ratan Library, 1936); Ranjan Kumar Gupta, *The Economic Life of a Bengal District: Birbhum 1770–1857* (Burdwan: University of Burdwan, 1984); Mohit Roy, *Nadia Kahini* (Krishnanagar: Rabindra Bhaban, 1995); Sanjit Dutta, 'Paanch Shataker Krishnanagar Onneshan' [A search for five hundred years of history of Krishnanagar], in *Krishnanagar Public Library Shardhashatabarsha Samagrangantha 1856–2006*, Kajal Mitra, ed. (Krishnanagar: S.M. Sadi, Krishnanagar Public Library, 2007); *Itihaasher Aloke Baharampur Paurasabha* [Berhampur municipality in historical light], Bishan Gupta et al, eds. (Berhampur: Berhampur Municipality, 2008).

2 The location of *zilla sadar* towns on pre-existing commercial, administrative or military sites has been discussed in Chapter 1. Other than this, the continuity of Mughal territorial basis into colonial spatial landscapes has been discussed, for instance, by Yuthika Sharma in her study on landscape strategies of imperial Delhi. Sharma argued that Mughal property rights that governed territorial divisions till mid nineteenth century bore a strong impact on the qualitative aspects of property division, territorial delineations and the type of physical interventions in colonial Delhi. Yuthika Sharma, 'From land to landscape: a survey of landscape strategies in imperial Delhi (1863–1913)', Harvard University unpublished Masters dissertation, Harvard Graduate School of Design, 2005.

3 These were the east-west route from Calcutta to the religious centre of Benares, and the north-south route from Bengal to the religious centre of Puri in Orissa. This was also an existing military route from pre-colonial times.

4 There are numerous other examples of such pre-existing settlements within the sites of *sadar* towns. The Berhampur cantonment (later, after 1870, a *zilla sadar*) sprang up virtually in the unoccupied area between a network of other settlements such as Kasimbazar, Saidabad, Khagra, Maidapur, Panchanantala, Madhupur, Banjetia and Babulbona. Of this, the latter four were indigo or silk establishments of European merchants. Kasimbazar had French and British factories as well as native settlements, and Saidabad, Khagra and Kansari-bazar were thriving native settlements and mercantile areas. The town of Khulna came up in the immediate proximity of *Sener Bazar* (an ancient port area centred on a thriving market settlement), the East India Company's salt factory established in 1781, sugar and indigo plantation areas, and a number of tiny indigenous habitations such as Tut-para, Benekhamar, Sheikh-para, Miya-baag, Shib-bari, Bagmara,

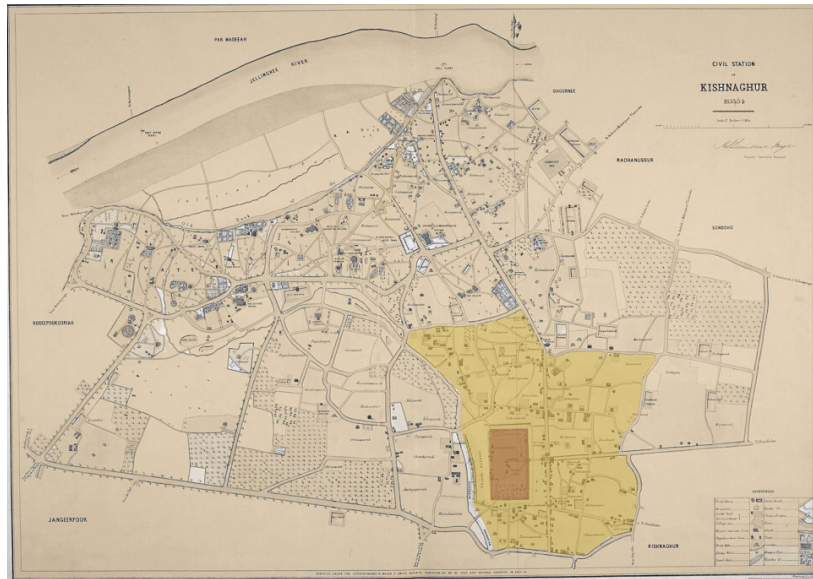


Fig. 2.1b Krishnanagar - consolidated pre-colonial *zamindari* settlement
Source: Base Map - British Library Maps Collection, IOR.



Fig. 2.1c Barisal - consolidated pre-colonial native settlement with *bazaar* as locus
Source: Base Map - British Library Maps Collection, IOR.



Fig. 2.1d Suri - scattered pre-colonial settlements.
Source: Base Map - Reconstructed by author from contemporary map

types of native settlements that formed the pre-existing context for *sadar* towns.⁵ The first – the *zamindari* towns, usually built under the patronage of landed aristocracy, viz. the *zamindar* or the *Raja* [feudal ruler]⁶ – were centred around one substantial *zamindari* establishment (Fig. 2.1b).⁷ With the *zamindar*'s palace as its locus, these settlements housed quarters for the *zamindar*'s army, accountants, treasurers, clerks, shopkeepers, artisans and entertainers to service the *zamindari* establishment. *Sadar* establishments in towns like Krishnanagar and Burdwan developed in the immediate proximity of such *zamindari* settlements. In the second category were towns like Barisal, Bankura or Jessore which had a reasonably consolidated native settlement with a port or a market as its focus (Fig. 2.1c).⁸ In the third category were towns like Suri, Khulna or Berhampur which consisted of a number of scattered settlements or villages – without a clear organising element like a *zamindar*'s palace or market or port – but existing rather as a patchwork of habitations (Fig. 2.1d). *Sadar* towns thus often developed on a heterogeneous physical, social and economic base. Their later developments were usually infills or new extensions. This intrinsic heterogeneity always formed a palpable under-layer for the towns, and expressed itself in different types of social structures and urban forms – ranging from dense 'urban' *bazaar* areas to low density estates, or virtually 'rural' habitations.

2.1.2 Relationship between European and native areas

When *zilla sadar* towns were established in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, the two basic components of the civil station were the colonial *cutcherry*⁹ (office and court complex) and the residential bungalow zone of European officials. In most cases, British officials chose to locate their residential areas in a tract of land clearly distinct and distant from the native settlements. In the *zamindari* towns, the separation between the native and European areas was arguably the starkest. Here it is interesting to note that in Krishnanagar, as well as Burdwan (both *zamindari* towns), the European and the native settlements lay on axes roughly perpendicular to each other – i.e. the European settlers chose to settle along a clearly different axis (Fig. 2.2a and

Banor-gaati and Gobarchaka.

5 My categorisation and typological identification of the settlement-context for *sadar* towns here have some overlap with M.S. Islam's more general but very useful classification of pre-colonial settlements in Bengal. Islam identified four types – viz. the great metropolitan cities, the *zamindari* towns, the European factory towns, and the transient *mufassal* towns (mostly small market or port settlements based on shifting patterns of patronage). M.S. Islam, 'Life in the *mufassal* towns of nineteenth century Bengal', in Kenneth Balhatchet and John Harris (eds.), *The City in South Asia* (London and Dublin: Curzon Press Ltd. and Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press Inc., 1980), 225, 227.

6 *Raja* – literally meaning 'king', was the common title by which *zamindars* were often known, especially by their subjects.

7 These were usually already well-formed settlements where the *zamindar* or the *raja* [feudal ruler] had been in charge of revenue, judicial, police and military duties under the pre-colonial Mughal rule. Major zamindars looked after their own estates as well as overlooked other smaller *zamindari* establishments.

8 In case of Jessore, there was also a significant *zamindari* establishment (of the *zamindar* of Chanchra) associated with the place, but it was located at some distance from the native settlement which seems to have existed also as a self-sufficient hamlet.

9 The term '*cutcherry*' in Arabic means office. Used as a generic term for offices at large in Mughal and colonial India, it has had a particularly heavy use in the context of administrative spaces. The British colonial administrative infrastructure in *zilla sadar* towns was pivoted on the *cutcherry* complex, which was the nerve centre of the town and housed a collection of administrative buildings such as offices (e.g. the Collector's office), courts (e.g. District Judge's Court, Sub-Divisional Officer's Court, Munsif's or lower court), record rooms, treasury and various other secondary establishments for colonial provincial administration.

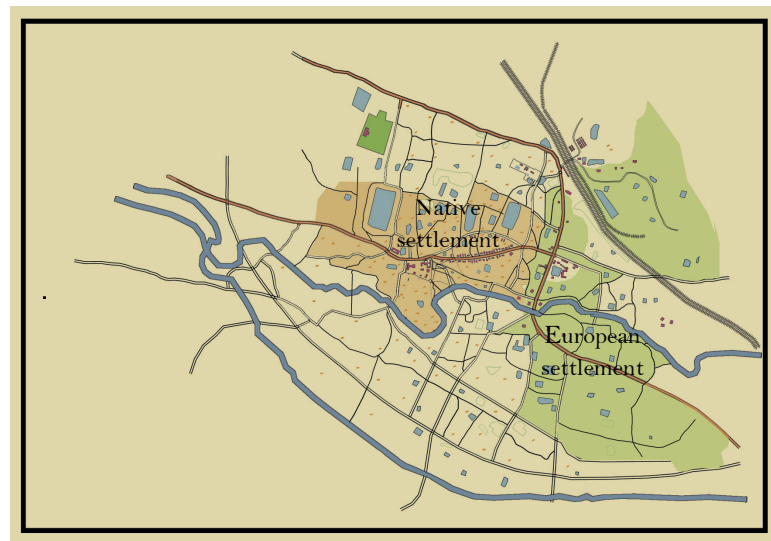
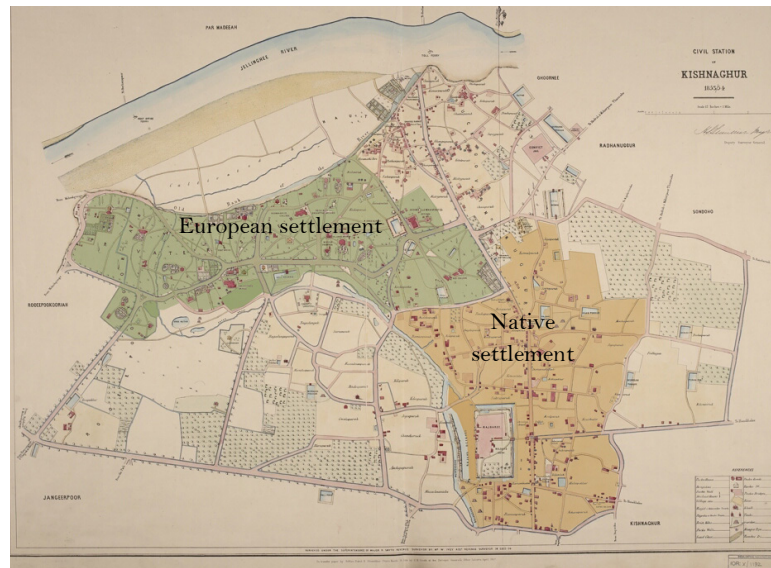


Fig. 2.2a and 2.2b
Krishnanagar and Burdwan
- European settlements on
axes perpendicular to native
settlements.

Source: 2.2a Base Map - BL
Maps collection, IOR. 2.2b Base
map - Reconstructed by the
author from contemporary map



Fig. 2.2c Suri - native and European settlements
on either side of the Dumka Road.

Source: Base Map - reconstructed by the author
from contemporary map

2.2b). In Burdwan the separation was aided by the presence of the *Badshahi*, or Grand Trunk Road¹⁰, which virtually formed the eastern border of the native settlement. As seen in Chapter 1, the prime areas in *sadar* towns were invariably appropriated for European habitation. However, in the *zamindari* towns, which had an established centre of power, land could only be appropriated in sequence of inhabitation. Thus in Krishnanagar, the prime tract – the highest ridge of the town (from which it derived the name ‘High Road’, in use till today) – had already been utilised for the previous *zamindari* settlement. The European quarters therefore had to be located on the next available ridge, which ran roughly at right angles to it. Appropriation of advantageous land for civil stations was thus not a blanket possibility for the East India Company – it always required negotiations and sometimes settling for second-best options. In other cases like Bankura, where there was no major seat of power claiming the best piece of land, things were less competitive. The Chhatna *zamindars* owned virtually half the land in the area,¹¹ but operated mainly from their estates in inland areas and so did not have a firm seat within the town. It was thus easier for the Company in this case to buy 23 acres of land from them on the most prime site, on the highest elevation, to create what was to become the *sadar* town.¹²

The basic distinction of the European residential area from the native settlement was also evident in both the other categories of towns – i.e. in towns like Bankura, Barisal, Jessore (with a reasonably consolidated pre-colonial settlement) or in Suri, Khulna or Berhampur (with a few scattered settlements). In most of these towns the distinction was achieved either through physical distance or through the strategic use of existing features like major transport routes. The older areas of Suri, for example, lay on the north-eastern and eastern side of the Dumka Road, whereas the European town grew incrementally to the west of it (Fig. 2.2c).

2.1.3 The colonial *cutcherry* in relation to European and native areas

The colonial *cutcherry* complex formed the nerve-centre of *sadar* towns. Interestingly, in almost all cases, due to its dependence on contact with the native population, the *cutcherry* site had to be located in proximity to the native settlements, even if at some distance from the European residential enclave. With the *cutcherry* becoming a key centre of employment by the mid-nineteenth century, expansion of native settlements also tended to take place in areas proximate to it. In fact, more often than not, the *cutcherry* was located at the junction of the native and European settlements and virtually acted as a link between the two (Figs. 2.3a and 2.3b).

10 The *Badshahi* or Grand Trunk road connected Calcutta through Benares to Peshawar to the north-west in present day Pakistan. It was extended by the British from the foundation of its pre-cursor – the *Sadak-e-Azam* (the Great Road) built by Sher Shah Suri in the 16th century. The Grand Trunk road was an immensely significant military route for the British as well, used to move supplies for the army to the fringe of the Maratha territory in western India.

11 The land in the town of Bankura belonged to two major zaminadary families – the Chhatna Rajas and the the Malla Rajas – with a rough split on either side of a north-south axis (along the road on the west of the colonial *cutcherry* complex).

12 *Bankura District Letters Issued 1802-1809*, S. Sinha and H. Banerjee, eds., West Bengal District Records (Calcutta: Office of the Directorate of Census Operations,), 14, 35.



Fig. 2.3a and 2.3b Jessore and Barisal - *cutcherry* at the junction of native and European areas.

Source: Base maps - British Library maps collection, IOR.

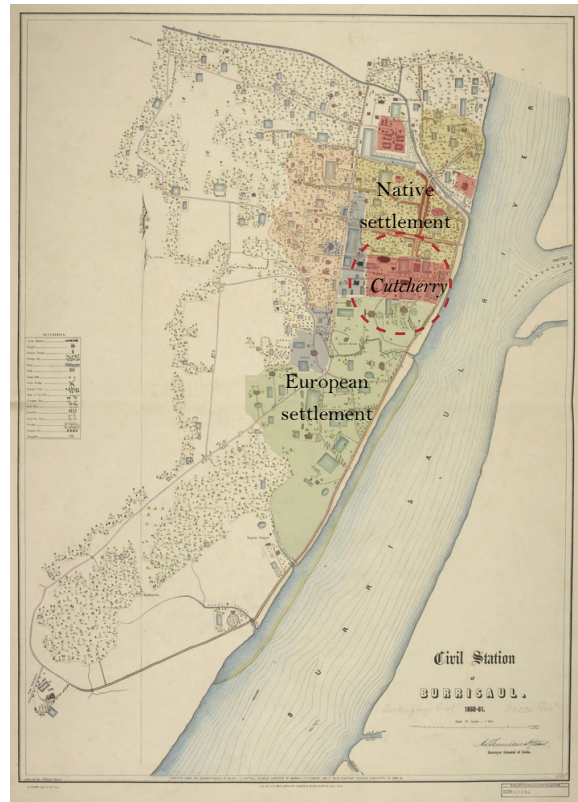


Fig. 2.3d The *cutcherry* precinct, Bankura.



Fig. 2.3c Suri - *cutcherry* locations with respect to the native settlement over time.

1 - ~ 1786; 2 - 1828-30; 3 - 1865-68.

Source: Base map - reconstructed from contemporary map by the author.



Fig. 2.3e The *cutcherry* precinct, Jessore.

In its early days¹³, the East India Company's *cutcherry* in Burdwan was situated right in the heart of the *zamindari* settlement – a result also of the fact that the Company was dependent for allocation of land and building on the *zamindar*. It moved out to a site outside, but adjacent to, the native settlement in 1818. Also, in the early days of revenue administration, the workings of the East India Company were much more dependent on the *zamindars*, since Company officers had fairly limited knowledge of the area, demanding closer proximity.¹⁴ By the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, however, colonial district administration in Bengal attempted to become increasingly independent, developing its own physical infrastructure of governance. This was also the period when *cutcherries* in *sadar* towns were custom-designed for the first time and if previously housed within native settlements, now moved out to sites directly abutting them.

But the proximity to native settlements was still indispensable. In fact, there were instances, like in Suri, where the *cutcherry* was moved from its original location within the Collector's bungalow in the European residential zone¹⁵ – it went first to the circuit house¹⁶ (closer to the native settlement) in 1828-30,¹⁷ and finally to a site directly adjacent to the native settlement in 1865-68 (Fig. 2.3c). The *cutcherry's* relationship with the native town was therefore vital. It directly served and was also served by the native settlement – with most of its workers being drawn from the latter. So even though most pre-existing settlements had had their own economic base centred on the *zamindari* establishment or market or port, the setting up of *sadar cutcherries* led to a huge shift in patterns of employment by the first half of the nineteenth century. An increasingly higher number of people were drawn from the surrounding villages into *zilla sadar* towns, many employed in governmental work. The *cutcherry* became ever more a pivotal intermediate zone between the native and European areas (Fig. 2.3d). Along with it grew a zone of mixed public functions – governmental and private, secular as well as religious – which, in effect, acted as a connector – physically and operationally – for the different parts of the town.

2.1.4 Split centres of district administration

The *cutcherry* site itself was a contested domain. The history of colonial provincial governance in Bengal is ridden with continuously changing constellations of power-structures – with the District Collector (in charge of revenue matters) being invested with more power at times, and

13 This refers in the present context to a period from around 1760, when Burdwan was ceded to the East India Company, till 1818 when the Company built its first *cutcherry* for itself.

14 Aspects of administration, like policing (and especially rural policing), remained the responsibility of *zamindars* till 1837, when police administration was reformed substantively transferring the responsibility of policing more directly to provincial administration.

15 See Annexure, W.W. Hunter, *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, 'The Cook's Chronicle of Beerbhoom, c.1785-1820'. The chronicle gives the account of Ramghulam Baburchi [chef], whose father was a chef to the Collector Christopher Keating of Beerbhoom in Suri. Ramghulam describes the area behind the *Rajnagar zamindar's* summer retreat in the town – at its western end – as being the site for the Collector's bungalow. It is known from the District Collectorate Records (letter to Board of Revenue, 4th Dec, 1788) that the Collector's office was planned to be housed within his dwelling. The Collector's *cutcherry* was therefore located at the western end of the present town, away from the native areas. This might have had also to do with the fact that, unlike Burdwan or Krishnanagar, Suri was not an established (pre-colonial) *zamindari* stronghold and did not offer the benefits reaped from affinity with *zamindari* settlements.

16 Circuit Houses were residence-cum-courtrooms for Sessions Judges who moved from district to district settling cases that involved serious offences.

17 British Library, IOR, Board of Revenue Papers, Letters of 10, 22 Apr, 4 May, 26 Jun, 1828, IOR/ Z/ P/ 878.

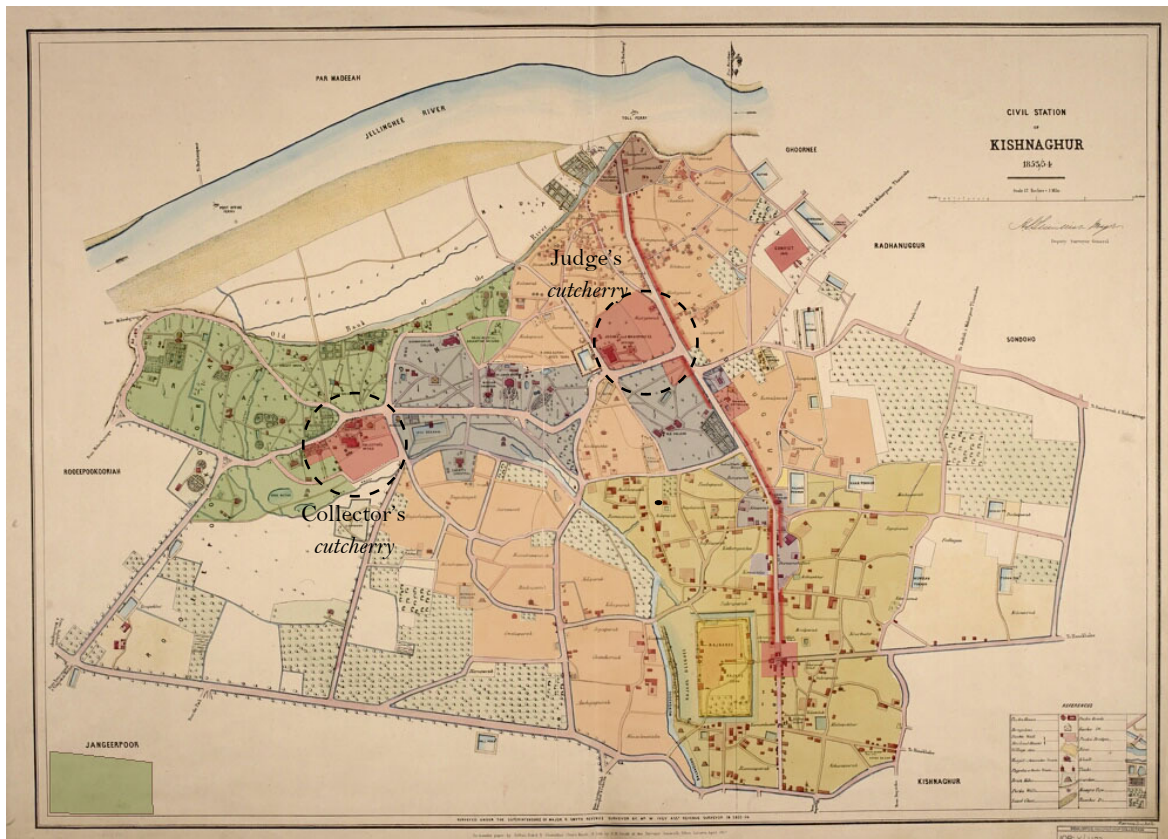


Fig. 2.4a Krishnanagar - split centres of district administration.

Source: Base map - British Library Maps Collection, IOR.



Fig. 2.4b Bankura - territorial division within the *cutcherry* precinct.

Source: Base map - C.S. Survey map 1919

- Revenue
- Judiciary
- Jail
- Local self government
- Postal
- Police
- Land/ birth- death registry
- Residential

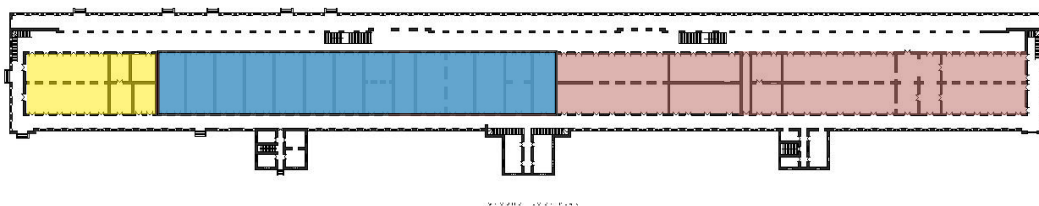


Fig. 2.4c Hughly - territorial division within the *cutcherry* building.

the District Judge (in charge of civil justice) having more power at others, often depending on which post the Magisterial function (delivery of criminal justice) attached itself to. The relationship between the revenue and judicial wings of district administration was, as a result, tenuous.¹⁸ Despite the adoption of an essentially paternalistic model of provincial administration, therefore, its own inner unevenness stood in the way of a unitary performance of governance. In Krishnanagar, for example, the *cutcherry* site itself split into two separate urban nodes, about one mile apart, representing the two different centres of provincial administration – the Collector's *cutcherry*, proximate to the European bungalow area, and the Judge's *cutcherry* (with its still higher need for public contact) adjacent to the native settlement (Fig. 2.4a). The same was the case with the town of Midnapur, where the Collector-Magistrate's and the Judge's court complexes were located almost a mile apart¹⁹ – again, forming two distinct administrative centres. In most other towns, such as Jessore, Burdwan, Bankura or Suri, the *cutcherry* site was shared by the revenue, judicial and magisterial courts and offices. However, the sheer physical parcelling of land revealed the fragmented nature of the territoriality within it (Fig. 2.4b). In Hooghly, on the other hand, the *cutcherry* building – adapted as it had been for administrative use from a massive army barrack – housed all the revenue, judicial and magisterial functions not just on one site, but under the very same roof (Fig. 2.4c). Territorial distinction was achieved here through a careful apportioning of the built space and manipulation of access systems. Each situation thus represented specific spatial conditions, negotiating between the different limbs of administration and continuous attempts by each to maintain its autonomy. Around 1860, within the emerging zeal for rationalisation and simplification spearheaded by the Public Works Department, there were attempts to even out such differences between the judicial and executive heads by opting for near-identical building designs for their operations. But the ambiguity of power allocation continued to act as a driving force behind district administration. By 1881, in the urban design of the new *sadar* town of Khulna, the Judge's and Collector's *cutcherries*, although adjacent, were allocated clearly different parcels of land, separated by one of the main roads of the town – thereby trying to achieve a precarious balance between the logistical requirements of proximity and the symbolic separation of the two competing centres of power. In the older *sadar* towns, far greater in number, the uncomfortable sharing of space continued. The internal differences within provincial administration thus brought about its own dichotomies and territorial fragments – both in its operations as well as in the physical use of space.

18 Till 1793, the judicial structure was reasonably distinct, with its own territorial divisions (13 provincial courts for Bengal) not exactly coincident with, and indeed somewhat independent of, the revenue districts. In 1793, the posts of the District Judge and the District Collector were clearly made commensurate with the territorial unit of the district. Powers in district administration were redistributed and the combined post of the Judge-Magistrate was invested with virtually the highest authority, with the Collector only in charge of revenue matters. This was clearly different from the Thomas Munro model adopted in the Madras Presidency, where the Collector was the supreme authority in the district. In Bengal, by contrast, this distribution of power was more uneven, ambiguous and continuously shifting. In 1831, the post of Collector-Magistrate was formed, the Judge's position being separated out for civil justice. In 1837, the Magisterial function was removed from the post of Collector-Magistrate, i.e. all the offices were separated. After the *Sepoy* Mutiny in 1857, it was combined back together, and the Collector in his capacity as Collector-Magistrate was finally made the chief executive officer of the district. But the District Judge was formally the higher authority and also constituted a very significant centre of power.

19 L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Midnapore District* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1911), 76.



Fig. 2.5 Location of circuit house and *dak* bungalow with respect to the *cutcherry* and the European bungalow zone - Krishnanagar (above) and Jessore (below)
Source: Base maps - British Library maps collection, IOR

2.1.5 Intermediate spaces - Circuit houses and *dak* bungalows

Other than the *cutcherry* precinct, the key components in *sadar* towns involved in district administration in the first quarter of the nineteenth century were the Circuit House, the *dak* bungalow (also known as the travellers' bungalow), and the district jail. The Circuit House was used by Circuit and Sessions Judges on tours of districts to hold courts for serious offences, as well as to provide residential accommodation for them. It represented a domain where official and residential function directly overlapped – it was as much a home as it was an office. Its dual character therefore made it a flexible spatial unit that could attach itself either to the European residential zone or to the official *cutcherry* area. In towns such as Bankura or Suri, the Circuit House was a part of the European bungalow enclave. In others like Jessore or Khulna it was in closer proximity to the *cutcherry* area. In yet others, like Barisal or Krishnanagar, it was part of the residential area, yet also in direct proximity to the *cutcherry* premises. In Burdwan, there were two Circuit Houses – one built in 1818 within the *cutcherry* area, and the other commissioned in the late-nineteenth century within the European residential area.²⁰

Dak [Post] bungalows were part of a larger network of travellers' accommodation provided by the postal department, in operation from the early-nineteenth century.²¹ To provide for change of horses or carriage-bearers, and to offer rest for travellers, staging bungalows were provided along the entire route (usually at 8-12 miles interval) and *dak* or travellers' bungalows were provided in civil stations. Government officials on tours also halted at *dak* bungalows. In terms of building typology, both the *dak* and the circuit house were based on the 'bungalow' form, but in terms of function, they both had an official content as well. The circuit house or the *dak* bungalow therefore played the role of intermediate functions that could be conveniently located in either of the official or residential areas, or occupy the nebulous ground in-between the two (Fig. 2.5). It is precisely such fuzzy boundaries between domains like 'official' and 'residential' – especially characteristic of provincial governance – that allowed negotiable spaces which fitted in between the crevices of spatial and functional categories in *zilla sadar* towns.

2.1.6 Spaces of incarceration - District Jails

In most *sadar* towns, jails were one of the first few governmental buildings to be erected. Along

²⁰ The second circuit house in Burdwan was in fact a direct conversion of the residence and office of the Commissioner of Burdwan Division (which was moved in 1897 to Hugly). West Bengal State Archives, Public Works Bengal file no. 3C/121 of 1896. Letter no 308 J.G, dt. Burdwan, 3rd Oct 1896, from G. Stevenson, Officiating Commissioner of Burdwan Division, to Secretary to Government of Bengal in the PWD. Typological interchangeability between residential and office buildings also allowed the easy placement of functions like the circuit house within residential zones.

²¹ As a convenient by-product, the postal department set up a system of transport for passengers, connecting cities like Calcutta to other major centres like Benares, as well as provincial towns. In fact, other than river-ways, for most towns, this was the chief mode of communication since all rivers did not remain equally navigable over time and in different seasons. Passengers were usually carried in palanquins or horse carriages with halts at several points along the way. According to the historian Christopher Bayly, by about 1807-10, a well developed *dak* network had been put in place by the British. Bayly also gives a fascinating analysis of how it also used much of the pre-colonial (including Mughal) infrastructure in terms of the personnel employed and formal and informal networks utilised. C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, c.1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 67.

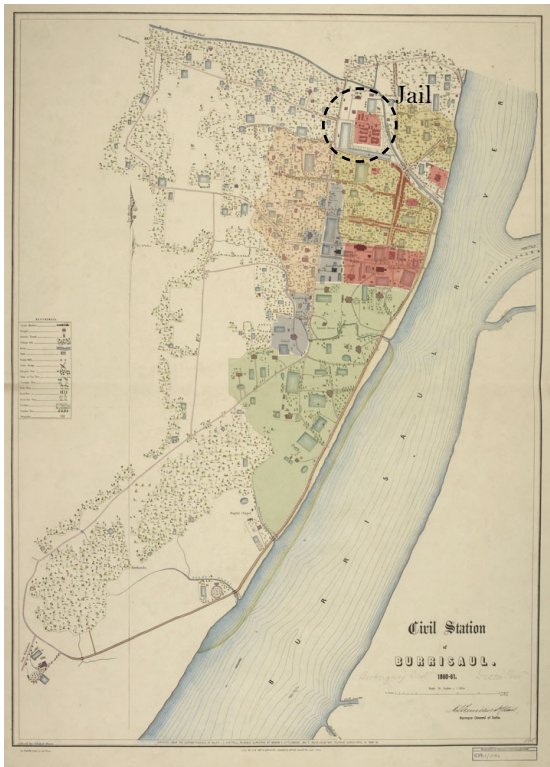


Fig. 2.6a Barisal - Jail in a peripheral location,
first quarter of the nineteenth century
Source: Base map - British Library maps
collection, IOR

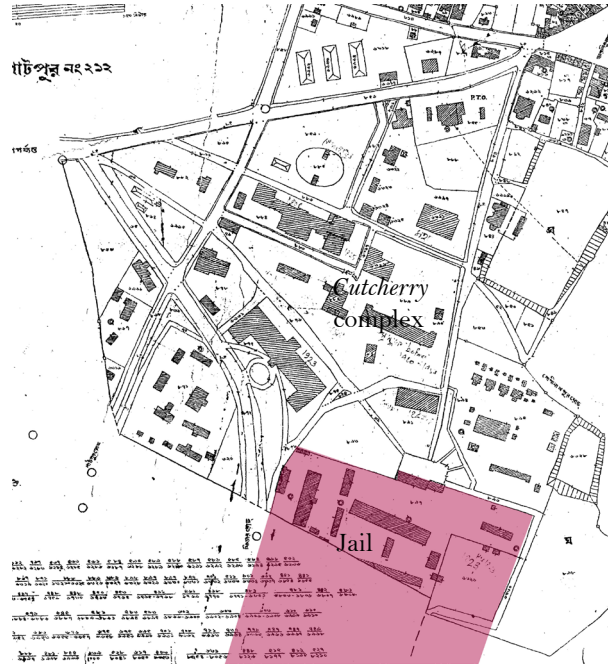


Fig. 2.6b Bankura - Jail next to the *cutcherry*,
first quarter of the nineteenth century
Source: Base map - C.S Survey map 1919



Fig. 2.6c Bankura - Jail coming to occupy a central location with urban expansion,
late-nineteenth century
Source: Base map - developed by the author from contemporary map

with the *cutcheries*, courts, record rooms and treasuries, they were vital sites of provincial administration right from the early-nineteenth century. Towns like Barisal (1818), Jessore (1822), Burdwan (1797) or Krishnanagar (1808) had jails constructed by the first quarter of the nineteenth century on the fringes of the native settlements, farthest away from the European residential area (Fig. 2.6a). In other towns like Bankura (1809 and 1823) and Suri (1819)²² they were located right next to the administrative *cutcheries* – possibly for the ease of conveyance of prisoners during their presentation in the district courts (Fig. 2.6b). The common consideration seems to have been to keep the jail clearly out of bounds with respect to the European areas. Keeping it proximate to the *cutcherry* complex, as in some of the cases mentioned above, may have been connected to the relative perception of some regions as being more trouble-prone than others, and the ensuing need to have a stronger hold and vigilance on the workings of the Jail by the administrative officers. Both Bankura and Suri, for example, were part of the extended Jangal Mahal areas which had, even before the setting up of these towns, been continuously perceived by British officers as being turbulent, difficult and prone to frequent insurgencies.²³

Ironically, even though the provincial prison was an area of incarceration, prison labour was indispensable for activities like jungle clearance or constructing governmental buildings and regional roads. Proximity of the prison to active sites of construction was thus crucial. The prison thus had a precarious relationship with the town – on the one hand it was a domain of isolation and exclusion, and on the other it was needed for the very making of the town and its physical infrastructure.²⁴ However, the relative weight given to the various parameters for location, at least during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, seems to have been largely varied. The choice of site for jails thus seems to have followed locally-looted logic, in terms of the availability of suitably large chunks of land or the perceived requirements of proximity relationships (e.g. with the colonial *cutcherry* complex) in each case. However, by the mid-to-late-nineteenth century, due to urban expansion, many peripheral jails effectively came

²² In all these towns the dates mentioned refer to the building of the first '*pucca*' jail as a formal provision for the district. '*Cutcha*' jails of temporary construction had been built in most of these towns by the late-eighteenth century, which were then upgraded to *pucca* ones in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

²³ The Jangal Mahal area, consisting of the present-day northern Midnapur, western Bankura and Beerbhoom districts, represented a particularly difficult territory for the British in the mid-to-late-eighteenth century. In 1765, the feudal lords of the area had refused to accept the East India Company's revenue settlements, and the troops sent by the British to suppress them had set up their base in the army cantonment in Bankura town. This very army base provided the troops used to suppress the Choar rebellion in 1789-91 as well. In fact, *sadar* towns like Bankura had come up directly within the context of insurgencies like the Choar rebellion, and virtually involved the morphing of a military establishment built for defensive purpose into an administrative one. So strong was the association, for provincial officers, of insurgent tribal peoples tucked away in the woods, that the clearing of the jungles around the town was a major activity in Bankura during its early days as a *zilla sadar*. This was also linked to the symbolic separation of 'organised' and 'civilised' areas from 'wild' jungle tracts – a telling example of the type of transformation of the European conception of the Indian landscape from the 'exotic orientalist' mode in the early-nineteenth century to the 'wild tropicalist' mode by the mid-nineteenth century that critics like David Arnold have traced. See, *Bankura District Letters Issued 1802-1869 (West Bengal District Records, New Series)*, Sukumar Sinha and Himadri Banerjee, eds. (Calcutta: office of the Directorate of Census Operations, 1989), Letter no. 116, from William Blunt, Magistrate, Jungle Mahal district, to George Dowdeswell Esq., Secretary to Govt. in the Judicial Department, Fort William, 10 Feb. 1809. See also, David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape, and Science, 1800-1856* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2006).

²⁴ As demonstrated in the work on late-nineteenth century colonial prisons by Sanchari Dutta, isolation of prison environments also had direct links with the various penal, health and medical experiments that routinely went on in colonial jails. Workings of the jail and general administration also had fairly direct links, most significant being the direct overlap of the sphere of public health, colonial medicine and the jail. S. Dutta, 'Disease and Medicine in Indian Prisons: Confinement in Colonial Bengal, 1860-1910', Oxford University, PhD thesis, 2008.



The presence of the jail wall within
the town - Berhampur



Entrance area, jail - Bankura



Sentry post and jail wall - Bankura

Fig. 2.6d The jail as a physical and symbolic space of
exclusion and isolation within *sadar* towns

to occupy central locations.²⁵ Suri, Bankura or Berhampur are glaring examples of this trend (Fig. 2.6c). With a lot of jails thus forming an undeniable part of the physical fabric of the core of towns, and with the clear identification of collective confinement environments (e.g. cantonments, hospitals or jails) as sources of ill-health for the larger urban area, mechanisms to sanitise, insulate and segregate them were stepped up by the colonial administration and the Public Works Department. However, jails still constituted key structural elements – insulated but visible – in the very heart of *sadar* towns, coming to occupy an emphatic physical and symbolic space of exclusion and isolation (Fig. 2.6d).

Yet, as research like that of Sanchari Dutta shows, prison environments developed their own porosity and flows of information, food and drugs from the outside world, drawing on informal networks around the edges of jail and penal codes.²⁶ They thus had far closer ties with the spaces of towns than their tall walls seemed to allow. In any case, despite the continuous attempts by colonial authorities to physically segregate and fortify prisons – by raising their walls over and over again²⁷, or by locating sentry-posts at critical points – acts of walls being scaled or escape holes being dug were not uncommon.

2.1.7 Spaces for native government clerks and middle-class professionals

From the early-nineteenth century, the movement of people from surrounding areas into *sadar* towns fuelled their development as urban centres in the provincial landscape. The growing network of revenue, magisterial and accountancy offices, treasuries, record rooms, and law courts in the *sadar* was largely manned by native personnel coming from villages to these towns. Likewise, the existing native settlements in the *sadar* increasingly underwent densification and had often joined up into a somewhat ‘patchy’ continuum by the first half of the nineteenth century. Predictably, areas around the governmental *cutcherry* complex witnessed particularly high intensities of inhabitation, although town peripheries were also gradually inhabited for the purpose, contributing towards settlement expansion. Most people took up clerical work in the colonial *cutcheries* or in *zamindari* establishments.²⁸ Other than the clerical establishment, there

²⁵ The historian David Arnold has discussed the difference in the location of colonial jails in India between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Arnold makes a case that in the nineteenth century, the idea of punishment shifted its register along different lines such that – unlike the location of jails in areas removed from settlements in the eighteenth century – the visibility of jails and of the rituals of punishment became key parameters driving the more central location of the newer jails in the colonies in the nineteenth century. Parading of prisoners within the towns and the fairly blatant suggestions of the threat of punishment for crime were thus potently communicated to the inhabitants of settlements at large. This, however, in the context of *sadar* towns of lower Bengal, needs to be contextualised within the frameworks of incremental urban development and the fact that most jails were already built, albeit sometimes in *cutch* construction, in a peripheral location but only later came to occupy central areas due to processes of urban expansion. David Arnold, ‘Power, knowledge and penology in nineteenth century India’, in David Arnold and David Hardiman (eds.), *Subaltern Studies No. 8, Writings on South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 148–187.

²⁶ Dutta, ‘Disease and Medicine in Indian Prisons’, Chapter 3.

²⁷ As amply evident from numerous proceedings of the Military Board, and thereafter the Public Works Department, raising prison walls to greater heights was a recurrent construction activity for the government. Finally around 1878, a height of 15 feet was specified by the PWD for all boundary walls of jails in Bengal. British Library/ IOR/ PWD Bengal Proceedings Oct-Dec 1878, B proceedings no. 34, P/ 1163. Incremental increases in the height of jail walls undertaken by colonial authorities were also visible in many cases during the author’s surveys of jail sites in *sadar* towns.

²⁸ These were also, in effect, extended arms of colonial provincial administration. A more detailed discussion on this follows in Chapter 6.

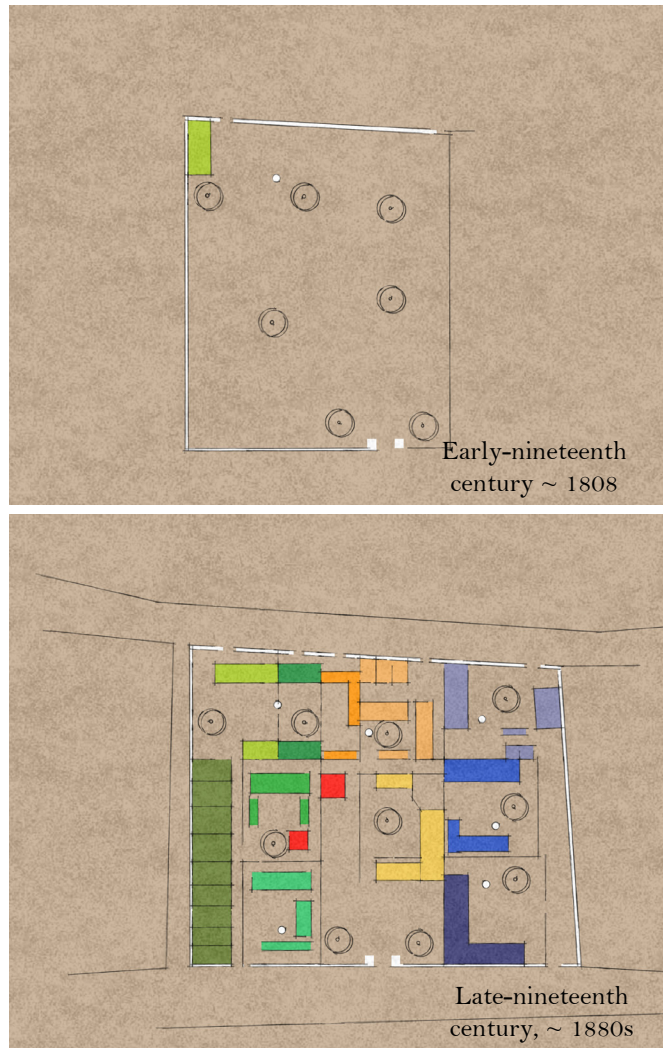


Fig. 2.7a Plot sub-division in Guruprasad Mukherjee's urban dwelling, Bankura (the different colours - green, yellow and blue - are indicative of the different branches of the family)



Fig. 2.7b Neighbourhoods, Krishnanagar town, along with *baroaris* (red dots), which were socio-religious centres for each neighbourhood.

Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR

was an emerging and increasingly powerful native professional class – consisting of lawyers, accountants, *moktars* [managers or representatives of men of influence], educationists and doctors – growing steadily especially after 1830.²⁹

A typical case of such social development was that of Guruprasad Mukherjee, a resident of Bankura, the *sadar* town of Jangal Mahal district. Mukherjee came to the town in 1807 as a *vakil* (or lawyer) for the East India Company, exactly as the infrastructure of governance – the *cutcheries*, record rooms, circuit house and jail – were being built. Mukherjee first took up temporary rented accommodation close to the *cutcherry* but within the native area. He, his son Harishankar, and subsequently Harishankar's youngest son, Kalikumar, over three generations and a span of roughly seventy years, bought the adjoining property – a total of about 1.68 acres of land – in bits and pieces, and incrementally built up the family house. At the same time, there was the simultaneous process of sub-division of the plot to apportion the property between the heirs of the various branches of Mukherjee's lineage, constituting a typical case of inner-town densification (Fig. 2.7a).³⁰ It was the combination of these processes that drove the evolving urban form of the *zilla sadar*.

Guruprasad Mukherjee in fact represented the initial batch of middle-class professionals who gradually emerged as a substantial group associated with the *cutcherry's* operations. The emerging occupational distribution of *sadar* towns found spatial manifestations in new types of neighbourhoods. As seen in the narrative of Kartikeyachandra in Chapter 1, until about the mid-nineteenth century, the first waves of migration from villages involved the continuation of rural kinship networks into the physical fabric of the towns, which became the basis of neighbourhood formations. Other than this, the social-territorial units of existing pre-colonial settlements within the site of the *sadar* also showed great resilience and largely survived. Examples of these are areas like Shearapara, Malipara (garland-makers' enclave), Baruipara (*paan* or beetel-leaf growers enclave) or Chandnipara (silver-and-gold-merchants' enclave) in Suri, Pathakpara and Ghatakpara (Brahmin enclaves) in Bankura, Malopara (fishermen's enclave) in Krishnanagar and Tutpara and Beniakhmar in Khulna. In Burdwan, its pre-colonial pattern of *haats* (specialised markets) and *ganjs* (market settlements)³¹ actually formed the basis for many of the neighbourhoods like Kotalhaat, Nutanganj haat, Borhaat, Tikarhaat, and Kajirhaat within the colonial town.³² With the emergence of the different wings of colonial administration, and

29 This was closely linked to the colonial government's policy from 1836, of replacing Farsi in official communications by English and Bengali, whereby English education became essential for governmental work. It was also linked to the new system of public instructions being instituted by government, especially in the educational sector. In addition to this, land litigations rose to particularly high levels in the 1830s triggering off the formation of a substantial pleader [lawyer] class.

30 See Chapter 6 on domestic spaces for a detailed analysis of the exact nature of built spaces and how they evolved incrementally within a single plot in the Gurudas Banerjee case. The analysis has been developed based on detailed accounts of Debasish Mukherjee (one of the present heirs), various family records and papers, and thorough the author's survey of the plot and its layers of building. Survey by the author and interview with Debasish Mukherjee, Bankura, in Nov 2007, Oct 2008 and Dec 2009.

31 Burdwan was a well-established business centre trading on agricultural surplus from a massive hinterland from pre-colonial times.

32 The pre-colonial names of most of these areas, indicating their ancestry in pre-colonial patterns of commerce, continue to be in use till today.



Fig. 2.7c Residential neighbourhoods (clockwise from top left):
Bankura, Krishnanagar, Krishnanagar, Suri



Fig. 2.8a Krishnanagar - single *zamindari* settlement, with consolidated land parcel.
Source: Base map - British Library maps collection, IOR.

zamindari establishments for revenue-related work, and their associated professional groups, various neighbourhoods based on the newer occupations -- such as Ukilpara (lawyers' enclave) or Peyadapara (*zamindari* guards' enclave) in Krishnanagar, Darogapara (police staff' enclave) in Khulna, Keranipara (clerks' enclave) in Midnapur -- also arose. Despite the pull that the *zilla sadar* exerted on rural populace as a centre of provincial administration, and the ensuing movement from a rural to an urban economy³³, social and occupational clusters still continued to act as the dominant basis of neighbourhoods within *sadar* towns (Figs. 2.7b and 2.7c). This resilience to retain pre-colonial and rural formations in fact contributed to the *sadar* never emerging as an intensely urbanised entity and in many ways, this was the reason for its split identity. This is particularly relevant because while a lot of post-colonial writings starting from the 1970s have emphasised the difference between 'black' and 'white' towns in colonial urban development,³⁴ the ability of indigenous settlements to retain much of their pre-colonial territorial basis while dynamically adjusting to the new urban contexts throughout the process of colonial urbanisation has been far less dwelt upon.

2.1.8 Spaces for *zamindars*

Other than native clerical staff and professionals, British revenue administration was inherently dependent on an elaborate network of Indian tax-collectors, or *zamindars*, who effectively came to be feudal land-owners in rural areas and with an increasing presence in *sadar* towns.³⁵ The Permanent Settlement of 1793 had virtually conferred on the *zamindars* the perpetual rights of tax collection provided that these taxes were paid on time. Assured of their *de-facto* rights on the tax-estates, the *zamindars'* contacts with their rural estates became increasingly minimal and the economic surplus they earned from agricultural areas thus began to be spent in *sadar* towns. Most *zamindars* also paid taxes to the *sadar cutcherry*, and were often embroiled in numerous litigations involving land and property disputes and criminal cases in the *sadar* courts. The *sadar* thus became the crucible for the transformation of a feudal society into a colonial urban

33 Quite a few critics have drawn our attention to the fact that other than in Calcutta, urbanization was still very limited in Bengal during almost the entire colonial period. People occupied in agricultural pursuits in villages by far outnumbered the urban population in provincial areas. Due to the history of their formation, *sadar* towns too mostly remained as semi-rural entities. See e.g. Islam, 'Life in the mufassal towns of nineteenth-century Bengal', 224-226; Pradip Sinha, 'Rural towns of Bengal', *Nineteenth Century Bengal, Aspects of Social History: A Study in Some New Pressures on Society and in Relation Between Tradition and Change* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), 67-69.

34 This kind of post-colonial analysis of colonial spatiality in terms of stark binary categories has been discussed in detail in the introductory chapter.

35 *Zamindars* were originally tax collectors on yearly contracts in the pre-colonial Mughal administration. They had, in the Permanent Settlement of 1793, been given perpetual rights of revenue collection by the East India Company, provided they paid taxes in time. This virtually translated into property rights for the *zamindars*. On the other hand, a number of older *zamindaries* were confiscated from defaulting *zamindars* and auctioned off to a new class of *zamindars*. Many of these new *zamindars* were drawn from the professional class emerging from the 1830s. Aided by the continuing pro-*zamindar* policies of the East India Company, and after 1858 of the Imperial government, the *zamindars* often oppressed the *ryots* (peasants) to maximise profits from land -- and in the process, amassed huge wealth skimmed off from agricultural production. At the same time, most *zamindars* also played a substantial paternal role in and virtually conducted informal governance of rural areas, and many were known for extensive philanthropic activities. For detailed and authoritative studies on the *zamindari* system in Bengal, see e.g. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Thomas Metcalf, *Land, Landlords and the British Raj: Northern India in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Paris: Mouton, 1963); Rajat K. Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal: 1875-1927* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).



Fig. 2.8b Suri - a number of newer *zamindari* establishments dispersed through the town.
Source: Base map - developed by author from contemporary map.



Fig. 2.9a Bankura - indigo planters' estates (in green) as pre-existing context for the *sadar* town.
Source: Base map - developed by the author from contemporary map.

bourgeoisie. Many *zamindars* came to own vast chunks of land and set up their own *cutcheries* and town-dwellings in *zilla sadar* towns by the mid-nineteenth century. Such *zamindari* estates also formed significant markers in the *sadar's* landscape in functional as well as symbolic terms. *Zamindari* establishments usually occurred in large parcels of land in centre of towns as well as peripheral areas, or between existing settlements. While the older *zamindari* towns contained a well-established native settlement centred on the *zamindar's* palace (Fig. 2.8a), towns like Suri, Bankura or Barisal contained a more distributed pattern of newer *zamindari* establishments dispersed across the towns (Fig. 2.8b). The nature of land utilisation in these two types of towns was thus clearly different.³⁶ Over the latter half of the nineteenth century, *zamindari* land in towns also provided for a number of key emerging functions of the town, with a host of urban institutions arising in lands or buildings donated by *zamindars*, often under *zamindari* patronage. Due to their role as virtually the collaborative support-structure for colonial governance, *zamindars* also continuously sold, leased or donated land for various governmental functions.

2.1.9 Commercial planters' and merchants' estates

As mentioned earlier, the East India Company's indigo, salt, sugar and silk factories and estates often formed the pre-existing context for *sadar* towns.³⁷ In 1813, as a result of the Parliamentary Charter Act in England, private trade in India was opened up to non-Company Europeans³⁸—businessmen, planters, and missionaries—allowing them to settle officially in India. This period thus saw an intensification of commercial as well as missionary activities in Bengal, and an increase in their settlement in and around *sadar* towns.³⁹ Planters' and cultivators' estates, usually large chunks of land in the peripheries of the *sadar*, either existed as an earlier landscape or arose later by plugging onto the urban formation. For example, by the time the town of Bankura was made into the *sadar* of Jangal Mahal district in 1807, it was an established seat of indigo plantation. There were at least three planters' estates and factories in Lokpur area (to the south-west of the present settlement) on the banks of the River Dwarakeshwar. When the *cutcheries* were set up in the town, the residential areas of European officers formed a close affinity to these indigo estates (*neel-kuthi*)⁴⁰ in Lokpur, extending north-eastwards right up to the *cutcheries*. In Krishnanagar, the European officers' quarters were built in a tract contiguous with a series of existing indigo estates to the west of the present town.⁴¹ On the other hand, in some instances,

36 Older *zamindari* towns such as Krishnanagar and Burdwan also developed urban dwellings and *cutcheries* of other smaller *zamindars* (e.g. the Nandas in Burdwan, the Sinharoys in Krishnanagar), usually having *zamindaries* in interior areas, in addition to the main pre-colonial *zamindari* establishment.

37 The cultivation and trade of these had been pursued in India since at least the late-eighteenth century. East India Company officials also routinely engaged in private trade in these.

38 This was also a result of the general climate of *laissez-faire* brewing in England at the turn of the nineteenth century.

39 This was especially true of indigo growing areas like the districts of Nadia, Beerbhoom, Jessore, silk growing areas like Murshidabad, indigo and silk areas like Bankura, Indigo, salt and sugar cultivation areas like Jessore and Khulna, and salt cultivation areas like Midnapur or Barisal.

40 A *kuthi* is a generic term referring to a specific type of dwelling, usually a bungalow with large grounds. These sometimes actually housed indigo and silk processing areas and factories within the estates. In colonial Bengal the *kuthis* specifically came to mean dwellings of commercial planters. *Neel* [indigo] *Kuthi* referred specifically to indigo estates.

41 In fact, the district judge's bungalow and arguably some other officers' bungalows in Krishnanagar were earlier *neelkuthis* or indigo planters' houses.



Fig. 2.9b Berhampur - silk planters' estates came up plugging onto the northern edge of the planned settlement.
Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR.

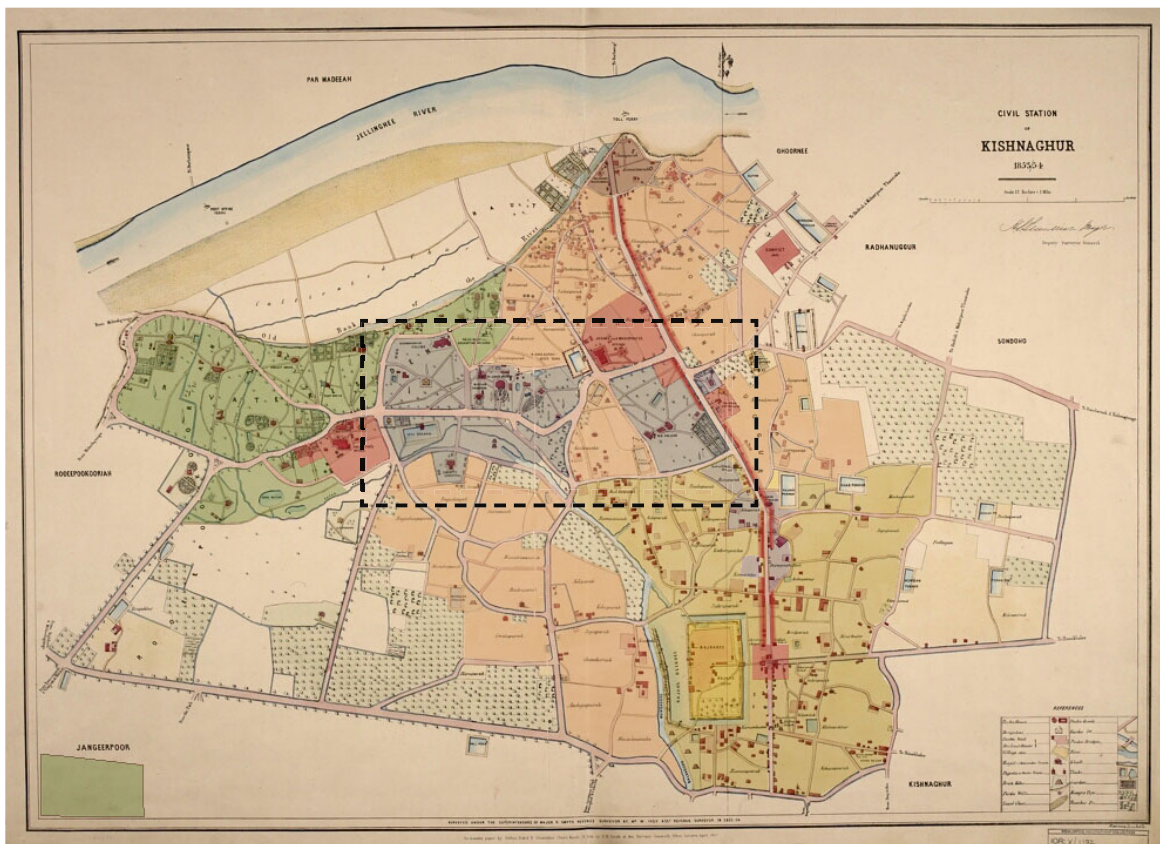


Fig. 2. 10a Krishnanagar - institutional spine containing government and missionary institutions.
Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR.

private planters' dwellings arose *after* the basic infrastructure of the town was set up. This was the case for the cantonment town of Berhampur⁴², which actually provided the framework for a series of silk merchants' *kuthis* (e.g. Marion's Kuthi, Burton's Kuthi, Baboolbuna Kuthi, Burma Kuthi) along its northern edge. Even official functions were sometimes carried out in residential buildings rented or bought from planters.⁴³ This also meant that not only were official functions accommodated within residential typologies like bungalows, they also became part of residential zones, blurring the boundaries between domains.

2.1.10 Institutional landscapes – Missionaries, governmental interventions and the ideal of 'improvement'

One of the key aspects of the incremental urban landscape of *sadar* towns were institutions such as churches and schools built by Christian Missionaries.⁴⁴ Missionary activities also acted as props for the emerging thrust of colonial governance from the 1830s centred on the ideal of 'improvement'.⁴⁵ Part of this was a new system of public institutions for vernacular and English education. These also became the obvious channels through which missionary activities and religious conversions took place.⁴⁶ In fact, in most *sadar* towns, missionary institutions preceded formal governmental intervention in the educational sector. For example, Reverend Williamson of the Srirampur Mission set up a girls' school for English education in Suri (probably by 1828), which was subsequently combined with a vernacular boys' school in 1834–35. The London Missionary Society set up its school in Berhampur in the late-1820s; centred on the Mission Church, the Christian Mission Society founded St. John's School in Krishnanagar in 1834.

Governmental provision for education had a fairly direct spatial affinity with missionary schools. The district schools set up in most *sadar* towns from around the 1840s as part of the continuing wave of Governor-General Bentinck's policy of 'improvement', as well as the government colleges, were usually located in the same institutional belt as missionary schools (Fig. 2.10a). For example, the District School (1846), Wesleyan Methodist Mission church (1877), Mission Boys and Mission Girls' Schools (1904 and 1906 respectively) and Christian College

⁴² As discussed in Chapter 1, Berhampur, initially a cantonment town, later became a *sadar* town in 1870. It was a relatively early planned settlement with its basic urban structure laid out by 1768.

⁴³ For example, Burton Kuthi and Burma Kuthi in Berhampur, both silk merchants' houses, were adapted to governmental offices later on (the exact date is unknown).

⁴⁴ The earliest Christian Missionary activities in Lower Bengal began in Srirampur and Hughli (both in the present-day Hugli district) and then spread to districts like Nadia, Burdwan, Birbhum, Murshidabad or Bankura. In 1821 William Carey set up the first missionary school (for girls) in Srirampur.

⁴⁵ The Liberal ideology of governance gaining currency in England from around the 1820s had enormous impact on India. In the Indian context, liberalism took a particularly paternalistic colour, with India being seen by the British authorities as a land that needed to be lifted up to a civilised state. Under the Governor General, William Bentinck (1828–36), this was translated into the ideology of 'improvement' — something that was to serve as an enduring thrust of colonial governance in India well into the twentieth century. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. For authoritative analyses of the impact of the Liberal and Utilitarian ideology on politics and governance in India, see, e.g. Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959); Thomas Metcalfe, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴⁶ As with other channels in which the ideal of 'improvement' took hold, such as public health, the extent to which such activities found success or acceptance within the Indian population varied considerably.



1. Government College
2. CMS School
3. CMS church
4. Roman Catholic church
5. Hospital
6. Town hall
7. Town library
8. Old college
9. Judge's *Cutcherry*
10. Post office
11. Police station
12. Krishnanagar collegiate school
13. Golap Khan's mosque and lichee grove
14. Municipal office
15. Rani Swarnamayee's temple and sacred tank

Fig. 2. 10b Krishnanagar - components of the institutional spine and mixed public zone.

Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR.



Government college, Krishnanagar



Church Missionary Society School, Krishnanagar

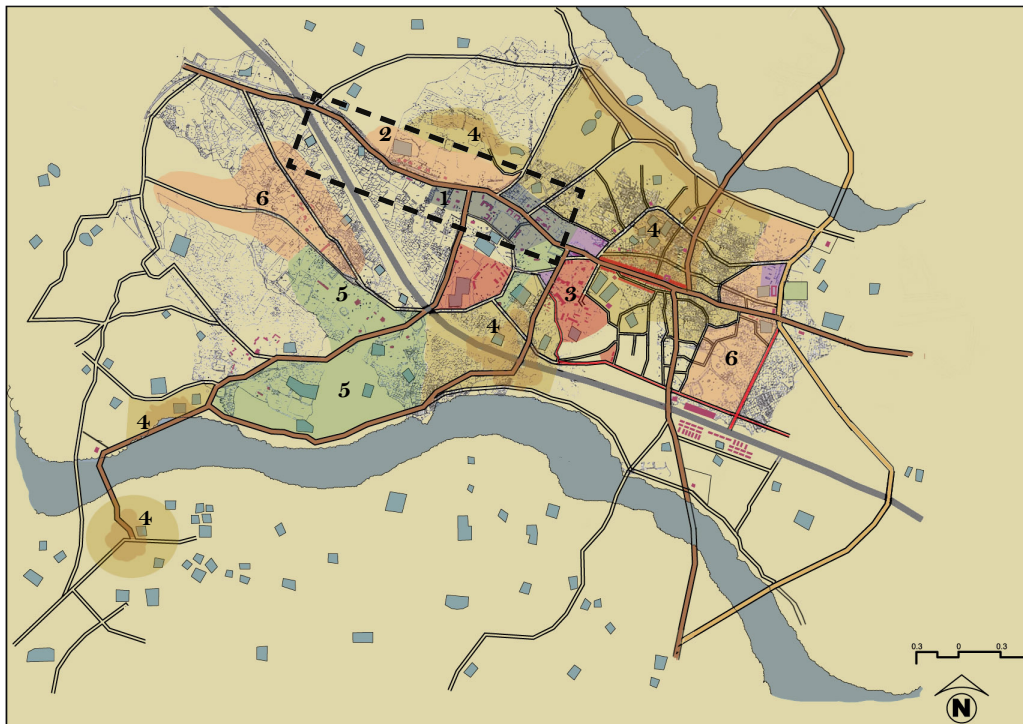


Fig. 2. 10c Bankura - the institutional spine triggered off a new axis of development on the western part of the east-west route.
Source: Base map - developed by the author from contemporary map.

1. Institutional axis
2. New native residential area (early twentieth century)
3. *Cutcherry*
4. Older native residential area (pre-colonial/ early nineteenth century)
5. European residential area (early nineteenth century)
6. Expansion of native residential area (late nineteenth century)

(1906) in Bankura all formed part of what virtually constituted an institutional spine, consolidated over 60-70 years. In Krishnanagar, too, the Church Missionary Society, St. John's School (1834), Government College (1856 at the site in question), and Roman-Catholic church created virtually another institutional spine (Fig. 2.10b). As part of the public instruction system, introduced to *sadar* towns from around 1855, were also the district libraries. Interestingly, however, in most cases, these libraries were not placed strictly in the institutional zone but overlapped with mixed areas containing, for example, the *cutcherry*, post office, municipal office, club, police station, town hall and main public space of the town (Fig. 2.10b). The same was true of district schools in *sadar* towns where missionary schools were few, possibly because the critical mass to create a substantial area of western educational institutions was not available.

Due to their formation as predominantly tree-filled, 'green' areas in which built forms were then embedded, these institutional zones offered a natural fit with the existing low-density European residential areas. In Krishnanagar, for instance, it was the institutional spine that also housed the *dak* bungalow and the circuit house. In Bankura, extensive land belonging to Collector Anderson, attached to his bungalow, was later bought from his wife to set up the Mission Boys' School and Bankura Christian College at the turn of the twentieth century. Similarly, the planter G. N. Cheek's estate in the same area was converted into the Mission Girls' school. Low-density residential premises thus sometimes underwent conversion over the latter half of the nineteenth century, shifting to a compatible institutional land use. Sometimes institutional areas also started an altogether new axis for urban development, or extended existing axes into new areas. The institutional spine in Bankura is one such example, triggering development towards the west of the town, and which upper-middle class villa neighbourhoods like Nutanchati later plugged into in the early-twentieth century (Fig. 2. 10c). As vehicles of 'improvement', suggesting the need to be in closer proximity to the local population, these governmental and missionary institutional areas often acted as connectors between native and European settlements. This was clearly the case in Krishnanagar, Burdwan or Barisal. In Burdwan, for example, the District School, the municipal school, the Town Hall, the Church Mission Society church and school, and the Railway Institute were all located along the Grand Trunk Road, stretching from the European settlement on the south to the native town further north, and later from there up to the beginning of a new European residential area to the north-east.⁴⁷

Governmental schools, colleges or libraries in *sadar* towns were thus clearly located either in tree-lined, 'green' institutional zones or in areas dominated by the *sadar's* public functions. However, no such reading of missionary institutions is possible. It is crucial to recognise the mixed nature of missionary presence in *sadar* towns. Missionary activities often embedded themselves, by necessity, right in the heart of dense indigenous settlements – the London Missionary School was located in the dense Khagra *bazaar* area of Berhampur (Fig. 2.10d); the Mission Boys School

47 The new European residential zone formed following the introduction of Burdwan railway station in 1855, whereby a fresh tract of land was opened up for development in the north-eastern end of the town.



Fig. 2. 10d. The London Missionary School within the dense Khagrabazaar area of the native settlement, Berhampur. Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR.



View of London Missionary school from *bazaar* street



View of internal courtyard, London Missionary school



Fig. 2. 11a Proposed sites for Government College, Berhampur. 1- site proposed by native committee, 2 - site finally chosen by PWD and government authorities, 4,5,6 - other sites proposed by the PWD and government authorities.

Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR.

had started off as Kuchkuchia High School in the heart of the indigenous area of Bankura; Williamson's school lay virtually within the native Christian community's settlement in Suri, which in turn had grown around the Mission Church. Such embedding of institutions under European patronage within native areas again de-stabilises any clear-cut notions of distinct 'black' and 'white' towns. It also complicates the straightforward idea of western design practices finding hegemonic supremacy without being tempered by local forces.⁴⁸

2.1.11 Emerging institutions under native patronage

It is hence of critical importance to recognise that by no means were educational or other institutional spaces in *zilla sadar* the monopoly of the colonial government or European agencies alone.⁴⁹ Nor were their spatial paradigms purely western. Institutional space was instead a domain that was actively co-produced, contributed to and being negotiated by the local elites, upper-middle and middle classes. The site selection for the Government College in Berhampur, for example, was a heavily contested issue in the late-1860s.⁵⁰ The key question being debated was whether it should be located proximate to the native or the European area. At least five different sites were analysed, and pushed for by the Public Works officers or by a committee consisting of 'native representatives' (Fig. 2.11a). The site finally chosen by the government was in the south of the cantonment, adjacent to the river and away from native areas – conforming to the idea of somewhat peripheral institutional zones under the direct control of governmental establishments. However, there were fierce negotiations conducted by indigenous groups to locate it on the north, next to the dense native area of Khagra-bazaar, on the ground that most students would be less than a mile's walk away. Obviously, the proximity to high-density settlements like Kansaribazaar, Khagra, Saidabad and Kadai would have been a sensible and efficient provision targeting directly the areas that needed the facilities the most, but the final decision was possibly fuelled by the palpable insecurity of governmental institutions espousing liberal western education being located right in the heart of native areas.

From around the 1840s, indigenous initiatives for vernacular and English education also started, albeit in minute fashion, and gradually developed into substantial provisions. This was also precipitated by the governmental decision in 1837 to emphatically eliminate the use of Persian/Farsi in official work, and the formal institution of English and Bengali for all official communication. With *sadar cutcherries* now acting as giant centres of employment, this virtually pushed natives into English and vernacular education. Various educational institutions appeared

48 This also finds resonance with works like that of Hayden J.A. Bellenoit on missionary education and empire in late-colonial India, emphasising that unlike the common belief that missionary teachers acted as mere arms of the empire, their role and manner of functioning were in reality far more complicated. Bellenoit argued that their interaction with India led the missionaries away from purely imperial norms and made them operate in more negotiated ways. See Hayden J Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in late-Colonial India, 1860–1920*, in the series 'Empires in Perspective' (London: Pickering and Chatto Publishers, 2007).

49 There was, in fact, a dampening of missionary activity in the aftermath of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857.

50 British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings, June, 1860, P/16/42, nos. 324–32.



Fig. 2. 11b Sequential locations of the Anglo-Vernacular School and its proximity to the Collegiate School, Krishnanagar. 1 - Nederpara. 2 - Ameenbazaar baroari., 3 - Brahmo-Samaj temple, 4 - final premises
Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR.

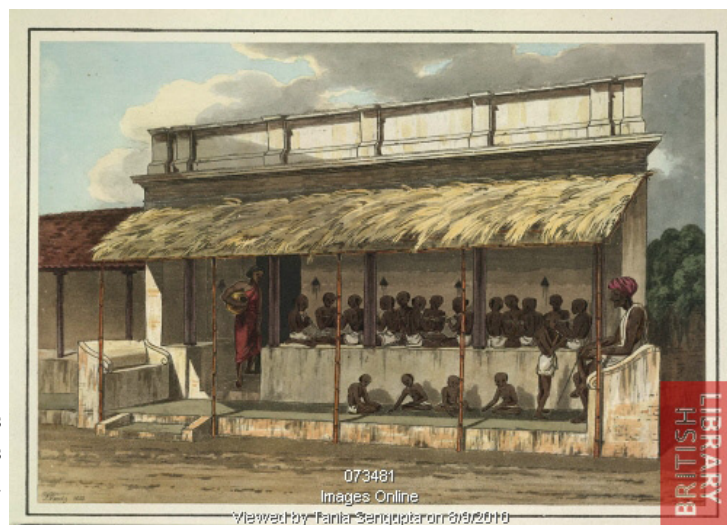


Fig. 2. 11c Many native institutions started from diminutive spaces such as the *verandah* of a house - as shown here.
Source: British library Images Online.

Fig. 2. 11d The Anglo-vernacular School, Krishnanagar, in its final site. It contained a school building (right) and later even built its own library (left) that was also used by the town population at large.



as a result of intense contestation between different logistical and ideological issues, both between and within European and native establishments. A look at the educational and institutional development in Krishnanagar, for instance, gives some indication of the complex issues, conflicts and negotiations between the different agencies, as well as the urban-geographical characteristics of such provisions. The fear of missionary conversions and indoctrination into the Christian faith had made the missionary institution of St. John's School fairly unpopular with the indigenous population of the town. Sriprasad Lahiri – brother of the eminent liberal educationist, Ramtanu Lahiri, and himself trained in English liberal education at the David Hare School in Calcutta – came back to his native town and set up a separate free-school for English education in his own house around 1840. Infused with new liberal education, and with input from people like Ramtanu Lahiri himself, the school became extremely popular. It then moved to Roypara, into the house of the Deputy Magistrate of the town. When in 1846, the Government College in Krishnanagar was established, the school was merged with the school section of the college. The college became one of the three government institutions – the other two being the Hindu College in Calcutta and Hugly College in Hugly – for higher education in Bengal. It was meant merely to absorb students from the district schools in surrounding districts, but in time it developed into a high-quality institution, offering tough competition to the other two, more prestigious colleges. Government College itself was housed for the first ten years in the bungalow of the District Collector, until it moved in 1856 to its own premises in the aforementioned institutional area. In the meantime, the Brahmo-Samaj movement⁵¹ was gaining ground in the town; even the *zamindar* of Krishnanagar, Maharaja Srishchandra, was its active patron. Fired by the progressive ideals of the Brahmo Samaj and liberal education, Brajanath Mukherjee, an ex-teacher of St. John's school, started a school in the Nederpara *baroari*.⁵² Due to the Brahmin-dominated character of the Nederpara area, the school was then shifted to the Ameenbazaar *baroari*, from where it was again moved – on account of its proximity to 'lowly' toddy-shops and prostitution areas – into the Brahmo-Samaj temple itself, directly under the shadow of the *zamindar's* palace. The school subsequently came to be known as the Anglo-Vernacular School, developing into a institution venerated for its free-thinking spirit. It moved to its own premises on the major spine of the native town (stretching from the *zamindari* area in the south to the Goari port on the north), alongside other institutions like Krishnanagar Collegiate School (Fig. 2.11b).⁵³ The history of educational institutions in Krishnanagar thus offers a revealing account of a wide range of issues: these include active local agency in the educational sphere, the governmental officers collaborating with local intelligentsia, the diminutive beginnings of many institutions (Fig. 2.11c), the continuous use of residential premises and other typologies for institutional

51 The Brahmo-Samaj was a liberal Hindu organisation denouncing idol worship and ritual practices in favour of a formless and minimal conception of religion and spirituality. It was rooted in a dissent against the conservative Brahminical practices of mainstream Hinduism and conceived by the *zamindar* and liberal intellectual, Dwarkanath Tagore, in 1830. After the publication of Hemendranath Tagore's *Brahmo-Anusthan* (code of practice), Brahmo-Samajism was formally separated from Hinduism and became a major force amongst the intelligentsia in Bengal in the late-nineteenth century.

52 *Baroaris* were locations within the town which housed specific religious festivals. They, however, functioned really as centres of community life and as sites from which more general, even secular, ideas of communal living were mobilised.

53 The Krishnanagar Collegiate School – another liberal-eclectic institution under native patronage – was set up in 1912 at the site in question, in the house of Manmohan Ghosh, an eminent barrister of the town.



Fig. 2. 11e Territorial-ideological formation around key institutions, Krishnanagar, mid to late nineteenth century
Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR.



Fig. 2. 11f Native public institutions in mixed public zone - Bankura, early twentieth century.
1- Edward Hall, 2 - Municipal office, 3 - district library, 4 - European club, 5 - Cutcherry complex, 6 - Central hall, 7 - Idgah mosque, 8 - Bangabidyalaya grounds.

Source: Base map - C.S Survey map, 1919.

purposes, their transformation from *ad-hoc* provisional spaces into territorial markers of the town (Fig 2.11d), the perceived role of new educational institutions especially in relationship to the social geography of the town (e.g. with respect to Brahmin areas or zones dominated by prostitution, liquor and drugs), and the gradual movement of eclectic native institutions from residential areas into mixed public zones within the urban landscape of the *sadar*.

Native institutions were also varied and rooted in multiple paradigms. Soon after the Anglo-Vernacular School, the Goari Hindu School was set up by Debnath Mallik in the Goari area of Krishnanagar under traditional patronage, based on Brahminical and Sanskritic traditions. While the *zamindari* area of Krishnanagar in the mid-nineteenth century directly enjoyed the liberal patronage of Maharaja Srishchandra, the Goari area drew support from the conservative Hindu patronage of the *zamindar* Bamandas Mukhopadhyay of Ula-Birnagar – creating two clear territorial areas within the town, aligned to clearly distinct axes. Institutions like the Anglo-Vernacular school or the Goari Hindu School became crucial sites around which such ideological-territorial formations consolidated (Fig. 2.11e). The existence of Goari and (*zamindari*) Krishnanagar as distinct settlements was a pre-colonial inheritance. On this was now overlaid the complex political-ideological configurations of mid-nineteenth century colonial Bengal. In a way, this again re-affirms the continuation of much of pre-colonial territorial distinctions which were articulated in newer ways and built forms during the colonial period. It is of course undeniable that many of these newer fissures were the direct result of negotiations in a context suddenly infused with a host of ideologies (e.g. Enlightenment thinking and liberalism) drawn from a radically different cultural context, and were also triggered by more immediate governmental measures like the introduction of English into the everyday working of *sadar cutcherries*, or of English education *per se*. Interestingly, it was this plurality of paradigms that helped create eclectic, heterogeneous and cosmopolitan landscapes.

While institutions directly under indigenous patronage were usually located within native areas, by the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century there were clear attempts by local elites and other groups to make these a part of a more mixed landscape, contributing towards the production of eclectic and heterogeneous public spaces. For example, Edward Hall, the town hall of Bankura, was built with native patronage in 1911 right next to the town municipality, the district library, the European club, the *cutcherry* complex, and in close proximity to the Central Hall,⁵⁴ the Idgah mosque and the major public space of the town – the grounds of the Bangabidyalay (the main vernacular school, also run through local initiative) (Fig. 2.11e). The town halls in Burdwan, Jessore, Suri, Krishnanagar or Barisal – all built chiefly with native patronage – formed part of the major spines of those towns housing. The Krishnanagar Public Library (1856, rebuilt 1859 on a new site) and the Town Hall (1903) were part of a zone housing

⁵⁴ The Central Hall itself had a history of continuous change of use between various public institutional functions over time. It was apparently the first Wesleyan Mission chapel in town (possibly in the mid-nineteenth century). It was later used as a public library and meeting hall, as well as classroom for the Bankura Wesleyan School and Bankura Christian College. See Rathindramohan Chowdhury, *Bankurajoner Itihaash Sanskriti*, 76; Girindrashekhara Chakrabarty, 'Bankurar Imarat Brittika', *Bankurar Kheyali*, 5 (2008), 57.

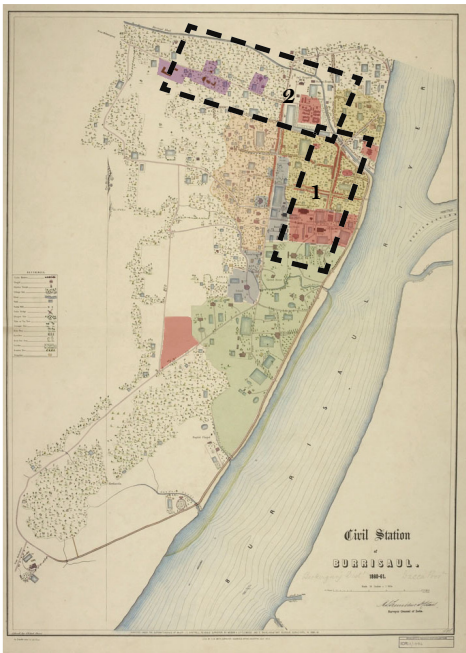


Fig. 2. 11g Barisal - other than the institutional axis (1- north- south) in the early nineteenth century, a new institutional spine (2- east-west) formed in the late-nineteenth early-twentieth century.
Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR.

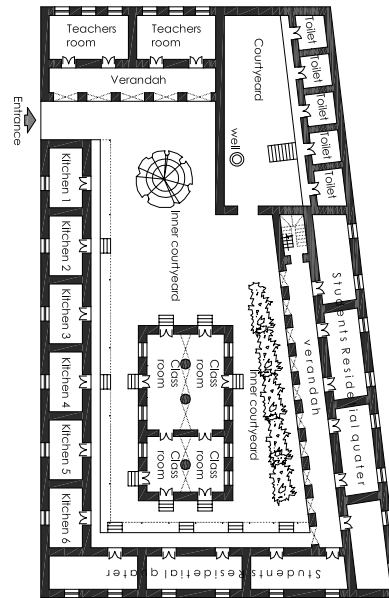
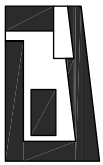
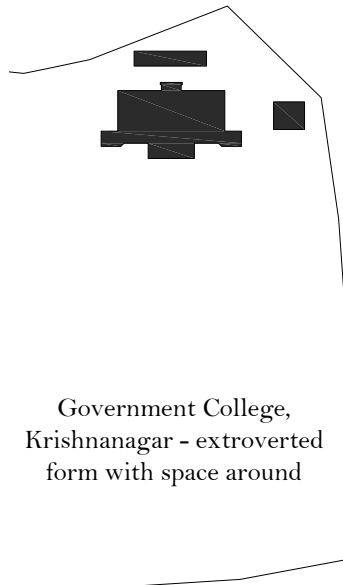


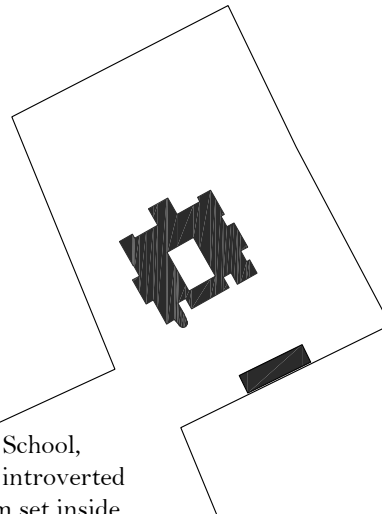
Fig. 2. 11h Bijoy Chatuspathi, Burdwan, early to mid nineteenth century - example of continuation of the introverted courtyard form of the traditional typology of schools in Bengal



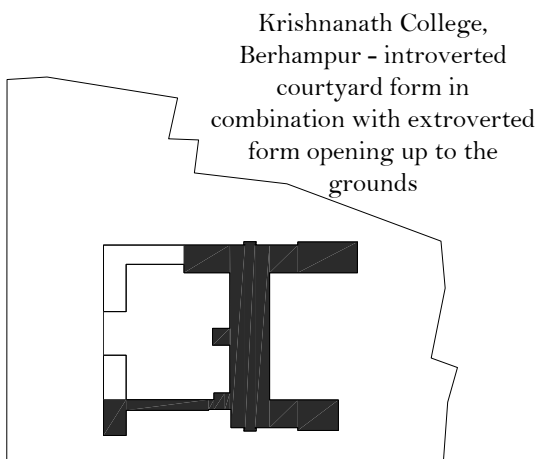
Bijoy Chatuspathi,
Burdwan - Introverted
courtyard form



Government College,
Krishnanagar - extroverted
form with space around



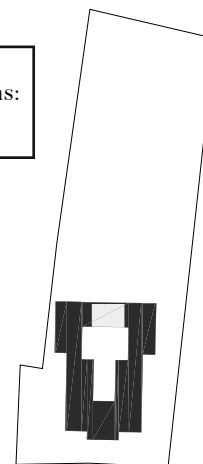
Collegiate School,
Krishnanagar, introverted
courtyard form set inside
open grounds



Krishnanath College,
Berhampur - introverted
courtyard form in
combination with extroverted
form opening up to the
grounds

Fig. 2.11i *Sadar* institutions:
typological variations.

London Missionary School,
Berhampur, introverted
courtyard form opening up to
the grounds



a rich mix of public functions ranging from the post office, municipality building, Golap Khan mosque, Collegiate School, the Anglo-Vernacular School, police station, Brahmo-Samaj temple and district library (Fig. 2.10b). The emergence of such mixed landscapes was perhaps inevitable, since the colonial government had become so heavily dependent on the patronage of local elites for building institutions and associated urban infrastructure.

This was especially true of *zamindari* towns which had a substantial *zamindari* presence. Local patronage thus in effect heavily subsidised and complemented governmental provision. The Burdwan Maharajas built both public libraries in the town, located within the *zamindari* settlement. Bansagopal Nanda (a relative of the Burdwan Maharaja) was the chief patron for Burdwan town hall (1894). Maharaja Srishchandra donated the land for the public library and town hall in Krishnanagar, which were built almost exclusively with contributions from him and other local inhabitants. When the colonial government considered closing down Krishnanath College in Berhampur in the late-nineteenth century due to lack of funds, Maharaja Manindrachandra Nandi and Maharani Swarnamoyee of the *zamindari* family of Saidabad stepped in to ensure its survival. As seen earlier, numerous schools were set up under local patronage – sometimes spearheaded even by people of moderate means, using simple establishments like private houses and front *verandahs*, and only growing to be substantial later. Such institutions based on local patronage also diverted much of the catchment of governmental and missionary schools from the 1840s, and especially by the late-nineteenth century.⁵⁵ There were also cases like that of Barisal where an altogether new institutional axis developed within the urban form in the first quarter of the twentieth century, built largely by indigenous patronage (Fig. 2.11g). Along with these newly emerging institutions, and albeit increasingly threatened, older ones like *tols*, *chatushpathis* and *madrasas* (Hindu and Muslim traditional schools) still continued. Bijoy Chatuspathi in Burdwan or Manindrachandra Bidyapith in Berhampur (Saidabad) are examples that survive till today. Many of these institutions retained their pre-colonial typological characteristics as well (Fig 2.11h).⁵⁶

The overall landscape of institutions in *sadar* towns was thus extremely varied, and ranged from governmental and missionary schools, colleges and libraries, to liberal-eclectic and new-conservative as well as older Sanskritic and Islamic establishments under indigenous patronage. Equally varied were their spatial dispositions, ranging from those located in low-density green institutional spines to those nestled inside dense indigenous settlements, to those occupying mixed public zones. Typologically, too, the institutions could range from extroverted formations of buildings with abundant open space all around (centred on notions of human

⁵⁵ A clear example of this was the Church Missionary Society School in Krishnanagar which lost a large number of students when the Anglo-vernacular school became well established starting from the mid-nineteenth century.

⁵⁶ Interestingly, building Islamic *madrasas* was very much undertaken by the colonial government, as the Muslim community was continuously marked out by the British government as being the most 'backward'. But, for the designs of *madrasas*, the PWD still followed largely traditional typologies of a building envelop around a court with a tightly controlled entry point (as in the Calcutta Madrasa or the Hughly Madrasa). It was evidently safer to steer clear of stirring up religious sentiments.



Fig. 2. 12a Baroari - Goari, Krishnanagar. These virtually served as socio-religious spaces and played key role in community life and sometimes in organising public opinion on civic issues



Fig. 2. 12b Temple complex in front of Mallik (the patrons) residence - Midnapur



Fig. 2. 12c Sholo Ana - Shakharipara, Bankura. Often, these were associated with open community spaces

development in active interaction with nature), to tight introverted forms (centred on notions of human development as internally reflective) characteristic of many pre-colonial institutions in Bengal, or hybrids of the two (Fig. 2.11i). A general trend seems to have been that institutions continuing traditional values tended to use introverted formations in dense areas with low visibility, while those espousing liberal values used more extroverted forms⁵⁷ and were increasingly located on major, visible public spines. On the other hand, in *zamindari* towns like Burdwan, most institutions, whether the traditional *tol* or new liberal-eclectic ones like the Raj College or Udaychand Public Library, were built right in the thick of the native settlement, directly under the shadow of the *zamindari* palace, and used traditional courtyard-based introverted forms. However, even in Burdwan, by the early-twentieth century, a more extroverted spatial paradigm seems to have dominated institutional landscapes, even under *zamindari* patronage, as evidenced in the design of Raj College at its new location. Missionary interventions on the other hand seem to have used the extroverted types as well as certain hybrids of extroverted and introverted forms, either in 'green' institutional zones or within dense indigenous settlements.

2.1. 12 Traditional institutions under native patronage

In addition to this emerging landscape of new types of institutions, all *zilla sadar* towns also had an elaborate network of indigenous institutions and spaces such as temples, mosques, *mela* [fairgrounds], folk performance areas and ritual routes that continued to thrive within native areas, especially in *bazaar* streets. Particularly interesting examples of these are the *baroaris* of Krishnanagar and the *sholo-anas* of Bankura. *Baroaris* were the nuclear centres of *paras* or neighbourhoods – usually a place for holding the annual *durgapuja* [chief religious festival of Bengal], but which also housed other social functions throughout the year (Fig. 2.7b and 2.12a). The town was thus effectively divided into cellular units, of which the nuclei were the *baroaris*. In terms of building typology, these consisted of a structure which held the deity, facing which was a pavilion to house worshippers and devotees – the overall formation echoing parts (the *garbhagriha* or the sanctum, and the *mandapa* or the pavilion) of a northern-Indian Hindu temple. But unlike the introverted form of the temple receding into the dark interiors of the *garbhagriha*, the *baroaris* were extroverted building-types, adapted to urban situations, and serving as open community spaces within an otherwise tightly knit, dense urban fabric. Another interesting example in this context is the Kali temple complex in front of the *zamindari* mansion of the Mallik family in Midnapur town, built under their patronage (Fig. 2.12b). The temple complex is a fascinating example of how the traditionally introverted courtyard form of multi-deity temples (usually built as autonomous enclaves on settlement peripheries) was skilfully 'opened up' to create an extroverted entity that could fit within an urban context – where its role extended far

⁵⁷ The latter was related to the increasing role of extroverted activities like outdoor sports such as cricket and football, seen by colonial authorities as well as missionaries as constituting fundamental aspects of education. This was in turn centred on the notion that the development of human beings found full form only when supplemented by physical interaction with natural elements, and this translated often into outdoor fitness activities. Many native institutions influenced by western ideas of human development thus also incorporated large amounts of outdoor fields as dominant components of their sites.



Fig. 2. 12d Location of *melas* (fairs) - Bankura. 1 - Dasher Bandher Mela, 2- Shiber gajoner mela.

Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR.

beyond that of a merely religious space into a more mixed and public one. The pure rectangular geometry of the autonomous enclave was also adjusted to fit the irregular street geometry in the dense urban context of Midnapur. The *sholo-anas* of Bankura were very similar to the *baroaris*, also associated with specific *paras* or neighbourhoods (Fig. 2.12c). What is of key importance is the fact that other than their religious functions, elements like the *baroaris* and *sholo-anas* came to play roles as social and civic units. These were exactly the sites from which communities were mobilised through indigenous networks to negotiate their civic rights. It is also useful to recall at this point that the Anglo-Vernacular school in its early days functioned from two *baroaris* before its building was erected. The *baroaris* were thus versatile modules accommodating a range of public functions as needed by the moment.

One of the other significant aspects of *sadar* towns was the network of ritual routes and practices, both for Hindu and Islamic traditions, within it. Though communal tension was not unknown, it was usual for *tazias*⁵⁸ [decorative floats] to be brought to the Hindu *zamindar's* palace in Krishnanagar, following which awards were given out. The other common ritual was the Hindu *ratha* [chariot] festival, whereby *rathas*, which were parked usually at certain key locations within the town, were brought out on the festival-day and rolled down the ritual route. On another festival (*Jagaddhatripuja*) in Krishnanagar, all the deities were carried through processional routes and brought to the *zamindar's* palace before being taken to the river for immersion. Contrary to the perception that secular cosmopolitanism was the contribution of European rule in India, a cosmopolitan framework very much existed within pre-colonial Indian towns, in the way the physical space of the town was routinely mobilised for multi-religious rituals. Such ritualistic and religious geographies also generously overlapped with those of governmental policing and administration of the town, and managed to survive right through colonial rule.⁵⁹

Mela [fairgrounds] were usually located in peripheral areas of towns, often next to the river and attached to religious buildings like temples or mosques to which the fair was linked – e.g. the Rathtala mela in Berhampur, the Shiber gajoner mela and the Doshier Bandher mela in Bankura (Fig. 2.12d), and the Barabaganer mela in Suri. Most of these were sites of older indigenous rituals, but sometimes newer spaces also formed in response to the emerging landscape of public events during the colonial period. For example, the Barabangan mela was one of the many agricultural fairs that came to be held in most district towns of Bengal under government initiative from the 1870s to showcase cattle and other agricultural produce.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *Tazias* were decorative floats used in the Muslim festival of Muharram.

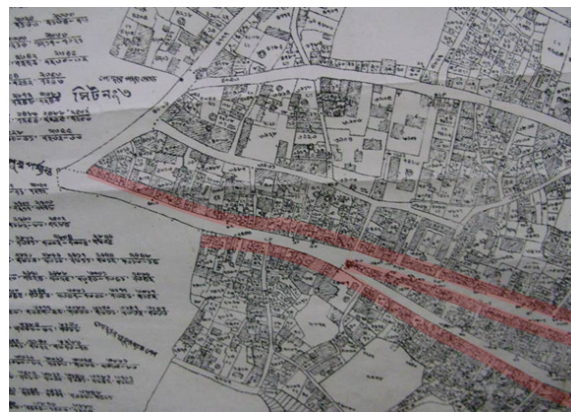
⁵⁹ Of course, the discomfort of colonial authorities with issues of disease and infections due to conditions of 'crowding' associated with the conduct of traditional religious rituals and pilgrimage in India has been well documented. See e.g. Mark Harrison, 'Quarantine, pilgrimage, and colonial trade: India 1866-1900', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 29 (1992), 117-144; Amna Khalid, 'Subordinate negotiations: the indigenous staff, colonial state and public health', in Mark Harrison and Biswamoy Pati (eds.), *Society, Medicine and Politics: Colonial India, 1850-1940* (London: Routledge, 2008); Sourabh Mishra, 'Beyond the bounds of time? The Haj from the Indian subcontinent, 1860-1920', in Mark Harrison and B. Pati (eds.), *The Social History of Health and Medicine in Colonial India* (London: Routledge, 2008). The later sections of this chapter, about the municipal planning era, discuss how some of these issues came to affect *sadar* towns.

⁶⁰ British Library, IOR, Bengal Proceedings, General Department, March 1864, 1.

Fig. 2. 13a Areas that served the *sadar's* primary functions: Rutimahal road (bread-makers' enclave), Berhampur



Fig. 2. 13b Bungalow area - Barisal.



1 Plan



2



3

Fig. 2. 13c Keranibazaar, Bankura (1 and 2) and Khagrabazaar, Berhampur (3).
Source (plan): CS Survey map 1919

On the whole, therefore, the *sadar's* institutional spaces can only be understood as a juxtaposition of both European and Indian, traditional and newer, paradigms, and as intricate negotiations between different spatial practices. A key aspect of many of the *sadar's* institutions was thus their ability to re-configure eclectic and adaptable roles. In a sense these were classic examples of 'modernity', not in the sense of the progression of indigenous systems and forms towards apparently 'superior' western ones, but in its more fundamental sense – i.e. the ability of existing systems, values and practices to adapt to change while forging connections between older and newer paradigms and spatial patterns.

2.1.13 Service population and the *bazaar* sector

Possibly the strongest source of the *sadar's* heterogeneity were those areas and people that served its primary functions. Neighbourhoods housing people who in effect propped up the *sadar* establishments and the everyday life of its inhabitants developed either from pre-existing occupational-based and caste-based patterns, or else formed in response to the requirements of towns from the early-nineteenth century (Fig. 2.13a). For example, in Bankura, Pathakpara and Ghatakpara still provided the brahmins required for temple establishments and religious work, while areas like Basudebpur and neighbourhoods to the north-east provided construction labour from the Baori and Bagdi communities for the increasing building activity. Manufacturing and mercantile areas like Kamarpara (ironmongers' quarters), Shankharipara (shell-workers' quarters), Poddarpara (goldsmiths' quarters), Nutanganj and Beparihaat (merchants' quarters) housed the respective specialised services. And though there were clear attempts by the British residents in *sadar* towns to distinguish and distance themselves from native inhabitants, even European provincial society in colonial Bengal was particularly dependent on services from the native population. All this wove spatial networks of dependence-relationships.

Thus, dense *bazaar* areas like Keranibazaar and Chowkbazaar in Bankura, Barabazaar in Suri, Goari in Krishnanagar, Chowkbazaar in Barisal or Barabazaar in Khulna, with strong 'urban' characteristics, formed as much an integral part of the *zilla sadar* (Fig. 2.13c) as did low-density bungalow zones for European habitation (Fig. 2.13b). Centred on the general *bazaar* which constituted the main node of the native town, a network of specialised *bazaars* acted as the vital service-providers for the life of the *sadar* – both European and native. Above all, the very pivot of the *zilla sadar's* operations, the *cutcherry* itself, was far from being an autonomous entity and was vitally dependent on *bazaar* areas for its functioning. For example, Kerani *bazaar* [clerks' *bazaar*] in Bankura grew in the first quarter of the nineteenth century to directly cater to the needs of the *cutcherry* and its staff, right next to it.⁶¹ By the early-twentieth century it had

61 Harachandra Ghosh, who was a *munsif* (lower court Judge) and then a surveyor posted in Bankura town from 1832 to 1838, gave a description of Keranibazaar in his survey of the town which was presented at a public lecture in Calcutta. He described it as a stretch of shops made up of mud and thatch buildings next to the *cutcherry*. Ghosh also mentioned how these shops – providing office stationary for the *cutcherry* or eating stalls for the use of *cutcherry* staff, directly supported the *cutcherry* establishment. See Harachandra Ghosh, *Statistical Account of Bengal: Bankura* (Calcutta: n.v., 1838), 9.



Fig. 2. 13d The *bazaar* townhouse, Burdwan and Bankura



Fig. 2. 13e The second *bazaar* area - Barisal, early-twentieth century

developed more elaborate provisions, such as printing presses (e.g. Kamala Press and Kali Press), handling private work as well as that of the *cutcherry*. Hence the local *bazaar* thus developed as the other substantial centre of *sadar* towns from the early-nineteenth century.⁶² The *bazaar* in many ways represented the absolute antithesis of the monovalent ideals of town and townscape being pursued by the colonial government, its officers, or the upwardly mobile native middle class. Although the *bazaar* area contained a mix of typologies, its basic unit was the 'town house' (Fig. 2.13d). With its upper floor devoted to residential rooms looking onto an inner court, and the ground floor devoted to shops directly abutting the street, the 'town house' involved an immediacy with the intense urban life of everyday buying-selling and other social encounters; it was exactly the opposite of the distancing that the 'house with garden' achieved. It created a phenomenal environment that was populated and collective – thick with people's proximity, charged with busy exchange, and a heady mix of sights, sounds and smells. Contrary to the wholesome ideological conception of the *sadar*, the chaotic, busy *bazaar* was thus a space that split up its perception into fragmented bits. It was also one that was a pivotal life force, on which the functioning of the town was integrally dependent. Above all, by the mid-to-late-nineteenth century, it became the crucible of a whole alternate economy, beyond the reach of governmental establishments that had typically dominated the economic and occupational life of the *sadar* in its earlier days.

Most *sadar* towns built up within a settlement context with a preformed *bazaar* area. This usually consisted of a small stretch catering to the everyday needs of the settlements, made up of temporary mud-and-thatch buildings. In addition, there were invariably the sites for weekly markets, or *haats*.⁶³ One of the recurrent patterns in a number of *sadar* towns seems to be that of existing *bazaar* areas forming a link to the *cutcherry* area via a stretch of specialised *bazaars* which specifically served the *cutcherry*. The native settlement of Bankura was centred on Chowkbazaar; in addition, Keranibazaar, which lay around the *cutcherry* area, developed in continuation. In Barisal, the original *bazaar* within the native settlement was limited to the northern portion of the town, but over a period of time it extended right up to the *cutcherry* area, with the stretch adjacent to the consisting of shops selling goods and services to the government establishment. In fact, spaces like the *cutcherry* were virtually unimaginable without *bazaars* next to them, as a spatial affinity of the seat of colonial governance with the other key centre of urban life. In many ways, the *bazaar* area by the late-nineteenth century had helped shift the economic base of some *sadar* towns (e.g. Bankura or Khulna) to a largely commercial function. Many towns also developed a second *bazaar* area, related to the process of intense urbanisation, around the turn of the twentieth century. Sadarbazaar in Burdwan, or its equivalent in Barisal, were both

62 *Bazaars* were also sites that connected the *cutcherry* to the life of the town and areas beyond, with which district officers had very limited contact. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

63 *Haats* were mixed or specialised periodic (usually weekly) open air markets. The pre-existing pattern of commerce in different *sadar* towns varied. For example, Burdwan, a hugely successful and thriving business centre built up on agricultural surplus from a wide hinterland, had an elaborate network of pre-existing *haats* and *bazaars* well before the *sadar cutcherries* appeared in it. In addition, under *zamindari* and private patronage a number of formally designed market-structures such as Barabazaar, Nutanganjbazaar, Raniganjbazaar were built inside its native settlement in the course of the nineteenth century.



Fig. 2. 13f Khoshbagan, Burdwan - prostitution quarters and their proximity to *bazaar* areas

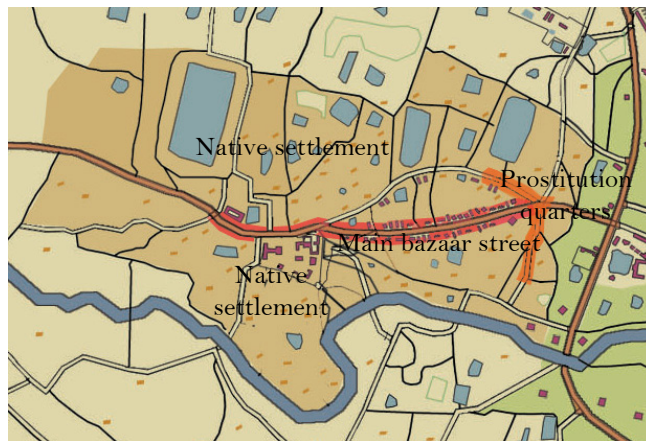


Fig. 2. 14a Villa typology, Saidabad *bazaar* area, Berhampur



Fig. 2. 14b Internal courtyard form within the villa type in peripheral areas of the *sadar* - Kenduadihi, Bankura



examples of this phenomenon (Fig. 2.13e).

Bazaars did not only provide goods and services for the *cutcherry* and the town – they also more often than not housed prostitution quarters. It is important to keep in mind that in the first half of the nineteenth century, migration to *zilla sadar* took on a clear gender split, with mainly the male members of families moving to the town along with their male servants and support staff – i.e. *sadars* were essentially a male domain. With the female members of the family in far away villages, *sadar* towns in effect represented and functioned as spaces of ‘marginal morality’. Prostitution operated on the edges of such morality and found tacit legitimisation in the town’s spatial scheme, although they never had formal social acceptance. Areas like Churipatti in Jessore or Khoshbagan and Mahajantuli in Burdwan, or their counterparts in Bankura and Suri, were classic examples of the trade-off between proximity to busy *bazaars* and a simultaneous marginalisation in the town at large (Fig. 2.13f). However, unlike in metropolitan cities such as Calcutta or Bombay, provincial authorities do not seem to have intervened or interfered significantly with prostitution. There were virtually no instances of removal or quarantining of prostitution quarters. But equally, these activities didn’t receive any constructive urban or medical attention either – and thus remained as neglected zones within the formal framework of urban planning.

2.1.14 Typological diversity and versatility - multi-valent spaces

Heterogeneity permeated many levels and spheres. A key aspect of the *zilla sadar* was the typological versatility of its buildings. On the surface level, *sadar* towns did, to some extent, follow predictable patterns of urbanisation, yet the correlations were not direct or simplistic. In many ways, *sadar* towns never became fully urban, and a split rural-urban character lay at their essence. Due, among other factors, to the incidence of fever, cholera, malaria and occasional epidemics, or to the industrial pull of Calcutta in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, urbanisation remained fractured. This fragmented nature of *sadar* towns, and the plurality of cultural paradigms that flowed into it, meant that building activity was not uniform. Even *bazaars* sometimes contained low-density villas (Fig. 2.14a), while villa-like developments in peripheries often used tight courtyard formations (Fig. 2.14b). Nor was there a stable correlation between density, dwelling form and ethnic categories. Although it was considered far from desirable, one finds the odd instance where a European officer took up residence in the *bazaar* areas of native towns.⁶⁴ On the other hand, by the late-nineteenth century the European villa or bungalow was not a dwelling type within the exclusive ownership of the European population, but permeated, in various composite forms, into the residential architecture of native elites. Generally the peripheries of *zilla sadar* were occupied by low-density estate developments, while

⁶⁴ Such residence of European officers within native areas is revealed, for example, in a communication from the Collector of Durbhanga district (Bihar province, in the Bengal Presidency) to the Lieutenant Governor (of Bengal) ‘s office where the Collector complained that the District Engineer had to live in a barrack like house. West Bengal State Archives, Bengal Public Works ‘A’ Proceedings for Nov 1888, letter from H.Beadon, Magistrate of Durbhanga, to S.T.Trevor, Office of the Public Works Department, Government of Bengal, 22 Mar 1887.

the central areas were occupied by high-density mixed-use town houses with 2-3 stories.⁶⁵ On the other hand, in cases like the cantonment town of Berhampur, which became a *zilla sadar* in 1870, the core was an artificially managed low-density area representing an abstract order of military planning, surrounded by denser peripheral settlements such as Saidabad and Khagra, or service areas like Gora-bazaar. All of this rendered it difficult to form category sets like 'native-central-high-density-town house' or 'European-low density-peripheral-bungalow/villa'. This was because the *sadar* was an agile, ever-changing entity with parallel paradigms, and at no point was its urbanisation complete. Neither did it remain an autonomous unit, nor did parts -- such as the European enclave -- remain separate as exclusive domains where ideals of 'healthy' living and abundant resources could be consistently preserved.

2.1.15 Other limbs of governance - Policing and vigilance geography

In his book *Shekaler Darogar Kahini*, which tells a police inspector's story, Girishchandra Basu -- the officer in charge of the police headquarters in Krishnanagar -- gave a fascinating account of the logistical and territorial aspects of policing as a fundamental aspect of provincial governance.⁶⁶ A look at the physical distribution of police infrastructure in *zilla sadar* towns also shows how the space of the *zilla sadar* was overlaid with a vigilance-geography during the colonial period. Such policing tactics in fact overlapped with, and complemented, sites like the *cutcherry*, thereby acting as vital scaffolding for administrative functions.

In the late-eighteenth century, under Governor-General Cornwallis, the size of the basic unit of policing increased greatly, and a police station or *thana*⁶⁷ was established for every 400 square miles.⁶⁸ Each district, headed by the Superintendent of Police (a European officer), comprised of a few *thanas* of which the *darogas* (native officers) were in charge.⁶⁹ The *thana* containing the *zilla sadar* town was called the *sadar thana*. The *daroga* wielded immense power in colonial police administration, but remained dependent on his constables or *chowkidars* for the actual conduct of vigilance. In 1837, police administration was substantially reorganised, and a second wave of reforms was also undertaken from 1860-71, backed up by the preparation of crime reports for different districts in the aftermath of the *Santhal* Rebellion (1855) and *Sepoy* Mutiny (1857), and later by the Bengal Police Reports of 1860-65.⁷⁰

65 Town houses in the *bazaar* typically consisted of shops in front on the ground floor and residential areas at the back and on upper floors. The inner layer usually had an introverted plan with the residential spaces wrapped around an internal courtyard.

66 Girishchandra Basu, *Shekaler Darogar Kahini*, Alok Ray, ed. (Calcutta: Pustak Bipani, 1983), originally published 1888.

67 The word *thana* referred both to the territorial unit of policing as well as the police station itself.

68 For a long time after the beginning of the East India Company's rule, elements of policing (especially rural policing) had been under the custodianship of *zamindars* who were responsible for law and order in their area. Within the pre-colonial Mughal administration there had been an established hierarchy from the smaller to the larger territorial units of policing -- e.g. *chowkidars* were engaged for villages, *thanadars* for *thanas* and *darogas* to oversee the *thanadar's* operations. The sizes of *thanas* at this stage, although varied, were relatively small.

69 The post of the *thanadar* was eliminated and the *chowkidars* were placed directly below the *daroga*. See Basudev Chatterji, 'The darogah and the countryside: the imposition of police control in Bengal and its impact, 1793-1937', in Partha Chatterjee, ed., *The disciplines in colonial Bengal*, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 18 (1981), 19-42.

70 There were active reorganisations in the police administration in Bengal, including district police, around 1860-



Sadar (main) police station, Burdwan



Goari outpost, Krishnanagar

Fig. 2. 15a Sadar Police station, outposts and main night-vigil routes, Krishnanagar (top and bottom right) and Burdwan (bottom left)
Source: Base map - British library maps collection, IOR.

However, crime networks were rarely limited to the physical space of the *zilla sadar*, and issues from the larger hinterland continuously influenced the policing of these towns. In extreme cases like Krishnanagar, the chief police station was actually set up in the first place to deal with conflicts between two warring *zamindari* families (Nakashipara and Bamanpara), who although they had estates in interior areas used the town itself as their warring ground. Spatially, the police station was located at the intersection of the two key routes taken by henchmen of the respective families to enter the town (Fig. 2.15). The town was also virtually ringed by a series of watch-points, manned by *chowkidars*, who would routinely signal other police posts or the *sadar* police station using torches or special types of calls. There seems to have been one or two kinds of locations for the *sadar thanas*: the first was at the junction of the native *bazaar* and the European areas, usually as part of a multi-functional zone around the *cutcherry*, as seen in Suri, Bankura or Khulna; the other location type was buried well within the *bazaar*, at some distance from the *cutcherry* and other governmental buildings, due to the need to keep direct vigilance on crime in the native town, as in Barisal, Burdwan or Jessore. But in either case, the *thana* had a direct correlation with the native settlement and its *bazaars* – even aspects of law and order related to prostitution in the eyes of the colonial authorities obviously needed to be closely monitored. The other key ritual was the *pahara*, or night-vigil, undertaken along the main routes of the town, connecting the various outposts to the *sadar thana*.

Also of crucial importance was the location of police outposts or '*phari*'s. Outposts tended to be located on the fringes of *sadar* towns as control points (Fig. 2.15a). For example, Krishnanagar was guarded on the northern riverside entry point by the Goari *phari*, on the south by the Anandamoyitala *phari*, and on the east by the Ghurni *phari*.⁷¹ However, it is interesting to note that only the native town was provided with such control points. Although the night-vigil went into the European areas, the latter never had police outposts, presumably because they were not perceived by provincial officers as representing any threat to law and order.⁷² Sometimes outposts on an outer fringe were absorbed into the expanding town fabric to become a stronger part of town life – the Khagra *phari* in Berhampur is a classic example, which later acted virtually as the police station for the area. Outposts also had sometimes to be shifted or adjusted to emerging town geographies. For example, in Bankura, while the major north-south pilgrim route through the town was diverted in 1870 by the town municipality to prevent against contagious diseases, the police station had to be relocated at the junction of the new by-pass road and the major east-west spine of the town, so as to filter out unwanted entry by 'unruly' pilgrims.

71. These were preceded by the preparation of crime reports, immediately after the *Sepoy* Mutiny and *Santhal* rebellion, of various districts. See e.g. Annual crime report of the Bengal Santhal Parganas 1861-1871, IOR/ V/ 24/ 534, Annual crime report of Dacca division, Bengal, IOR/ V/ 24/ 521-523, Report on the Police of Bengal 1860-65, Report on the new police in Bengal 1861-62, IOR/ V/ 24/ 526 and Report on Police Administration in Bengal, IOR/ V/ 24/ 3192 – 3207.

71 In Berhampur, for example, the *pharis* were strung along its linear formation along the river, with a *phari* at Gorabazaar on the river's edge, one in the dense *bazaar* area of Khagra, and one within the native area of Saidabad, running from south to north.

72 This was also linked to the very conception of the town itself, discussed earlier, as comprising chiefly the native area – and the perceived breeding ground for crime.

Fig. 2. 15b Police Lines, Bankura.
Source: British library Images collection, IOR.

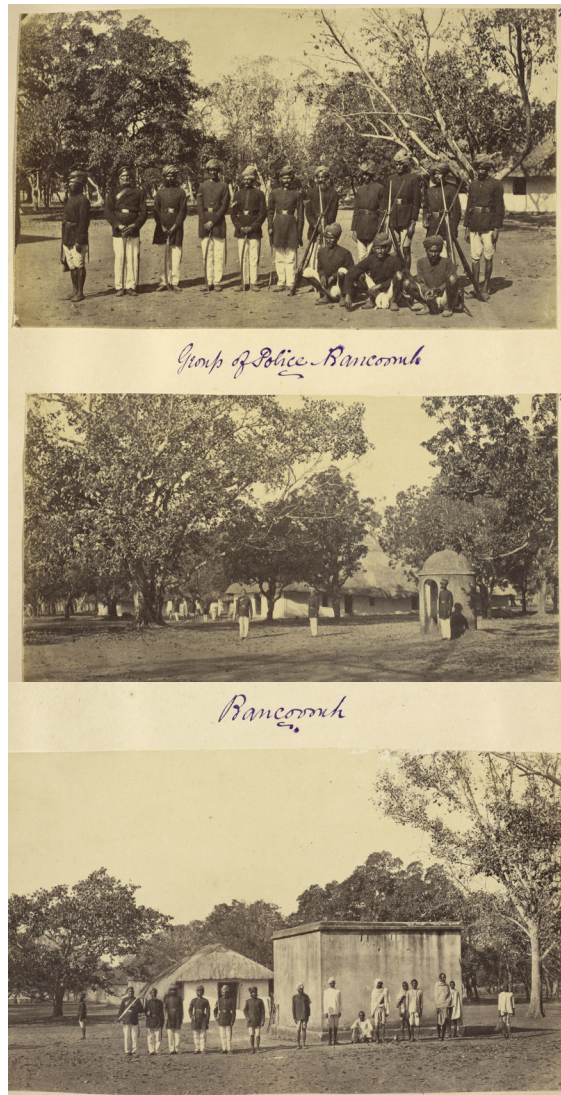


Fig. 2. 15c Police Lines, Burdwan.



Backing up the entire operations were the police lines – barracks and training areas for police staff – invariably located in peripheral areas and, like the military cantonment, acting as an ‘incubation environment’ (Fig. 2.15a and 2.15b). The regime of police training and discipline was centred on a degree of insulation from the everyday workings of the town. While police staff routinely had to deal with the messy world of searches, chases and arrests in the *zilla sadar*, their training took place ironically in an environment that was highly controlled and isolated. Interestingly, a number of police lines – e.g. in Bankura, Suri, Berhampur or Midnapur – actually came up on pieces of land that had been used earlier for military camps. In fact, the formal physical infrastructure for most police lines was set up only in the early twentieth century; but the operations of police training till then virtually used the remains of military camps. There was a fairly direct correlation between the two – ensuing possibly from a typological fit in terms of the nature of land parcel, and the established physical patterns (of rows of repetitive units centred on a large field) to conduct the various fitness and disciplinary rituals, common to both military and police training. Conceptually, the police was in effect the equivalent of the military within civil administration. It was the domain that offered the closest match with the discipline and abstract order of military functioning – the clear pattern of military sites morphing into police lines, seems to emphatically underline and evidence this affinity. Interestingly, a number of police lines – e.g. in Bankura, Suri, Berhampur or Midnapur – were sited on land used earlier for military camps; indeed, the formal physical infrastructure for most police lines only came to be set up in the early-twentieth century. In this sense, conceptually and typologically, the police was in effect the equivalent of the military within civil administration. Ironically, despite their highly organised vigilance-geography, *sadar* towns were almost impossible to fortify.⁷³ The settlement pattern of most native areas meant there were always ‘loose ends’ that petered out to provide ways to escape into the countryside, and which couldn’t all be manned. Furthermore, the typical formation of settlements an intricately interconnected mesh also made following offenders incredibly difficult. Much to the annoyance of police officers, the organic street system of the native tow routinely interfered with and subverted the planned vigilance-geography structured around key control points.

2.1.16 Railways and urban restructuring

Until the end of the nineteenth century, *zilla sadar* towns in interior districts had no railway system. Other than Hugly and Burdwan, which saw the first railway stations in 1854 and 1855 respectively, *sadar* towns only came to be connected in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.⁷⁴ In any case, the railways were – at least initially – linked far more with colonial

⁷³ This is amply evident, for example, from Girishchandra Basu’s accounts. Basu describes numerous chases that he and other police staff undertook to apprehend the criminals, and how the latter would simply disappear within the labyrinthine spaces of the town. Basu, *Shekaler darogar Kahini*.

⁷⁴ For example, even though it was among the *sadar* towns closer to Calcutta, Krishnanagar only got its first narrow-gauge railway in 1899, and a broad-gauge line in 1903. Bankura obtained its first in 1908. See L.S. S. O’Malley (ed.), *Bengal District Gazetteers: Nadia and Bankura* (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Press, 1905–1938), 101.

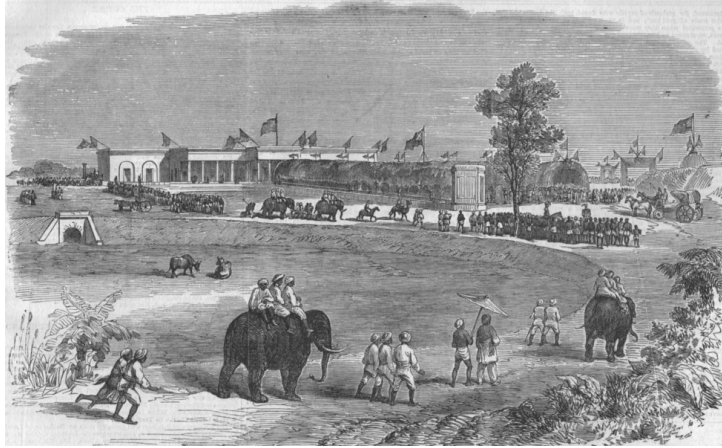


Fig. 2. 16a Opening of the East Indian Railway, Burdwan, 1855.
Source: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/1800_1899/britishrule/railways/railways.html



Fig. 2. 16b New tract of land opened up by the railway development in Burdwan, where a second European residential area (1) came up in the 1860s and 1870s. The 'railway colony' (2) was also came to be a major structural component of the town.
Source: Base map - developed by the author from contemporary map



Fig. 2. 16c The 'railway colony', Burdwan.

commercial operations than with provincial administration.⁷⁵ Even the relatively early connection to Burdwan was mainly due to its location on the route to the coal-mining area of Raniganj.⁷⁶ Although it nominally enjoyed rail connectivity from 1859, Suri was actually linked for another thirty years only through nearby Saithia, an established business centre and agricultural market. *Zilla sadar* towns in the course of nineteenth century were this still mostly served by road and water networks. As a result, most *sadar* towns weren't much affected by railways in terms of urban restructuring. Even amongst the district headquarter towns, the presence or not of railway lines created its own landscape of exposure and interiority, lifting some towns into prominence and marginalising others: for example, Barisal and Chittagong remained un-connected by the railways all through the colonial era.

Burdwan was the case where railways had the most substantial impact during the nineteenth century (Fig. 2.16a). As well as the wider connections effected,⁷⁷ railway development opened up new tracts of land for European inhabitation – such as in Sadhanpur on the north-eastern edge of the town – and actually constituted a second phase of European settlement within the town (Fig. 2.16b). Huge areas were also taken up next to the station for railway infrastructure and staff quarters – the 'railway colony' emerged as a new and substantial structural component of the town, usually on the periphery and apart from existing settlements (Fig. 2.16b and 2.16c). This was because, on the whole, colonial authorities seemed to be weary of intervening within native town areas and so simply decided to steer clear of them.⁷⁸ But this still involved acquiring agricultural land or clearing small-scale settlements, leading to a radical change in the character of these areas in *sadar* towns. In some cases the railways were built along existing road systems. In Bankura, for example, the railway station and its tracks were laid out on a portion of the older military road that connected Calcutta to the north-western provinces. In Krishnanagar, railway lines were physically overlaid on a part of the old Badshahi Sadak or Nawab Road.⁷⁹ Typically, the railway establishment, through its sheer critical mass, generated new infrastructure in somewhat untouched areas, and newer settlements or residential

⁷⁵ See for example the following studies on the railways in colonial India which discuss the commercial basis of the railways: Ravi Ahuja, *Pathways of Empire: Circulation, Public Works and Social Space in Colonial Orissa, c. 1780–1914* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2009); Ian J. Kerr, *Building the railways of the Raj* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); John Hurd, 'Railways', *The Cambridge Economic History of India, vol. 2, c.1757–1970*, Dharma Kumar, ed. (Hyderabad: Orient Longman in association with Cambridge University Press, 1982). The first railways were built by private commercial companies and then transferred to the government, but operated by them in their own and other commercial interests. See also Roopa Srinivasan, Manish Tiwari and Sandip Silas (eds.), *Our Indian Railway: Themes in India's Railway History* (Delhi: Foundation Books, 2006), xv.

⁷⁶ It is considered though that the fact that Burdwan was a thriving market town and the good relations of the Maharaja of burdwan with the colonial authorities aided the process.

⁷⁷ For example, by late-nineteenth century the railways actually aided the out-migration from Burdwan town to the industrial capital Calcutta. J.C.K Peterson, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Burdwan* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1910), 79.

⁷⁸ In some cases like Krishnanagar there had been deliberations by the government on running the railway line through the heart of the town touching Goari bazaar (the old port area and proposed as a station) and Ghurni, but was possibly abandoned because of the interventions in dense settlements that this would have involved. See W Radice, *Railway Development Report: Eastern Bengal State Railway* (Calcutta: 1905); Messrs H.V.Low & co., *Complete Survey Report: Eastern Bengal State Railway* (Calcutta: 1910).

⁷⁹ In both these cases the remains of the pre-colonial road network are still visible in certain portions of the railway tracks, stations, railway colonies and adjoining settlements.

areas grew around it. But a notable characteristic of habitations around railway areas was that these were invariably on low-lying ground, prone to flooding, from which earth for to raise up the railway line had been excavated. As such, they became the less preferred, marginal areas of towns – part of a landscape of marginality as a direct by-product of the railways.⁸⁰

2.2 Emerging landscapes in *sadars* from mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century

Although many of these processes contributing to the complex spatial patterns of the *zilla sadar* took place over the whole of the nineteenth century, from around 1850 the development of *sadar* towns took on one or two particularly significant directions. The first was the emerging notion of the *sadar* as a health and hygiene system; the second, working simultaneously, was the vision of the town as an ordered, synthetically arranged and aesthetic entity tied by abstract relationships of power and hierarchy. The former was pursued in a spirit of paternalism and ironically through the apparatus of decentralised government, while the latter was linked to the increasingly centralised representations of governance that were the hallmark of late-nineteenth century imperial rule in India. Both were also centred pivotally on the very question of ‘urbanity’ – i.e. what, in effect, constituted or distinguished ‘urban’ areas from ‘rural’ ones in the first place.

2.2.1. Town as a health and hygiene system – ‘improvement’ and municipal planning

The conception of the *sadar* town as a health and hygiene system did not emerge on a blank slate. Nor were acts of provincial urban intervention based on such conceptions entirely new. The notion of the town as a health and hygiene system was fundamentally rooted in European perceptions of India as a land in its most physical sense, as well as its cultural practices. David Arnold has shown how the conception of the Indian landscape in the European mind transformed during the first half of the nineteenth century from an ‘exotic orientalist’ mould to a ‘wild tropicalist’ one – whereby India’s landscape was increasingly seen and constructed as being wild and untamed, with its diseased environment uncontrollable.⁸¹ Along with this was the fact that, by the 1830s, India’s climate was largely seen as being fundamentally at odds with the European constitution.⁸² In addition, Indian cultural practices were also seen to be unhygienic

80 Such areas around the railway establishment which constituted clearly disadvantageous land in terms of urban development are visible till today in towns such as Burdwan, Bankura or Krishnanagar. The other vital impact of the railways was at a more micro-scale and yet had broad-based implications. This constituted the new technologies and building materials that the railways physically transported into provincial towns, relatively sheltered from other industrial technologies. Use of newer technologies of construction (such as segmental-arched roofing, steel girders and rolled-steel sections) in the railway colonies thus served a demonstrative purpose for general emulation in local architecture.

81 Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*.

82 Racial theories centred on corporeal and constitutional difference, gaining currency in late-nineteenth century England and Europe more broadly, went hand in hand with British imperial zeal. There were also other real issues, such as the mortality of Europeans in India – especially the lack of fitness and health of European soldiers – particularly exposed during the 1857 *Sepoy* Mutiny. Army hygiene in India was in turn, as traced by medical historian Mark Harrison, the beneficiary of the growing concern with the health of troops evident in Britain since the Crimean War and the findings of the Royal Commission in 1857, which reported that mortality rates in the British army at home was greater than among the civilian population. See Mark Harrison, ‘The foundations of public health in India: crisis and constraint’, *Public Health in British India*, Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1994, 60–98.

and contributing to public health problems.

The conceptual coupling of *urbanisation* with issues of health was triggered off by epidemics – that is, sudden and abnormal outbreak of diseases like cholera, plague, various forms of fever or malaria. While in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries these were thought by Europeans to be caused by peculiar properties of the atmosphere (mostly excessive heat and moisture), by the nineteenth century they began to be attributed to man-made problems such as the overcrowding and insanitary conditions caused by urbanisation or the ignorance and unclean habits of Indians.⁸³ During 1830s, under the rule of Governor-General William Bentinck, public health was also taken up as a key channel of ‘improvement’. For instance, a number of charitable dispensaries and veterinary hospitals were established in key locations in *sadar* towns from the 1830s. These dispensaries didn’t just offer cures but useful public health functions as well – they ‘became local centres for vaccination against small-pox and for conveying western ideas about sanitation and hygiene’, and for sanitary interventions like digging tanks and wells, filling up holes, etc.⁸⁴ For provincial towns around the mid-nineteenth century, a clearly perceived correlation between public health and urban drainage thus seems to have emerged. As mentioned in Chapter 1, at this time projects for urban drainage were taken up under individual efforts of district officers or local engineers. Berhampur, large parts of which were often waterlogged, was, for example, provided with an elaborate network of interconnected water retention pools, in turn connected to the Bhagirathi River through an overflow system.⁸⁵ One also finds mention of a drainage project for Jessore by Mr. Beaufort, the District Collector, around 1854, to counter its ‘unhealthy’ situation.⁸⁶

But it was really under the custodianship of town municipalities, as part of emerging local self-government, that health and hygiene systems were imagined and pursued with unforeseen intensity. *Mufassal* [provincial] municipalities in Bengal were created through a series of municipal acts,⁸⁷ with most being created under the 1856 and 1868 acts. Their formation was part of a financial and administrative decentralisation being pushed forth by Viceroy Lord Mayo in the early-1870s, primarily to divert responsibility for sanitation, roads and other services from central to provincial government. At the height of Gladstonian Liberalism in the 1880s, and fuelled by growing criticism of the paternalistic government in India, Lord Ripon instituted reforms in local administration to enable more representative government. Other than its ideological

83 Harrison, ‘Epidemics and the Ideology of Improvement 1800-1860’, *Climates and Constitutions* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 153.

84 However, much of this was built and funded with Indian patronage and if the patronage ran dry, so did the provisions. By 1860s, the dispensaries came to be funded by diverse sources like the government, commercial organisations like the Bengal Coal Company or by subscriptions from Europeans. In any case, after 1870, the government distanced itself from the running of dispensaries, banking on the fact that the value of dispensaries was by then widely enough acknowledged to attract other sources of funding. *Ibid.*, 88.

85 A map of Berhampur drawn up in 1851-52 by the Revenue Surveyor Capt. W.S. Sherwill, updated in 1858 by James E. Gastrell, shows this newly introduced system of drainage. The drainage scheme thus predated 1858.

86 James Westland, *A Report on the District of Jessore: Its Antiquities, its History, and its Commerce* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1871), 148.

87 These were Act XXVI of 1850, Act XX of 1856, Act III of 1864, and Act VI of 1868.

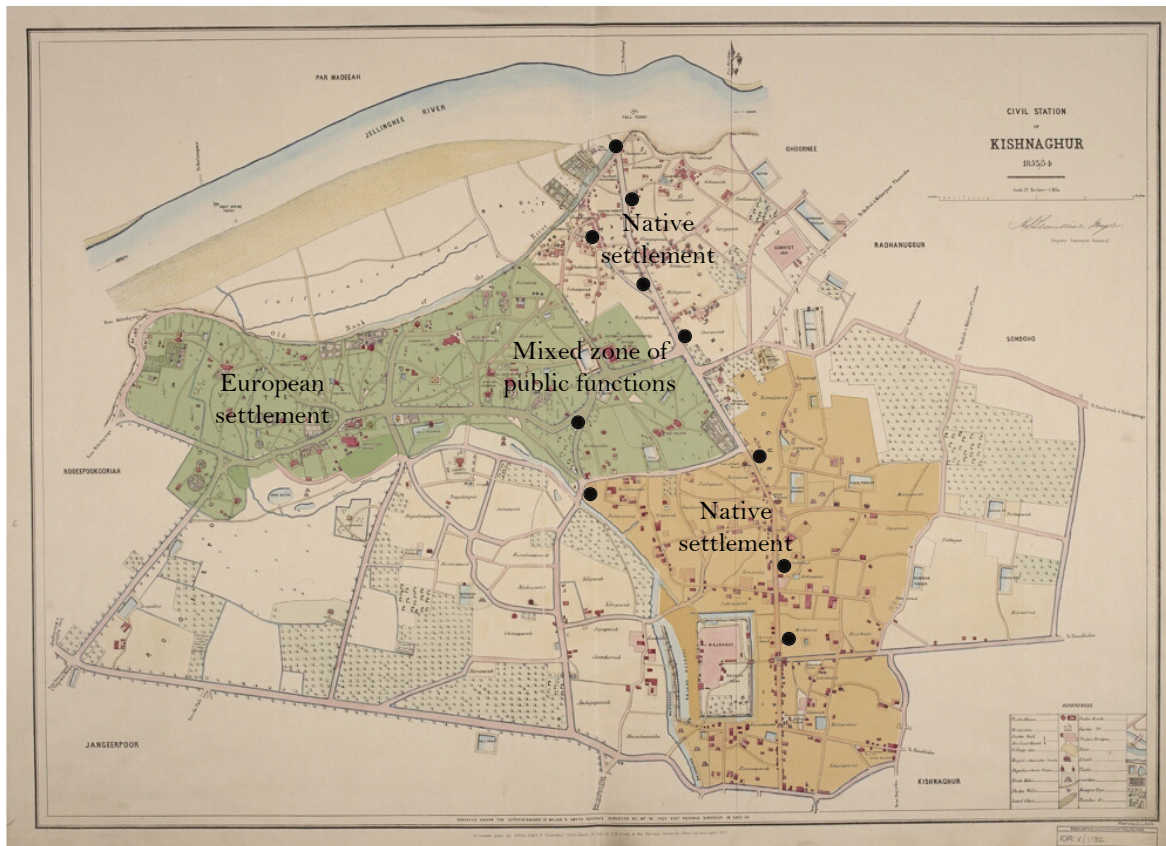


Fig. 2. 17a Location of municipal wells, Krishnanagar. Note the high number of wells in the native town due to its perception as being 'unhygienic'.
Source: base map - British Library Maps Collection, IOR.



Fig. 2. 17b Municipal well - Bankura.



Fig. 2. 17c Water works built by the Maharaja of Burdwan, 1881.

premise, Ripon's reforms stemmed from a pragmatic realisation that raising municipal taxes from local taxpayers was almost impossible without involving them in government, especially in matters of health and hygiene that impinged directly on indigenous cultural practices. It is interesting to note that relatively little seems to have been done in terms of urban improvements in *zilla sadar* between their formation and the establishment of 'majority-elected' municipal bodies in 1882.⁸⁸ With the advent of local representation, a number of native residents became municipal commissioners and came to hold key offices. Typically, they came from urban elites such as *zamindari* and professional families, pursuing a similar vision of the 'modern' town as the colonial authorities themselves. In many ways, they acted as mediators between western ideas of health and sanitation and Indian cultural practices. After 1882, in most *zilla sadars*, municipal interventions centred on certain distinct policies of improving the water supply, drainage, waste management, and services such as street lighting, parks or the disposal of the dead.⁸⁹

Ensuring 'healthy' conditions became what predominantly drove municipal activity and lay at the core of their modern conception of urbanity. The central problem was that of *contact* and *contamination*, whether through air or water, and the basic solution was the separation and segregation of different categories of spaces and resources, via 'urban cleansing'. For example, drinking water tanks were separated out from those for washing and bathing. In towns like Krishnanagar (Fig. 2.17a), Bankura (Fig. 2.17b) or Suri, wells were dug for everyday use and washing roads. A certain differentiated geography of water and other primary resources emerged as a result. The various municipal wells of Krishnanagar clearly demonstrated, for example, how the native town was perceived as the key problematic site, and thus in need of the most active 'improvement'. While in the European area, wells formed part of private bungalow and administrative compounds, in the native town, municipal wells were public provisions, forming a chain along key routes and junctions. Of course, most crucially, these interventions were the result of the changing landscape of medical knowledge in Britain, especially the 'germ theory' of diseases, whereby maladies like cholera were clearly identified by the late-nineteenth century as being water-borne. A water filtration system was duly set up under the patronage of the *Maharaja* in Burdwan in 1881, one of the earliest *sadar* to have one (Fig 2.17c).⁹⁰ Most other towns got their

88 In this context Mark Harrison enumerates a handful of instances of sanitary progress in *mufassal* municipalities till 1881, these being virtually limited to Dinajpur in Bengal, where drainage and water supply schemes were initiated that year.

89 The following list of municipal interventions in this period has been compiled based on various sources: Bengal Municipal Reports 1873-1910, IOR, V/24/ 2850- 58, British Library; the Municipal Reports available in the various *zilla sadar* towns; and the author's own survey of the municipal interventions from the late-nineteenth century, some of which (e.g municipal wells, taps, overhead water tanks or water tanks for drinking, bathing and ablutions) still exist:

- Water supply (provision of drinking water through digging wells, filtration systems, and, after 1900, overhead water tanks, piped water, provision of tanks specifically for drinking, washing and bathing, watering of streets)
- Drainage (construction of storm-water drains)
- Cleaning and conservation (use of staff and trolley systems to remove night soil)
- Waste management (designation of garbage dumps, mostly in peripheral areas)
- Communication networks (building new roads, repairing existing ones)
- Municipal markets and slaughterhouses
- Disposal of dead (cremation, *ghaats*, cemeteries and other enclosures).
- Street lighting (gas, and electrical by around 1920-35)
- Urban aesthetics (environmental interventions, parks, planting of trees)

90 This was also influenced, for example, by the incidence of the dreaded burdwan fever between 1860 and 1874.



Fig. 2.17d Municipal water tank and water taps in Berhampur, built by Rani Swarnamayee of the Saidabad *zamindari* family. Elements like water tanks became major markers in the *sadar's* landscape. More often than not urban nodes came to be

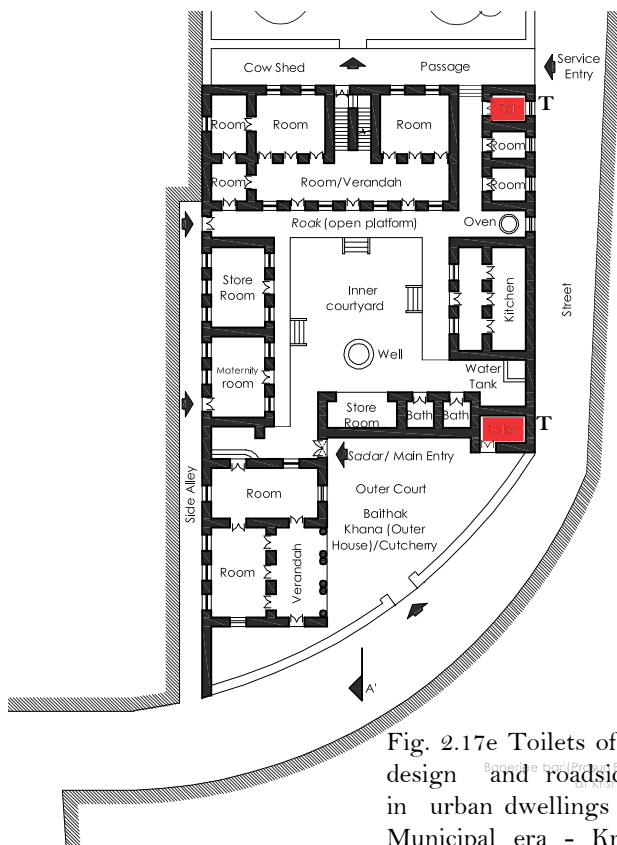


Fig. 2.17e Toilets of distinctive design and roadside location in urban dwellings during the Municipal era - Krishnanagar and Bankura.



first water supply system in the first two decades of the twentieth century, again many being directly founded by patronage from the local elite. The water tank in Berhampur was erected by Rani Swarnamayee, who was in charge of the Saidabad *zamindari*, and who also introduced a system of water outlets (known as *ranir kol* or queen's taps) throughout the town (Fig. 2.17d).⁹¹ Another key area of intervention was conservancy arrangements, the initial experiments for which actually started in Bengal prisons before being adopted in the general areas of towns. Toilet designs specifically formulated to enable removal (by lower-caste workers) of night soil proliferated in the *sadar* in the late-nineteenth century, with local builders and masons becoming very adept at constructing them. In fact, these toilets with their distinctive vaulted roof (making the act of spotting them easier for municipal workers) were integral aspects of the urban form of *sadar* towns (Fig. 2.17e). While traditional latrines were embedded deep inside residential premises, house layouts transformed in response to new sanitary requirements, with toilets now located strategically on walls abutting streets to facilitate removal. Garbage dump areas such as Godadanga just outside the eastern edge of Krishnanagar, or Moilapota at the intersection of three dead streams on the southern edge of Khulna, were typically in the fringes of *sadar* towns. Sometimes these designations of 'waste' or 'marginal' land were reinforced by other attributes – for instance, the Godadanga area also housed the Muslim cemetery and was thus considered unhealthy and impure by the Hindus.

The advent of native representation in municipal bodies, along with factors like stability of local tax income and the lifting of the burden of police expenses, had a direct impact on health and hygiene interventions between 1884–1894, rising almost threefold and forming on average around 40% of municipal expenditure.⁹² Although uneven, sanitation schemes and protection against diseases clearly dominated municipal thinking. J.M. Cunningham's *Sanitary Primer* was translated into various Indian languages and was being widely distributed by the 1880s. In the early-twentieth century, former commissioners of 'successful' municipalities like Baranagar wrote handbooks for the benefit of younger generations of municipal staff.⁹³ Nonetheless, it has to be noted that the reception of municipal sanitation measures by citizens in *sadar* towns remained lukewarm, and was usually marked by ambivalence.

Not only were *zilla sadar* taken up as physical space to be cleaned up, they were also seen as threatened by mobile disease vectors created by bands of pilgrims, against which they had to be fortified. The movement of pilgrims indeed came to be identified as one of the biggest threats to *sadar* towns. In Bankura, as noted, a by-pass road was constructed in 1870 to divert the flow

91 In this context it is important to take special note of the contribution and patronage of local elites in instituting sanitary interventions in *sadar* towns. A look at the list of Public Works built with local private patronage easily reveals the steady rise of native patronage in this sector from 1880 onwards. British Library, IOR, PWD Annual Reports 1885/86 – 1900/01, V/24/3336; See also BL/ IOR/ Review of Public Works Executed by District and Local Boards, Municipalities and Other Local Bodies in Bengal, V/24/3338.

92 British Library, IOR, Bengal Municipal Annual Report, Bengal public Health and Local Self Government Department, for the years 1881/82–1885/86, 1886/87 – 1890/91, 1891/92 – 1899/1900, V/24/2852, 2853 and 2854.

93 P.K Shaw, *Municipal Life in Bengal. A Book of Practical Advice to Sanitary Officers and Overseers* (Calcutta: Pooran Press, 1914).



Fig. 2.17f The by-pass pilgrim route in Bankura (~1870) and its associated urban functions. 1- Police station, 2 - malaria office, 3 - labour depot, 4 - post office, 5 - Hindu High School grounds (~1894).
Source: base map - developed by author from contemporary maps.

of pilgrim traffic from villages in Bengal to Puri, since the old, established route went through the centre of the native town and was seen as a health threat (Fig. 2.17f).⁹⁴ Ironically, with the by-pass road soon picking up commerce from pilgrims, new urban nodes – such as Lalbazaar Mor – emerged along it. Lalbazaar Mor had to be provided with its own police station (guarding the easternmost end of the town), and the *sadar* dispensary and malaria office were set up there also. In addition to pilgrimage functions, it also acted as a point where a labourers' depot was built.⁹⁵ Although a by-product of attempts to counter disease infiltration, Lalbazaar Mor thus became an active urban node. By the late-nineteenth century, the by-pass route itself contained a second town-post office and the Hindu Boys School, whose came to serve as one of the three major public spaces of the town. In Midnapur, the arrival of the railway station shifted pilgrims from the main road in the town to its periphery – however, the railway was still regarded as a key carrier of dreaded diseases like cholera, malaria and other fevers.⁹⁶ Furthermore, stagnant water in low-lying areas created by railway construction was also identified as causing malaria.⁹⁷ While initially skirting the urban edges, railway areas eventually joined up with the physical fabric of *sadar* towns, making any real filtering out of diseases all but impossible. In both Bankura and Midnapur, therefore, the very measures used to protect the inflow of diseases ironically helped to reduce the effectiveness of mechanisms of separation.

Another controversial issue was the relative priorities attached to different aspects of civic governance by *sadar* municipalities. As pointed out by Harrison, municipalities were often accused of neglecting lighting and watering of streets in favour of sanitation. On the other hand, sanitary officers were irritated at a seeming preference for 'cosmetic' aspects.⁹⁸ Interestingly, the health and hygiene conception was in some ways linked to that of the 'ordered aesthetic'. For instance, one of the main tools for effecting sanitation measures was the adoption of *pucca* construction – involving, for example, firming up the edges of water tanks, metalling roads, or building permanent drains – to create a neater urban aesthetic as well. Yet in other ways the two approaches were at odds with each other, especially in terms of the share of municipal revenues claimed by each, and the image of the town as reflected through such allocation. However, one of the significant aspects to recognise is that unlike metropolitan cities such as Calcutta, Madras or Bombay, widespread urban restructuring through municipal intervention remained rare in *sadar* towns.⁹⁹ In most *zilla sadar*, the initial street layout was not really tampered with, probably

94 Centres of pilgrimage like the Jagannath Temple precinct in Puri in Orissa, and its annual *rathayatra* [chariot festival], was for the colonial authorities virtually a metaphor for disease and death that acted as an epicentre for the spread of disease and triggering off epidemics. See Biswamoy Pati, 'Ordering' 'Disorder' in a Holy City: Colonial Health Interventions in Puri During the Nineteenth Century', in Biswamoy Pati and Mark Harrison (eds.), *Health, Medicine and Empire: Perspectives on Colonial India* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2005). See also Ahuja, *Pathways of Empire*, 41–52.

95 Due to its arid and somewhat non-productive land, Bankura had had a tradition of migrant seasonal labour serving many other areas, especially the eastern areas of Bengal, for miscellaneous work.

96 L.S.S. O' Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Midnapore* (Bengal Secretariat Press, 1911), 94.

97 Areas adjacent to railway tracks as being problematic breeding grounds for mosquitos that carried malaria was a recurrent theme of various railway reports in the early-twentieth century. See e.g. Radice, *Eastern Bengal Railway Survey Report 1905*, 23; Capt. Maginiac, *Complete Engineering and Traffic Survey Report 1906* (Calcutta: 1906), 36.

98 Harrison, 'Public health and local self government', *Public Health*, 179–180.

99 For instance, in Calcutta or Bombay, the laying out of new, straight roads (e.g the C.I.T Road in Calcutta), cutting through urban areas or opening up new areas – was the hall mark of the urban planning attempts of municipalities and city improvement trusts. See, in this connection, Norma Evenson, *The Indian Metropolis* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989),



Sadar Hospital, Krishnanagar



Hospital Mor (hospital junction), Krishnanagar

Fig. 2.17g The central location of the *sadar* hospital as part of the mixed public zone, Krishnanagar. The intersection in fact came to be known as Hospital Junction and constituted a key node in the town.

Source: Base map - British Library maps collection, IOR.

due to the sheer difficulty of intervening in such complex spaces. Indeed, as for example, with the old city of Delhi, provincial towns in Bengal hardly received any ostensible ‘improvement’ to beautify their urban form.

It is also interesting to note the location in the *sadar* towns of the actual municipal offices. In the early years, most municipal offices started within the colonial *cutcheries* or some other governmental building. From 1882 onwards, with the introduction of a few elected representatives, they began to move to indigenous settlement areas, or in ‘mixed zones’ between the latter and the *cutcherry*. The first municipal office in Bankura was thus run from a room within the Collectorate, then moved to a site in the heart of Chowkbazaar or Barabazaar, within the native area, before shifting again to a site adjacent to the *cutcherry* and the native town. Likewise, municipal meetings in Burdwan were initially held in the Collectorate complex, then in a Roman Catholic church on the fringes of the native area, until it shifted to a *neelkuthi* on the main spine of the town. In Midnapur again it was the native town that finally came to house the municipal office. In Krishnanagar, the municipality (along with other functions like the post office and the *sadar* police station) was located in a mixed zone of public functions between the Judge’s *Cutcherry* and the indigenous settlement.

Municipal sanitary interventions were complemented by *sadar* hospitals, usually founded through a combination of governmental and local elite patronage. These appeared formally in *sadar* towns from around 1880 and intensified in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. For example, the Fraser Hospital in Burdwan was founded in 1910 by the Burdwan Maharaja and the *sadar* hospital in Suri was constructed by the Kundala *zamindars* in 1917. Prior to this, the health provision was limited mostly to town dispensaries as discussed earlier. The hospital invariably constituted one of the key urban nodes of the *sadar*, as part of a network of dispensaries and ‘malaria offices’ dispersed across the town. Typically, *sadar* hospitals also formed part of mixed zone of public functions around the *cutcherry* precinct (as in Bankura, Suri, Khulna), or else created a fully-fledged alternative node, as in Krishnanagar, Barisal or Burdwan (Fig. 2.17g). In fact, certain areas derived their names from their primary function as the hospital precinct – for example, one of the main nodes in Krishnanagar came to be known as the ‘Hospital Mor’, or Hospital Junction. However, for most of the nineteenth century, the hospital infrastructure in *sadar* towns was minimal,¹⁰⁰ and western medicine had only skeletal acceptance amongst the native population – accounting largely for the late emergence of the westernised hospital as a major urban element.

156.

100 In special cases like the cantonment town of Berhampur, with its relatively higher European population, there was a European hospital from the late-eighteenth century. Provincial jails in *zilla sadar* towns invariably contained jail hospitals, and the medical officer (Civil Surgeon) doubled up as the Jail Superintendent as well. He, along with the occasional Assistant Surgeons, also oversaw the treatment of the handful of European citizens in *sadar* towns. But the governmental provision of medical infrastructure for the indigenous population was generally non-existent until the late-nineteenth century.

2.2.2 Maps, municipal governance and urban-rural definitions

Arguably, the first trace of the 'formal' recognition by the colonial government of *sadar* towns as distinct urban territories appears to have started in the mid-nineteenth century. This was possibly rooted in the text-based surveys of eastern India undertaken by Walter Hamilton from 1815, and the augmented versions by Montgomery Martin around 1836–38,¹⁰¹ in which a few *zilla sadar* towns, as well as the larger region, were studied in detail. An attempt to capture the *sadar* as a comprehensible spatial entity can be seen for the first time in the maps drawn up by the Survey Department of Bengal from 1851–54 under the Surveyor-General, Captain W.S. Sherwill, followed by an updating in 1857–58 by Captain J.E. Gastrell (Fig. 2.18a). These maps were clearly very different from Rennell's terrain maps or revenue maps (Fig. 2.18b). Indeed, they didn't contain the level of detail or information that revenue maps were usually characterised by. Instead, they delineated the *sadar* as a whole settlement, marking up contextual features like adjacent rivers or agricultural land, and thereby making legible the urban structure in terms of primary streets, key functions and the nature of built forms. Interestingly, the maps were all titled 'The civil station of [sadar town] and its environs', suggesting they were meant chiefly as representations of the European settlements, with surrounding native areas constituting merely its 'environs'—again reinforcing the sense of 'otherness' of the native areas within the colonial perception. However, the maps equally revealed the juxtaposition of the two and in many ways, of the difficulty in establishing a real boundary between them. In any case, these maps offer ample evidence that — contrary to the suggestion by some post-colonial historians that events like the *Sepoy* Mutiny or *Santhal* Rebellion acted as the crucial drivers of recognising and reorganising urban areas¹⁰² — in the case of Bengal's *sadar* towns, the acknowledgement of them as distinctive spatial entities began at least as early as around 1850.

As noted in Chapter 1, a particularly ambiguous aspect of the *sadar* was the ever-contentious issue of urban and non-urban areas within it. The difficulty in assigning a single coherent character to the *sadar* was most intensely felt during and after the formation of provincial town municipalities from 1856 onwards, especially in terms of defining their boundaries.¹⁰³ By the mid-nineteenth century, the *sadar* was effectively a cluster of settlements, many of them existing villages, and it was unavoidable to include these villages within the *sadar's* municipal

101 Walter Hamilton, *The East India Gazetteer; containing particular descriptions of Hindostan, and the adjacent countries, India beyond the Ganges, and the Eastern Archipelago: with sketches of the manners ... of their various inhabitants* (London: n.v., 1815); Robert Montgomery Martin, *The history, antiquities, topography and statistics of Eastern India: comprising the districts of Behar, Shahabad, Bhagulpoor, Goruckpoor, Dinajepoor, Puraniya, Rungpoor & Assam, in relation to their geology, mineralogy, botany, agriculture, commerce, manufactures, fine arts, population, religion, education, statistics, etc.* (London: Wm H. Allen & Co., 1838).

102 See e.g. Evenson, *The Indian Metropolis* or Veena Talwar Oldenberg, 'The Making of Colonial Lucknow 1856–1877' in *The Lucknow Omnibus* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

103 *Mofussil* [provincial] municipalities were created through a series of municipal acts, viz. Act XXVI of 1850, Act XX of 1856, Act III of 1864, and Act VI of 1868, with maximum numbers being created under the 1856 and 1868 acts. Bengal Municipal Annual Reports 1876/77, V/ 24/ 2850, India Office Records, British Library.

boundaries.¹⁰⁴ Added to this was the concern that reforms related to health, hygiene, sanitation and education could be carried out more easily if all settlements in the vicinity were brought formally under municipal jurisdiction. Also, the very basis for including a settlement within a municipality was its predominantly non-agricultural economy.¹⁰⁵ Though many villages around *sadar* towns fitted this bill, their 'rural' character in terms of buildings and lifestyles was a continuous source of discomfort in their emerging conception as an 'urbanised' entity. From around 1875, there were efforts to curtail certain municipal boundaries (e.g. in Darjeeling, Berhampur, Balasore) to delimit them as far as possible to what was regarded as the 'urban' area.¹⁰⁶ Villages in peripheral areas often had lower-density housing of largely mud-and-thatch or mat-and-bamboo construction, which in turn generated lower municipal taxes.¹⁰⁷ Revenue from certain fringes of towns was thus felt to be so low that municipalities found it unviable to maintain efficient policing or roads, and on such grounds many areas with 'rural' characteristics were edged out of the town's jurisdiction. What is most critical though is the instrumentality of such measures in defining what was 'urban' and 'non-urban'. Interestingly, despite the desire of municipalities to define the town in terms of urbanity, in reality even in the central areas of the towns (especially in eastern districts like Chittagong and Kumilla) people often chose to continue living in *kutcha* mat-and-bamboo houses, and not upgrade to *pucca* construction, so as to avoid higher taxes – something that was a source of much frustration for the municipalities.¹⁰⁸ While the municipalities continuously tried to use *pucca* construction in urban engineering or other improvement projects as an index of modernity, any stable correlations between categories like *kutcha*/rural on one hand and *pucca*/urban on the other, were thus problematic given that *kutcha* dwellings often made up the very core of *sadar* towns.

2.2.3 The town as synthetic picturesque and abstract order

Possibly as a reaction to the dominance of sanitary interventions in municipal governance through to the 1890s, an alternative and more 'cosmetic' idea of the town was surfacing by the late-nineteenth century. Again, such a conception – shaped around tree-lined avenues, public gardens and parks – was not altogether new. A small urban design scheme for the sub-divisional town of Kushtea in the 1860s was a case in point.¹⁰⁹ Other than being a civil station, Kushtea was also a thriving business centre. By 1860, there was a proposal by the Public Works Department to provide a market and other infrastructure in the town. A European contractor, Mr. Kenny, and an unknown native contractor were awarded different parts of the commission. Even more interesting was Mr. Kenny's actual design for Kushtea, which the Public Works Department

104 It is fairly well established that the formation of town municipalities after 1850 was largely driven by passing the burden of financing the government's sanitation projects to the town's population at large. See for example Mark Harrison, *Public Health*, p. 166.

105 Refer Code 6, Bengal Municipal Act, 1864.

106 Bengal Municipal Annual Reports 1873/74–1875/76, V/ 24/ 2850, India Office Records, British Library.

107 Municipal taxation system was related to valuation of property, and thus poorer quality and temporary constructions like mud, mat or thatched buildings naturally generated lower taxes.

108 Bengal Municipal Annual Report 1873/74, IOR/ V/ 24/ 2850, India Office Records, British Library.

109 British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings, P/ 16/ 38, Nov 1860.



Fig. 2. 19b Panorama, Dacca, mid-nineteenth century. Panoramas like these also possibly fed into the unified built-form based conception of representation of governance of the 1860s.

Source: British Library Images Online, IOR.

lauded (Fig. 2.19a). The scheme proposed a crescent-shaped market which created a large, almost semi-circular, space in front, right at the entrance to the town, abutting the jetty onto the Hugly River. A major spine road took off from the centre of the crescent into the town. The Kushtea scheme marked a clear departure from the prevalent typologies for markets and street patterns characteristic of most *sadar* towns and civil stations, and tried instead to organise its space into a rational geometric formation that would introduce catalytic spatial elements to ensure more organised growth in future. It also marked the intersection of state projects and private commercial enterprise as agents of such an abstract restructuring.

Thus from around 1860 this kind of abstracted, coherent arrangement began to gain more confident expression in governmental thinking, as part of a drive to represent imperial governance after the assumption of power from the East India Company by the British Crown. Another significant example was the town of Dacca, which was actively taken up for development around 1860, with deliberations on the spatial organisation of its new administrative buildings. One of the substantive moves was that of *consolidation* – of individual functions of government into one wholesome formation – with a large chunk of land (Fig. 2.19b).¹¹⁰ In most *sadar* towns which had grown through incremental urban growth, spatial relationships between different administrative functions were the result of many forces – based, more often than not, on their day-to-day working. Most were typically distributed throughout the *sadar* in a dispersed manner, with networks that overlapped with other networks of everyday life (for example, the typical routes for the police's night-vigil were the ones shared by religious processions, and so a police station could be right next to a mosque, or a post office next to a temple precinct).¹¹¹ But the newer emphasis on the representation of governance isolated its constituents from those of the town, preferring to link colonial administration through abstract relationships. Elaborate negotiations were thus conducted in Dacca to achieve this consolidation, especially in overcoming the limitations imposed by land parcelling and private ownership. Much effort was made, and through intricate jugglery of the Land Acquisition Act,¹¹² a unified centre of district governance was achieved with a large number of government departments like police, health and land registration being integrated into the same site. Twenty years later, in the design of the newly formed *sadar* town of Khulna,¹¹³ the vision of a unitary representation of governance was explicitly articulated in a communication from the Public Works Department to the Superintending Engineer:

110 British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings, Apr – Jun 1864, P/ 16/ 67.

111 A classic case in point was the *sadar* police station and post office on a junction in Krishnanagar which contained a mix of other functions as diverse as the collegiate school, private lichee grove, mosque, the municipality, as well as being the entrance to the main *bazaar* area of the town.

112 Regulation of land acquisition was first enacted by the British in India in 1824, with its application being limited to the Bengal Province. The rule empowered the government to acquire immovable property at what was deemed to be fair and reasonable price for construction of roads, canals or other public purposes. In 1850, some of the provisions of the act were extended to include Calcutta (Act I of 1850). It was particularly utilised for the development of the first railway network. Act VI of 1857 was the first full enactment to include all of British India, and it repealed all previous acts. This is what is likely to have been used in the Dacca case. Subsequently an act of 1870 and finally the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 came about, the latter of which was finally adopted in independent India as well. The Land Acquisition Act is one of the most influential items to radically affect urban and rural development patterns in India.

113 The administrative infrastructure of Khulna was being upgraded from that of a subdivision and in many ways, virtually being recast and freshly laid out at that time.



Fig. 2. 19c Golapbag gardens, Burdwan - mid to late nineteenth century.



Fig. 2. 19d Star of India gate, built in 1904 by the Burdwan Maharaja in honour of Lord Curzon's visit in 1905

During his recent visit to Khoolna, His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor was of opinion that the Judge's cutcherry, collectorate and other judicial buildings could be advantageously built on the river bank retired to a safe and suitable distance, but so as to be seen as a whole from the river.¹¹⁴

The Superintending Engineer in turn communicated to the District Collector that the advantage of such a layout would be 'that seen from the river these buildings would present a fine façade'.¹¹⁵ Around this time there seems to have also been a move towards organised individual components of urban aesthetics, such as in public gardens and parks. The brick field in Khulna, set up to produce bricks for the administrative buildings before construction commenced in 1881, was subsequently converted into a decorative public garden by the municipality.¹¹⁶ However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, such efforts at beautification were not only pursued by the colonial government but also by native elites like the Burdwan Raj family (Fig. 2.19c and 2.19d). Native patronage of gardens, temples, water tanks or *ghaats* had of course a much older lineage. But while earlier provision had been more utilitarian or part of the everyday cultural life of people¹¹⁷, by the late-nineteenth century it took on a more cosmetic and decorative turn. As such, it fostered a different notion of aesthetics, leisure and public space within the larger vision of the town as a synthetically ordered entity. Visions of decorative ordering as a means to create an aesthetic townscape had thus rubbed off on the native elite as well. Tree-lined avenues, public gardens and parks were also linked to the introduction of western ideas of health centred on fitness, associated with good air, green surrounding, and with the artificial tailoring of natural environments supplying the human requirements for such fitness. This was a clear departure from the more functional provision of water supplies, drainage, conservancy schemes or gas-lighting characteristic of, say, 1880s municipal work.¹¹⁸

But again, such visions found limited applicability or response in *sadar* towns. As for abstract urban ordering, it was limited by the complex history of development of the typical *zilla sadar*. Exceptions like Dacca or Khulna or Howrah, towns where substantial administrative areas were being set up from scratch or re-built in the late-nineteenth century, were few and far between. And even in these exceptions, the implementation remained restricted mostly to the *cutcherry* precincts. So despite the emergence of conceptions of authority and representation of empire, and of provincial administration as part of the larger framework of imperial rule, most *sadar* towns continued to grow largely outside the ambit of such ideologies. Urban spaces like parks didn't find much popularity either, yet interestingly, they served as spaces which were at

114 British Library, IOR, Bengal Public Works Department Proceedings Mar-May 1885, no. 100, letter from W.B. Bestic, Under-Secretary to the Government of Bengal, PWD to the Superintending Engineer, Central Circle, P/ 2482.

115 *Ibid.*, no. 102, Letter from Colonel Beresford Lovett, Officiating Superintending Engineer, Central Circle to the Collector of Khulna.

116 See Improvement of the Town Khulna, West Bengal State Archives, 259 MPI, 8/1890, March 1890.

117 These mostly comprised of provision of water, or of religious structures like temples or mosques.

118 Urban elements like parks in provincial towns were also possibly the result of a 'trickle-down' effect from conceptions of parks as urban components developing in metropolitan centres like Calcutta. In the early-twentieth century, in fact, the Bengal government formulated a formal policy for public parks, with strict controls and limitations in terms of their usage and the degree of public access. See *Rules under Section 4 of Bengal Public Parks Act 1904 for the Management and Preservation of the Eden Gardens, Calcutta.*, West Bengal State Archives, 516 MPI, 1E/1/1904.



Fig. 2. 20a European club, Berhampur and Town hall, Burdwan. Note the grounds in the latter which also served as the key public space for the town at large.

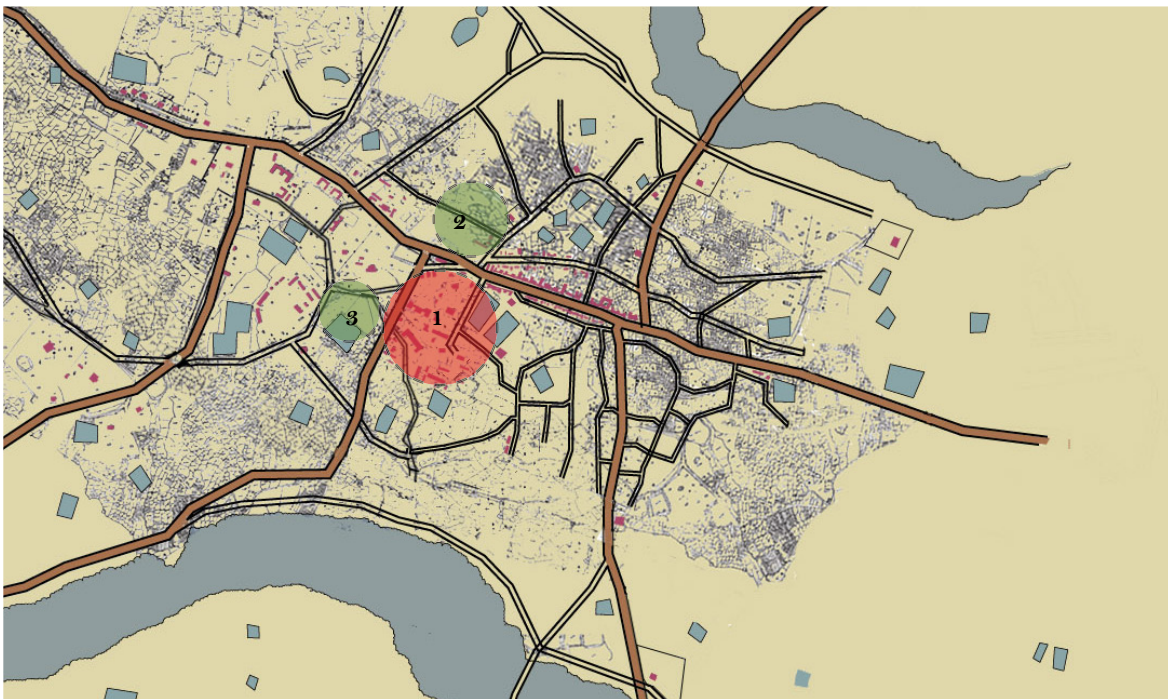


Fig. 2. 20b Key public spaces in relation to the *cutcherry*, Bankura. 1 - The *cutcherry*, 2 - Bangabidyalaya (vernacular school) grounds, 3 - Tamliband grounds
Source: Base map - developed by the author from contemporary map.



Fig. 2. 20c Public library (in front) and town hall (not visible) grounds, Krishnanagar. This served as the major public space for the town.

times appropriated for radically different uses. The park in Khulna, ironically, became the most popular meeting ground in town, where all important public meetings and political protests were held. It also served as a site from which the nationalist movement was largely mobilised. Within the emerging histories of resistance movements and nationalism after the partition of Bengal in 1905, and of various forms of indigenous dissent, these seemingly cosmetic spaces offered other potentials and came to possess new semantic content. Many of these grounds were later appointed with stages for orators and theatre performances; a new layer of props that paradoxically enabled them to perform their newer, more subversive civic roles.

2.2.4 Public spaces and spaces of dissent and resistance

Thus a highly potent dimension of the *sadar's* identity came from its public spaces and buildings. Other than the European club, which was the centre of leisure and entertainment for the white population, local public life also formed around pivotal spaces like the town hall (Fig. 2.20a). While the former was usually attached to the European bungalow area, the latter was part of the mixed public zone discussed earlier.¹¹⁹ In most towns, the chief public space was a site close to, and in fact often a counterpoint to, the *cutcherry* precinct (Fig. 2.20b). In Krishnanagar, Barisal, Burdwan or Jessore it was the grounds of the town hall or public library that doubled up as the common public space for the town (Fig. 2.20c). In Krishnanagar, the Government College grounds also served this function, especially until 1859 (when the public library was built). In Suri, Gangadharbabur Hata, a piece of elevated land close to the *cutcherry*, served as the main public space. In Bankura there were two different sites – the Tamblibund area and the grounds of the Bangabidyalaya vernacular school – both in the vicinity of the *cutcherry* complex – that served as the central public spaces for the town. Later on, from 1894, when the Hindu Boys School was founded on the new pilgrimage route on the eastern edge of the town, its grounds (as noted) also provided a third public space. Educational and cultural institutions like town halls, schools and college grounds, often built with considerable native patronage, were the natural crucibles of public life. They held activities ranging from cultural events like theatre, dance or music programmes, sports events, to political meetings, debates and propaganda. In some cases, the collective activities of public life split up territorially into different types of functions on different sites – for example, at the Government College grounds in Krishnanagar were held most of the sports events, while the town hall grounds held mainly political meetings and cultural events. Vital to the *zilla sadar* was the multivalent nature of these sites; there was rarely anything that was a strictly institutional space, since they routinely doubled up as centres of social and political life. Ironically, it was also from these very institutions – mostly founded on eclectic liberal ideas – that dissent, resistance movements and nationalist fervour grew in the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century, seeking to dismantle the imperial system in India. Dissent against colonial establishments had been brewing for a long time and became increasingly strong after the imposition of imperial rule in 1858.¹²⁰

119 For a more detailed architectural study of the European club or the Bengali town hall-cum-club, see Chapter 6.

120 This had, in fact, found sporadic outlets through insurgencies such as the Indigo Rebellion (1859-62). This



Fig. 2. 20d Low-visibility spaces of resistance - Harihar Mukharjee's house (2), the *Akhada* (3) in relation to the *cutcherry* (1), Bankura.

Source: Base map - developed by the author from contemporary map.



Fig. 2.20e Harihar Mukherjee's house - this served as a key base for dissent movements and nationalist resistance

Further, developments like those around the Vernacular Press Act (1878)¹²¹ and the Ilbert Bill (1882)¹²² cast in the Bengali mind serious doubts as to the sincerity of the state in pursuing the fundamental values of representative government. Such sentiments of dissent against the colonial state also found expression in the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. The final blow was the partition of Bengal under Lord Curzon in 1905 that ignited the anti-state *Banga-bhanga* movement.¹²³ Without almost a single exception, all the spaces cited above – situated in the immediate vicinity of the *cutcherry*, the seat of provincial governance – acted also as spaces of dissent and resistance. Being part of a mixed public zone that had been co-produced by indigenous and colonial agency, these were sites that the native population managed to carve out or appropriate. They offered a level of exposure and impact through their visibility and proximity to sites of colonial governance that proved an immense boon for Bengali resistance movements.

It was this very aspect of visibility that was controlled in other types of spaces of resistance. A number of nationalist and other resistance activities were mobilised covertly in sites which had low visibility. One of the recurrent patterns seems to be that of *akharas* and *byam samitis*, or indigenous fitness schools, which gained a special significance in the consolidation of the nationalist movements by the late-nineteenth and turn of the twentieth century. These schools were particularly instrumental since they not only provided a counterpoint to western notions and institutions of fitness, but because indigenous techniques of keeping fit and body building were increasingly seen as a vital foundation for the basic training of ‘freedom fighters’ in the nationalist movement. It is well established that *akhadas* and *byam samitis* directly served as recruitment centres for resistance groups in the aftermath of the partition of Bengal (fig 2.20d). The *akhada* in Bankura, for example, was an active formative ground for anti-British activities. Resistance movements were also mobilised from houses of *sadar* inhabitants – the case of Harihar Mukherjee in Bankura being a classic example (Fig. 2.20d and 2.20e). Mukherjee was

rebellion started as a peasant movement and subsequent uprising of indigo farmers against the European indigo planters of Bengal. It, however, found widespread support amongst Bengal’s wealthy upper class, its intelligentsia, as well as amongst a few Europeans in Bengal.

121 The Vernacular Press Act was enacted in 1878 to curtail the freedom of the Indian-language (i.e. non-English) press. Proposed by Lord Lytton, then Viceroy of India (1876–80), the act was intended to prevent the vernacular press from expressing criticism of British policies – notably, the opposition that had grown with the outset of the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–80). The act basically excluded English-language publications. It elicited strong and sustained protests from a wide spectrum of the Indian populace. The law was repealed in 1881 by Lytton’s successor as Viceroy, Lord Ripon (1880–84). However, the resentment it produced among Indians became one of the enduring aspects of the increasingly hostile relationship between the colonial state and the Indian people.

122 Introduced by the Viceroy Lord Ripon in 1883, the Ilbert Bill (named after Courtenay Peregrine Ilbert, the recently-appointed legal adviser to the Council of India) formally allowed, in amendment of existing laws, Indian judges and magistrates in *mufassal* [provincial] areas to try European offenders in criminal cases at the district level. The bill faced intense opposition in Britain and from British settlers in India, and thus was passed in 1884 in an extremely compromised form. It was decided that Europeans in provincial areas could be tried only through a jury system where at least 50% of the members of the jury were Europeans or Americans. The controversy caused deep schism between the British and Indians and acted as a prelude to the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

123 The *Banga-bhanga* [partition of Bengal] movement of 1905 – a major political upheaval that fundamentally questioned the presence of British authority in Bengal – was precipitated by the division of Bengal into two parts (eastern and western) by the British government. The partition of Bengal is largely accepted by colonial historians as a clear attempt to fracture the growing anti-imperial formations there. The *Banga-bhanga* movement, it is now widely recognised, helped to forge, in substantive terms, a national identity for India at the turn of the twentieth century. This in turn acted as the foundation for the Indian nationalist movement from then onwards, flowing directly into India’s struggle for freedom from British rule in the 1930s.

a government pleader, a member of the Town Committee (formed in 1867), and the chairman of the Bankura municipality between 1885 and 1900. Although a part of the governmental establishment, Mukherjee was equally a severe critic of the colonial administration, and he actively funded the resistance movement and even provided shelter to insurgents. Mukherjee's house in fact came to be known in later years as the 'freedom-fighters' house' within popular parlance.¹²⁴ Visible and invisible spaces of resistance thus worked as different aspects of an overall resistance geography in *sadar* towns – made up on one hand of spaces embedded deep within residential areas, or in other obscure locations, alongside spaces that offered blatant public exposure on the other.

To sum up, the *sadar* was a far more complex, heterogeneous and nuanced urban landscape than can be understood through such blanket categories as city/town/country, or in terms of binary oppositions like "black-town/white-town", "dominant/dependent" and "native/sahib" areas. Rather, it operated in a highly fluid and amorphous space – whether of an intermediate administrative hierarchy, of movement between locales and different perceptions of such moves, of inter-changeability of forms and types of space, of non-fixity of occupation and use, of conflicting readings of wholesomeness and heterogeneity. The contours of the *sadar* town in Bengal, from its urban form to building types and interior spaces, were determined by a range of relationships of difference, autonomy and dependence. Such relationships worked on one hand with a vast rural hinterland with which its own social and economic life was intricately enmeshed, and on the other, with large urban centres such as Calcutta which logistically and in terms of the cultural 'trickle-down' effect, including from Britain, continued to fuel the spatial imagination of the *sadar*. The urban patterns of colonial provincial governance in lower Bengal were thus continuously tempered by such plurality of paradigms that routinely infused the life of *zilla sadar* towns, and as a result produced genuinely fluid and multivalent urban spaces.

¹²⁴ Interestingly, the *akhada* and Mukherjee's home were adjacent to each other. Though there does not seem to be much documentary evidence of direct connections between the two, popular narratives state that both worked in tandem, as complementary units, and thus in effect, they constituted a composite site of resistance. In the *akhada* the nationalist insurgents were trained, in Mukherjee's house they were given shelter. Conversations with Girindrashekhar Chakrabarty, Rathindramohan Chowdhury, Debashish Mukherjee, Gautam De and Durgaprasad Chattopadhyay of Bankura town, who based their observations on narratives handed down from earlier generations.

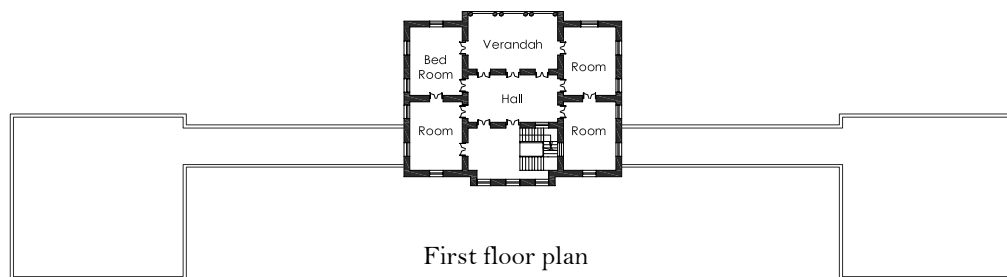
Chapter 3 ■

Administrative architecture 1786 - 1830



Introduction

This chapter focuses in the development of provincial administrative spaces during the early period of the East India Company's revenue governance in Bengal. It looks at how, as the different demands for revenue administration gradually emerged, the designs of provincial administrative buildings in the *zilla sadar* evolved in response to them. In doing this, the chapter first studies the early establishments of the East India Company - the commercial Factories - that preceded its buildings of revenue administration in the region. It then traces the development of the colonial '*cutcherry*' or the governmental office complex in *zilla sadar* towns in relation to these early Factories, setting out what the two had in common and what the points of departure between the two were. It subsequently looks in detail at the architectural character of provincial administrative buildings in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century and at its transformation into more elaborate forms after the 1820s. The chapter identifies and analyses three basic phases of evolution of provincial governmental architecture of the East India Company - the Factory phase (1640 -1800), the bungalow-cum-*cutcherry* phase (1800 - 1820) and the barrack-type *cutcherry* phase (1820-1830).



Rear view



Front view

Fig. 3.1 Circuit Judge's house, Register's and Magistrate's *cutcherries*, Bankura 1808

3.1 Late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century provincial administrative architecture - a case

In the central administrative complex of the town of Bankura, stands a two storey building weathered by time, in a state of neglect and disrepair. A closer look reveals two smaller single-storied cousins on either side, connected to the central building by passageways. It takes a good amount of observation, a good look at the drawings folder of governmental buildings by the East India Company produced in 1823, and a thorough reading of a few letters issued by the Bankura Collectorate describing the production of these buildings in 1807-8, to realise that the outer *verandah* in the central building and the layers of building around the connecting corridors are, in fact later additions, built around a central core structure which was the original form. The historical documents also give a fair idea about some of the pressing issues that shaped the making of these buildings.

The central building in question was a Circuit House – typically used to accommodate the Circuit Judge's residence, the record offices and, later on, to house officers on inspection circuits in districts at large (Fig. 3.1)¹. The ones on either side were respectively the Magistrate's and Register's *cutcherry* – in this case, they housed public courtrooms and offices for administering justice in criminal and civil matters. From the letters issued by the Magistrate in 1808 to Fort William in Calcutta, the seat of colonial Governance², it is known that the construction of all three buildings was completed in that year. It is also known that the land for these public offices, considered premium property since it sat at an elevation within the town, had been bought from the local *zamindar* of Chhatna.³ In many ways, this cluster of buildings represents a key moment in the development of administrative architecture of the East India Company and of the complex decisions or negotiations at different levels and on different fronts – from logistics of land acquisition to building design and agency – which were involved in the process.

The buildings in Bankura need to be understood in the perspective of the colonial administrative structure and development that formed their context. Starting from 1765 or the granting of the *diwani*, the first 20 years of the East India Company's revenue administration was marked by a continuous dilemma as to whether administrative power should be largely placed in the Company headquarters at Calcutta, or whether it should be dispersed at the more localised district level. In an atmosphere where the collection of land revenue was always the driving

1 As mentioned in Chapter 1, Circuit Judges were judicial officers who undertook circuits within the region to settle important cases. They were usually based in *zilla sadar* towns and constituted pivotal personnel within such a 'mobile' administration system that was characteristic especially of the early years of revenue administration. In fact the delivery of justice through mobile judicial officers continued right through – even into the imperial era after 1858. Divisional Commissioners would at that time double up as Circuit Judges. However, their visits to and contact with interior areas gradually saw a decline, with junior officers from the *sadar* or stationed in interior areas shouldering most of the delivery of justice.

2 *Bankura District Letters Issued 1802-1869, (West Bengal District Records, New Series)*, Sukumar Sinha and Himadri Banerjee, eds. (Calcutta: office of the Directorate of Census Operations, 1989), Letter no. 84, From William Blunt, Magistrate, Jungle Mahal district, to George Dowdeswell Esq., Secretary to Govt. in the Judicial Department, Fort William, 18 Nov. 1808.

3 *Ibid*, Letter no. 52, 20 June, 1808. The town of Bankura comprised of land belonging to two different local *zamindars* – the Malla rajas (*zamindar*) and the Chatna rajas. The portion of the *cutcherry* complex (69 Bighas 3 Cottahs or 1.68 acres) belonged to the Chatna *zamindars* and was bought from them for 250 Rupees.

force, and in which numerous land and property disputes, differences over revenue settlements, related law-and-order issues and assessment of crime were its associated incumbencies, the key changes in the structure of administration were centred on the three pivotal columns of early colonial administration – the administration of revenue, criminal justice and civil justice. In 1786, in a move substantially aimed to decentralise governance, the post of the ‘District Collector’ was formed, empowering this figure with virtually the entirety of district administration in revenue collection and executive matters. Criminal justice was administered at the district level through the *foujdari* (or criminal) courts, still based on the old Mughal system, whereby trials were conducted by the native *Kazi* or *Mufti*⁴ but overseen by a European Collector appointed by the East India Company. Civil justice was conducted initially by district *dewani* (or civil) courts to 1781 and then onwards by *dewani* courts which had areas of jurisdiction larger than the local districts. In 1787, the Collector was also made Magistrate (for criminal matters) and Judge (for civil matters) – i.e. all the offices were fused into one. In 1793, however, through fresh reforms, the ‘Collector’ was divested of his judicial duties altogether, and made the key executive functionary, and a separate post for the ‘Judge-Magistrate’ was created. Both the posts, from then onwards until reforms in the Civil Service in the late-nineteenth century, were held exclusively by European officers. Attached to the Judge-Magistrate’s office was also a Register, with assistants taken from European civil servants of the Company. The whole establishment was however, vitally dependent on a large body of middle and lower level Indian staff such as junior officers, clerks, orderlys and *chaprases*.⁵

It was the operations of this district governmental apparatus that the buildings in question in Bankura accommodated and gave force to. They represented one of the early attempts at providing for and articulating spatially the arms and components of British colonial administration in provincial areas – one through which administration began to be seen as and spatialised into distinct segments rather than as part of a larger, over-arching, umbrella category of revenue governance. It represented a moment in which the sheer complexity and specialised demands of revenue governance of an unknown topographical and demographic landscape – in this case, Bengal – necessitated finer differentiations within the governmental apparatus itself, and this in turn led to spatial units that were distinct and had their own independent identities. At the same time, it demanded deliberations on affinity relationships and spatial clustering that depended on the logistics of governmental operations. From a letter of 1808, it is interesting to note that the central building was chiefly a residential unit meant for the Circuit Judge, while the ones flanking it were offices or courtrooms, making this perhaps one of the earliest attempts to distinguish the ‘work’ domain from the ‘home’ domain in the provincial landscape of Bengal.⁶ The record rooms⁷ – a key prop of colonial governance – were housed within the residential

⁴ *Kazis* and *Muftis* were native judges under the Mughal system who continued to be part of the British judicial administration in its early days after 1765. These posts, usually held by native officers with expertise in Hindu and Muslim law, were gradually removed from the British administration system.

⁵ See glossary of terms.

⁶ *Bankura District Letters Issued 1802-1869*, letter no. 84 from William Blunt to George Dowdeswell, 18 Nov 1808.

⁷ In the case of provincial administration these held mostly land revenue, property and various other civil and

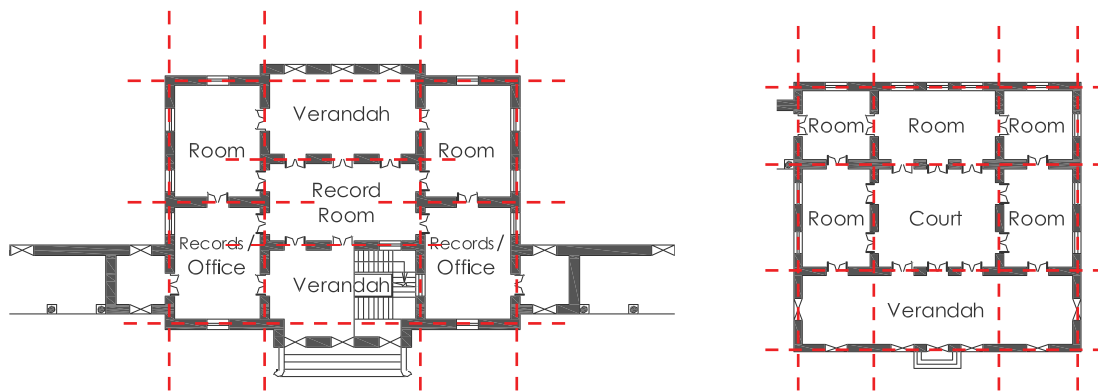


Fig. 3.2 Morphological comparison: Circuit Judge's house and Register's/ Magistrate's *cutcherries*, Bankura

unit, on the lower floor and with the Judge's residence on the floor above – possibly to ensure a direct control of records and to effect a certain economy in keeping vigilance on them after the daily suspension of court activities. What is equally critical, however, is the fact that work and home domains were still intricately linked and integrally tied to each other spatially through dependence relationships. It was also a link that had to be negotiated in conceptual and physical terms. In a letter written on 18th November 1808, the Judge-Magistrate for Bankura William Blunt, actively negotiated with the higher authorities in Calcutta for the building of two linking passageways on either side of the main building, as originally it had been intended that they should stand as three separate buildings. Blunt commented:

....as a further addition I would beg leave to recommend of uniting the three detached buildings into one by means of a colonnaded passage; the utility and advantage of which will be very considerable as a place required to protect the parties and witnesses under trial from inclemency of weather and affording a convenient communication from the record offices and apartment allotted for the accommodation of the Circuit Judge with the court rooms.⁸

He thus used a two-fold argument for the purpose. First, that the colonnaded passages would provide shelter for native litigants and witnesses, and second, that they would allow easy movement of the judge from his apartment and of records from the central building, to the respective courts on the side. While the various functional spheres were thus shaped as distinct spatial units of colonial governance, they had to be simultaneously and necessarily bound together as a composite entity. 'Work' and 'home' too, though differentiated, were not really separate – the entire composite was built up and formed around the ease with which the interface between work and home could be negotiated, an aspect that came to characterise colonial provincial governance in Bengal for the next century and more. The design thus had to, in effect, enable a trade off between differentiating governmental sub-units and linking them, between autonomy and interdependence of strands of administration, between separating and binding work and home spheres.

One of the significant issues that emerges is the centralised placement of records, accompanied architecturally by its strong physically central location within the scheme – a design consideration that seems to have dominated provincial public office architecture in Bengal for the first three quarters of the nineteenth century. A closer scrutiny also reveals that the simultaneous clustering and differentiation of components was not just made in terms of 'work' and 'home', but more specifically in terms of private and/or carefully guarded domain (e.g. residence and records) on one hand and public and/or more loosely guarded domain (e.g. courts and offices) on the other. The core concern, and basis for spatial articulation, seems thus to have been built around the notion of 'guarding' per se. Yet one cannot but anticipate the obvious possibility of slippages of such cautious practices or of the inconsistency with which they might be pursued either. For reasons of economy and avoidance of duplication, the connecting passageway had to play dual, almost conflicting, roles. While native litigants or witnesses would wait for their turn

criminal litigation records.

8 *Ibid.*

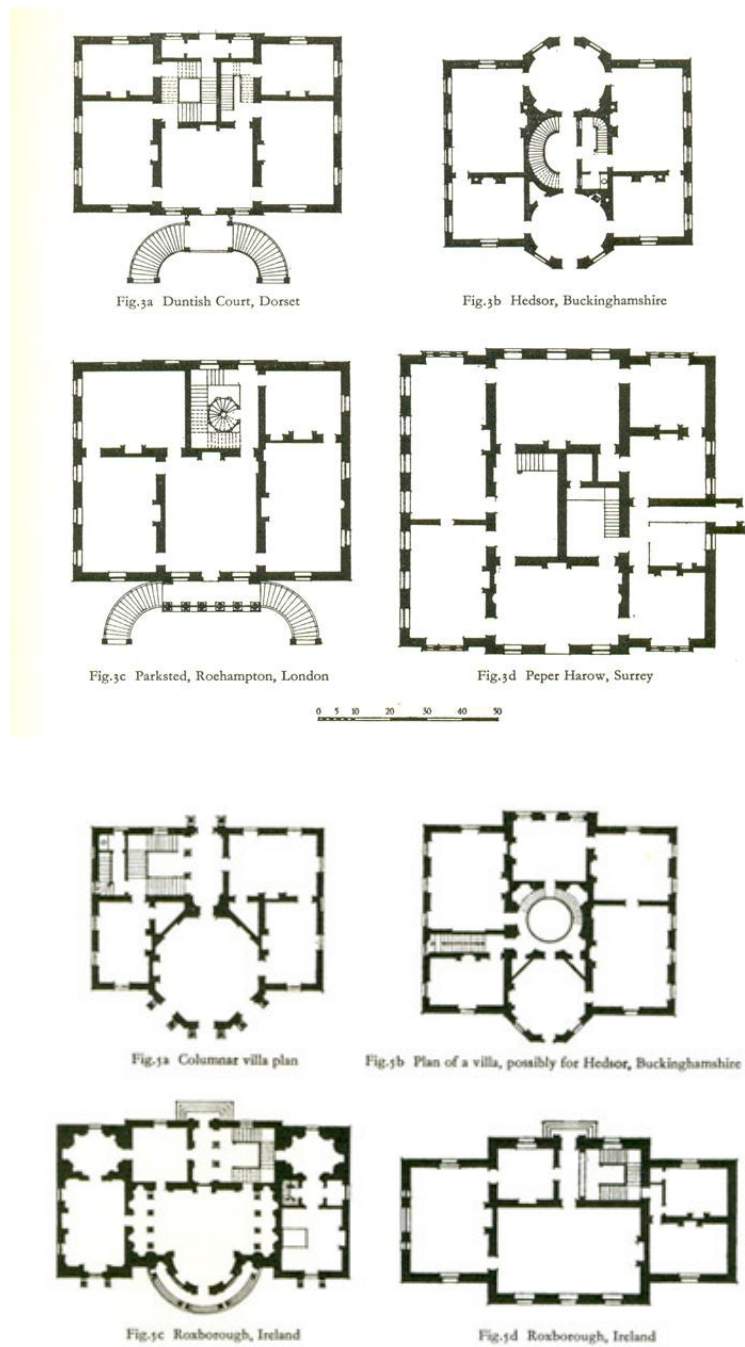


Fig. 3.3 Country house and villa plans (mid-eighteenth century) by William Chambers
 Source: *William Chambers: Knight of the Polar Star*, John Harris, 46

for court hearings in the connecting passageway, the very precious records which needed the highest protection, would have to be carried right through the same space (all of 10 feet wide) into the courtrooms – it meant a tricky and uncomfortable overlap of the most public function with the most guarded one, and a precarious exposure of protected government or legal material to the very subjects it was meant to be kept from.

Typologically, the set of buildings in Bankura throw up even more interesting questions. Despite the territorial separation of work and home, public and private, exposed and guarded domains, both the central building and the ones flanking it came from essentially the same morphological species (Fig. 3.2). Both were nucleated forms, with a central core space, around which a second layer of spaces formed an annular ring. The similarities with some of the eighteenth-century neo-Palladian villa forms found in Britain are quite striking – likewise, the three bay arrangement in one direction and two or three bay arrangement on the other hand are reminiscent of villas and country houses designed by architects like William Chambers in mid to late-eighteenth century Britain⁹ (Fig. 3.3). Like many of Chambers' villas the plans for both the Judge's residence/ record block and the two court blocks were dominated by a core space, but unlike in the former, the core space in the latter, instead of housing the main staircase, represented rather the most important and substantial space in the scheme – dedicated to functions like chief courtrooms, drawing room or dining room. The staircase itself (as in the residential block) followed the front or edge location also seen in many of Chambers' other designs. On the other hand, unlike many neo-Palladian villas designed by Chambers and others, which often juxtaposed the main staircase and the service staircase in physical proximity to each other, in this case there was no notion of a service staircase at all – suggesting, among other things, a far higher spatial and territorial overlap between British officers and native service staff. Compared to Chambers' designs, the building also had far higher level of porosity – with many doors connecting various spaces. While British neo-Palladian country houses of suitable scales probably figured in some way as the sources of form, there was evidently also a strong affinity to the local bungalow form of Bengal, which, in its most basic incarnation, consisted of a central nuclear space with an annular space of *vernadahs* all around (Fig. 3.4). The Bankura buildings were hence hybrids – drawing on British and local influences from Bengal. This sense was also reinforced by the incorporation in the buildings, of *verandahs*, though not continuous, on the front and back – in some sense, a morphing of the screened 'loggia' (characteristic of many neo-Palladian houses in eighteenth-century Britain, and of course, rooted in Italian ancestry) into the indigenous tropical *verandah*. On the other hand, the Bankura buildings could also be read as bungalows with parts of the *verandah* ring selectively closed up to form the internal rooms¹⁰.

9 It is likely that the buildings were partly influenced by works like those of William Chambers, since the latter offered parallels in scalar terms (Chambers designed a large number of small and medium sized country houses) unlike the ambitious, grand schemes by architects like Inigo Jones or Colen Campbell, which comprised the bulk of eighteenth century Palladian and neo-Palladian building catalogues like the 'Vitruvius Britannicus'. For an analysis of Chambers' work, see e.g. John Harris, *Sir William Chambers: Knight of the Polar Star*, with contributions from J. Mordaunt Crook and Eileen Harris (London: Zwemmer, 1970).

10 See Anthony D King's work 'The Bungalow' for illustrations of many such variants. Anthony D King, *The Bungalow* (London: Architectural Association, 1973).

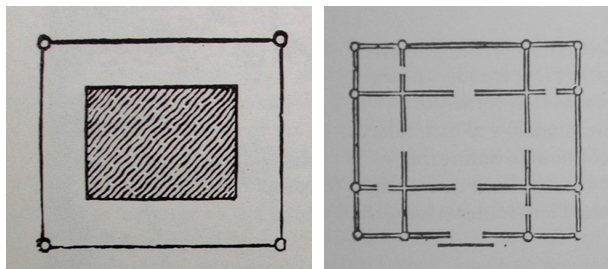


Fig. 3.4 Basic bungalow form and three-bay pattern.
Source: *Rural Life in Bengal*, Colesworthy Grant, 1860.



Fig. 3.5 The basic bungalow Mud and thatch houses,
Bengal.
Source: *Rural Life in Bengal*, Colesworthy Grant, 1860.

According to architectural historian Swati Chattopadhyay, the central core space in the bungalow form in colonial Bengal was actually a direct derivative or equivalent, a roofed version, not of European neo-classical prototypes, but rather of the courtyard, already prevalent in the tropical domestic architecture in Bengal¹¹. In many ways therefore, the buildings in question were an overlay of the small neo-Palladian villa and the tropical bungalow which in turn owed its origin to local mud and thatch houses (Fig. 3.5). Either way and, irrespective of their functions (e.g. courts, offices, apartments or record rooms), they were clearly rooted in what were residential forms. The Bankura cluster of buildings thus clearly illustrate a situation where very different functions were being accommodated within the same, or very similar, morphological format and a comfortable use of residential forms for all purposes. What is important to note is that it was obviously acceptable for colonial administrators to use such typological templates across functional categories like residence and office, and that, as a result, there was no direct correlation between functional, territorial and typological distinctions.

An interesting aspect of Colonial building in this context is the notion of temporariness and permanence that comes through in the design decisions that were being made. In the original proposal for the Bankura complex, the central building was to be entirely built of brick walls and terraced roofing¹², and the two side blocks were to be made with *chappah* or thatched roof over their verandahs, the relative sizes of which in respect to the total area were not unsubstantial. The Judge-Magistrate, William Blunt put forth a strong case for replacing the thatched roof over the *verandahs* also with terraced roofing, so as to settle for an all *pucca* construction¹³. The move does not seem as much to do with upgrading the construction of these 'parts' of the buildings, but rather, to upgrade to a different generation of full-fledged permanent building altogether, ensuring the scheme was not exposed to the risks associated with temporary construction, whether in part or whole. This, Blunt did through juggling the costs, whereby the terraced roof did not mean it would cost more. Although the cost finally did exceed the original estimate, Blunt managed to convince the Company headquarters to sanction the building modifications by positing the additional cost against the future gains likely to be accrued from lower maintenance costs. As governmental structures and functions, after continuous shifts between 1765 and 1793, became stabilised at the district level by the early-nineteenth century, so came the need to stabilise its operational base and material existence – through buildings that could last out a good number of years. It was an exigency that was most experienced on the ground, literally and metaphorically, since the revenues of these provincial districts of Bengal were, in effect, to hold up and consolidate British colonial government itself. It was fuelled, conditioned and prompted by a continuous insecurity of survival of the material substance of colonial functioning; given

11 For a detailed discussion on this, see Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny* (London: Routledge, 2005), 118 - 123.

12 Terraced roofing, along with brick walls in mud or *chunam* (lime) mortar, was considered a long lasting 'permanent' construction at the time, as against mud walls and country tile or thatch (also called *choppah* or *chappah*) roofs. It consisted of 2-3 layers of 1"-1.5" thick terracotta tiles, laid with staggered joints over wooden 'purlins', which were in turn placed over wooden beams (called '*barga*' and '*kori*' respectively in local parlance) – the entire construction being protected on top with a waterproof layer of lime terracing.

13 Originally part of the Hindustani (the lingua-Franca in large parts of Northern India), *kutchha* (also written as *cutcha*) and *pucca* are the Anglo-Indian terms for temporary and permanent construction.

how exposed the practices were to the realities of local conditions. Whereas to the ruling elite and high-up officers in Calcutta, the East India Company headquarters represented the stable centre of governance, and the province constituted the ever-changing 'provisional', a shifting landscape¹⁴, it was the local officers who in effect negotiated the stability of peripheral operations and their material substantiation. It was the latter who in effect, acted as the larger territorial grounding for the colonial apparatus. Things like building materials and building technology became key indices of crucial notions such as permanence or impermanence, and so were actively harnessed for the purpose. In real terms, this also meant forging links and mediating between larger demands of governance and directives from the central authorities on one hand, and the complex realities of local operational requirements and building practices on the other. Between the late-eighteenth century and the first two decades of the nineteenth century, one can trace the development of a notion of governmental space and function that seems obsessively to pursue stability, and which was demanded and mobilised from peripheral areas by provincial towns like Bankura.

The critical aspect to recognise here is also the factor of local agency – in other words the various actors who played out their roles in the building activity. Though not very explicitly stated, the letters issued from the District Magistrate's office in Bankura suggest that the public building designs were prepared locally, possibly with inputs from the Military Board, since it was the chief building agency between 1786 and 1854, then sent to the central judicial department for sanction, since they were judicial buildings. Various changes were engineered along the way (e.g. additional components, decisions regarding temporary and permanent construction) by the District Officer, in this case, the Judge-Magistrate, who often cited local conditions and reasons such as the availability of building materials, specific ground conditions, type of soil, risk of natural hazards like lightning, and different requirements for security, to argue his case. An instance regarding the building of the first *pucca* jail in Bankura illustrates this point rather well; In another communication to the authorities at Fort William, Calcutta, William Blunt, the Judge-Magistrate of Bankura made the following observation on the construction of the jail:

...I have since learnt that tiles can not be procured at this station, but at a considerable expense and the insecurity of a jail constructed with choppahs (thatch) particularly in a situation so elevated as is this station & where the public buildings from the nature of the soil which abounds with iron ore peculiarly exposed to accidents from lightning, appears to me to render it highly necessary that every possible precaution should be taken against the occurrence of such accidents to provide both for the safe custody and security of the lives of the convicts...¹⁵

In effect, therefore, responsibility for architectural design moved between a number of different agencies and were finally the products of intricate negotiations between central

¹⁴ Provincial districts were characterised by continuously changing jurisdictions and newer delineations of territorial areas. District boundaries were extremely elastic - often territories far away from the physical boundaries of a district were part of its jurisdiction. Stations often saw changes in their hierarchical status as well (e.g. a divisional headquarter town being declared a district headquarter town or the district headquarter function being totally removed or sub-divisional towns being upgraded to district headquarter towns). For an idea of the actual changes and shifts in jurisdiction in the districts of colonial Bengal see Manmohan Chakrabarty Bahadur, revised and updated by Kumud Ranjan Biswas *A Summary of changes in the jurisdiction of districts in Bengal 1757-1916* (Calcutta: K.R. Biswas, 1999).

¹⁵ *Bankura District Letters Issued*, Letter no 59, from William Blunt to George Dowdeswell, 3 Jul 1808.

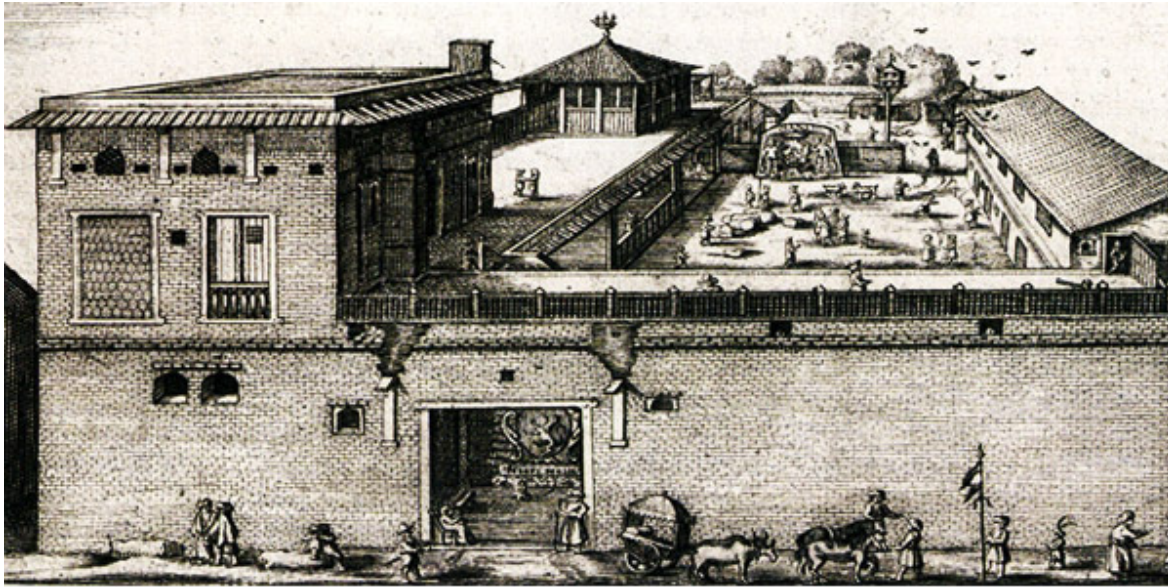


Fig. 3.6 The English Factory, Surat, Western India, mid-seventeenth century
Source: http://www.illwa.org/chapter_1.htm

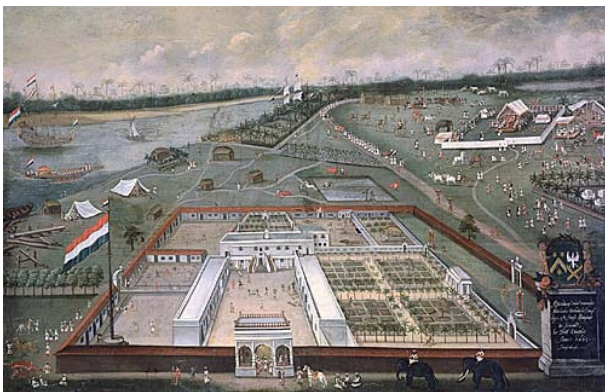


Fig. 3.7 The Dutch factory in Hugly, mid-seventeenth century. Though there were scalar variations, European factories in different regions of India largely followed a similar typology - that of a number of structures arranged around a courtyard within a walled enclosure.
Source: http://www.illwa.org/chapter_1.htm

bodies such as the Military Board, the judicial or revenue departments and local agencies like the District Officer, and the local building contractors and masons who actually carried out the work. They also shifted between European spatial patterns and locally prevalent ones, and were continuously moderated by local conditions. Nonetheless, design was not purely contingent and there were clear typological influences on building form.

3.2 Tracing roots – earlier spatial practices in the ‘Factory’ typology

It is interesting to roll back a bit in time to look at a larger landscape of spatial practices that provided the backdrop for the buildings of district administration in Bengal. To do so, the architecture of administrative system of the first half of the nineteenth century needs to be culturally situated. In the seventeenth century, Bengal was one of the most productive regions of India under Mughal rule, a strength that was mostly derived from ‘a strong agricultural base, a high skill level among artisans, and a financial and communications network supported by a fairly stable administrative structure, making it an important site of international trade’¹⁶. It was, however a contested territory, the British being one of the several groups of foreign merchants (along with the Dutch, French, Portuguese and Armenians), who had, other than their Indian counterparts, been given the right to trade in Bengal. By the mid-seventeenth century, trading in long distance commodities like silk were an integral part of local transactions, and the next hundred years witnessed the development of regional specialisations in cash crops, grains and textiles. This was also backed up by an elaborate commercial and physical network of large wholesale markets, local markets and small village markets. Bengal thus stood for a well-developed commercial, economic landscape from early on. Already by the mid-seventeenth century, so-called ‘factories’ were established by British settlers at a few of locations in Bengal such as Hughly and Kasimbazaar, and this was followed in 1690, as noted, by the re-opening of the British East India Company’s enterprise headquarters in Calcutta, after two previous failed attempts. ‘Factories’ were built mainly as establishments for trading articles in entrepot settlements like Hughly, Calcutta, Chittagong, Kasimbazar and Dacca by the mid-eighteenth century. The latter acted as control points both for collecting raw materials and articles from inland areas for export to Britain, as well as for the import of British and European goods into the Indian market.¹⁷ They were essentially commercial stations consisting of a warehouse, some dwellings for the merchants, and various other facilities¹⁸. Images and accounts of the first British factory on Indian soil in Surat on the western coast of India (Fig. 3.6), by Albert de Mandelslo in 1638 and by Dr. Fryer in 1674, give some idea of its spatial components, their organisation, the various functions carried out within, and the personnel involved¹⁹, the basic configuration of which were continued into those in Bengal (Fig. 3.7). Drawings of the first of

¹⁶ Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta, Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny* (London: Routledge, 2005), 8.

¹⁷ For a detailed account of the history of India and Bengal during the yearly years of European colonial presence in India, see *The Cambridge History of India, vol 5., British India 1497-1858*, H. H Dodwell, ed. (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1987).

¹⁸ See Kosambi and Brush, ‘Three colonial port cities in India,’ *Geographical Review*, 78 (1988), 32-47.

¹⁹ See J. Tallboys Wheeler, *Early Records of British India: A History of the English Settlements in India* (London, Calcutta: unknown, 1878), 21.

these 'factories' reveal them to be a tight enclosure (usually wrapped around by a high wall) with a strongly controlled entry, and a cluster of buildings with different functions arranged around a central open space inside. From Mandelslo's description, it is amply evident that the 'factory' contained a good number of visitor's rooms, or chambers, as well as living quarters for its own staff. In effect, they were defensible trading posts. In addition to every day living areas, there was a 'great hall' presumably for visitor's entertainment and special occasions. 'Open air galleries' probably referred to upper floor terraces or walkways, again, a typical feature of the hot tropical settlements of India for 'taking the coolness of the sea-air'²⁰. Fryer, writing 40 years later, gave an account of an Indian 'factory' as being:

...partly the King's gift, partly hired; built of stone and excellent timber, with good carving, without representations; very strong, for that each floor is half a yard thick at least, of the best plastered cement, which is very weighty. It is contrived after the Moor's buildings, with upper and lower galleries, or terrace walks; a neat Oratory, a convenient open space for meals. The President has spacious lodgings, noble rooms for counsel and entertainment, pleasant tanks, yards, and a hummum to wash in;²¹

In this quote, Fryer referred to the planning as following 'Moorish' principles, possibly because of the arrangement of buildings around the central courtyard, the presence of abundant water tanks, open terraces, etc., as was characteristic of Surat and large parts of North India. Fryer's account also listed the key offices forming the cornerstones of 'factory' administration – first, the President or Factor, the overall person in charge; the Accomptant, next in line to the President, in charge of all accounts local and central, and thus also the quasi treasurer; the Warehouse-keeper, in charge of registering all goods moving in and out; the Purser-marine, in charge of transporting goods, paying seamen their wages, providing wagons, porters for transport and ship storage; and finally the Secretary, in charge of all paper work, including writing letters, having them signed by the President, sending copies to relevant authorities and keeping records of all communications and managing the Factory seal. The personnel structure of the 'factory' also has to be seen in relation to the general classification of the East India Company's servants at this stage – viz. Merchants, Factors and Writers²², from which staff for relevant segment of any of the Indian 'factories' were sourced. In accounts of the factory at Kossimbazar in Bengal, there seems to have been workshop areas which actually housed the production of local goods and living areas for the local artisans involved in making them²³. Accounts of factories very often included references to high and robust walls and moats, conjuring up ideas of forts, fairly characteristic of the larger landscape of provincial Bengal, where all major feudal landlords had for a long time functioned out of the mud forts which dotted the landscape²⁴. In fact, it was this very infrastructure of local fortifications that Robert Clive systematically engineered the demolition of from 1757, precisely, to gain political stronghold for the East India Company²⁵.

20 Dr. Fryer, as quoted by J. Tallboys Wheeler, in *Early Records of the British in India*, 8.

21 *Ibid.*

22 J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1994).

23 British Library, IOR, 'Factory Records', 1740.

24 See e.g. the descriptions of the elaborate network pre-colonial forts of feudal landlords in Bengal – which also formed part of the landscape during the early colonial period – in the Midnapur, Jessore and Khulna districts. Pranab Roy, ed., *Medinipur: Itihash O Sanskritir Bibartan* [Midnapur: Its History and Culture] vol 3. (Calcutta: Sahityalok, 2002), 188-203; Satishchandra Mitra, *Jasohar-Khulnar Itihash, reprinted vols. 1 and 2* (Khulna: Uttaran Press, 2001), 123 - 133.

25 See British Library, Bengal Proceedings (Political and Military), 1757 - 1793.

Thus right from its early trading years, the function of the Company was buttressed by its military base, something that translated effectively into invaluable political power. In any case, trading was a competitive arena, and often involved small battles with local feudal landlords or other trading groups, with goods and money transported to-and from inland areas of Bengal, which were continuously exposed to robbery, for which reason 'factories' also typically retained a small army of their own. Fryer's description also gives us a flavour of the life and the phenomenal environment of the typical 'factory' in India:

Here they live (in shipping time) in a continual hurly-burly, the Banians²⁶ presenting themselves from the hour of ten till noon; and then afternoon at four till night, as if it were an Exchange in every row; below stairs, the packers and warehouse-keepers, together with merchants bringing and receiving musters, make a mere Billingsgate; for if you make not a noise, they hardly think you intent on what you are doing²⁷

On the whole, it suggests a busy environment rife with sounds, noise, active transactions and trading negotiations between the East India Company's servants and native merchants, as well as a realm of enjoyment and consumption – a place where work, living, and leisure fused into an amorphous whole. On the other hand, its membership (in a broad sense) or freedom of access was strictly limited, consisting mostly of a handful of Company employees, specific local merchants or artisans, some native soldiers and a few select visitors. Though it played a key role in transforming the economic and political landscape of mercantile colonialism in terms of its sheer reach into interior areas, the physical operational base of the 'factory' was always a fortified, insulated entity. In many ways, the 'factory' represents one of the earliest forms of organised operational set-ups associated with mercantile colonialism in India. A few key aspects make themselves evident from the images and descriptions. First, that the 'factory' was a quasi settlement with various aspects of trading and living welded together into a single, but composite, spatial entity, i.e., it consisted of an aggregate of parts. Second, that it was essentially, and critically, an introverted and defensible establishment, built with robust materials but in a highly functional manner (Fryer's description alluded to this pragmatic, non-ornamental character), with specific security apparatus included (both in its material form, as well as in personnel). Third, that it had reasonably clearly delineated separation of offices and organisational hierarchy. Fourth, that it produced a fairly populated, active and phenomenally mixed environment. Fifth and final, that there was little or no strict dividing lines between the domains that it housed, and in fact it was seen as much as a residential enclave as it was a locus of trading. In fact, the Surat 'factory' was often referred to, in common parlance, as the 'English House'. Clearly the defensive imperative overrode any desire for strict functional or programmatic use. In many ways, this was the strongest legacy for later colonial buildings in provincial Bengal.

²⁶ The term '*Banian*' refers to the merchant caste in Hindustani - the local vernacular language in large areas of North India.

²⁷ Dr Fryer as quoted by J. Talbot Wheeler in *Early Records of the British in India*, 29.

3.3 The emergence of the *sadar* and the *cutcherry* complex

Between the end of the first quarter and the middle of the eighteenth century, the East India Company experienced a long history of turbulent relationship with the Nawab²⁸ of Bengal, Siraj-ud-daula, who was finally defeated at the Battle of Plassey and removed from his seat in 1757. This was followed by a period of alliance with the new Nawab, who, for all practical purpose, functioned as just a titular head. While most of Calcutta had been acquired between 1690 and 1717 as a rent-free tenure, the *zamindari*²⁹ of 24 Parganas was acquired in 1757 and the areas of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong were ceded to the East India Company in 1760. The Battle of Plassey in 1757 and the granting of the *diwani* in 1765 led to momentous changes in the East India Company's role in Bengal – it saw the morphing, through multiple types of social and political negotiations, of the functioning of a trading company into that of a revenue administration agency, and then, after 1858, into that of imperial governance, in the broadest sense. As discussed earlier, the years between 1765 and 1793 saw a slow decentralisation and stabilisation of governance at the district level. During this period, as the mechanics of revenue administration were experimented and struggled with, the *cutcherry* or revenue office made its first appearance in the urban landscape of the *sadar*. Over the next half a century, the *cutcherry* came to be the nerve centre of these provincial towns and of the wider region beyond.

3.3.1 Early *cutcheries* and the 'DNA' of provincial administrative architecture

One of the earliest discussions about one such provincial *cutcherry* can be found in the district record books of the town of Burdwan. The Collector of this district, on being asked in 1799 by the Governor General at Fort William, Calcutta, to arrange for a suitable *cutcherry* in the *sadar* town of Burdwan, suggested renting a small building from the *zamindar*, Raja Tej Chand, of Burdwan. This he describes as consisting of 'three excellent rooms and an enclosed *verandah* all around' which, in his opinion, was 'eminently suitable' for holding the basic functions of office, records and treasury³⁰. A very similar description of an early *cutcherry* is also found in the context of the sub-divisional settlement of Chandkhali, in Jessore district. It was apparently built by Mr. Tilman Henckell, the Collector of Jessore around 1786, and was described by James Westland, a later collector in the 1870s, in the following manner –

there stands on the river's bank a little brick-house composed of three rooms ranged longitudinally, and an arched verandah in front of them. The masonry is still quite good, but the roof, which was supported on beams, has fallen in. A masonry wall once surrounded and enclosed the building, but in these more civilised days, this has ceased to be necessary, and it has long disappeared. The gateway alone remains, standing roofless in front of the building. It was Mr Henckel who put up this building, and it was used as a *cutcherry* not only at his time, but even in that of Rupram Mazumdar,

²⁸ The governors or representatives of the Mughal emperor in the provinces, virtually possessing the status of provincial kings. The Nawabs often grew to be very autonomous in their functioning.

²⁹ Revenue collection and payment of a portion thereof to the Nawab.

³⁰ Ashok Mitra and Ranajit Guha, eds., *Burdwan District Letters Issued 1788- 1800, West Bengal District Records, New Series*, (Calcutta: office of the Directorate of Census Operations, 1989), letter from Y. Burges, Collector, to G.H. Barlow, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Burdwan, 3 Jun 1799.

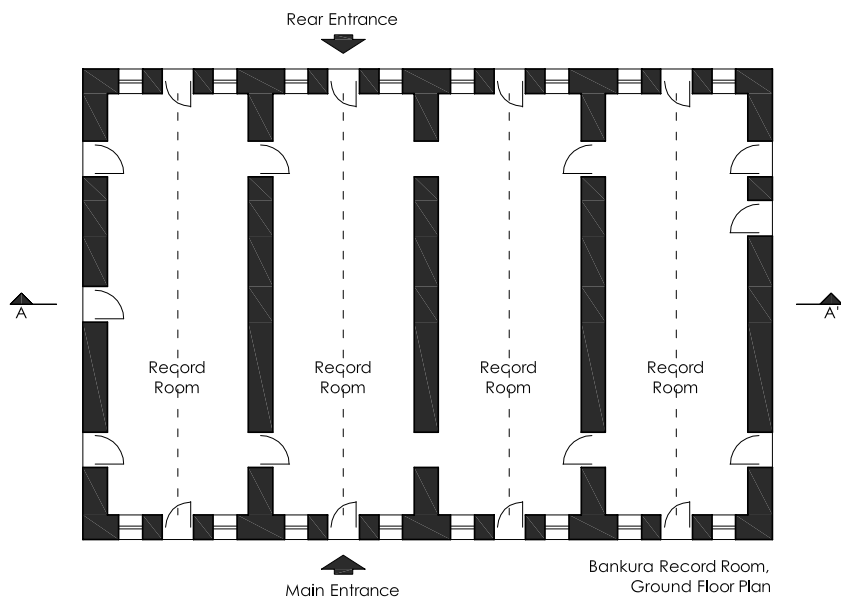
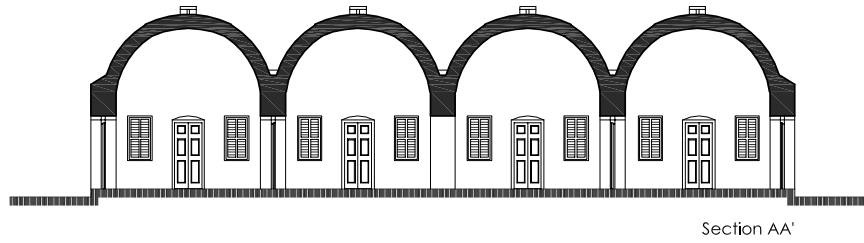


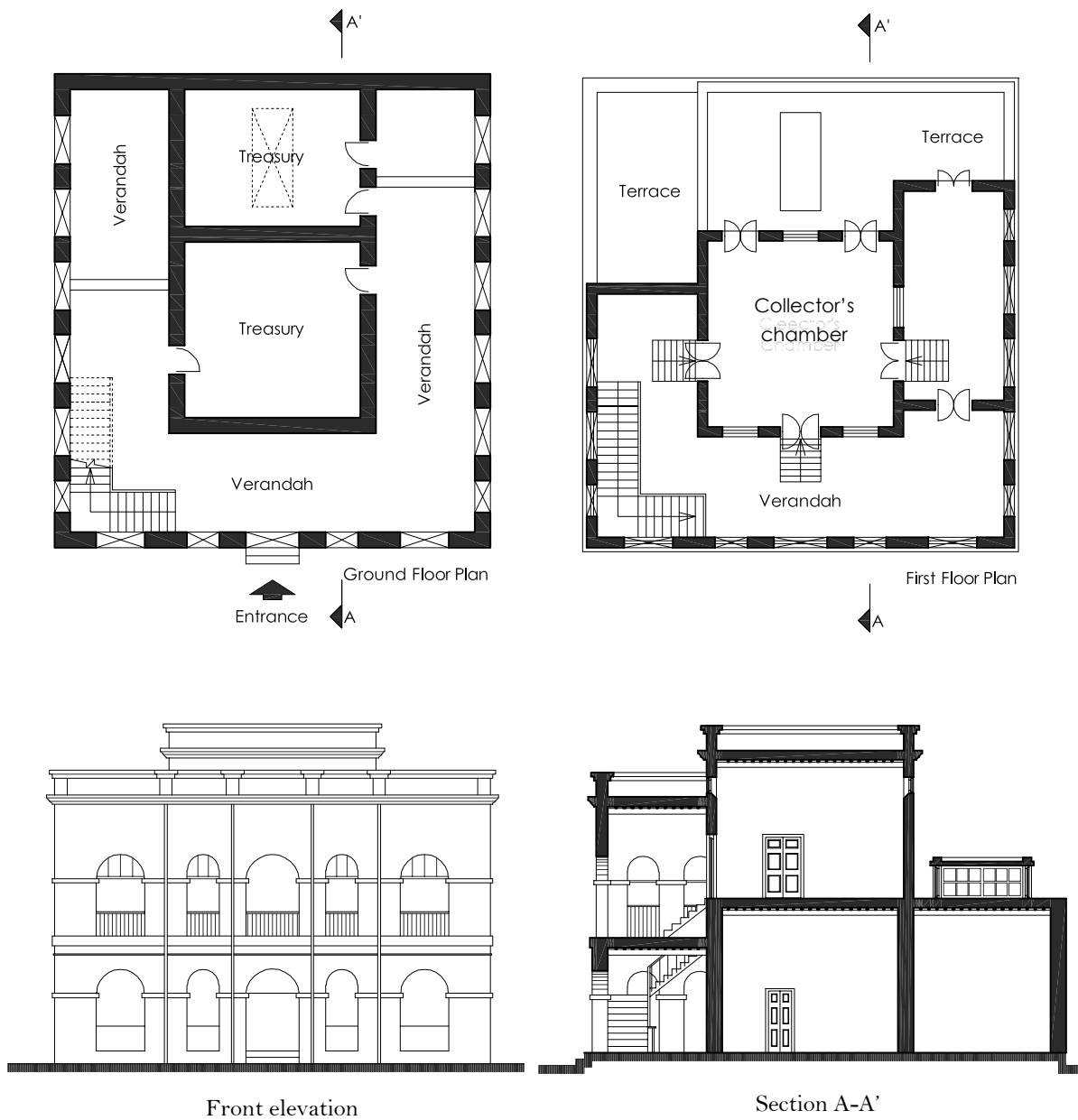
Fig. 3.8 Record room (*Mahaphezkhana*), Bankura, built 1808

a subsequent zemindar, who bought it of Government. The river now threatens to carry it away.³¹

Although the building being referred to was apparently insignificant in terms of its architectural merit, it set out in simple terms a generic type of tropical office architecture in its most basic form, essentially consisting of individual spaces (generic, but adapted to fit specific functions), with a protective layer of the *verandah* attached to them – a model that continued to provide the basic building block – the equivalent of DNA – for provincial office architecture in Bengal right up to the twentieth century. The recognition of the ‘eminent suitability’ and ‘fit’ of this very basic form to the fundamental requirements of provincial administration seems to generate a key coupling – of the generic form of ‘rooms with a *verandah*’ with the functions of provincial governance. This was also reinforced and legitimised through its near-continuous incorporation and use from then on. The particular instance also demonstrates the common practice, especially in the period between the granting of the *diwani* and the early nineteenth century, of administrative operations being housed in properties rented from local elite figures like *zamindars*, in many ways a continuation of the types of practices seen in Surat earlier. The East India Company’s *cutcherries* invariably came up on lands acquired from local *zamindars* (as seen earlier in the Bankura case), often along with some existing structures on them which had also been pressed into use as *cutcherries*. Early colonial operations were thus rife with instances of renting and re-use of existing properties belonging to local landowners. They were also characterised by a certain provisional functioning, whereby operations were accommodated within certain generic forms. This signifies two key aspects. Firstly, that due to this lineage, local spatial and building practices largely found a somewhat seamless entry into the East India Company’s official architecture, especially when aspects of them – having evolved through trial and error over time in the specific context – were found to provide a ‘natural fit’ to the requirements of provincial governance. In effect, some of the most un-changing units, modules or principles of provincial office design were thus actually rooted in local practices. As studies of newer buildings in the first half of the nineteenth century (like the Bankura public buildings) reveal, there was very little that was invented anew on a clean slate, but rather, they had to be forged by crossing British and European building species with locally prevalent types. Secondly, it suggests a certain rooted-ness of provincial office architecture within a culture of using, accommodating and adjusting to generic available forms, thought to be suitable and sensible in the context in question. This flexibility and adaptability was contingent on the East India Company’s operations, and had to work as a way of functioning altogether for survival and continuity – subject as it was, to an overall atmosphere of negotiation and give-and-take with various other local agencies (e.g. *zamindars*, silk and salt merchants), as part of the larger political and economic context.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, when administrative functions grew more specialised and complex, there was an attempt at delineating individual functions and spaces, while forging links between them as and when necessary. A look at a list of public buildings in

³¹ James Westland, *A Report on the District of Jessore: its Antiquities, its History, and its Commerce*. (Calcutta: unknown, 1871), 142.



Front view



Fenestration detail



Stairs leading up from first floor level to collector's chamber and the use of saloon doors

Fig. 3.9 Collector's office, Bankura, built/ acquired 1825

the *sadar* town of Bankura gives an interesting idea of the various spatial domains that were seen to be cornerstones of provincial governance in the early nineteenth century³². In case of Bankura, along with the main judicial buildings in 1808, was constructed the *foujdari* or criminal jail, consisting of two separate square enclosures - one for the main jail building to house the serious offenders, built of *pucca* construction, and the other for petty offenders, the jail hospital, and guards built of *kutchha* construction. A Collector's *cutcherry* would have also existed in some form, although there is not any evidence available or else it may have been run solely from the Collector's own residence. The Public Works Department building register in 1876 showed the existence of the Collector's record rooms, still standing, from 1808³³. This was an independent structure, consisting of four similar and connected rectangular bays, each 18'x 53', roofed over with barrel vaults (Fig. 3.8). In 1825, a Collector's *cutcherry* was built (or acquired)³⁴, it had a clearly identifiable nuclear bungalow form with *verandah* (Fig. 3.9), with the treasury and the collector's *cutcherry* occupying the central space on ground and first floor respectively. In principle this building bears considerable affinity to the earlier Circuit House, both in terms of its functional disposition as well as its formal appearance. Both were two storied, with the basic 'core and annular ring' formation, housing a private/ semi-public function at the top (Judge's residence/ collector's *cutcherry*³⁵) and a guarded function which had higher security demands (record room/ treasury) at the bottom. But most critically, both represented similar symbolic configurations - the control of key currencies of colonial wealth (revenue and land records respectively) being carried out below and the figureheads of governance (spaces for Circuit Judge and Collector respectively) above. In fact, in case of the Collector's *cutcherry* building, the floor of the central core area, i.e. the Collector's chamber on the first floor, was raised by about 1.2 m from its surrounding *verandah*, with steps rising from the latter to the former, the openings to the office chamber being regulated by saloon doors (Fig. 3.9) - it was conspicuously reminiscent of a 'throne'- like configuration. In a strictly symbolic and spatial sense, the collector sat on the Company's money. It also represented a more explicit move to the bungalow form from the earlier Circuit House, which, as noted, was a half-way mix between a neo- Palladian villa and a Bengal bungalow.

A similar list of architectural provisions for provincial governance is revealed in the account of the headquarters of Jessore district by James Westland. Westland refers to an earlier Collector Tilman Henckell, who, when he first came to the headquarters of the district (a settlement called Murali, after which it was shifted to Kasba or Jessore town) in 1781,

32 *Bankura District Letters Issued 1802-1869*, 'General statement of disbursements in the erection of public buildings at Bancoorah', letter nos.136 and 154, 23 May 1810 and 7 May 1817, from William Blunt to George Dowdeswell.

33 West Bengal State Secretariat Library (WBSSL), Writers Building, Calcutta, *Register of Buildings Bourne on the Books of Public Works Department, Bengal, 1884 (2)* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1884), XXIII.8.

34 *Bankura District Letters Issued 1800-1869*, 'Annual return of buildings at the station of Bancoorah in the 17th Division of Public Works', letter no. 205, from H.P. Russell (Magistrate) to William Bradon (Commissioner of Circuit, Burdwan), 1 May 1832.

35 Though public in spirit, the Collector's *cutcherry* had lesser public interface compared to the courts, which invited a huge number of people associated with a range of activities taking place around litigations. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following pages.

...found one house, 'the factory' belonging apparently to the British Government. This house he repaired and extended, and if the value he himself puts on it (Rs. 18,650) is a true value, it must have been a fine house. He afterwards built a *cutcherry* for dewani and faujdari for about Rs. 2,500, one for the collector for Rs. 450, a registrar's residence and office for Rs. 1000, or Rs. 2000, a record building for Rs. 850, and a small treasury building³⁶.

Like Bankura, the Jessore example also illustrates the gradual branching out of colonial governance and formation of specialised spaces dedicated to different arms of provincial governance.

By the first quarter of the nineteenth century the umbrella function of revenue governance had thus grown visible limbs (for a comparison between provincial governmental building infrastructure in Bankura between 1817 and 1832 see Appendix. 1). In Bengali towns like Bankura and Burdwan, the basic components of the spatial apparatus of provincial administration and the essential mechanics of agency that shaped its making and use, had now appeared. At the least, its spatial apparatus now consisted of the following components: Courts, Principal *cutcheries* (Judge-Magistrate's and Collector's), Subordinate *cutcheries* (office clerks'), Record rooms, Treasury, Judge-Magistrate's and Collector's residences. The 'three rooms with a *verandah*' that was sufficient to run the blanket body of civil administration some 50 years back, had now grown into a composite entity of distinct parts, related and connected to each other through ties of function, territorial delineation, form, construction, demands for security, control, publicness, privacy, autonomy and dependence -- in different ways and to different extents. In effect, the earlier Indian 'factory', as an essentially singular entity with its tight, dense cohesion of parts, had been dis-aggregated into a more complex entity with more complex connections. It is worth examining this transformation in more detail.

3.3.2 Shifting priorities - the 'factory' and the 'cutcherry'

The principal function of the *cutcherry* or office complex was, as noted, to enable revenue collection and the conduct of civil and criminal justice. Revenue was collected through a giant machinery of native *zamindars* who had been given perpetual rights of collection through the Permanent Settlement of 1793, provided, of course they paid their share of revenue on time³⁷. The *zamindars* sometimes farmed out the revenue collection further to so-called *pattanidars* or *talunkdars*. Payment of revenue to the East India Company and redressal of various revenue-related issues took place at the Collector's *cutcherry* in each *sadar* town, and involved people visiting it on an ongoing basis. The Collector was also the omnipotent executive functionary in charge of civil administration of the entire local district and he dealt with just about anything that did not fall under the strict purview of the judicial domain. In addition, there were continuous

³⁶ James Westland, *A Report on the History of Jessore*, 146- 147.

³⁷ The Permanent Settlement of 1793, bought about by Lord Cornwallis, fixed the amount of agricultural revenues to be given to the Company by the native *zamindars* in perpetuity. The revenue had to be deposited by sunset of a particular day of the year, leading to the Settlement also being known as the Sunset Settlement. It had huge consequences in the re-configurations of the land-system in Bengal and transferred virtual property rights to the zamindars provided rents were paid in time.

land and revenue litigations in the district courts that *zamindars* and petty cultivators or *ryots* were invariably embroiled in – mostly to do with delineation of property boundary, ownership, cultivation contracts, evaluation of productive and non-productive land, and numerous other law-and-order issues characteristic of an emerging and changing urban and rural landscape. Due to the very nature of its role and functioning, the *cutcherry* complex by definition involved a level of public contact that was higher, more complex and layered than the limited transactions that the ‘factory’ had provided for. Indeed for the *cutcherry* to function, it was precariously dependent on its ability to allow such contact, though its British anchor-figures simultaneously harboured a certain discomfort with such open contacts to a population that so clearly constituted the conspicuous ‘other’. Interestingly, in many ways, the factory still informed the administrative skeleton of the *cutcherry*. It provided the initial framework for an organised, though limited, structure of management and administration. In fact, in certain cases it was the existing Factors³⁸ who simply took up their new roles as Collectors – for example, *Pargana* Burdwan and *Chakla* Midnapore³⁹ were placed under the Residents in charge of the East India Company’s factories in those territories and Thana Chittagong was placed under the Chief and Council in Charge of the Chittagong factory⁴⁰. The emergence of the *cutcherry* saw an immense shift from the defensible set up of the ‘factory’ to one that needed a highly active public interface. This, in effect, demanded a certain ‘loosening up’ of the ‘factory’ typology. Thus while the ‘factory’ as a whole had to be a tight, defensible domain, governed by strict control, vigilance and rules of admittance⁴¹, the *cutcherry* demanded a much more porous spatiality. Building design now had to be transformed around more specific and nuanced definitions of defensibility. Since, for the first time Bengali provincial governance had to allow for areas where control had to be loosened up, questions of what needed to be loosened up and what had to be guarded, and how, became ever more critical.

Such a transformation from a strongly defensible architecture had already been set afoot even in some of the ‘factory’ designs themselves some time back around or after the granting of the *dirwani*. A discussion regarding the ‘factory’ at Chittagong in Bengal in 1764 is particularly illuminating, in that it anticipates some aspects of continuity with the *cutcherry* that would develop more concretely a few decades later⁴². In a letter from Capt. Flemming Martin, Chief Engineer of the Military Board, Martin critically commented on a building proposal made by Mr. Plaisted⁴³ for the Chittagong ‘factory’. Mr. Plaisted’s scheme proposed what appears to be a tightly knit building configuration, perhaps more characteristic of the hot-dry geo-climatic zones of Surat and Northern India, ‘having intended by the plan that the whole building should be joined together & the Chief’s apartments in the Centre’ – something which coincided comfortably with

38 Heads of Factories.

39 *Parganas* and *Chaklas* were spatial units of revenue administration under the Mughal governance. The colonial delineation of districts were often directly based on these pre-colonial divisions.

40 See *A Summary of changes in the jurisdiction of districts in Bengal 1757-1916*, 12.

41 Almonsb’s account also discusses the factory being a set-up driven by strong ordering principles, in everything ranging from transaction to discipline of

42 National Archive of India (NAI), *Military Board Consultations*, Public department, letter 22 Nov, 1764, From Capt. Flemming Martin, Chief Engineer, Military Board, to Henry Vansittart Esq., President and Governor General, Council of Fort William.

43 It has not been possible by the author to establish the exact designation of Mr. Plaisted. He is likely to have been a surveyor or an engineer in the Public Works department.

its defensive purpose. He also proposed digging a ditch around the building in order to raise the plinth level of the building and which, again, going by the usual defensible, fortified formation of Indian 'factories', was no unusual act. Martin attacked Plaisted's plan on many fronts. First, he criticised it as being unsuitable for the specific climate in question (the hot-humid plains of Bengal) and instead suggested a looser, more fragmented form, sheltered with the deep *verandahs* characteristic of the area –

I should apprehend that by such disposition the apartments to the North-east would be deprived of sufficient air in the time of the South West winds and consequently those to the opposite point in the contrary in Monsoons. The buildings to the South having not verandahs must render them insufferably hot⁴⁴

Martin went on further to express his reservation against the use of the ditch which according to him 'would prove a Harbour for filth..... (and be) offensive if not unhealthy'⁴⁵. He picked up on a number of proposed features, like raising the plinth level and the increase in foundation depth that this would involve, excessive wall thicknesses, timber beam lengths which were not easily transportable etc., to argue for a more 'economical' and 'efficient' design in terms of available resources. He also questioned the feasibility of negotiating an entry for boats directly into the 'factory' from the river side without an adequate study of other topographical and hydrological factors:

M. Plaisted proposes to be opened from..... to admit boats to your factory I am not in particular so well informed as to speak with much certainty, for want of proper surveys & sections of the Ground with surroundings and Settings of the Site, Course of the river & many other considerations which should be attended to, before such an operation, on which it is hardly possible to determine without being on the spot though from the lowness of the ground it seem not impossible that the Side would overflow the banks of the ditch proposed, which I entirely disapprove at any rate.⁴⁶

This debate thus took place within the emerging dynamic of the 'factory' as a defensible entity born in a certain context of mercantile colonialism and as a 'generic' concept, and the demands for its re-configuration by specificities of place and changing nature of colonial interest. While in hot-dry areas of India the requirements of density for climatic purposes enjoyed a smooth overlap with the requirements of defensibility, in the hot-humid plains of Bengal, the choices were uncomfortably opposed – demanding, in effect, a trade-off between climate friendly design and the advantages of a compact, tightly controlled building. Interestingly, it was also around this time that the nature of the East India Company's interest and base in the region was undergoing a momentous shift, whereby the requirements for blanket defensibility was sliding down the list of priorities. Capt. Flemming Martin also used the opinion of another engineer, Capt. George Burghall, with previous familiarity of the site in question, to lend weight to his case⁴⁷. Burghall approved of the scheme by Plaisted in terms of its 'form and situation', but questioned its 'size and capacity'. A whole new range of issues were now considered more

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* In the context of Bengal such ditches were often associated with filth, foul smell and seen as a breeding ground for mosquitoes that caused tropical diseases like Malaria.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ National Archive of India (NAI), *Military Board Consultations*, Public department, letter 15 Nov, 1764, From George Burghall, to Capt. Flemming Martin, Chief Engineer, Military Board.

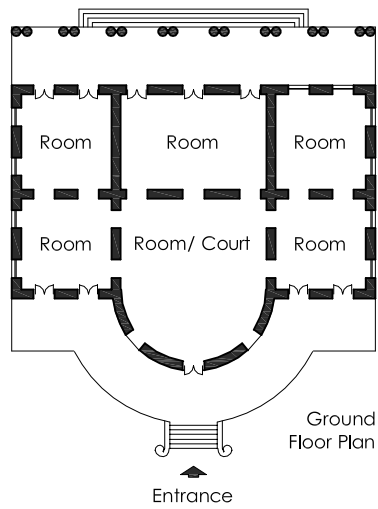


Fig. 3.10 Magistrate's house-cum-cutcherry, built around 1817-18.

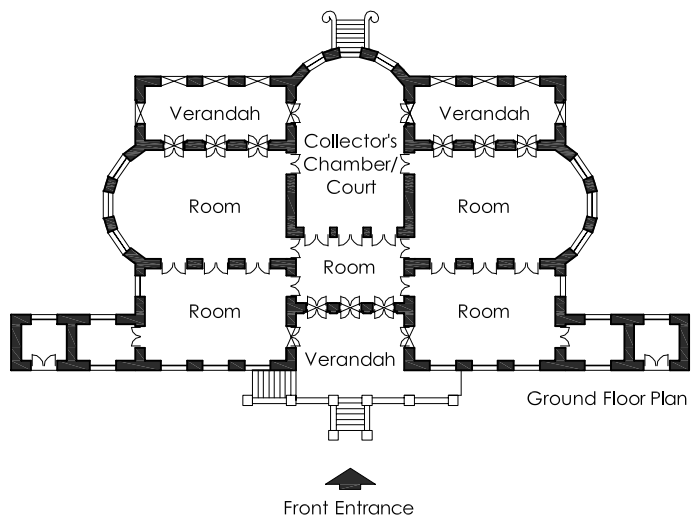


Fig. 3.11 Circuit Judge house Burdwan, built 1818

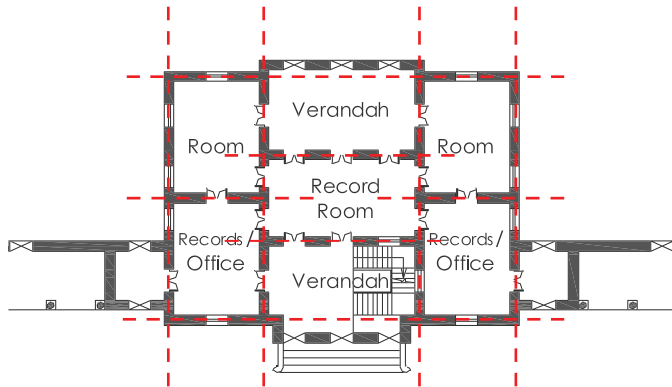
critical to design, while key parameters such as defensibility, held inviolable earlier, lose their primacy of place. However, while local geo-climatic conditions and the changing nature of colonialism demanded adaptation of the form of the 'factory' to a new context, the hierarchical spatial traditions of the 'factory' displayed considerable continuity with the emerging function of the *cutcherry*.

The letters about the Chittagong 'factory' revealed another crucial shift. Martin pointed out that Plaisted's plan showed no *cutcherry* or office space. It is vital to keep in mind here that, by 1764 Chittagong was already a 'ceded' territory, the revenue collection of which was the East India Company's job. It was specifically the demands of newly developing revenue operations within the existing functioning of the 'factory' that saw the emergence of the 'office' or the *cutcherry* as an identifiable function that was distinct from the home or trade sphere, and instead a dedicated spatial unit in provincial governance. Most Indian factories, as discussed earlier, were environments where work and living were more amorously enmeshed with no obvious distinction of domains. It is likely that the factory would have had areas like living rooms which also doubled up at work spaces for practical purposes. The Chittagong 'factory' in some ways marked a transitional phase when autonomous domains dedicated for revenue administration were still some way off, but out of which, gradually, revenue administration came to be largely co-terminus with the spatial and functional unit of the *cutcherry*. However, while the *cutcherry* function was being delineated in distinct terms, it never really got wholly severed from the other spheres. In fact, the 'factory' in effect was facing pressures to accommodate revenue *cutcherries* within its existing framework. Such shifts and early attempts at accommodating one within the other -- resulting in entities like the composite 'factory-*cutcherry*' -- were thus the connecting links between the two typological entities. In many ways, despite the development of the *cutcherry* complex as a distinct entity and a pivot of colonial revenue administration by the early nineteenth century, ironically, many aspects, including the foetal link between 'work' and 'home' spheres was never completely washed away. The indelible imprint of this relationship simply continued to find newer forms and became one of the characteristics that distinguished provincial governance and its spatial practices from metropolitan ones, as found in Calcutta.

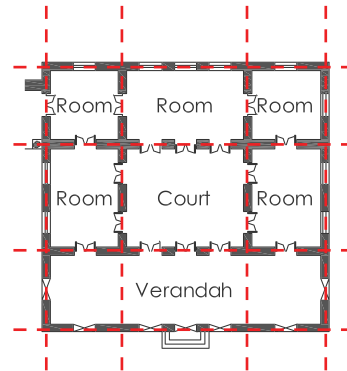
3.4 Development of *cutcherry* forms 1800-1830

3.4.1 Bungalow type *cutcherries* 1800-1820

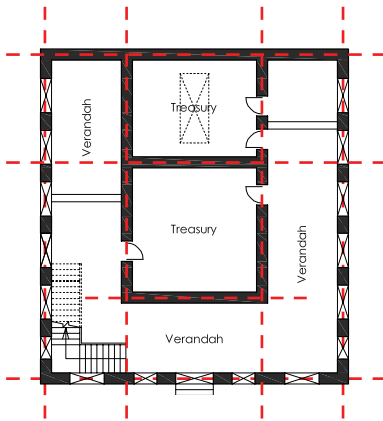
The pressing need to provide for revenue administration outside the gradually inadequate framework of the 'factory' was clearly acute by the early-nineteenth century, for its first three decades saw the emergence of a host of 'designed' administrative buildings (usually the *cutcherry* complex) in the provincial landscape of Bengal. Including the public buildings in Bankura mentioned earlier, a whole series of courts, Collector's offices, record rooms, treasuries and Circuit Judges houses mushroomed in many other *sadar* towns like Burdwan, Krishnanagar, Jessore,



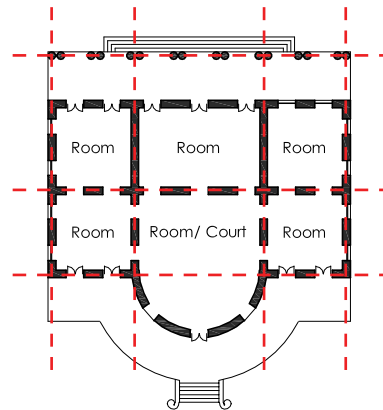
Circuit Judge house
Bankura, 1808



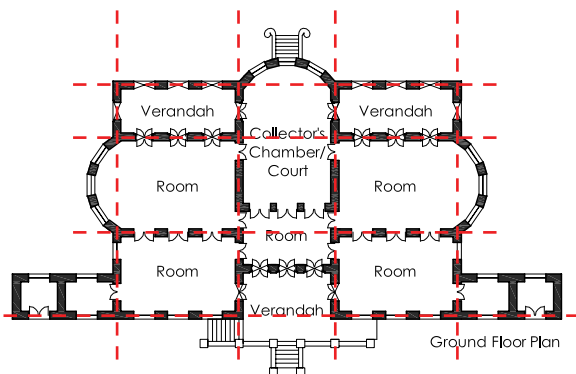
Magistrate's/ Register's cutcherry
Bankura, 1808



Collector's cutcherry
Bankura, 1825



Magistrate's House cum cutcherry
Barisal, probably around 1817



Circuit Judge house,
Burdwan, 1818

Fig. 3.12 Comparative Typology: Bungalow or 3-Bay Form

Rajshahi, Gazeepore (*sadars* of Burdwan, Krishnanagar and Jessore districts respectively). As noted, the Military Board proved to be the main source of designs up to 1855.⁴⁸

The appearance of a large number of these buildings was also obviously triggered off by the relative stability in the type of governance brought about through the administrative reforms of 1793 during the era of the Governor General Cornwallis.⁴⁹ With the permanent settlement of 1793, the Company had finally, and seemingly, brought a certain stability to the structure of governance, and set the foundations of what its bearers thought of as 'good governance' in India – viz. the rule of law and the value of private property in the development of a just society. With the perpetuity of the zemindars' rights to revenue collection virtually translating into private property, and the streamlining of revenue collection and the judicial delivery system through articulation of the powers of the Collector and the Judge-Magistrate, governance mechanisms had also been more clearly re-fashioned. There were also larger political developments provided a stable base for provincial operations -- local insurgencies like the Chuar Rebellion had been suppressed in the 1790s; The Anglo-Mysore wars⁵⁰ had been fought and won by 1799.

Following close on the heels of the Circuit Judge's house in Bankura was an early *cutcherry* in the town of Barisal (Fig. 3.10). It was probably built between 1801 and 1829 (when a completely new *cutcherry* was built following one of the worst floods in nineteenth century Bengal, in 1822)⁵¹. From a later account written in 1876 by H. Beveridge, a civil servant posted in Barisal, it is known that the building was probably the Magistrate's house which also doubled up as the *cutcherry*⁵², a tradition of work-cum-home space that even the Bankura circuit house was part of. Not long after this, was built the Circuit Judge's house in Burdwan, in 1818 (Fig. 3.11), again on the house-cum-*cutcherry* theme. Both these buildings still followed the basic three-bay pattern in both directions, making it on the one hand similar to the classic nine-grid plan of neo-classical building design, on the other to the 3-bay pattern common to the basic bungalow form of Bengal which, as mentioned earlier, had been directly derived from the local mud and thatch huts. In the Barisal building the front bay consisted of a continuous *verandah*, very similar to the magistrate and register's *cutcheries* in Bankura (Fig. 3.1), except that the central space at the rear was developed into an oblong space with a semicircular termination. From the *verandah* was entered a hallway, the equivalent of a central space in the three-bay by three-bay configuration.

48 A folder of drawings (containing 56 plates) prepared by the Military Board in 1823 showed governmental buildings in *sadar* towns at the time. Most of these buildings were therefore built roughly within the first twenty years of the nineteenth century. British Library, IOR, Maps and Plans Collection, *Plans of Jails, Cutcheries, Circuit Houses & C.*, in *the Lower Provinces*, 29 May 1823, X/ 1004/ 1-53.

49 Cornwallis' reforms in the sector of agricultural revenues was accompanied by major re-structuring of provincial governance. The Collector was stripped off his judicial powers and the magisterial function at this stage was combined with the Judge's post - in the form of the post of the Judge-Magistrate. 15 Civil courts were established all over Bengal with courts of appeal at Calcutta, Dacca and Murshidabad.

50 Wars fought between the kings of Mysore Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan, and the East India Company.

51 There is a high possibility that this building was built around 1817, when the Collector Mr. Hunter shifted the collectorial base to the town of Barisal. It may be contemporary to or a slight predecessor of the Burdwan Judge of Circuit House (built 1818) to which its design bears a lot of similarity. See H. Beveridge, *The District of Bākarganj: its History and Statistics* (London: Truebner, 1876), 267.

52 Beveridge, *The District of Bākarganj*, 279. Beveridge was posted in Barisal and Backergunj district for about 5 years and intensively documented its various physical, historical, socio-cultural and administrative aspects.

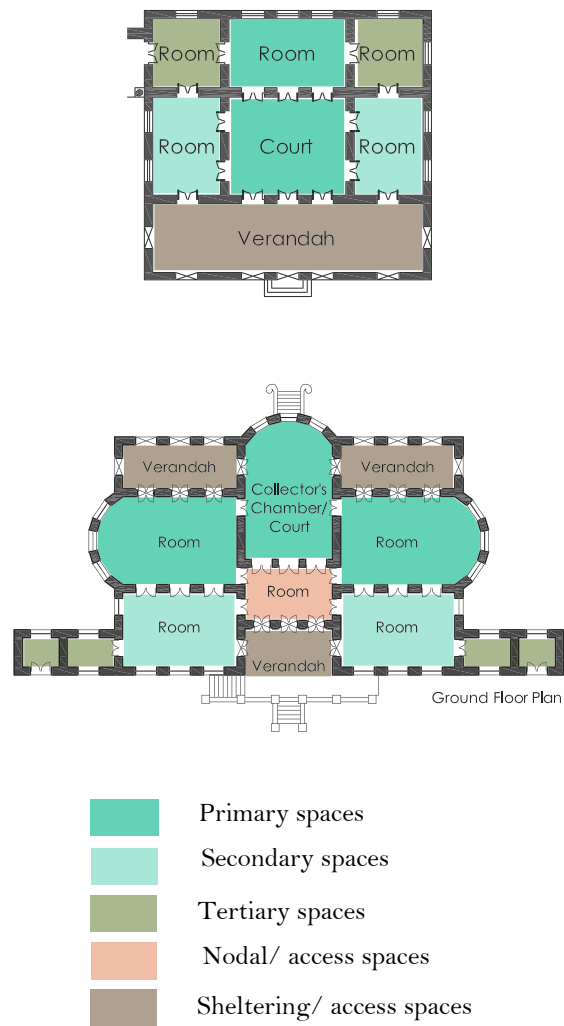


Fig. 3.13 Spatial modules in the Bungalow or 3-Bay Form

This, and the oblong space at the rear served as the spaces along the central axis from which all other spaces were entered. The Burdwan building seems to be a further development from this typology. It articulated a more differentiated range of spaces – it had three larger oblong spaces with semi circular ends probably serving as principal rooms like public courts or living room, two (medium) sized rooms probably serving as general offices or residential quarters, and a set of service spaces attached on both sides to the 3x3 matrix or the nine square form. It is also possible that the oblong space along the central axis acted as the main courtroom, flanked on either side by the Judge's chamber/general office and his private quarters respectively. The design also apportioned the continuous space of the front *verandah* (seen in the Barisal *cutcherry*) into three separate parcels, one in front at the centre, and two at the back off the two oblong rooms on two sides, providing a transitional space and a protective screen for them. The pivot of the composition was the central hallway, less substantial than in both the Bankura and Barisal buildings, but retaining its key role as a point from which all access was negotiated. The Collector's *cutcherry* in Bankura built/ acquired later in 1825 (also discussed earlier, Fig. 3.9) is another one based on a three bay pattern, though it bore a much closer and more obvious affinity to the basic 'core and envelop' bungalow form, with a large proportion of the annular space retained as a *verandah*⁵³. All the four buildings actually used different building plans, but were based in effect on a basic 3 x 2 or 3 x 3 matrix (fig 3. 12), each of the grids of which may have been occupied by space-types like rectangular/ square spaces, oblong spaces with specially shaped endings and *verandahs* (as per physical character) or chief spaces, secondary spaces, tertiary/ service spaces, nodal/access spaces and sheltering/ access spaces (as per role performed in the spatial scheme) – making possible different permutations of space types and leaving open, within the 3x3 format – a reasonable range of options (Fig. 3.13). Following the basic principle of a bungalow, the central or larger spaces had a greater height and skylights were accommodated in the difference between the lower and higher volumes – allowing a volumetric layering to be built in as well. A key characteristic of the plans were their porosity - enabled by the profusion of doors connecting the spaces - and hence, a fluid circulation system.

Most of the buildings mentioned above, designed around the concept of a nucleated form with a surrounding envelop (i.e. the bungalow form), or the 3 x 3 pattern, had been rooted in a practice of overlapping home and work spaces. It is important to note in this context that two of the four buildings in question were Circuit Judge's houses – products of a system of governance that had its root in the administrative reforms of 1790, whereby one part of *foujdari* or criminal justice (serious offences) were carried out by Judges of Courts of Circuits based in Calcutta, Dacca and Murshidabad. The initial period thus witnessed a more centralised, but partially mobile, provincial governance where officers on circuit moved from district to district for settlement of serious offences, and who lived and held courts from the same building. Mobility

⁵³ In any case, as shown by Swati Chattopadhyay (2005), the core and envelop plan and the 3X3 bay plan share essentially the same spatial principles. Both these forms in colonial Bengal, Chattopadhyay argues, also drew from the courtyard typology of urban dwellings already prevalent from pre-colonial times. Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, 118 - 123.



Fig. 3.14a Fort William barracks,
Calcutta, 1781

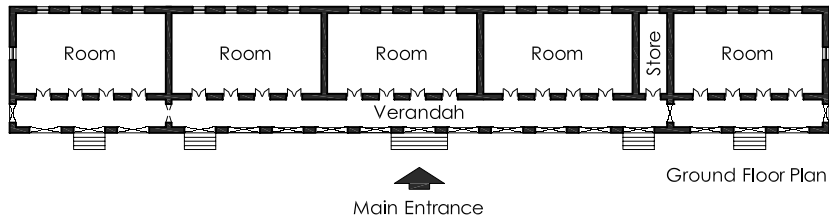


Fig. 3.14b Army barrack, Bankura,
late-eighteenth century

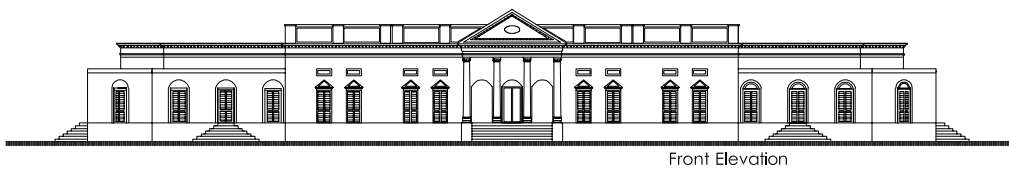
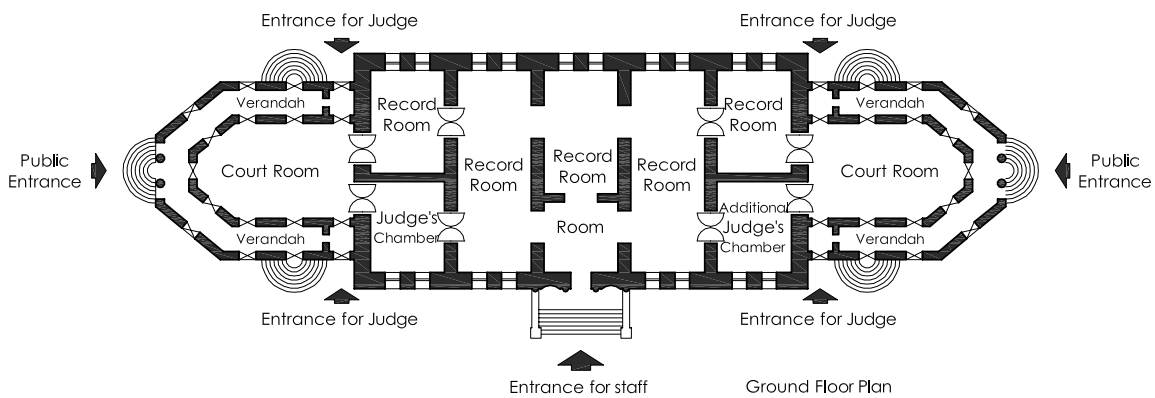


Fig. 3.15 Judge's courthouse, Burdwan, 1820

had its own limitations and only the provision of a combined living and working environment was economically viable. Even in other, more sedentary and locally stabilised areas of governance (civil or the other branches of criminal justice), it seems to have been the most common practice to live and hold office from the same building (as evident in the *cutcherry*-cum-magistrate's house in Barisal). One of the reasons behind this was possibly scalar – the nature and scale of operations and public contact, though very different from the 'factory', were still limited, making it possible, and optimal, for the two spheres to combine comfortably. As mentioned earlier, typologically too, the designs were rooted in the bungalow or the villa i.e. in residential prototypes. Here too the scalar aspect must have played a role – in that smaller residential buildings probably offered a far more suitable scalar reference, since in effect there were almost no designed 'small office buildings' as typological precedents, either in India or Britain.

3.4.2 Barrack type *cutcherries* 1820 - 1830

From around 1820s, however, another seminally significant spatial and formal paradigm became apparent, precisely stemming from the scalar issue – one that was to provide an enduring blueprint for colonial office architecture. There were a few significant developments in the larger political–administrative landscape of India that directly fed into this. The first was political developments like the end of the Maratha wars in 1818 which brought in further political stability for British presence. The second was the British Parliamentary review of the state of affairs in India and the Charter Act of 1813, whereby it was identified that much more detailed information on India was necessary for its successful governance. The pressures of this seeped from the British Parliament in England, to the Company headquarters at Fort William in Calcutta and right into the provincial courts and *cutcherries* in *sadar* towns. Elaborate land-revenue and tenure surveys, socio-cultural and economic surveys were undertaken by the provincial offices.⁵⁴ As provincial administration in Bengal became more elaborate, staff-heavy and paper work-intensive, the demand for specialised office spaces grew. This was particularly felt in judicial administration where the sheer number of civil and criminal litigations grew by leaps and bounds. Other than the enormous numbers of genuine cases, Bengal soon came to be infamous for the *mamlabaaz*, or chronic litigants and middlemen, who almost made it a profession to thrive in the courts, multiplying the number of cases far beyond reasonable proportions. Also, since the administrative reforms of 1793, the civil and criminal justice systems in Bengal were administered separately both for different denominations of money involved (at the Registrar's, *Sadar Ameen's* or *Munsif's* courts) as well as at different levels. Cases routinely moved from smaller courts to higher courts – and since *sadar* towns were typically also a sub-divisional unit of the district, its lower courts had also to be accommodated within the *cutcherry* complex. In any case even the district level court had at least one District Judge and one or two Additional Judges. Added to this was the increasingly expanding administrative machinery, in the executive domain.

⁵⁴ For an authoritative account of how information demands from the top shaped and was fed by provincial governmental establishments, see C.A. Bayly, *Empire and information: intelligence gathering and social communication in India, c. 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

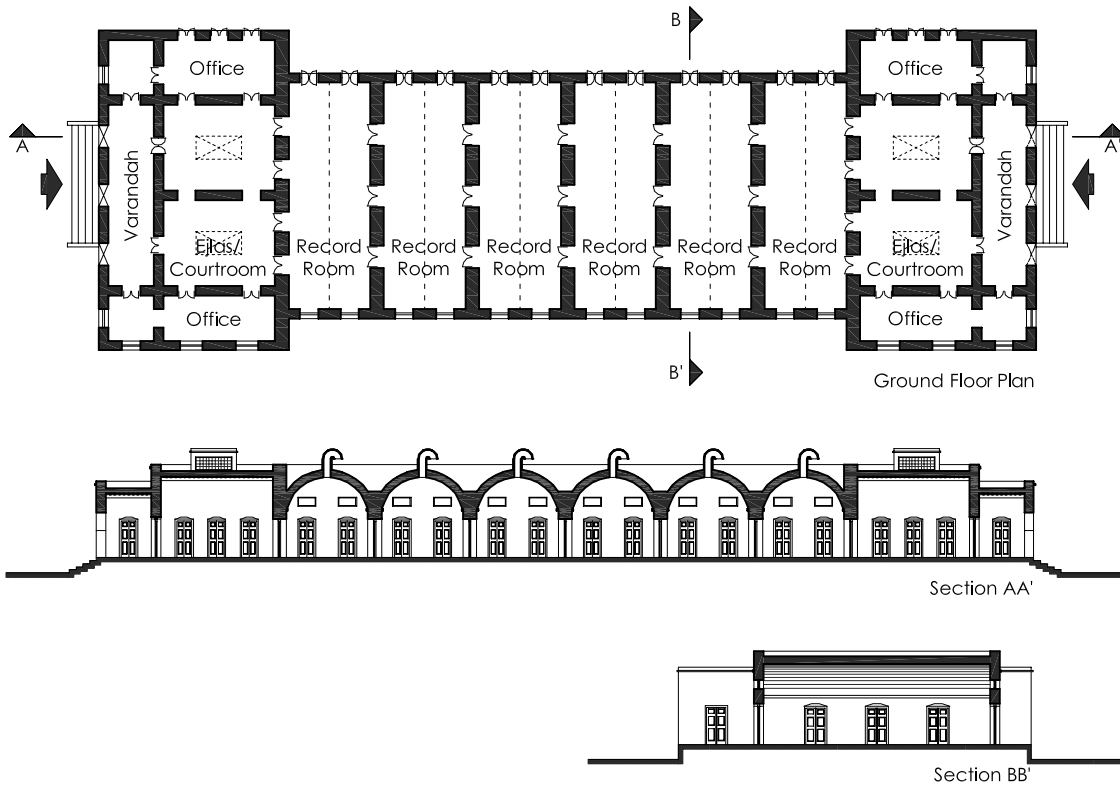


Fig. 3.16 Judge court, Krishnanagar, pre-1823

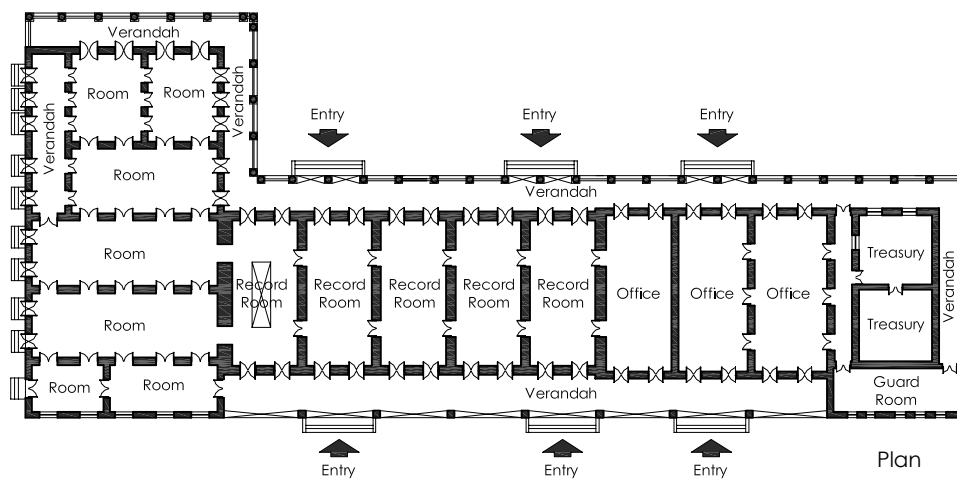


Fig. 3.17 Magistrate-Collector's cutcherry, Krishnanagar
(exact date unknown, probably c.1820)

The hierarchical nature of colonial administration tended to route any action through a number of officers and native clerks in a sequential manner, requiring many more administrative positions. It was also an indispensable apparatus since, in the absence of a good enough knowledge of local conditions by the British officers, the entire governance system was fundamentally dependent on the native officer's know-how and prudence. The court and the *cutcherry* thus relied heavily on *amlā*, or native ministerial staff, and even a simple presentation of a case at the court involved 'the *serestadar* who allows [allowed] the case to be placed on the role, the *peshkar* who reads [read] it, and the *mohurrir* who writes [wrote] the deposition'⁵⁵. Also growing was the amount of land revenue and ownership disputes. All this triggered off a huge demand for a range of types and more critically number, of spaces – viz. different courts, record rooms, office areas, senior officer's (District Judge-Magistrate or Collector) chambers and treasury.

Other than the quantity and volume of operations, some other key aspects were also changing in governance itself. There had already existed a practice of clubbing up two or all three primary arms of governance viz. revenue collection, criminal justice and civil justice, in different combinations. After 1793, while the practice of mobile administration through circuit courts still continued and there was an overall increase in the amount of provisions needed in both the executive and judicial domains, the Collector's and the Judge's functions were increasingly separated out. The Magistrate's function (criminal justice) was thought to straddle the domain of judiciary as well as the executive. It was the role that was most commonly shuttled around – sometimes combined with the Judge's and sometimes with the Collector's functions, giving rise to spatial combinations like Judge-magistrate's court/ *cutcherry* or Magistrate-Collector's court/ *cutcherry*. There were also instances where the Judge-magistrate simply held court for civil justice in what came to be known as the 'Judge's Court' and for criminal justice in the 'Magistrate-collector's court' i.e. he physically operated from two different spatial locations. These practices were adopted mostly based on specific requirements of an area, the availability of trained personnel or scale of operations, and varied largely from town to town. Officers had to be used to multi-tasking. In short, despite the elaborate reforms from 1765 and 1793 to introduce organised governmental instruments, there was very little standardisation possible in the model of provincial governance in Bengal as it had to react to the realities on ground.

The freely combinable nature of governmental arms in turn pressed forth the need for architecture to accommodate this. It became the driver of what was to be a large-scale typological shift. While the early offices were mostly housed in derivatives of the bungalow form, the formal type of the army barracks was increasingly found more suitable for the evolving and additive office machinery. A barrack typology was more easily expandable, since it consisted of smaller multipliable units. It allowed equity of access to the sub-spaces and was in essence non-hierarchical, yet with minor modifications, allowed differentiated access systems and hierarchies

⁵⁵ Anon., 'A young civilian at Mofussil court', *Calcutta Review*, 33 (1859), 59, as quoted in 'Life in the Mufassal Towns of Nineteenth century Bengal', M.S. Islam, in Kenneth Balhatchet and John Harrison, eds., *The City in South Asia - Pre-modern and Modern*, (London and Dublin: Curzon Press, 1980), 237.

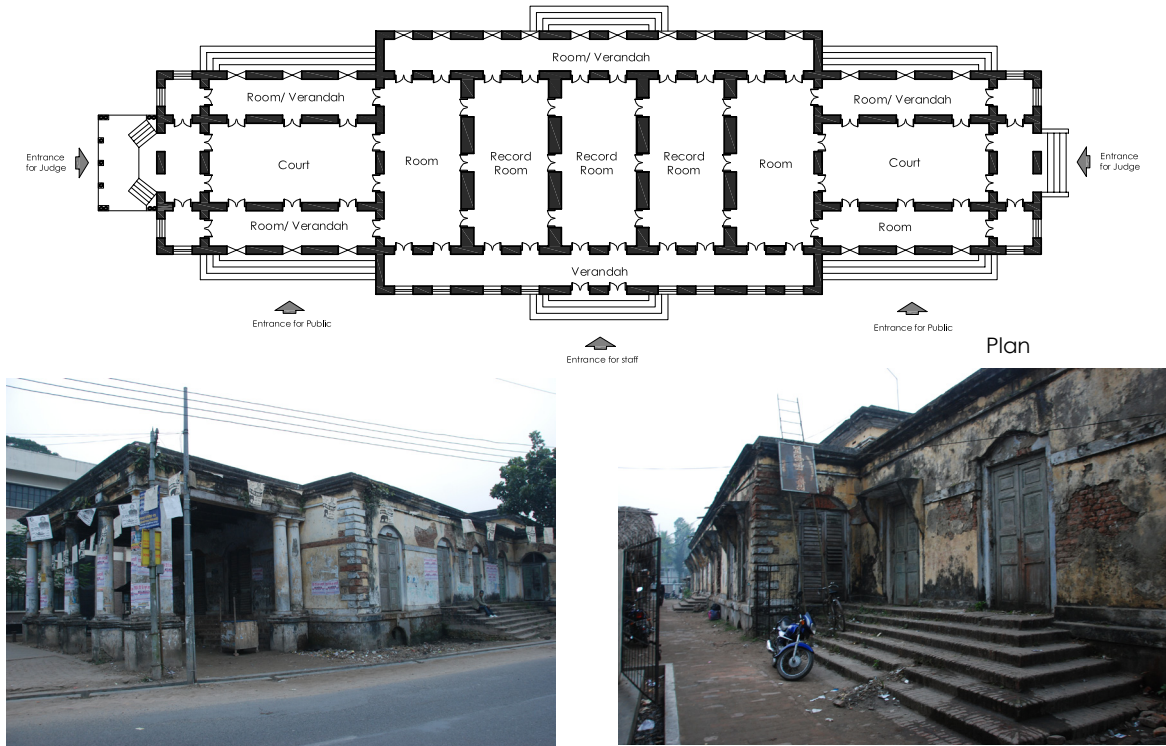


Fig. 3.18 Magistrate-Collector's *cutcherry*, Jessore



Fig. 3.19 Volume articulation of parts of buildings

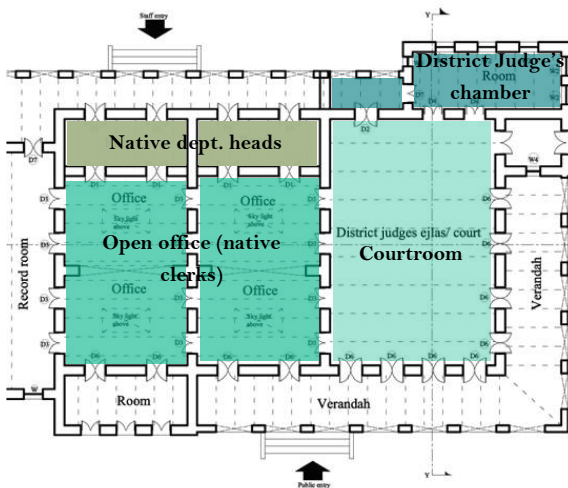


Fig. 3.20 Hierarchy of officers' and clerks' spaces

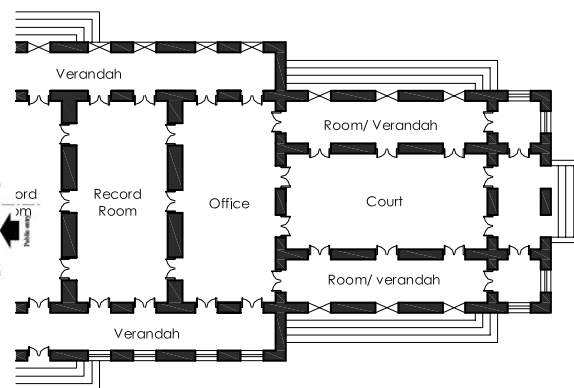


Fig. 3.21 Porous, interconnected spaces

to be built in. For precedence, there were a good many in the larger landscape. The barracks of Fort William in Calcutta, built as early as 1720, and incrementally growing and modifying over time, were one of the earliest and a continuous source of reference (Fig. 3.14a). But, for the remote provincial *sadar* towns in Bengal, there were examples closer to home (Fig. 3.14b). As mentioned in the chapter on Urban Form, a number of *Sadar* towns were actually set up on, or by, the 'firming up' of an existing military camp. Towns like Bankura thus had existing army barracks built even before the establishment of their *sadar* functions.

A number of buildings built in Bengal between 1820 and 1830 -- such as the Judge's courthouses in Burdwan (1820, Fig. 3.15) and Krishnanagar (1823, Fig. 3.16), the Magistrate-collector's *cutcherry* in Krishnanagar (exact date unknown, fig. 3.17), the Judge's court (~1823, adapted from the Krishnanagar Judge's Court) and Magistrate-Collector's *cutcherry* in Jessore (probably built between 1823-55, Fig. 3.18) were all based on the basic format of barrack design. All possessed a number of spatial units strung together in a clearly linear form, dramatically different in their aspect and spatial arrangement from their bungalow predecessors. Incidentally, this practice of stringing together rooms in a repetitive pattern had of course started even earlier, as the Record Room structure in Bankura, built in 1808, reveals (Fig. 3.8). With the exception of the Krishnanagar Judge's court, all the examples mentioned above were oriented in a north-south direction - the searing heat and humidity of the tropical plains of Bengal, after all, had to be dealt with. The use of a *verandah* was selective in most cases, wrapping around or acting as access to areas with more public interfaces (e.g. courts) and not others. At this stage, the *verandah* seems to have been used primarily as an access device and as a way of controlling entries of different groups of people into the building, rather than as a climatic device to shelter rooms within. But the overall designs of these buildings also moved much further beyond basic barrack architecture. The apparently simple, linear plans, on detailed inspection, actually reveal distinct sub-modules corresponding to different functions like records, offices, courts etc. What is most significant is not so much their simple linear arrangement, but the sub-modules themselves and their spatial relationships. In terms of functional disposition, most of the plans followed a similar format -- with the central stretch being occupied by record rooms, flanked by office areas on both sides, which in turn are flanked by court rooms which terminate the buildings on either side. In some cases, the record rooms were directly flanked by courts on either side, which are in turn ringed by a layer of offices and the public access *verandah*. In case of Magistrate-collector's *cutcheries* (e.g. in Krishnanagar, Fig. 3.17), one end of the composition was occupied by the treasury, which itself was ringed around invariably with an annular *verandah* on three sides, the fourth being the side along which it was attached to the rest of the building. While the record rooms and offices (i.e. the areas not requiring public access) were entered in the centre of the longer length either directly (Krishnanagar Judge court, Fig. 3.16), or through a hall like space (Burdwan Judge court, Fig. 3.15) or a through a *verandah* (Krishnanagar and Jessore magistrate-collector's *cutcherry*, Fig 3.17 and 3.18) -- the courts (heavy on public presence) were entered on the sides, clearly separating out public access from that of administrative staff. In the Burdwan Judge Court and Jessore Collector's *cutcherry*, the Judge or Magistrate had a separate, direct

COURTS		
RECORD ROOMS		
TREASURY		
OFFICES		
RESIDENCE		
VERANDAH		
CONNECT-ORS		

Fig. 3. 22 Generic spatial/ volumetric modules in provincial administrative architecture

entry into his office/ chamber (Fig 3.15 and 3.18) as well, accounting, in all, for three different categories of access and movement - one for the public, one for the staff and one for the top officers like the Judge-Magistrate. Typically, the record rooms had brick vaulted roofs, the office and courts had terraced roofs, and the *verandahs* had terraced or lean-to tiled roofs.

Though the plans of these buildings (both the bungalow and the barrack types) were nowhere near identical, there was an overall systemic structure. The first aspect was that the entire building was made up of a number of individual modules with distinct characteristics (Fig. 3.22). Specific functions were associated with certain specific options of spatial, volumetric and constructional modules (e.g. the record room had a typical spatial module of 18 ft - 20 ft x 40 ft - 50 ft, a volumetric module of a rectangular vaulted space, a constructional module of 3 ft - 4 ft wide brick walls with a 2 ft - 2 ft 6 in deep brick vault roof). Second, each such module allowed certain edges along which it could be combined (e.g. the record room module usually allowed combination only along the two long walls) (Fig. 3.23). Third, they could be combined within a certain range of acceptable affinity relationships (e.g. a record room was usually flanked by either an office space or a courtroom or abutted by a *verandah*). Fourth, there were certain acceptable sequences of access and movement (e.g. a *verandah* would definitely precede a courtroom) and that public, general staff and higher officers' accesses were differentiated. In some ways the front and back access that the bungalow form had previously allowed was now split sideways in the barrack form, allowing partial penetration into the spaces by different segments of people from different ends - e.g. the public would enter on the sides, through the *verandah* and into the courtroom but no further. The judge would usually enter through a separate entry and into his chamber or the courtroom. Interestingly, it was the *amla*, the native administrative clerk who in effect had access to most areas of the building. The record rooms were typically entered either from a *verandah* or directly from the outside, and then there was a sequential closed-loop internal circulation from one sub-unit to the other within the overall record room module. Also of interest is the fact that while such a modular conception (of record room, courts, offices, treasuries, *verandahs*) existed even in the earlier bungalow forms -- they were re-configured in new relationships within the barrack-type courts/ *cutcheries*.

On careful scrutiny, there seems to have been a clear consciousness of the different functional-spatial modules and an effort to articulate them as distinct parts of an overall scheme. For instance, the court rooms in the Burdwan Judge court were given special or distinct shapes, as well as separate orientation and access. Analysis reveals that the composite record room/ office module (made up of five sub-modules) in the centre was projected just a little bit from the building line of the court, giving it a distinct reading. In case of the Krishnanagar Judge Court the court modules along with its surrounding ring of offices and *verandah* were projected out beyond the building line again and given an access perpendicular to the rest. In the Jessore Collector's *cutcherry* the central office/ record module clearly projected out with two limbs of court/ *verandah* formation extending out on the sides. In terms of volume disposition and elevation treatment too, the modular parts, elements like entrances etc., are articulated with care,

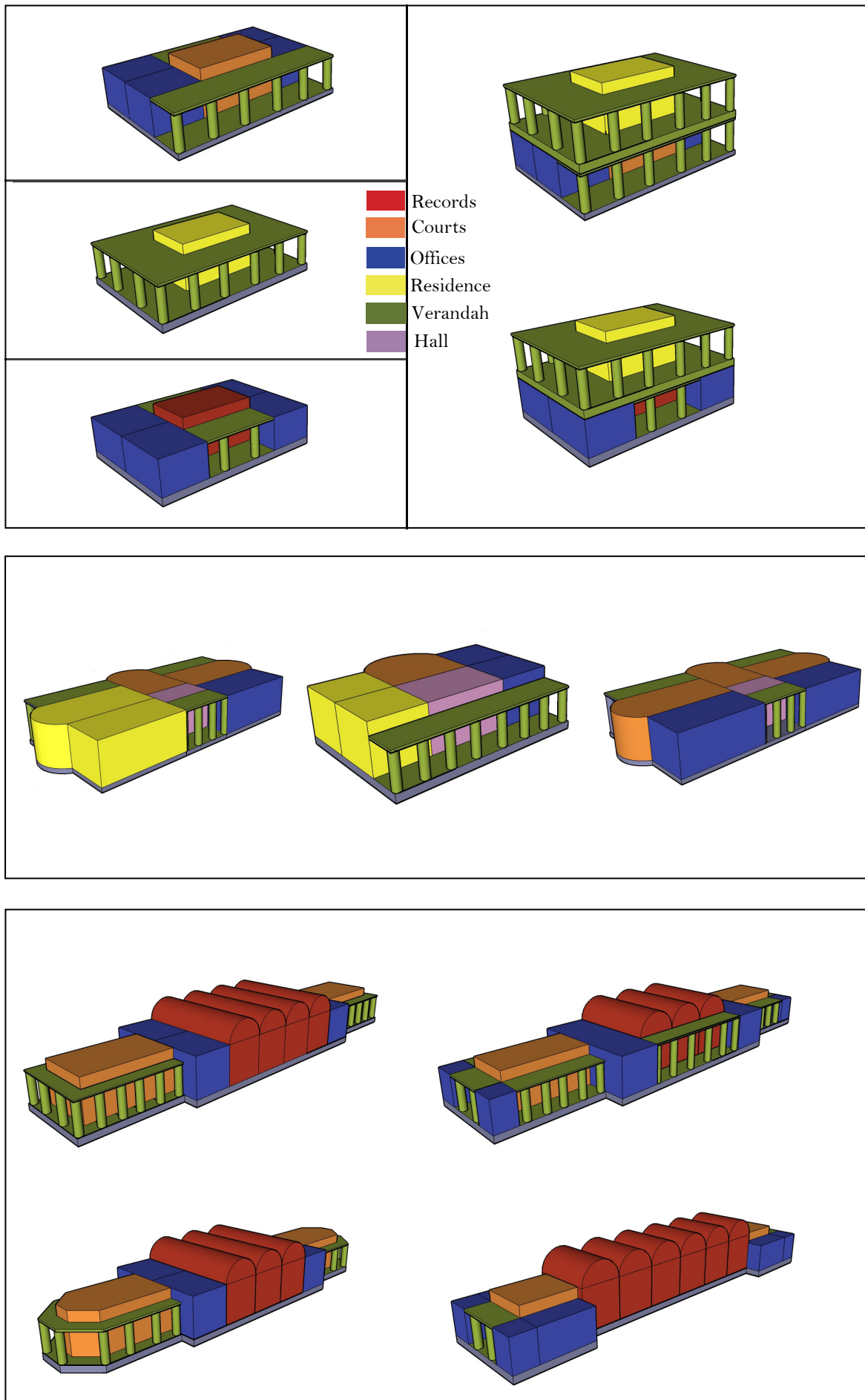


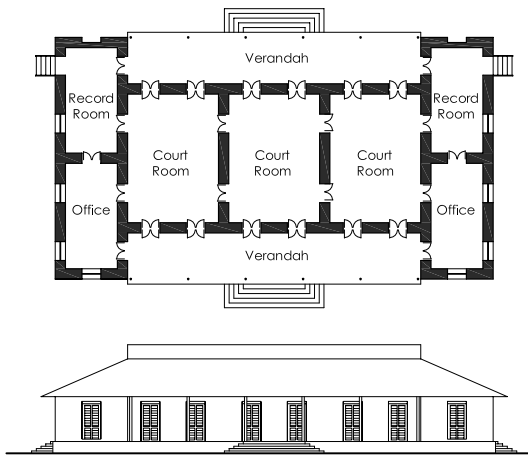
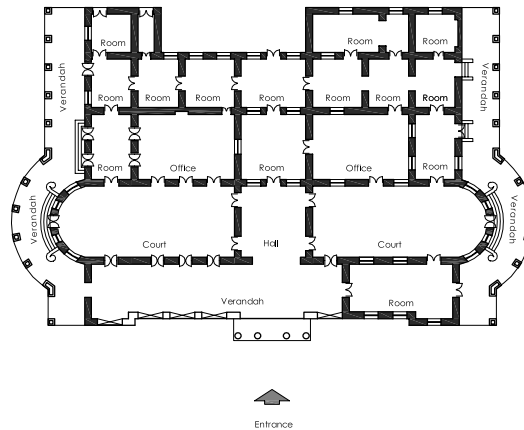
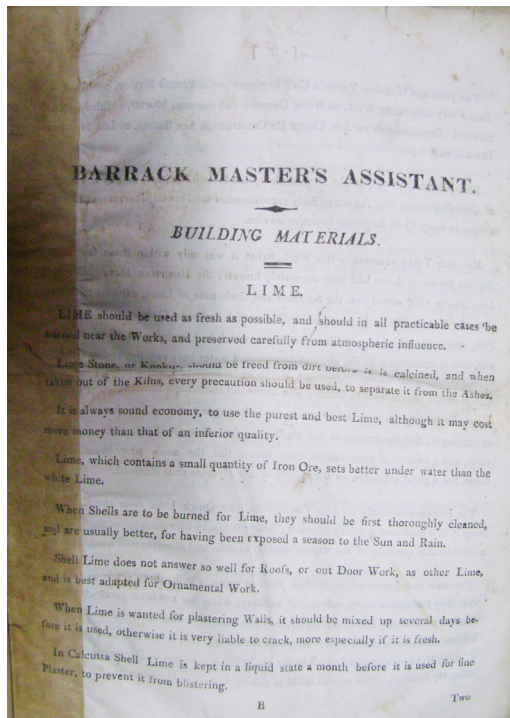
Fig. 3.23 Combination of spatial/ volumetric modules

so the whole feels like an assembly of legible parts (Fig. 3.19).

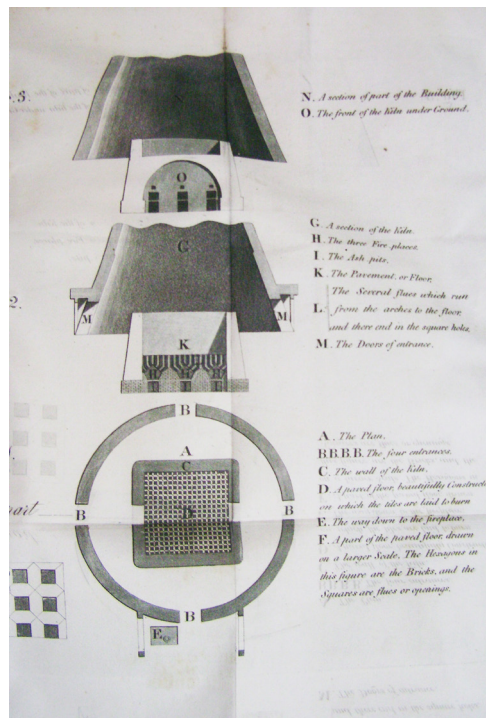
Like the record room, the typical repetitive sub-unit of the '*cutcherry*' function was the 'open office' for the numerous native clerks, writers, accountants, etc. It was a module typically of 18 ft x 40 ft - 50 ft (similar to the record room, but with a terraced roof), housing between 12-20 people (Fig. 3.22). The width of 18 ft - 20 ft was the most typical span for both record rooms and offices (which formed the biggest proportion of the total space) and seems to have been a threshold span for the semi circular vaults as well as of readily available wooden beams⁵⁶. Though seemingly democratic to begin with, the open office employed its own methods of establishing hierarchies through the size and placement of furniture and the type and sequence of access to its sections (Fig. 3.20). Attached to these were smaller but hierarchically superior office spaces for relatively higher officers like the '*barrababu*' (head-clerk) of individual departments – typically these were of 8 ft -10 ft width and length matching the length/ width of the open offices/ record rooms which they abutted. Similarly, there were the spaces for the top (European) officers which were usually accessed through other secondary spaces like a hall, an open office/ court or a head-clerk's room. These were typically buried deeper into the scheme and hence to enter these one had to navigate through the open office of junior clerks, or other spaces, making it very difficult if not impossible for common public to gain access.

Although the individual offices functioned as separate units, most of them were interconnected like railway carriages, through a system of doorways (Fig. 3. 21) - leading to a highly porous system of spaces. Each room had doors on all walls, usually two or three of them, depending on the length, totalling sometimes 10 to 12 doors to a single room. The characteristic porosity allowing for cross-ventilation in the humid tropics, seen in the bungalow plans, had thus been carried into the barrack form as well - e.g. a 40 ft long wall most often had at least 3 doors, each 4' wide, making an almost 30% proportion of opening length to wall length. The uniform spacing of the openings also ensured a fairly evenly distributed porosity across the spatial scheme. This also meant that administrative staff could navigate most of these spaces with relative ease, forming a criss-crossing of peoples' movement into and through various office spaces. There was a certain monotony of the physical environment of repetitive spaces (sub-spaces within a spatio-functional module were nearly identical). Added to this was the fact that clerical work was often considered mechanical and boring -- meaning that social networks and friendship circles within the office space was a thriving way of life, which absorbed within its folds many peripheral activities like playing cards, reading newspapers and engaging in office and local gossip. Often furniture arrangements were changed around to suit this social purpose. Due to this, the offices often acquired a certain 'looseness' in the way they were occupied and inhabited. Despite modular definitions and the systemic nature of the bungalow and barrack based designs, therefore, just as individual spaces like offices came to be 'loosened up', functions and people too often spilled over

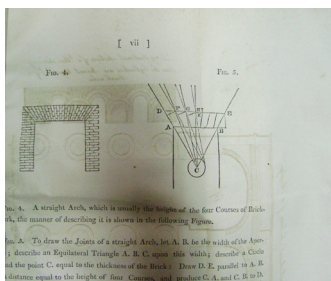
⁵⁶ Most beams in the lower plains of Bengal were of *Sal* (or *Saul*) wood which is difficult to plane or drive a nail into, making it unsuitable for general carpentry but eminently suitable for construction work, where strength and elasticity are foremost requirements, and where polishing is not so very essential. Sal trees can be up to 30-35m high, but only a part of it is usable as timber lengths. 18'-20' appears to have been the most common sizes available.

Fig. 3. 24 Collector's *cutcherry* Rajshahi, c. 1820Fig. 3. 25 Collector's *cutcherry* Berhampur, 1831

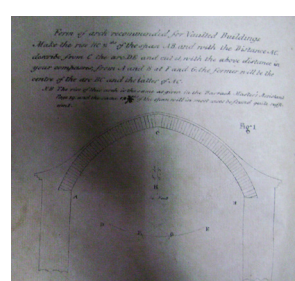
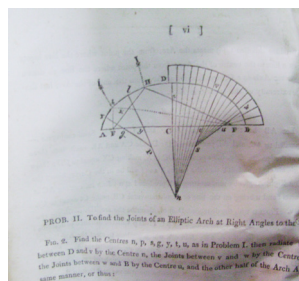
Introductory page on building materials



Brick kiln design



Geometrical construction of different shapes of arches



Construction drawing for barrel vaults

Fig. 3.26 Pages from the *Barrack Master's Compendium*, 1823.

This construction manual was a reference document for building practices all over Bengal.

Source: West Bengal State Secretariat Library, Writers' Building, Calcutta.

to the next domain. It was not uncommon to have an audience for a court-hearing spilling beyond its formal threshold, and out onto the *verandah*. The profusion of openings in each internal and external wall, a pressing necessity in hot humid tropical conditions, also by default created a porous, permeable, interconnected spatiality – within which delimiting each function to its built margins became virtually impossible.

The typical courtroom measured about 23 ft - 24 ft or 34 ft - 36 ft x 40 ft (max.) (Fig. 3.22), with terraced roofing, although the room's size ratio was less acute than the record room/office module. Courtrooms in the colonial context were often thickly populated with a large range of people (from convicts, witnesses, administrative staff to attending friends, relatives and other interested parties). While there was possibly a natural restriction of depth (limited by the audible and visible range of the judge/ magistrate), the large space requirement had to be negotiated by using larger widths. Most court rooms were of more squat proportions with aspect ratios of around 2-2.5:3. Its adjacency to the *verandah* (of a lower height) allowed it to receive light through clerestory windows at the ceiling level.

The other typical building module was the 'treasury' (Fig. 3.22), usually part of the Collector/ magistrate's *cutcherry*. Normally it was a square (as in the Bankura Collectorate building of 1825, Fig. 3.9) or rectangular space surrounded on one, two or three sides with an annular *verandah*, allowing the fourth side for attachment to the larger scheme. In this case, the purpose of the annular ring seems to be expressly that of a defensive layer – not only increasing the danger for anyone trying to access the treasury, but also actually being used as a space for vigilance (typically armed guards were stationed in this layer). The annular space also often contained additional vault chambers in a row under the floor of the space. The treasury commonly had thicker walls and an elaborate system of protective instruments (like heavy grille doors, gates with padlocks and virtually no windows).

More amorphous spatial modules such as the *verandah* performed a wide range of functions, one or more at a time (Fig. 3.23). These could range from being a simple screen to providing shade for inner walls or a buffer zone, an access space, or a vigilance space. The *verandah* was typically 8'-10' in width and of lengths dependent on its purpose in the specific context. Construction-wise, it had a roof which was typically flat terraced, or sloped tiled or thatched. Some other spaces like the entrance hall in the central bay of the Burdwan Court building (Fig. 3.15), very similar in role to the hall spaces in the Bungalow prototypes, were chiefly nodal access spaces or connectors.

The key pre-occupation in building designs at this stage seems to have been to articulate the entire built form in terms of guarded and loosely guarded domains, with different levels and types of access systems built in. The most closely guarded were the colonial revenue and the land-records. Next in terms of control were the higher officials chambers. The open offices and courtrooms were relatively exposed. The devices used to achieve these varied - from vigilance

verandahs, to grilled/ padlocked doors, to differentiated access systems. However, due to the inherent porosity of the form, ironically, such tight control of access and protection was largely diluted as well.

3.4.3 Typological plurality and systemic principles

Despite the increasing proliferation of the barrack type, from around 1820, the bungalow type did not die out either – it continued to be reinvented in newer incarnations. The *cutcherry* building in Rajshahi (Fig. 3.24) was a curious mix of the basic core-envelop bungalow form and the linear arrangement of the barrack form. The Collector's court in Berhampur, built in 1831 (Fig. 3.25), was essentially very similar to the nine-square bungalow forms of the Barisal *cutcherry* and the Burdwan Circuit Judge's house, but was developed much further to fit in more elaborate functional requirements. The Rajshahi *cutcherry* also had the outer layer built with a local thatched roof, i.e. it was a combination of temporary and permanent construction. This was a result either of its relative importance amongst various *sadar* stations, the lack of adequate funds, the lack of perceived need by or inability of the local officer to negotiate a more permanent building, or simply a high level of artisan skill available in thatch-work which tilted the balance in favour of temporary construction. While the cause could be rooted in the specific context of a place, or local agency, it all meant that the larger built-landscape of public office architecture had spawned a huge heterogeneity, with multiple paradigms like bungalow and barrack and their many incarnations, permanent, semi-permanent or temporary construction in different combinations, and a large range of materials and techniques, operating simultaneously. Different issues and solutions depended on ground-realities, and it was simply not logistically possible for central agencies like the Military Board to institute uniform codes across the territory. A deterministic framework could not be evolved, at a time when knowledge of the territory and its practices was only partial, local and varied.

Both the previous bungalow type, as well as the barrack derivatives developed through the first half of the nineteenth century in Bengal on different permutations and combinations of modules – each of which had, to some extent, its own autonomy, distinctive characteristics and functions. Fig. 3.22 and 3.23 illustrate the systemic principles behind this. Depending on the specificities of place, site conditions, plot shapes, amount of floor space required for each function, the basic units could be combined in a number of ways. Some modules like the Record rooms (made up of a number of sub-modules of individual record rooms) could even function as stand alone buildings (e.g. Bankura Record room of 1808, Fig. 3.8). Other than horizontal connections there were also vertical couplings possible whenever two spatio-functional modules were similar. For example, since the basic form of both a residential unit as well as a treasury was a core space with annular ring, combining them vertically was a possibility (as seen in the Bankura Collectorate of 1825, Fig. 3.9). The ensuing possibility range was considerable. It was a system which involved a 'typification' of parts, but not the whole. The parts or modules were

‘determined’, that too with some range of flexibility – but the whole was never deterministically laid down. Its composition rules were defined, but the final design was not. The various designs were systemically linked but not the same. Elevations too varied considerably in style from the earlier neo-Palladian to later variants of neo-Classicism through to combinations of these with local vernacular mud, tiled or thatched architecture.

Looking at the difference between individual designs of government buildings in Bengal and the sheer variety that is legible, it is clear there were never strict design types given out by the Military Board. Rather, as shown by the various communications in Bankura and Burdwan between the District Officer, the Military Board Chief Engineer, the subsidiary engineers, surveyors or other advisors, and the central Judicial/ Revenue Department, the designs seem to have been the product of negotiations between a number of agencies. In fact, a lot of the decision making was evidently actively passed onto the district officer in both the cases. This is apparent, for example, from the following communication between William Blunt (the Judge-Magistrate) of Jangal Mahal district and the authorities at Calcutta:

As the Government do not deem it necessary to direct that a survey of the buildings be made by a professional officer [probably meaning in this context an engineer] I beg leave to suggest that the Judge of Circuit whose arrival at this station is expected in a few days, may be instructed to examine and report to Government on the manner in which the works in question may have been executed⁵⁷.

Also, while the surviving government papers are somewhat silent on the role of local agency, much of it does reveal itself as an under-layer, legible only when one reads between the lines. The sort of argument that William Blunt used (such as the effect of lightning on buildings made of and built on iron-rich soil or brick, the cost comparisons between thatched and terraced roofing) would have been impossible without direct recourse to the know-how of local artisans. In a later letter of May 1817, Capt. P. Phipps the Superintendent of Buildings (Military Board) actually asked for detailed information on the range of local building materials available, ease of procurement, suitability of each for construction purposes, type of labour involved, availability of each type of labour, seasons in which resources are abundant or scarce, nature of soil, and other geological properties in the Bankura region. In response, the Magistrate, C.H. Hoppner, furnished all the details⁵⁸; it is obvious that his information came from an all-local constituency. The exchange also reveals the near-complete ignorance of central authorities in Calcutta and London of the unknown provincial territory of Bengal and its building practices, or about the ‘intermediate’ position of the District Officer in knowledge construction and the dependence of newer knowledge systems and practices on existing ones. It is well established that all construction of government buildings in colonial provincial Bengal was carried out by local masons and builders in any case⁵⁹. By the 1820s, there was some attempt to bring a

⁵⁷ *Bankura District Letters Issued*, letter no. 136, from William Blunt (Judge-Magistrate) to George Dowdeswell (Secretary to Government in the Judicial Department, Fort William), 23 May 1810.

⁵⁸ *Bankura District Letters Issued*, letter no. 154, from C. H. Hoppner (Magistrate) to Capt. P. Phipps (Superintendent of Buildings, Calcutta), 23 May 1817.

⁵⁹ Such a role of the local artisan, in the context of colonial India, for instance, has been articulated, e.g., by some architectural and art historians such as Sten Nilsson, Giles Tillotson or Jan Morris. Sten Nilsson, *European architecture in*

degree of standardisation in the construction practices across Bengal by circulating construction manuals such as the *Barrack Master's Compendium*, published in 1823 by the Military Board. This enumerated building practices in terms of available building material and descriptions of suitable building technology (Fig. 3.26). However, even in this, the emphasis seems to have been to capture the range of practices that already existed in Bengal and overlay them with British military engineering knowledge and clearly not to radically alter existing practices. In any case, the purpose of this appears to have been to ensure quality in construction and careful attention to construction techniques and processes – rather than to institute blanket uniformity in building practices. The manual, in fact, openly acknowledged the role and importance of local artisans and local knowledge on numerous instances. It continuously attempted to make the newly recruited British engineers privy to the need for adjusting to realities on the ground, differentiating the practices in the colony as distinct from those ‘at home’.

It is not that the Military Board had devised the ‘systemic’ principle of building design discussed earlier (Figs. 3.22 and 3.23), but rather that an environment where centralisation was nearly impossible, where each local situation demanded and virtually formed its own solutions, and where there was still some common currency of practiced principles, allowed the development of the systemic principle. It was a system where the individual building modules (e.g. record rooms, offices, courts, treasuries) came to be subjected to somewhat standardised practices across Bengal (e.g. record rooms in virtually all *sadar* towns consisted of 20 ft x 50 ft spaces with vaulted roofs) – in that sense the parts were determined to a large extent by wider prevalent practices, but the whole design in terms of their inter-relations was not. That was, instead, left to be determined at the local scale – through the intervention of a number of local agencies like the District Officer, the local contractor or artisan, and based on considerations of local issues like site condition, available space, the nature of local skills and materials.

All this, combined with the uncertainty of the suitability of any solution, the range of factors still unknown to the ‘stranger’ coloniser, the variety of local geo-climatic conditions and skills available in each region, the differential ability of local officers to negotiate different aspects of design like temporariness and permanence – had in effect, interestingly, and as a necessity, created a flexible and adaptable system – with a reasonable space for local, individual variations and elasticity. Through the early period of revenue administration, therefore, there was thus a high degree of malleability in the design system – showing that British spatial practice in colonial provincial Bengal was far more negotiated and far less imposed or dogmatic than stereotypes would suggest. However, this was true only of the period before the institution of imperial governance – for it was also a design spontaneity that was to be heavily curtailed during the era of the Public Works Department, after 1855, as will be seen in the later chapters.

India, 1750-1850 (London: Faber, 1968); Jan Morris, *Stones of Empire: the buildings of the Raj* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Giles Tillotson, *The tradition of Indian architecture: continuity, controversy and change since 1850* (New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 1989).

Chapter 4 ■

Administrative architecture 1830-1860

**Introduction**

This chapter deals with a transitory phase in Indian political history that roughly connects the rule of the East India Company to the rule of the British Crown. The institution of formal imperial rule, established in 1858 (after the Indian Mutiny of 1857), and the subsequent 'high-imperial' era from the 1870s, witnessed substantial centralisation of governance. This directly impacted on governmental building activity in the provincial areas of Bengal, as such works became one of the core spheres subjected to centralised decision-making by the Government of Bengal and also the Public Works Department (PWD) – a consolidated central body formed in 1855 to design and build the physical infrastructure of colonial governance. However, although the rule of the Crown was distinctly marked out from that of the Company through the formal act of assumption of power in 1858 and the later declaration by Benjamin Disraeli, the British Prime Minister, of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India in 1876 – the change in governance and building practice was not as abrupt as such discrete temporal divisions would tend to suggest. Much governmental practice in India had already begun to transform with the emergence of certain new ideologies from around 1830, which found more concrete expression later. This was conditioned directly by the development of political and governmental philosophy in England and by the attempt to fit the colonial governance of

India within such a framework. On the other hand, such frameworks were also continuously re-configured in order to treat India or other colonies as 'special' cases – and so perhaps not the most appropriate grounds for a fully-fledged implementation of the newer ideals of governance. In short, the period between 1830 and 1860 provided a nebulous 'testing ground' in India for both the adaptation of emerging European visions of governance to the Indian context as also for the later development of many governmental building practices in the 'high-imperial' era. At the same time, this period mediated the continuity of certain aspects of provincial architecture of governance, which had originated in the first half of the nineteenth century, into the imperial era. Building activity in provincial governance during this period thus reflected this transience. The nature of interventions in provincial governmental buildings also reveal the attempt by the colonial establishment to manage its operations in provinces like Bengal through the manipulation of built space – and simultaneously, the ongoing struggle to cope with ever changing requirements, which accompanied the difficulties of governing a land that was far from being fully known or understood.

In this chapter, the architectural developments in the period in question will be looked at in two phases – the first, between 1830 and 1855, and the second, between 1855 and 1860. While the former represented incremental changes in the nature of governance and its architecture, the latter was marked by a relatively quick succession of landmark events such as the colonial government's dramatic new development projects centred on visions of 'progress' and most significantly, the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 – both of which, in effect, radically transformed the complexion of governance and governmental architecture.

4.1 Development in building practices, 1830-1855

4.1.1. Ideology of reform and improvement

To understand the radical changes in the conduct of governance in India and the way its built space was to be shaped from 1858-59 and for the next 40 years, it is essential to consider the critical transitory phase which began in the 1830s. The Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 and the subsequent assumption of governance of India by the British Crown are seen by a number of critics to be the two landmark events that led to a radically different notion of imperialism¹ that also had a very direct bearing on provincial public architecture.² However, although the Mutiny and the take-over by the Crown precipitated structural alterations in governance and in the design and delivery of governmental buildings, the seeds for much of this were actually sown in an earlier period. Indeed, the 1830s heralded significant and substantive developments both in the

¹ For an authoritative account of this transformation see e.g. C. A. Bayly, *Indian society and the making of the British Empire*, in series *The New Cambridge history of India II*, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Thomas Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-1870* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1990); Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, in series *The New Cambridge history of India: The Indian empire and the beginnings of modern society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

² The impact of the emerging ideals of imperial governance on governmental buildings *per se* and the subsequent development of the Indo-Saracenic style as a consolidated representation of the imperial government in India has been traced e.g. by Thomas Metcalf and Giles Tillotson in Thomas R Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian architecture and Britain's Raj* (London: Faber, 1989) and Giles Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture: Continuity, Controversy and Change Since 1850* (London: Yale University Press, 1989).

ideological foundation of governance as well as in its actual operations. It was then that one of the key ideological instruments of governance was identified which was also to become a driver of provincial urban development and public architecture in India over the next three or four decades: the idea of 'reform and improvement'. The self-assuming role of the British colonial state as an instrument for the improvement of a people had been legible even in the reforms of 1793, but at that time the idea of improvement was primarily limited to land-management systems. It was not, as yet, used as a pervasive dimension of everyday life. But by the 1830s, under the Governor General, William Bentinck, the policy of improvement was virtually formalised into a governing ideal in Bengal. The extent to which it was successful has been much debated by historians, but that it provided one of the enduring ideological premises for governance until the late-nineteenth century is now generally accepted.³

The impetus for improvement came largely from the development of Liberalism in England around 1818-19, after the Napoleonic Wars, but which had actually originated in the late-eighteenth century. At core, this constituted a belief in the individual's freedom from despotism and the replacement of the aristocracy by greater social equality, while on the economic side, it included free trade and progressive taxation.⁴ However, Liberalism was also an extremely heterogeneous doctrine, which broadly believed in a universal human nature and the idea that human beings could be totally transformed or reformed to a higher state through the mechanisms of law, education and free trade. Interestingly, in colonies like India, where the State played a far greater role, the testing and experimentation of liberal ideals could happen within a governmental space that was far less constrained than in England. In 1818, James Mill (1773-1836), a London-based East India Company employee who later rose to the position of 'Examiner' of the Company's correspondence, published his three-volume work, *A History of British India*, in which the liberal view of Indian society found its fullest expression. Following the Benthamite Utilitarian framework, and indeed using utility as a measure of social progress, Mill attempted to place India within a scale of civilisation which was based on an hierarchical classification of societies, and which concluded that India was in a 'hideous state of society' and thus virtually stagnant. According to Mill, happiness, not liberty, was the goal of government, and he believed that this could be achieved in India by 'light taxes and good laws', that is, individual property rights enforced by 'scientific' codes of law without the need of a representative government. About forty years later, in and after 1859, with his essays *On Liberty* and *Representative Government*, Mill's son John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), among others, made concrete a more eclectic form of

3 This is apparent, other than in the works of Metcalf or Bayly mentioned earlier, also in the works of other scholars like Mark Harrison, David Arnold or Gauri Vishwanathan, writing on colonial institutional history. Bayly himself argues that the 'age of reform' (1830s- 1840s), though it often produced contradictory and ineffectual outcomes, the medium of the reformers were as important as their message and therefore the very process of reform and improvement were critical in colonial governance. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, c 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); 212. See also Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*; David Arnold, *Science, Technology, and Medicine in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Mark Harrison, *Public Health in British India: Anglo-Indian Preventive medicine 1859- 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India 1600- 1850* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Gauri Vishwanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (Columbia, 1989; Oxford, 1998).

4 The economic side of the late-eighteenth century was shaped through works like those of Adam Smith, *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Fourth Edition), London: A Strahan and T Cadell, 1786.

Liberalism than the Benthamite Utilitarianism espoused by his father. Although largely built upon similar ideological premises, John Stuart Mill argued in favour of liberty as a goal of governance in itself and therefore stressed the need, usually, for a representative government. He also drew upon similarities between Europe and India, such as their common Indo-European lineage and linguistic roots. India was seen as a land that originally shared the superior cultural base of Europe but which had, though the ages, eroded and degenerated into a lower form of civilisation. Ironically, however, Mill's belief in a representative government stopped short when it came to colonies like India. He argued that the 'ideally best polity' was not fit for all peoples. Culture, not race and environment, was what was seen to distinguish and elevate Europeans from their Indian counterparts.⁵ Recognition of India as being in a backward state, in turn, generated and legitimised the idea of 'reform and improvement' through a paternalistic state. Liberal views of government in the Indian context, therefore, were curiously being transformed into a legitimisation of delivery of codified law, through an imperial apparatus that apparently had a full knowledge of the good of its people. Within the larger Liberal ideal, a separate premise for the governance of India thus continuously needed to be carved out. Ironically, also, from 1830 onwards, the understanding of India as a land characterised by a traditional reverence for despotic forms of rule was conveniently harnessed by British political thinkers to forge an even higher state control within an apparently Liberalist framework. From the 1860s and within the new imperial governance, it is this dichotomy which would express itself so profusely in various arms of the Indian administration and extend right into the design of its own built space.

There were two significant directions towards which the idea of improvement developed and these were to have important spatial implications in the context of provincial governance. The first was the management and systematisation of information and knowledge - as well as the limitations and subversions of such attempts - which transformed the workings of the internal spaces of provincial *cutcheries*, as well as affecting a larger administrative geography. The second was the development of a new educational apparatus, a public instruction system and health and sanitary attitudes that became agents for newer conceptions of planning and management of towns. The latter also directly began a trend of 'standardisation' in building design, initially to address sanitation issues, and later -- as a way of managing the increasingly voluminous and complex building activities of government. Added to these, was the third aspect of the development and importation of industrial technology from Britain which became in many ways a key bearer of the ideology of improvement and 'progress', such as those in building systems. The period between 1830 and 1855 witnessed very little new generation of buildings, but was largely characterised by the addition/alteration of parts of existing buildings, driven by the changing nature of administration. It also witnessed, as discussed in Chapter 2, the development of new institutional areas within Bengal's provincial towns. The following sections of this chapter map out some of these incremental changes in provincial administrative architecture and discuss them in relation to the emerging priorities in central and provincial governance.

5 See Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

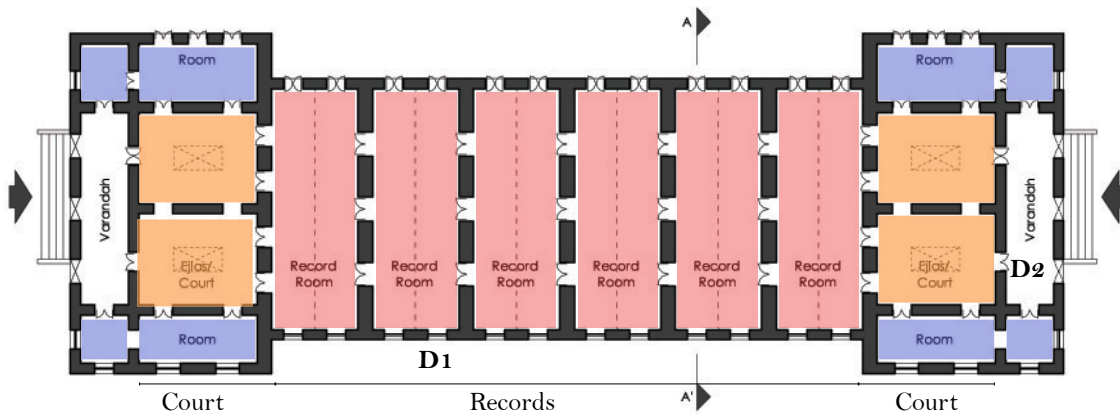


Fig. 4.1 Location of record rooms,
District Judge's Court, Krishnanagar,
early-nineteenth century

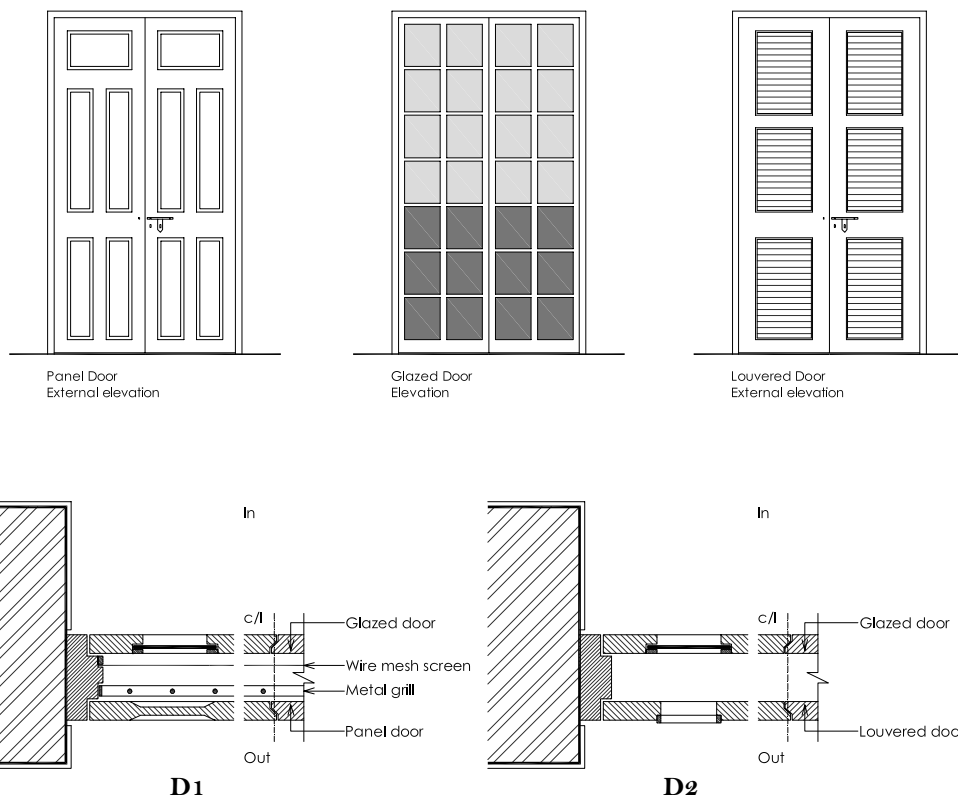


Fig. 4.2 Opening details of record rooms (D1), in comparison to those of other spaces like courts or offices (D2). Judge's court Krishnanagar. Note the use of the far higher number and types of protective layers.

4.1.2. Information, revenue knowledge, provincial 'treasure' and internal changes within the *cutcherry* space

One of the key parameters determining the nature of provincial governmental spaces was the information and intelligence collection system of governance, the physical material that it generated and the actors and human networks it involved. In describing the crucial nature of information gathering, the historian C.A. Bayly emphasises that 'the expansion of knowledge was not so much a by-product of empire as a condition for it'.⁶ Colonial governance up to 1830 was based on mastering and manipulating the information systems of Hindu and Mughal predecessors. The formal grant of the *diwani* in 1765 had made collection of revenue information vital for the East India Company's survival. It also allowed Company officials much freer physical access to provincial areas for this purpose, giving them a new legitimacy in accessing indigenous information. After 1773, many indigenous revenue records and procedure manuals were open for examination. Similarly, even survey and mapping activities, undertaken during the 1770s under James Rennell,⁷ moved from merely preparing maritime charts to, for example, recording inland routes and town and village locations.⁸ Though it was heavily dependent in this late-eighteenth-century period on the existing information-base of Mughal governance in the provincial areas of Bengal (for example, on the record rooms of the Nawab's court in Murshidabad), by the early-nineteenth century the Company was very active in securing and formalising its own information base. Agencies like the army commissariat became mammoth, centralised pools of data about the nature of local resources in interior areas.⁹ As part of this larger scheme of information generation (discussed in Chapter 3), record rooms in provincial *cutcherries* became central to the spatial conception of provincial office architecture. As well as being necessary for the internal functioning of *cutcherries* at the district level, expanding the information base was also actively demanded by officials in Calcutta and London – for example, much local evidence was produced for the Parliamentary enquiries held before the renewal of the Company's charter in July 1813. So critical was their role in administration that the record rooms were invariably placed right at the physical centre of the spatial organisation of provincial *cutcherries*, and other spaces like courts, higher officials' chambers or general office areas were arranged with respect to them, and not the other way round (Fig. 4.1). With the possible exception of the treasury, the record area was also, by far, the most guarded entity in the spatial scheme – hemmed in between other functions and protected by various layers and types of fenestration devices that were incrementally built up from around 1830. A close look at the door/window details of a typical record room gives a fair idea of the different types of anticipated threats and the design measures taken to mitigate them (Fig. 4.2). The fenestration system consisted of a number of distinct layers – for example, i) the

6 C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 56.

7 As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, Rennell had been appointed the Surveyor-General of India in 1767. *ONDB*.

8 Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 49.

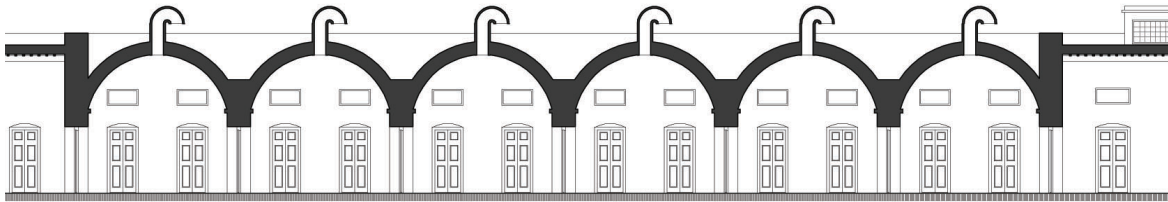
9 Bayly gives a meticulous account of this process of information generation by the colonial government in the early nineteenth century. Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 56 - 180.



View of record room, Bankura, 1808 - visible vaults

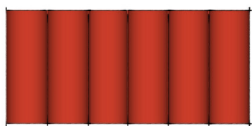


View of record room, Krishnanagar, ~ 1820 - vaults merged into the overall visual composition

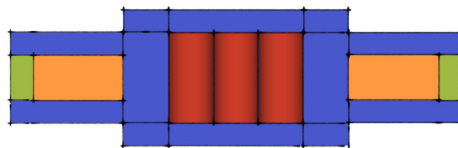


Section of record room, Krishnanagar - note how the parapet walls were raised at the shorter ends of the barrel vaults, making them invisible from the outside.

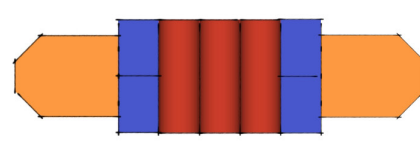
Fig. 4. 3 Changing treatment of vaulted roofs of record rooms.



Combined record rooms, Bankura,



Collector's cutcherry ,
Jessore , 1820



Judge's court/ cutcherry,
Burdwan , 1820



Fig. 4.4 Distribution of centralised record rooms into separate ones for the Collector's and Judge's cutcheriies

environmental layers: a) glass shutters to let in light but cut out dust or moisture, and b) louvered wooden shutters to enable ventilation and selective light; ii) the security layers: a) grilles to protect the space against human intrusion, and b) wire-mesh to keep out tropical insects.¹⁰ In no other space of the *cutcherry* were the sheer number and types of fenestration and other security devices deployed as in the record room area. In most cases these layers were not a one-off provision but had been built up over a period of time as the understanding of possible threats evolved. In short, the record room area was gradually fitted out as a space with a very high degree of control over its environmental and security parameters. While central in terms of the priority it enjoyed as the generator for the overall designs of *cutcherries*, security requirements also often made it necessary for these record rooms to be hidden from the public view. The vaulted roofs, typically associated with record rooms to ensure a tighter and more secure envelop, were therefore often disguised by raising parapet walls around them, since otherwise these very elements would make it blatantly easy to identify the most guarded domain of provincial administration. Thus while the older type of record rooms built in and around 1808 had visible vaulted roofs (e.g. in Bankura and in the Krishnanagar Collector's *cutcherry*), from around 1820, in most of the *cutcherries* these were hidden behind a parapet so they merged invisibly into the overall visual composition of the building (Fig. 4.3).

The second aspect that affected the spatial disposition of functions within *cutcherries* was the nature of revenue and judicial knowledge itself. As articulated by Christopher Bayly, while in pre-colonial times, Indian kingdoms used revenue rights and grants as part of a much wider science of kingship to establish networks of political obligations, under the East India Company “revenue knowledge assumed the status of a specialised corpus of economic information, much more divorced from political, judicial and military knowledge”.¹¹ Each branch of British imperial governance in turn developed its own specialised information base. Governmental domains like the military and the civil in India were already becoming somewhat segregated in physical terms, being based in cantonments and civil stations respectively. The oligarchic form of district administration fed further into this process of segregation of information systems and the spaces in which they were housed. While early record rooms like the one in Bankura combined record rooms for the work of the Judge, Magistrate and Collector, in almost all *cutcherry* complexes built after 1820, the Judge's and Collector's record rooms became separate entities, acting as the vital cores, respectively, of each of their *cutcherries* (Fig. 4.4). Aside from record rooms, different functions and spaces within the *cutcherries* themselves were also shaped as distinct modules with their own identities, although they retained a high level of physical inter-connection until at least the 1850s. An increase in physical segregation between spatio-functional modules — through the deployment of specific architectural devices — was taken up with more vigour during the early

¹⁰ Interestingly, such an approach to filtering out different elements through a careful orchestration of a range of design devices has been considered the hallmark of modernist architecture of the twentieth century and its attempts to set up devices in buildings in terms of ‘thing systems’ (to control interactions with, access to or movement of elements like dust, air, organisms etc.) and ‘people systems’ (to control the same issues involving people). See for example, David Smith Capon, *Architectural Theory: Le Corbusier's Legacy, Principles of Twentieth Century Architecture Arranged by Category* (New York: John Wiley & Co., 1999), 88–93.

¹¹ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 151.

1850s and reached its peak later in the 1860s, during the period of the Public Works Department (as will be discussed in the next chapter).

The other fall-out from the emerging specialised demands of revenue and judicial information was a shift in the type of functions that dominated administrative operations, and this in turn affected the built spaces. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, 'accountancy rather than political patronage was ... elevated to the top of the hierarchy of administrative skills'.¹² Consequently, the *amla*, or administrative clerks (a heterogeneous group which included writers, accountants and translators) became a pivotal constituency of district *cuthcherries*. The chain of interconnected open offices were sites where the whole panoply of clerical work flourished and sometimes degenerated into realms of boredom, lethargy and inertia -- something that appears to have been a characteristic aspect of colonial employment. One of the key constituents of the office *amla* was the group of *Munshis*. In the pre-colonial system, *Munshis* were news writers, constituting an Indo-Muslim bureaucracy that also developed characteristics of a middle class. Armed with virtuosity in the Persian language, as well as accounts and politics, they enjoyed considerable social power. Interestingly, the *Munshi* system 'had also given rise to a state service above and beyond allegiance to any particular king or dynasty'.¹³ This meant that they were capable of attaching themselves to different administrative set-ups. The British initially used *Munshis* as private language instructors and, in fact, numerous accounts by young Company officials -- as they newly arrived in Calcutta -- described their mandatory training under *Munshis*, before taking up district postings in provincial areas.¹⁴ The nature of this contact comprised chiefly of private tuition within transitory residential spaces (typically hostels or boarding-houses in Calcutta). Every *zilla sadar* town also invariably had *Munshis* who would give private lessons to European officers in their bungalows. As C.A. Bayly points out, between 1820 and 1850, a new type of (second generation) *Munshi* began to appear, who was closely related to British patronage; indeed by the 1850s, most were educated in English. Michael Fisher has also shown that from 1820-40, Indians serving the British as semi-independent *Munshis* and clients of individual officers were gradually moulded into a bureaucracy.¹⁵ As the Company's revenue administration developed, the *Munshis* were thus gradually inducted, as a group, into the formal district administration apparatus - initially to interpret Persian texts within land records, and to help with the art of official letter writing (much of which still took place in Persian), and later on, as a far more generic group of administrative clerks in district *cutcheries*. The slowly evolving critical mass of this group within the office organisation saw the emergence of the *munshikhana* (and more specific names like the 'revenue *munshikhana*', for example, to mean those in the Collector's *cutcherry*), which referred at once to the collective as well as to the physical space they occupied. Though drawings of governmental buildings in the period leading up to mid 1850s never showed designated or named spaces, the *munshikhana* is a recurrent theme in

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁴ See for example John Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian*, (London: Eland Publishing, 2003), 61.

¹⁵ Michael Fisher, 'Indirect Rule in the British Empire: the Foundation of the Residency System in India (1764 - 1858)', *Modern Asian Studies* 18, 3 (1984), 339- 57, as cited in Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 230.

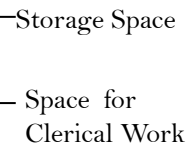


Fig. 4:5 Typical Distribution of Space in *Munshikhana*



Fig. 4.6 Addition of record rooms and office areas,
Judge's court/ *cutcherry*, Burdwan, 1852- 53

descriptions of district *cutcherries*. The space of the *Munshis* thus extended beyond the residential premises of European district officers right into governmental office premises. In terms of architectural character, the *munshikhana* was usually just another open office, enjoying a high level of connectivity with other parts of the *cutcherry*, but in terms of proximity relationships, it was placed right next to the chambers of higher European officials (like those of the District Collector, Magistrate or Judge), signalling the immediacy of contact associated with the *Munshis*' services. In fact, the *munshikhana* often acted as a connector space between court rooms and these higher officials' chambers on the one hand, and record rooms on the other. The *munshikhana* was a writing-intensive space. It was also, by corollary, a paper-intensive domain. This is where the embodied knowledge of the *Munshis* was being transformed and translated into material form, 'using paper to befuddle its colonial masters and also to maintain a whip hand over peasants and merchants'.¹⁶ This change in the form of knowledge created its own spatial demands. The *munshikhana* thus became increasingly reliant on having a large amount of physical space for the safe-keeping of paper documents – it was not just a work space, but more and more a storage space too. The peripheral wall areas of the open-office spaces were becoming increasingly layered with this storage and the personnel in them were pushed further into the centre (Fig. 4.5). This was possibly one of the significant reasons why many open-office spaces in *cutcherries* were increasingly fitted with skylights over the central portion of the room, providing more daylight to that area – a trend that is most noticeable especially after the 1850s (with room depths up to 50 feet in office spaces, these central areas were otherwise relatively dark).¹⁷

Hence by the 1830s the transformation from embodied to institutional knowledge had already substantially progressed. As Bayly points out, the virtuosity of the *Munshi* and the *Vakil*¹⁸ was largely replaced by institutional knowledge. Demands on record rooms and storage areas for institutionalised knowledge increased further after 1830, with the onset of the statistical movement initiated by Bentinck, the Governor General, – whereby a series of intensive and organised survey and census operations were undertaken by the government. The idea was to generate detailed information on the "land and its culture". Men like Robert Montgomery Martin were employed to carry out extensive surveys of various districts of Bengal Province.¹⁹ Provincial record rooms and their ever-expanding storage areas became the crucibles of this institutionalised knowledge and record areas had to be modified and expanded in many provincial *cutcherries* between 1830 and 1855. In fact, for most of the *cutcherries*, already built in *sadar* towns by 1830, the main changes for the next thirty years were chiefly centred on the modification of record and office areas and the addition of *verandahs* for various purposes. For example, in 1852-53, the Judge's *cutcherry* in Burdwan added two more record rooms, office

16 Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 136.

17 There was a proposal, for example, for introduction of skylights in the Collector's *cutcherry* in Krishnanagar in 1856-57, and this was finally carried out in 1858-59. British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Annual Report for 1858/59 - 1862/63, V/ 24/ 3333.

18 Governmental lawyers.

19 See, for instance, Robert Montgomery Martin, *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India : comprising the Districts of Behar, Shahabad, Bhagulpoor, Goruckpoor, Dinajepoor, Puraniya, Rungpoor & Assam, in Relation to Their Geology, Mineralogy, Botany, Agriculture, Commerce, Manufactures, Fine Arts, Population, Religion, Education, Statistics, etc.* (London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 1838).

areas and had eight more record racks made (Fig. 4.6).²⁰ In Midnapur, the native record room was re-arranged in 1851-52, according to plans designed between 1849 and 1850 with 'great care'.²¹ From the sheer amount of correspondence moving between the Board of Revenue in Calcutta, the Commissioner of the Burdwan Division and the Collector of the local district on the subject of the design of revenue record rooms, it is apparent that this was something actively deliberated upon at the time. In an account of the design modifications of these Midnapur record spaces, the Collector also openly acknowledged the input of the Record-Keeper towards these changes. Until the mid-nineteenth century, any fundamental changes in spatial design had to be carried out with active input from native clerks like the Record-Keeper, who simply had better knowledge about how these functions operated. The account of the Midnapur Collector is particularly revealing in providing a flavour of the type of design issues faced in this context:

Great care has been personally given to the native record room, which has been arranged on the plan mentioned in the correspondences here cited and in which work the Record-Keeper had aided most effectively. Parties requiring copies go to a particular door to receive them, which door has a label with that direction affixed to it, and the Record-Keeper sits close to that door, which is in the open *verandah* and therefore within earshot of every passer by. All complaints of delay in this matter were personally taken up by the officiating Collector immediately on being made. The other arrangements of the record room are based on the plan of – first, the records are arranged by *pergunnahs* [revenue units] on large racks; the names of the *pergunnahs* being conspicuously labelled on the racks and on the walls, second, the bundles are all numbered consecutively, and outside the bundles on the cloth the number of papers, according to the list, is also marked thus, PH Cossijorah, Bundle 1, paper 1 to 100 of list. Third, there is a book for each *pergunnah*, stating what papers are in each bundle; fourth, there is one separate long *verandah* for those Omlahs [*amlas*] to sit in, who are employed in arranging the records for record-room purposes, and another for those Omlahs to sit in, who are engaged in collecting information from records for the purposes of the general office, both being separate from each other and from the main suite of record rooms in the centre, to which there is only one entrance, the doors and windows on each side being iron wire netted, which provides light and the fullest ventilation and security from noise or illegitimate intrusion.²²

This account reveals key aspects in the development of record areas in *cutcheries* in the period between 1820 and 1860. One of the most striking is the desperate attempt by provincial offices to reproduce the revenue geography of entire districts within the rather limited physical parameters of record rooms. This was carried out by classifying revenue information into parcels, systematising the spatial organisation of the revenue room and working out a 'fit' of one onto the other. The nomenclature system started with real references to real places (e.g. PH. Cossijorah) but sequentially disintegrated into completely abstract systems (e.g. bundle no.1, paper 56). In a sense, the colonial record room came to represent an abstracted mini-map of a huge territorial region. Once mapped onto the racks and shelves of the record room, it was also a map that possibly only the record room *amla* - and not even the officials who created the records - fully understood. In addition, by the mid-nineteenth century, record areas could not remain as insular an entity as they had been in the first quarter of the century. One of the curious aspects of the nature of colonial revenue knowledge was that once it had transformed revenue information into a form

²⁰ Public Works Department Annual Report, 1852-53, BL IOR/V/24/3332. See also, Register of Buildings Bourne on the Books of the Public Works Department, Bengal, 1884 (2), XXIII8, West Bengal State Secretariat Library, Writers' Building, Calcutta.

²¹ H.V. Bayley, *History of Midnapore* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1902), 11-12

²² *Ibid.*

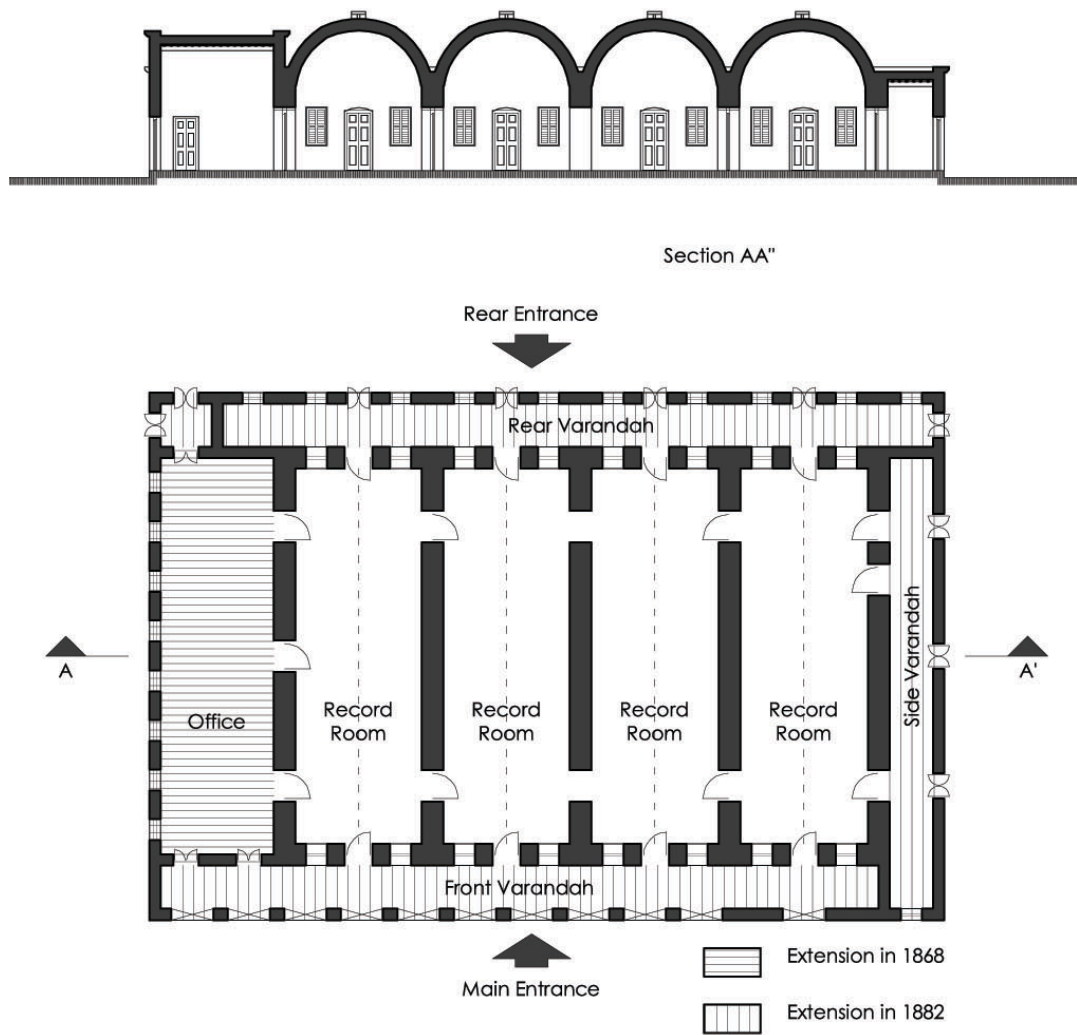


Fig. 4.7 Addition of office areas and *verandahs* in record room, Bankura

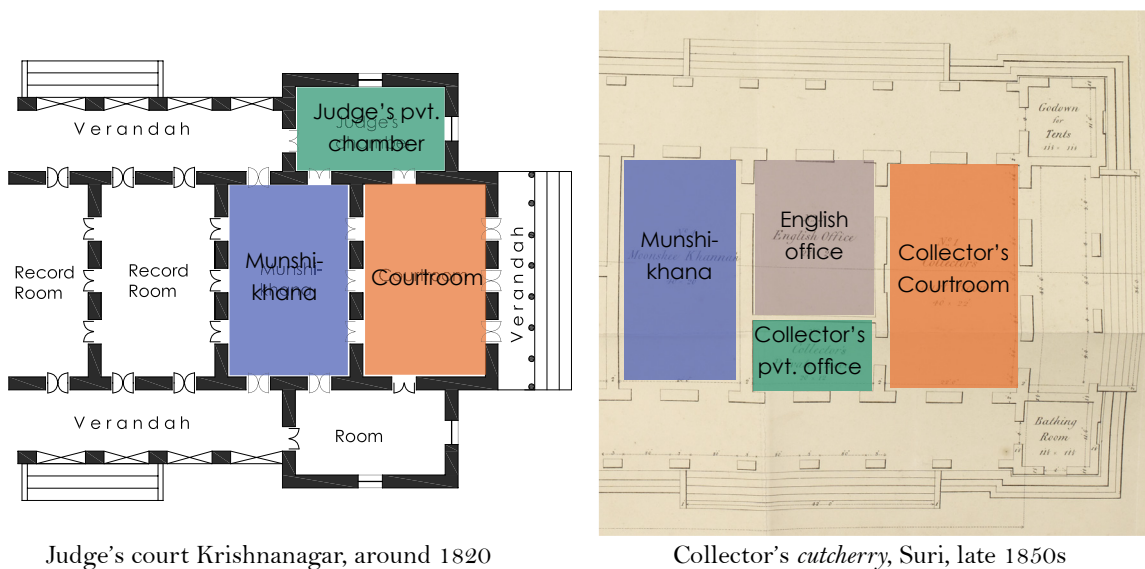


Fig. 4.8 The changing location of the *munshikhana* within the *cutcherry*

amenable to colonial administration (e.g. revised *mouza*²³ maps, plot demarcations, ownership tables, etc.) the ordinary public had to be able to understand and access it in that very form if they were to have any hope of redress from the governmental system in matters of conflict. This meant that people often needed to obtain copies of these documents, which in turn demanded public contact zones like *verandahs*, within the records area itself where the public could wait. Aspects like the visibility of the Record-Keeper, signage systems and auditory range all played crucial roles in the disposition of such spaces. Equally, it also meant that by manipulating these same parameters, the degree of physical, visual and auditory access to record rooms could be controlled. Furthermore, the processing of 'raw' revenue information into forms more suitable for record rooms, and then from that into forms useful for office purposes, meant providing for different staff or *amlas* within the dedicated spaces, who were distinct and sometimes separated from each other. It was a concept of information flow, a separation of tasks and an arrangement of spaces not that unlike an assembly line used for industrial production. The *verandah* as a spatial type came to be the ideal addition to record rooms since by its very nature it allowed for flexibility of use. It could be open or enclosed according to the function it housed. It could also be built as a temporary construction and later upgraded to a more permanent form. Compared to record rooms of the earlier period, which almost acted as autonomous modules, the record rooms after the 1830s gradually became enveloped by a layer of subsidiary spaces like public waiting areas and offices (Fig. 4.7). These spaces enjoyed a greater amount of light and easier access, forming a full or partial ring around the core darker space which held the records and which was much more tightly controlled with a single entry and exit point.

Hence the prime position of records within the colonial apparatus still continued and this was directly reflected in the specification of building materials, construction techniques and space standards. The public waiting areas and *verandahs* used by *amlas* were invariably constructed with terraced or thatched roofing that was much less robust than the sturdy vaulted masonry coverings of the record rooms themselves. Interestingly, the dimensions of these waiting and office areas were also often far from adequate, as the additions to the Bankura record room reveal. Here the native staff were expected to sit within a *verandah* that was only six-feet wide, barely allowing room for a work space along the window with hardly any passage way. Spatial standards for clerical work were thus, more often than not, abysmal. While its central place within the provincial *cutcherry* was to see a decline in the years after 1858, additions and alterations to record areas were a continuous feature of provincial *cutcheries*, gathering even greater momentum with the centralisation of governance in the 'high-imperial' era of the late-nineteenth century. The Bankura record room, for example, was modified once in 1868 with the addition of an office, and then again in 1882-83 with the addition of *verandahs* to house public waiting and office spaces (Fig. 4.7). Such modifications in record rooms continued right up to the early-twentieth century, which in fact heralded a new generation of record rooms altogether.

²³ *Mouzas*— another inheritance of the colonial administration from the earlier Mughal system — were administrative divisions within town areas. The sizes of *Mouzas* varied considerably. Each town had on an average between 5-10 *Mouzas*. *Mouzas* were further sub-divided into units called *Khasras*.

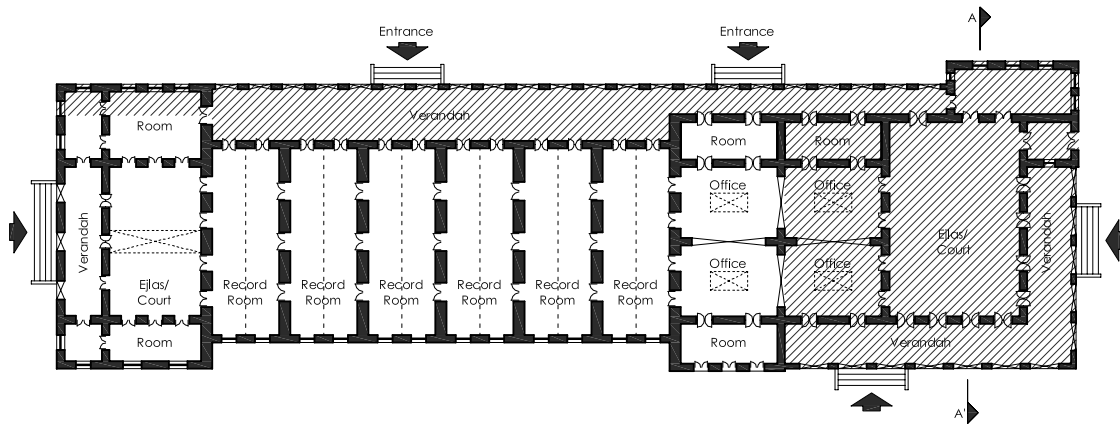


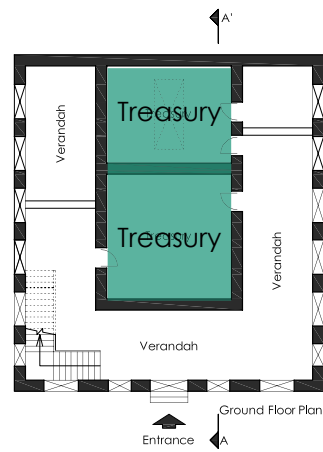
Fig 4.9 Addition of office space for *amlas*, verandahs and court, Judge's *Cutcherry*, Krishnanagar

After 1837, the East India Company decided to expand the use of the English and Hindustani languages in official communication – clearly an attempt to free themselves from their dependence on the Persian-speaking *munshi*. The ‘English office’ (as it was called) – a specially designated space dealing with the processing of English records and information (then more amenable for use by European administrators) – thus largely replaced the *munshikhana* in importance. This shift in the role of the *munshikhana* was revealed very effectively in the spatial proximity relationships expressly prescribed by the Public Works Department, the central design agency after 1855, which invariably assigned the key location (next to the highest official’s court and private chamber) to the English office, thereby displacing the *munshikhana* to the next level of proximity (Fig. 4.8). One of the key issues in the period from the 1830s to the 1850s seems to have been the sheer struggle faced by the colonial administration to keep up with its own ever-changing spatial requirements. This gave rise to a characteristic incrementality and provisionalism in the architecture of provincial *cutcheries* during this period. As provincial administration witnessed the development of newer and newer functions, and branching out of existing ones into different streams, or modification of the nature of the functions themselves – new rooms had to be added (Fig. 4.9) or existing ones had to be supplemented continuously with the use of secondary devices like railings, signage systems or labelling in order to designate different areas of work within the open-office spaces. In fact, such secondary devices came to be a vital aspect of provincial governmental buildings and played increasingly vital roles even in the later ‘high-imperial’ era. Attempts to demarcate functions extended beyond mere official operations (for example, separate arrangements for issue and receipts of payments or papers) to actual physical sub-division and alteration of spaces. In the Midnapur *cutcherry*, for example, the English-language records were separated from the English Office, and the Treasury was separated from the accounts offices, with railings and labelling.²⁴ Continuous emergence of new office functions meant that there was always gaps – and never a one-to-one fit – between the emerging requirements and the spaces provided. The modular nature of buildings of the earlier periods had assumed a clean fit of official functions with spatial units. Instead, in a scenario of ever-changing requirements open-office spaces had increasingly to be shared between different office functions. Preserving spatial boundaries of individual domains within these open-office areas thus became particularly tricky. It was virtually impossible to allocate self-contained spaces for each function and so until the early 1850s, such demarcation was based on loose and somewhat elastic divisions, with the use of provisional devices like railings, furniture arrangements or labels that could be altered and re-configured with relative ease – a far cry from the concrete spatial compartmentalisations that the provincial *cutcherry* of the 1860s were later to witness.

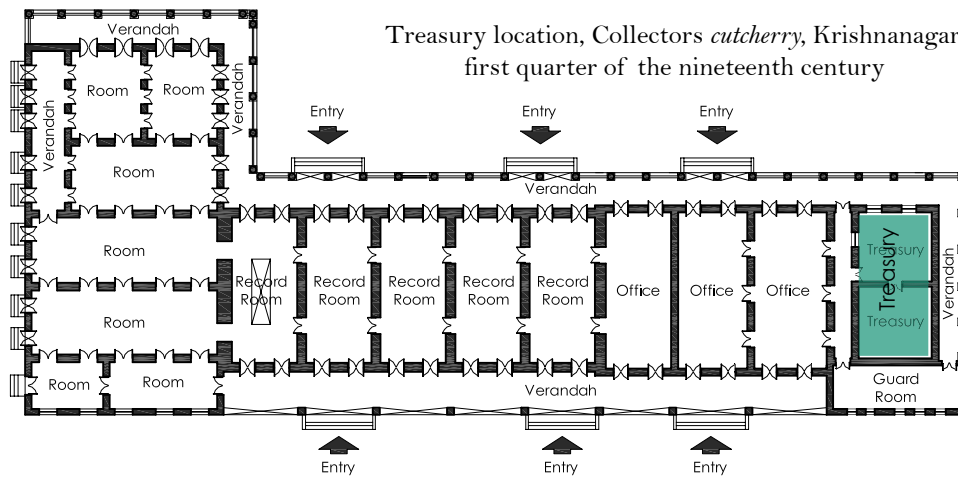
There were other changes taking place in the knowledge landscape of provincial government offices in Bengal. Indian land litigation, already a substantial aspect of governance, increased by leaps and bounds after 1830 and flooded the provincial courts.²⁵ This created a new

²⁴ H.V. Bayley, *History of Midnapore* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1902), 12.

²⁵ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 74.



Treasury location,
Circuit Judge's *cutcherry*,
Bankura, ~1825.



Treasury location, Collectors *cutcherry*, Krishnanagar,
first quarter of the nineteenth century



View of treasury, Collectors *cutcherry*, Krishnanagar

Fig. 4.10 Treasury designs

class of Indian plaintiffs (called pleaders) who rapidly acquired revenue knowledge in order to argue their cases, challenging the monopoly of the office clerks. This class gradually wielded higher powers within the bureaucratic apparatus and became an organised group in Bengal. In terms of provision of spaces, though, the plaintiffs did not figure formally within the designed spatial schemes for a long time. In fact, the narrow provisions for them were acutely expressed in discussions about designs of *cutcherry* and court buildings around the 1860s.²⁶ It was not until much later, around the 1880s,²⁷ that the provision of designed facilities for the plaintiffs were concretised in district towns, although it is worth noting that the demands for such provision took shape from much earlier.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that the office *amla* never really lost his instrumental role within the district *cutcherry*. Between 1830 and 1855, the embodied historical knowledge represented by the *munshikhana*, although eaten away greatly by the record room, continued still to supplement the government apparatus in practical terms, and indeed revenue administration could be effectively conducted only by overlaying the two. The *amlas* thus remained vital to the *cutcherry* and the nature of their work simply transformed over time and they became a more mechanical, but vital human resource for colonial administration – engaged in various types of clerical work. Incremental additions to office spaces for the *amla* was thus also becoming contingent. In fact, so vital were the *amlas* to the *cutcherry*'s functioning that they were among the few identified groups within the office who received formal and substantially augmented spatial allocations within the more prescriptive *cutcherry* designs that were to become the hallmark of the 1860s.

Custody of the provincial revenue (or 'treasure' as it was charmingly termed) was the other crucial aspect of *cutcherries*. As seen in the previous chapter, early barrack-type and bungalow-type *cutcherries* housed the revenue in tight chambers with few openings, usually at one end of the single-storey barrack-type or on the lower floor of the two-storey bungalow type (Fig. 4.10). The older kind of treasury was typically enveloped by a *verandah* at least on three sides and most often had a guards' room right next to it. Like the record room area, the treasury was heavily ringed by devices for physical protection and by layers of vigilance. Physical protection was instituted chiefly through the design of the outer wall of the treasury room which was typically a good bit thicker than the walls used in other parts of the building (typically 3-4 feet as against the general wall thickness of 2 feet). It had virtually no openings other than an entry-exit door which had a wire-mesh shutter, a heavy grille-door with padlock and a regular wooden shuttered door. Next, was the vigilance layer in the form of the *verandah* which was permanently manned by guards.²⁸ While the treasury room itself was tight and introverted,

²⁶ British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings for Feb 1860, P/ 16/ 38.

²⁷ In 1880, standard designs for pleaders' rooms and bar libraries in the districts were drawn up. British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings for 1881, P/ 1635.

²⁸ Interestingly, while up to the 1850s the treasury had a heavy dependence on native surveillance staff such as the *chowkidar*, after 1860 there was a clear shift from the use of human personnel towards the use of additional security devices like heavy and increased number of padlocks – whereby the treasury became an even more physically fortified entity. British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings Jun-Dec 1865, P/ 16/72, nos. 35-40. ..

the *verandah* around it performed exactly the opposite function – it was extroverted and actively looked outwards to allow radial vigilance over a large area. Typically, nothing was built in the area directly surrounding the treasury. Watching the treasury was a 24-hour activity so the guard room (housing 6-8 guards) was virtually a residential quarter for native guards. Although this basic format for the treasury (as a sub-unit of the *cutcherry* and usually physically attached to it) seems to have been accepted as a suitable spatial system for its purpose, one finds a few mentions of specially-designed, stand-alone treasuries in the period between 1830 and 1855. New treasuries were built in emerging *sadar* towns, and some sub-divisional towns (which usually did not house a treasury), were gradually provided with one. For example, in August 1853, the estimate for the construction of a new general treasury and guard room at Moulmein (in Burma but under Bengal administration) was sanctioned, since there was ‘no proper place for the safe and convenient custody of the treasure at Moulmein’.²⁹ The building that was constructed consisted of three rooms, two for the guards, each 16 feet by 28 feet, and one in the middle for the treasure, 16 feet by 16 feet, surrounded by a *verandah* with arched openings.³⁰ The basic components and formation of the treasury seem to be virtually the same as before. However, the description does suggest a few changes in attitude towards the guarding of revenue. Firstly, there was a clear increase in the proportion of space for the guards and the *verandah* compared to the treasury room itself. Secondly, the treasury was organised more firmly into a central location, hemmed in on two sides by the guards’ quarters. The *verandah* layer was systematically wrapped around the entire formation, maximising its efficacy for vigilance and as a shield. But interestingly, the design seems to re-affirm, as late as the 1850s, the relatively flexible, modular conception of components of provincial governance – each with a degree of functional autonomy and spatial articulation – which could retain their identity and yet could also be either a part of the general *cutcherry*, or simply act as stand-alone units in themselves.

4.1.3 Information, geography and administrative operations

During the first century of British rule [1765-1850/65] land revenue emerged as the determining discipline through which the conquerors ‘knew’ Indian rural society. The knowledge was sufficient to extract a massive share (1/4 or more) of the gross agricultural produce. The earnings from land revenue dwarfed the profits from trade with India. But knowledge of rural areas still remained partial.³¹

Much as the provincial offices in Bengal tried consolidating their information base into the finite, designed units of the record rooms, there was still an immense gap between the intricacies of knowledge required for revenue administration and the actual spatial parcels of information that the record rooms held. As administration firmed up, new institutions of knowledge were created over time – within the military, political, revenue, legal and educational establishments. In many ways the older embodied knowledge systems of indigenous communities, like the

²⁹ British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Annual Report for year ending April 1853, V/ 24/ 3332 (containing 1851/52-1853/ 54).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ E.T. Stokes, ‘Bentinck to Dalhousie: the rationale of Indian Empire, unpublished paper for ‘Study Group on Policy and Practice under Bentinck and Dalhousie’, in C.A. Bayly’s possession, and as quoted in Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 151.

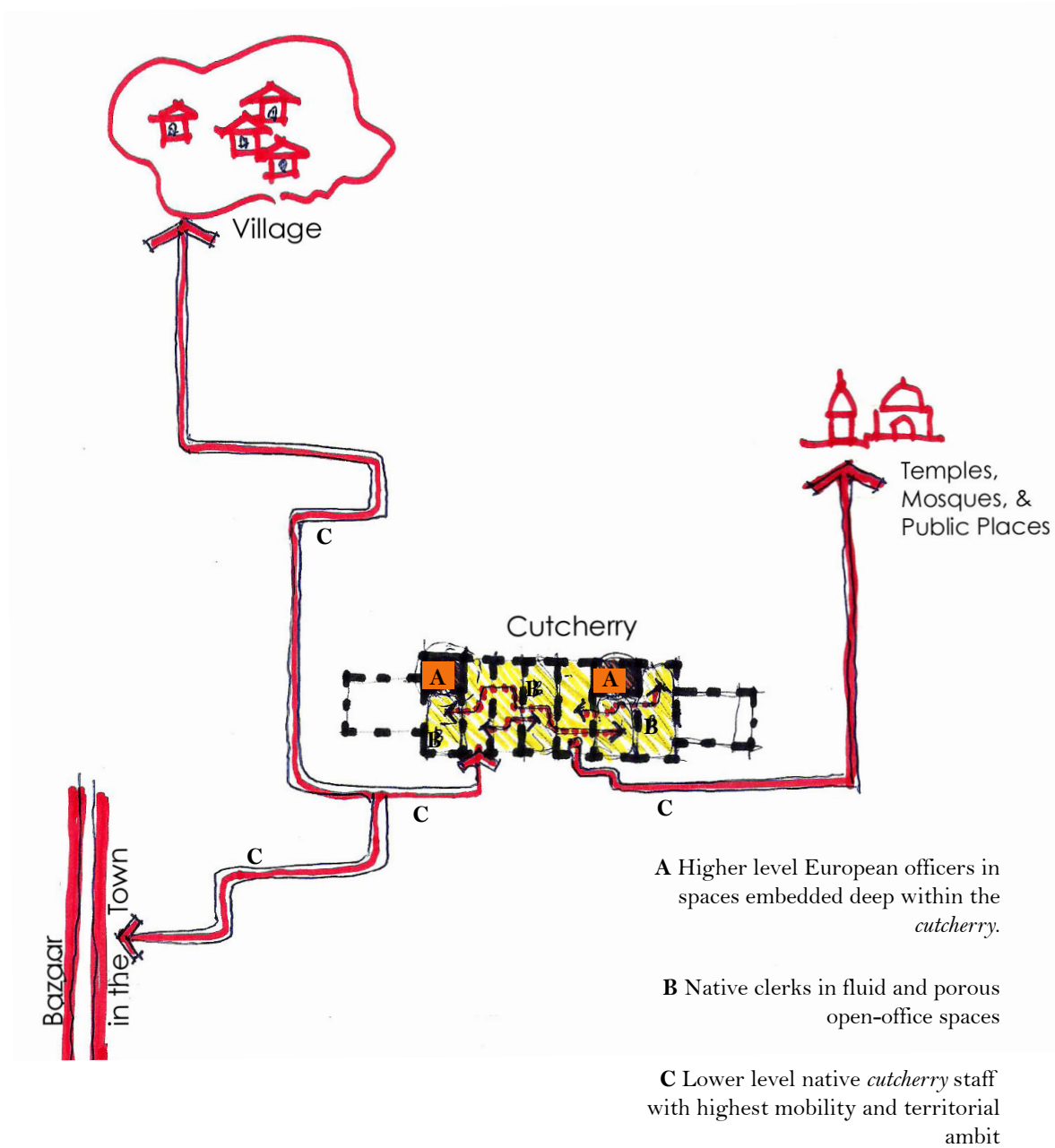


Fig. 4.11 The *cutcherry* and its administrative Geography

harkaras,³², astrologers, physicians, doctors of Hindu and Muslim law and wise women, saw a steady erosion and were being 'slowly edged away from the political centre'.³³ But this newly-emerging information system also had severe limitations, as the historian C.A Bayly points out:

...away from the hubs of British power and below the level of the district office, the old intelligence communities held their place. It was in the zone of ignorance where the knowledgeable colonial institutions met, but failed to mesh with, the sentiment of the knowing people of the locality, that the stereotypes of Thugs, criminal guilds, religious fanatics and well-poisoners hatched. ... In the peripheries too, British innovations had little purchase on the debates and forms of communication of the older Indian 'public' which centred on mosque, temple and bazaar.³⁴

The administrators in the *sadar cutcherries* thus had little direct access to the popular communication taking place within the older public sphere. The only way the *cutcherry* officers could gain any idea of the public pulse was through employing more mobile intermediaries. Other than this, the actual everyday running of provincial offices created its own requirements of informal contact with the town and the village communities served by the *sadar*. In fact, one of the key features distinguishing provincial governance from metropolitan ones was the way that informal transactions with the local population were, by sheer necessity, naturalised and almost legitimised into it. By being in more direct contact with the Bengal hinterland, and being nodal points for the pooling of revenue funds as well as of revenue knowledge (and various other forms of intelligence relevant to colonial governance), the dependence on informal local networks in *sadar* towns was far higher than in say Calcutta. Provinciality thus had a direct relation with the nature of governance and the administrative geography which arose from this. The oligarchic provincial governance with the District Collector and the Judge-Magistrate as its key figures was dependent, therefore, on Indian intermediaries who in effect played multiple roles ranging from collecting information, apprehending offenders, summoning town or village residents for court hearings to simply acting as messengers and as general channels of communication. Mobility thus had very direct links to the collection of information from interior areas and, as such, needed to be harnessed through some part of the governmental apparatus. Other than external agents, much of this role was taken up by the personnel within the provincial *cutcherry* itself. This was especially true of lower-level staff, such as *orderlys* and *chuprasees*, who were by far the most mobile of all *cutcherry* employees. They not only enjoyed a high degree of physical mobility within the *cutcherry* but in effect connected it to the life of the *sadar* town. An account of Paunchkouree Khan, a lower-level member of staff in a *cutcherry* in Benares during the 1840s, is particularly revealing in this context.³⁵ In the account based on his real-life experiences, Paunchkouree assumes the voice of an orderly to the Deputy Magistrate, revealing the various ways in which native staff would fool senior European officers and engage in corrupt practices like bribe-taking in return for favours to external parties. The account also describes how Paunchkouree actually moved around different locations in the nearby town and villages around it to summon people to the

³² *Harkaras* were a heterogeneous group of mobile communicators, involved in a range of tasks from simple messaging services to transacting intelligence between different agencies and places.

³³ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 143.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Paunchkouree Khan, *The Revelations of an Orderly*, by Paunchkouree Khan. *Being an attempt to expose the abuses of administration by the relation of every-day occurrences in the Mofussil Courts* (Benares:n.v, 1848).

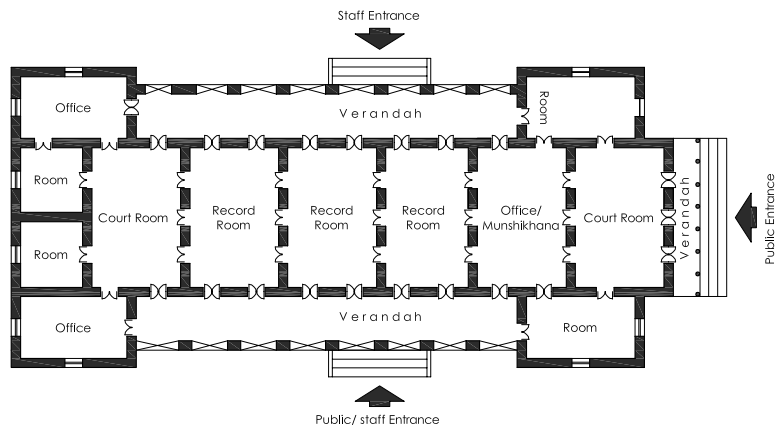


Fig. 4.12 Collectors' *cutcherry*, Burdwan 1840

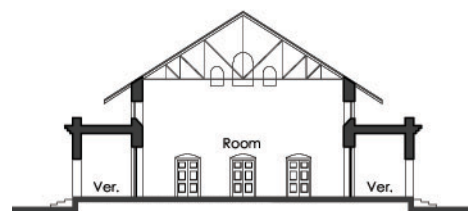
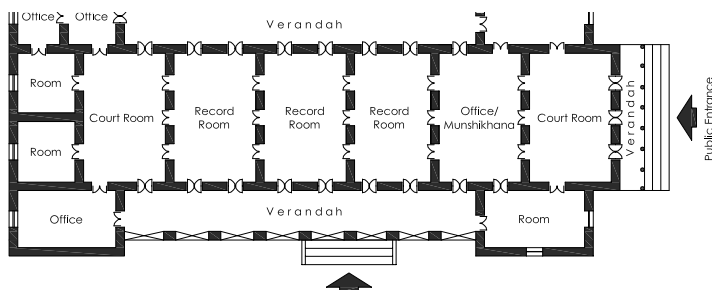


Fig. 4.13 Foujdari (criminal) court, Krishnanagar (between 1837 and 1857)

cutcherry, to apprehend parties, or to conduct negotiations and bribing (on behalf of the provincial administration or for his own gains). For some of these transactions, Pauchkouree intentionally went to the local *bazaar*, where he had a higher likelihood of finding the parties concerned and which was also a far more suitable location for carrying out the transactions.

From Pauchkouree's account of asking for 'petty cash for favours' it is clearly evident that due to the very nature of its spatial character, the *cutcherry* allowed a certain informality of operations where even corruption could thrive. Many of its spaces, like the *verandah*, entrance hall to the officers' chamber or the interstitial spaces between buildings, were nebulous and as such fostered anonymity. While the *cutcherries* were highly porous (arising, as discussed in Chapter 3, from the number and distribution of doors and windows), they were also spatially largely anonymous. Part of this anonymity arose from its populous character and the sheer density of people ambling around, waiting, working, talking and conducting business within its premises. In this case, it was not being shielded from view, but instead the very blatant exposure of open, thickly-populated spaces, where individual transactions virtually merged with the rest and ceased to matter, that brought in such anonymity and allowed a whole range of transactions, including corrupt practice, to take place.

The other interesting aspect in Pauchkouree's account is the spatial distribution of different groups of people and types of spaces within the *cutcherry* (Fig. 4.11). The first of these were the higher order spaces, deeply embedded within the scheme (access to which were circuitous or controlled, often by native staff) and typically occupied by District Officers or departmental heads who were relatively fixed actors anchored to definite spaces. The second was a range of more fluid spaces, like the interconnected open office that housed clerical staff with assigned locations but that in effect allowed a reasonable degree of fluidity of movement between the spaces within the *cutcherry*. The third was a result of virtual non-provision of fixed locations for a whole range of sundry actors, mostly lower-level staff, who in effect were the most mobile of all. Their ambit extended, in fact, far beyond the *cutcherry*, out into key sites of the town and into the rural areas beyond.

Following on from this observation, another aspect that makes itself apparent is that the *cutcherry*, as the 'formal' site of governance, was vitally dependent on and connected to other types of sites within the *sadar*, like the local bazaar, temples and mosques which acted in some ways as its extensions. The *cutcherry* thus operated as much from the edges of formal provision as it did as a strictly governmental space. It had close links with religious and commercial sites which in fact constituted the public sphere of the town and could be seen, in common perception, as the complete antithesis of the *cutcherry* itself. This connection with community life, which the workings of provincial governance found impossible to dispense with, was what bound all these spaces to the *cutcherry's* orbit. In effect, the *cutcherry* provided the vital locus for a richer and wider administrative geography spread over the town and region.



Fig. 4.14 Judge's court, Berhampur, 1855

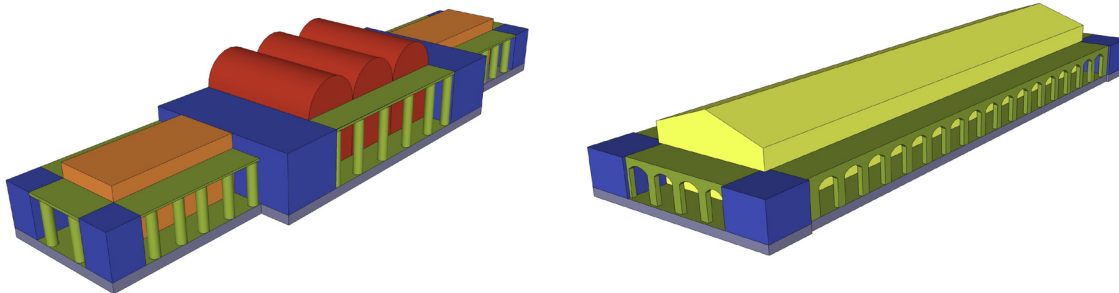


Fig. 4.15 Simplification of volume — early-nineteenth century cutcherry (left)
to *cutcheries* built between 1840 and 1855 (right)

4.1.4 Technology, progress and the seeds of simplification

The ideal of reform in colonial rule was also translating into the ideal of progress. One of the pivotal instruments for the ideology of improvement and progress in provincial architecture of governance was building technology. Starting from the 1840s, up to 1855, a few new *cutcherry* buildings were built in lower Bengal – the Collector's *cutcherry* in Burdwan (1840, Fig. 4.12), the Foujdari Court in Krishnanagar (between 1837 and 1857, Fig. 4.13), the Judge's Court in Berhampur (1855, Fig. 4.14), to name a few. Perhaps the most significant shift they marked was in the type of technology employed, especially in terms of their roof spanning system. As the fruits of British industrial technology made inroads into interior areas of Bengal, large trussed roofs, with a terraced and tiled layer on top, became ever more common. This was obviously not happening in isolation, but within a larger landscape of jute, silk and cotton factories, warehouses, early railway station buildings and other large-span structures. The spanning direction (which was usually along the shorter dimension, about 18-20 feet, for typical office and record rooms) could now almost be flipped overnight. Spans previously considered long (40-50 feet) could now be negotiated with great ease, and in fact the longer dimensions of individual rooms now became the shorter span of the entire building. A single large two-way sloped roof would thus cover the entire length of the building, taking all the rooms under its fold. Internally, the volumes increased substantially – typical internal heights of 15 ft or 20 ft (for terraced and vaulted roofs respectively) now shot up to 22-33 ft, hugely expanding the storage area for records or the area available for clerestorey lighting between the main roof and the adjacent *verandah* roof at lower level. Externally, the entire building could now be treated as a 'whole', spanned by one giant roof which unified and simplified almost the entire composition, save for the *verandah*, into one singular volume. In such a design, the side elevation (with the tall gable end of the sloped roof visible) gained a certain prominence, and attempts were made, for instance, to articulate the corners of the *verandah* (these often being the only places left where some ornamental articulation was possible). However, the articulation of broad parts, of the distinct modules correspondent with individual functions, and of the systemic relationships characteristic of the earlier barrack-type and bungalow-type buildings, witnessed a dilution (Fig. 4.15). The primary victims of this new 'clubbing up' of different spaces under a single roof were the record rooms, courts and offices, the distinctions between which virtually collapsed, and each of which became one of a series of near-identical spaces. But some differentiation between the individual spatio-functional units still remained. For example, in the Foujdari court house in Krishnanagar, there was considerable attempt at articulating an entrance to the court room with a pediment and a front *verandah* with tall Doric columns, or to distinguish the smaller office spaces on the sides with their smaller heights and volumes. In the Burdwan Collectorate building, the treasury at one end and the entrance at the gable end were visually differentiated from the rest of the building. Entities such as the treasury or entrance areas were thus still modulated, but on the whole, there was largely a tendency towards simplification that later, after 1860, became the hallmark of the architecture of the Public Works Department – and as such became codified and frozen into a bureaucratic norm.

4.2 Developments in building practices, 1855-1860

Between 1855 and 1860, a number of watershed developments took place in the history of British rule in India which directly or indirectly affected the nature of provincial administrative architecture in *sadar* towns. There was a further and fresh intensification of the ideology of improvement and reform. Certain key governmental instruments emerged in the form of specialised departments, especially for provision of physical infrastructure. Political landmark events like the Sepoy Mutiny and more localised insurgencies like the *Santhal* Rebellion took place. As a result, the relationship between Britain and India was dramatically re-configured, with the assumption of power by the British Crown in 1858. Governance of Bengal had to be clearly separated from the governance of India – the three Presidencies (Bengal, Bombay and Madras) were then retained as the Local Governments under the overall charge of the Viceroy of India (as the Governor-General was now called) who of course was the formal representative of the Crown. A Lieutenant-Governor's post was duly created to take overall charge of the governance of the Bengal Presidency.³⁶ And, at a more local level, provincial administration also saw certain structural changes. It was a combination of all these that heralded a new generation of governmental buildings in provincial areas around 1860.

4.2.1 New governmental instruments and the Public Works Department

As seen earlier, though the ideology of improvement could be translated only partially into practice during the 1830s and 1840s, it still instilled a value system that lasted much longer. In 1848, Lord Dalhousie became the Governor General of India and India was to experience what has been termed a 'second age of reforms'. One of the most significant developments of Dalhousie's rule was the emergence of new cornerstones of governance as markers of 'progress' – the arrival of the railways, the telegraph, the Central Legislative Council, institutions of broader vernacular education, and in 1855, the pivotal body that would largely attempt to shape public architecture till after India's independence in 1947 – the Public Works Department.

The Public Works Department (henceforth referred to as PWD) was formally set up in 1855, being in charge of all civil and military construction – mandated with the vision of building a 'progressive' and 'modern' India. It was in a sense an extension, in the colony, of the emerging conception of the state in late-eighteenth century Europe where 'governmentality manifested itself as equipmentality'.³⁷ As articulated by Arindam Dutta:

The parliamentary revolutions in Europe in the eighteenth century shifted the authority of the state in a different register, necessitating a different structure of consent for government. In a modern sense, public works thus emerges in a promissory milieu between state and subject.³⁸

³⁶ The post of the Lieutenant Governor was in fact created earlier in 1854, by which time there was clearly a need felt to separate the administration of India as a whole from the administration of Bengal. However, it was only after the institution of imperial rule that the Lieutenant Governor's post emerged as a key position within the larger administrative apparatus.

³⁷ Arindam Dutta, introduction to course module (no. 4.640) on 'Public Works – Totality and Infinity', Massachusetts Institute of Technology. URL: web.mit.edu/smt/www/misc/4.640_syllabus_fa07.pdf, accessed on 27.10.09.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

The PWD in India replaced the Military Board (which had been in charge of all construction activity since 1786) but in many ways, also inherited much of its staff and design practices. It still had an engineer-heavy orientation, infused directly by the British tradition of military engineering in which it was rooted. On the other hand, it was seen as the agent of progress, change and modernisation, and along the way, created new specialisations like buildings, roads, railways and communications, and posts like that of the Government Architect or Civil Architect. It also acted as a ground for gradually forging a higher role for civil (rather than military) specialisation in building work. The PWD was endowed with an authority and power unprecedented in the building sector in colonial India - with the quintessential characteristics of a heavily centralised agency - in terms of the symbolic assignment of its role as well as in its real impact on building practice. In many ways, it was perhaps one of the most representative instruments of the larger landscape of colonial governance. The incremental nature of the East India Company's governance in the first half of the nineteenth century had necessarily made it an amorphous collection of varied administrative practices, which also extended to the nature of its physical infrastructure and buildings. By contrast, in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century, the PWD's activities became a visible barometer of the organisation of imperial government itself. So crucial was its role perceived to be that the analogy of building and the PWD's role in delivering it were often used to describe the larger vision of the making of 'modern India'.³⁹ In many ways it acted as the vital support, the material foundation, of imperial governance. On the other hand, as Peter Scriver has succinctly analysed, its role was initially meant to be 'prop-like' and similar to building scaffolding; it was intended to lay out the physical skeletal infrastructure for governance as and when the bureaucratic structure needed it, and which was then meant to be skilfully withdrawn. Its frameworks were meant to be provisional and malleable. But interestingly its actual operations eventually created enduring products as well as delivery practices which had definitive, confident and rational notions of 'good building' and bureaucracy-heavy working methods. These continued until well after India's independence in 1947 (and in fact, still continue today). Yet, despite the enduring material presence and practices that the PWD came to be associated with, its workings were continuously shaped by other forces -- local, as well as within its own and the larger governmental set-up -- that continuously resisted authoritarian, centralised practices, and in effect, came in the way of a 'uniform' landscape of architecture of provincial governance.

Like its other governmental counterparts in British colonial rule, the PWD's own structure was arranged hierarchically from the centre down to lower levels. At the level of the Local Government (of Bengal) was the Chief Engineer and Secretary to the Government of India in the Public Works Department. He was in the overall charge of all public works establishments in the province and acted as the advisor to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in

³⁹ Architectural historian Peter Scriver has analysed this 'representative' role of the PWD within the overall framework of colonial imperial governance: 'In the Victorian heyday of the Raj, the Public Works Department of the Government of India was a prime, even literal, exemplar of this metaphorical "scaffolding" of empire.' Peter Scriver, 'Empire-building and thinking in the Public Works Department of British India', in Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash (eds.), *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007), 69.

Table 1 People involved in public construction activity under the PWD**Recruitment source and nature of expertise**

(Developed by the author from the account of Julius George Medley, in *India and Indian Engineering*, London, 1872, p. 40, 41, and PWD Codes of Regulations of 1858, 1866, 1870)

Role	Ambit/ Jurisdiction	Qualities/ skill-base available	Recruitment source
(PWD ESTABLISHMENT)			
Chief Engineer	Representative at Local Government level. Mouthpiece and Professional advisor to the Lieut. Governor of Bengal. Head of the PWD, Bengal.	Expert engineering knowledge; bureaucratic leadership; and little know-how of local practices.	All levels up to AE - from Royal Engineers/ Artillery and Line officers trained at Roorkee/ Civil Engineers sent from England/ Civilians (European and native) trained at Roorkee. Identity: Those recruited from military service wear uniform but had to stick to either civil of military dress.
Superintending Engineer	In charge of PWD Circles	Expert engineering knowledge; bureaucratic leadership; and little know-how of local practices.	
Executive Engineer	In charge of PWD Divisions consisting of a few districts	Engineering knowledge, designing; preparing working drawings; estimation, progress reports, coordination; high level of local knowledge; usually men of diverse skills and considered the key <i>unit</i> of construction.	
Assistant Engineer	To assist the Executive engineer.	Engineering knowledge; ability to carry out instructions from above and lead personnel below. Good local knowledge.	
European Overseers	Supervision of construction work	Hard working; intelligent; valuable as sub-ordinates; usually deficient in practical knowledge; not well conversant with local language; and given to drinking and intemperance.	Non-Commissioned of- ficers or privates who vol- unteered from the various Regiments in India for the PWD.
Native Sub-overseers	Supervision of construction work	Skilled in precision work (e.g. Draftsmanship, survey, estimation); low theoretical knowledge and physical stamina.	Trained at Roorkee.
Clerks, accountants/ writers	Office keeping	Efficiency in clerical work. Many natives considered very intelligent for the purpose; reasonable knowledge of English; but often considered lazy.	Generationally acquired skill / apprenticeship
Native <i>mistrees</i> Lascars (daily-wage labour)	Head mason or carpenter		
(NON-GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL)			
Native <i>mistrees</i>	Head mason or carpenter	Intelligent, with high sense of integrity; high learning ability; easy to manage and low theoretical knowledge.	Generationally acquired skill/ apprenticeship. In Bengal, often agricultural labourer working in alternate employment cycle on building.
Daily wage labourer			Agricultural labourer working in alternate employment cycle on building.

matters of general public works. Subordinate to him were Superintendent Engineers, in charge of the next territorial unit, the 'Circle'.⁴⁰ These were followed by Executive Engineers in charge of various 'Divisions' and who were arguably the most important link in the PWD's chain of operations. The Executive Engineer was aided by Assistant Engineers, followed by European overseers, native sub-overseers, the clerks and accountant establishment, and the native head-masons. Building material was procured from private contractors, but work was carried out by daily-wage labourers. Below the level of the Assistant Engineer, personnel were engaged purely in execution work, while those above were engaged in architectural and engineering design. Executive and Assistant Engineers were multi-tasking employees and their work ranged from preparing designs, estimates and progress reports through to the general supervision of buildings on site (for a detailed description of the roles, qualifications, and qualities considered 'desirable' for the different categories of its staff by the PWD, see Table 4.1).

4.2.2 PWD's sites of improvement and the *kutch-pucca* question

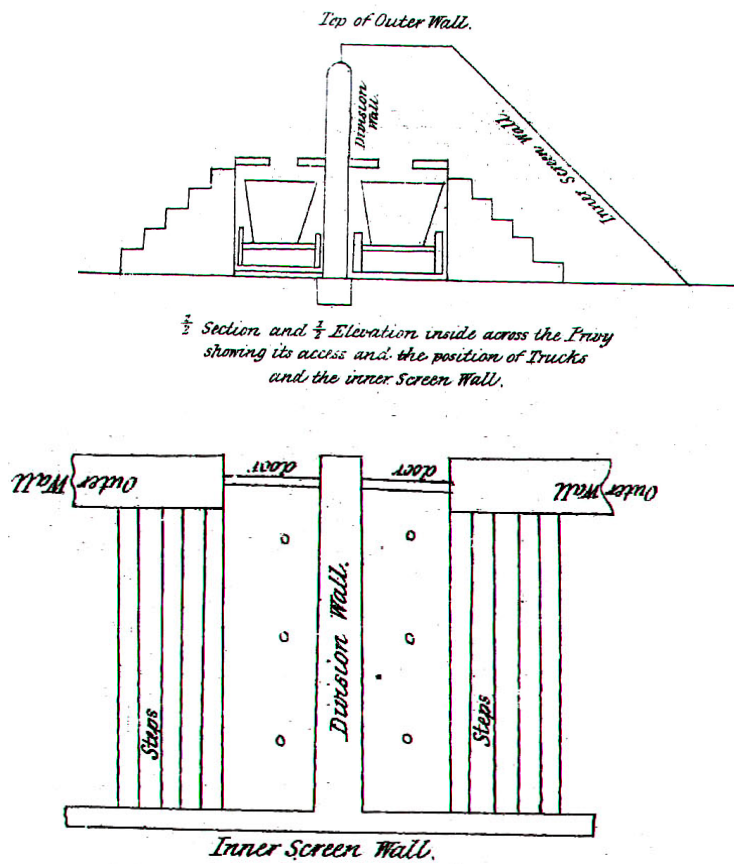
A new infrastructure of progress and public improvement schemes were the PWD's core mandate. One of the significant channels that the thread of improvement developed along was the domain of health and sanitation. Whereas up to 1750, European perception of India's climate and its relationship with the human body was seen as flexible (i.e. humans could largely adapt to different climatic systems), by the 1830s, and often as a result of the persistently high mortality amongst Europeans in India, it was seen more and more as immutable.⁴¹ There thus grew a stronger and stronger view that the European constitution was fundamentally unsuitable for Indian climate. Fears about the dangers of the tropical environment were also precipitated by incidents like the outbreak of cholera in Bengal in 1817. Interestingly, it was not just the response to climate but also culture that was seen to constitute the fundamental difference between Europeans and Indians. This was also the premise of Governor General Bentinck's administrative reforms of the 1830s – Indians were simply seen to be culturally inferior, something that, for British administrators, came in the way of India's progress. In the context of Bengal, one of the major concerns in this connection, especially for medical men like Ranald Martin,⁴² was the attitude of Bengalis towards hygiene. As the medical historian Mark Harrison points out: 'Indian people, as well as Indian climate, were increasingly viewed as part of the "sanitary problem", 'as reservoirs of dirt and disease'.⁴³ However, even during the height of the reformist era of the 1830s, British interventions in aspects of indigenous life for health and hygiene reforms were limited and rarely successful. This was largely because the application of utilitarian philosophy in India made a

⁴⁰ The number of circles changed during the course of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Initially, there were three circles. These were later expanded to seven in 1866. See *Code of regulations for the Public Works Department, with rules for the guidance of the Barrack Department* (Calcutta: Public Works Department Press, 1866), 23.

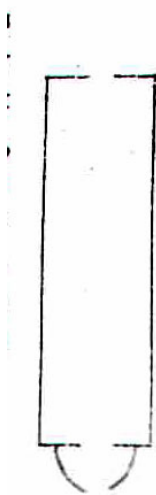
⁴¹ Mark Harrison, *Public health in British India. Anglo-Indian preventive medicine 1859-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴² Sir James Ranald Martin was a surgeon in the East India Company's employment in India since 1817. He was a key figure in finding links between human health and the environment. Martin was later appointed as member of the Sanitary Commission in India and contributed to the Sanitary Commissioner's Report (1863) on the state of sanitation in Indian stations and the various physical interventions needed to improve it. *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB).

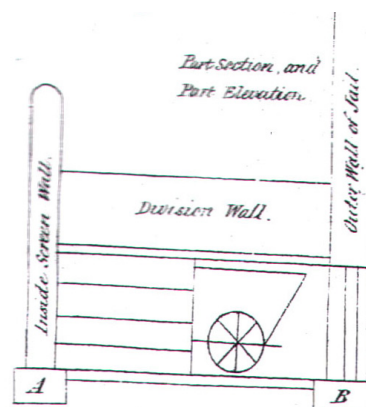
⁴³ Harrison, *Public health in British India*, 48.



Day privy and removal systems



Night privy attached to typical jail ward



Removal of night soil with the help of metal carts

Fig. 4.16 Arrangements for jail privies.
Source: Bengal PWD Annual Report
1851/52-1853/54

distinction between personal and public spheres on the one hand, and religious and secular spheres on the other. In the eyes of government, the religious sphere in India was also coincident with the personal sphere and therefore not suitable for direct intervention.⁴⁴ Some measures like the institution of modern conservancy systems were received with total indifference or lukewarm reception due to the fact that the Bengalis could not relate to the reforms culturally. In the absence, therefore, of its ability to institute its notions of hygiene and health within the Bengali population at large, in the early years of the 1850s, provincial administrations intervened only where they could – i.e. within sites of governance directly under the control of provincial authorities, and in collective confinement-environments like jails and cantonments. These were seen to be especially prone to inefficiency, sickness, spread of disease and a general lack of health. As a result in the mid-nineteenth century, cantonment towns like Berhampur were provided with improved drainage systems. But it was really within the controlled environments of provincial jails that the new ideal of improvement in health, hygiene and sanitation could be carried out in its most paternalistic spirit. Other than a perceived capacity to breed disease and create unhealthy conditions, the internal environment of jails directly affected provincial *cutcherries* as well. A number of district and central jails (for example, in Suri, Bankura and Berhampur) were located right next to the provincial *cutcherry* complexes, since this enabled easier conveyance of prisoners to a Judge's or Magistrate's court. The early years of the 1850s witnessed a series of interventions to improve the internal drainage, cooking provisions (Indian cooking was considered particularly polluting and unhealthy) and ventilation systems of jails, as well as to separate them more effectively from the *cutcherries* next door with higher boundary walls.⁴⁵ Since by the mid-nineteenth century even jails located in the peripheries of towns often came to be occupy fairly central areas or directly abutted inhabited areas of the town, even these became sites for the 'improvement' based interventions.

One of the critical concepts relevant to provincial building that the PWD based its interventions on during the 1850s, was the notion of *pucca* construction. While in the case of the early *cutcherries* and jail buildings, using *pucca* construction was essentially a practical way of ensuring a more 'robust' building with a longer life, within the subsequent milieu of improvement, the idea of '*pucca*' construction came to represent a self-generative value system. 'Firming up' itself apparently bore the potential to improve and thus remedy health, hygiene and sanitary problems. By contrast, temporary and provisional construction came to be associated with decay, degeneration and lack of health. Using new *pucca* construction, or upgrading existing *kutchas* ones to a *pucca* form seemed directly to offer a movement to a higher state of more 'healthy' and 'civilised' living. In the year 1851-52, *pucca* drains were constructed in the jail at Noakhally, and; *pucca* cooking sheds for prisoners and small *pucca* reservoirs in the enclosures to provide bathing and washing facilities were constructed in the jail in Jessore.⁴⁶ These, the *pucca* provisions were

⁴⁴ The seeds of such separation of distinguishing the personal/religious sphere from the public/secular were sown right from Warren Hastings' regime in the 1770s. It was an understanding that in many ways proved to be an interpretation along purely European frames of reference and proved to be very problematic all through colonial rule.

⁴⁵ BL/ IOR/ Departmental Annual Reports, Bengal Public Works Department (BPWD), for the years 1851/52 - 1853/ 54, V/ 24/ 3332.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

sharply contrasted against existing temporary provisions: ‘under a representation from the Civil Surgeon [the medical officer of the district who was also usually in charge of jails], dt. the 2nd January 1851, that the existing drains are merely channels cut into the earth, which are constantly choking up in the dry season and retaining the filth from the Jail, thus causing noisome stench’ or, ‘these cooking sheds are in lieu of mat [temporary] sheds and they were proposed together with the other improvements to the Jail by the Officiating Magistrate and the Sessions Judge’.⁴⁷ The sheer frequency of occurrence of the expression ‘*pucca*’ is particularly high in building-related documents during this period. Read in juxtaposition with the fact that the titles or subject matter of these documents often directly referred to the concept of ‘improvement’, they tellingly reveal how the new value system was being translated into techniques like *pucca* construction.

The movement to *pucca* construction was buttressed, predictably, by newer technologies and building systems. Buildings increasingly seem to have been conceived and re-modelled as ‘health and hygiene systems’ – in a manner almost similar to the ‘system’-based conception of modernist architecture in the twentieth century. Interestingly, this period also heralds the beginnings of an overlaying of mechanical systems onto the re-configured spatial systems; something that reached even greater intensity during the 1860s and 1870s. For instance, at the architectural level, night-prives were designed as spaces to be incorporated in and attached to jail wards in 1852-53 by the Superintendent Engineer of the Lower Provinces. For the removal of solid and liquid waste – aside from an elaborate system of architectural devices like high and low walls, space underneath the privies to house the waste, passageways to enable removal – mechanical devices like a system of steel carts or trucks were developed (Fig. 4.16).⁴⁸ Detailed designs of the removal carts, including the mechanics of tilting and linear movement, were worked out by the building engineer. Architectural and mechanical devices were thus meant to work in conjunction in order to mobilise the logistics of ensuring health and hygiene. Privy designs were developed for the Cantonment at Sealkot and disseminated via an all-India circular in 1856.⁴⁹ Following such experiments in jails and cantonments, bathrooms were also incorporated in or added to governmental staging bungalows.⁵⁰ Privies for the public were incorporated in *cutcherry* complexes and ninety-five ventilators were added to the roof of the jail in Jessore.⁵¹ Jails and cantonments thus provided the first stage in the development of many systems which were gradually incorporated into the architecture of *cutcheries* and other governmental buildings. They also heralded the early experiments for overlaying mechanical devices on the physical forms of buildings. It was these attempts at designing ‘organised’ and ‘healthy’ environments which that perhaps found their fullest expression later, in 1866, in the barrack designs for cantonments

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Paras 383, 384.

⁴⁹ Government of India Circular of the 11th March 1856, in William Grant (compiled), *Circulars and Standing Orders of the Department of Public Works, From 1833 to 8th July 1857* (Madras: William Grant by permission of the Government of Fort St. George, 1857).

⁵⁰ Staging bungalows were rest-houses at intervals of 8-12 miles along major routes connecting Calcutta to *Sadar* towns and other important places. This was part of the *Dak* or travel service run by the postal department especially for Europeans.

⁵¹ BL/ IOR/ PWD Annual Report 1851/ 52, in volume 1851/52 – 1853/ 54, BL/ IOR/ V/ 24/ 3332.

proposed by the Sanitary Commission.⁵²

4.2.3 The Sepoy Mutiny, imperial governance and techno-bureaucratic machinery

Undoubtedly, of the various developments during the 1850s, the most seminal in political, military, administrative and psychological terms was the Sepoy Mutiny or 'Great Rebellion' of 1857. On the morning of 10th of May 1857, Hindu and Muslim sepoys of several regiments of the Bengal Army based at Meerut rose in revolt against their British officers, ostensibly in protest against being forced to use cartridges for a new rifle which were alleged to have been greased with pork or beef fat. Within a few weeks, the rebellion had spread across northern Bengal. The rebels captured Delhi, declared their allegiance to Mughal authority and denounced British rule. Although it apparently started over a local issue within military cantonments, the Mutiny soon became the general channel within various sections of Indian society for venting long-suppressed dissent with various aspects of British rule in India. Even groups in interior areas of villages joined in -- '...landlords and peasants, princes and merchants, Hindus and Muslims, each for their own reason threw off the British yoke and sought their own independence'.⁵³ The Mutiny was finally suppressed by the Government, but its searing intensity, coupled with the fact that such a widespread revolt even broke out at all, instilled within the British psyche, like never before, deep fears and suspicion of the Indian people they were to continue ruling.

The Mutiny precipitated arguably the most momentous change in the governance of India. In 1858, the British Crown formally assumed the mantle of governing the sub-continent. The Governor-General of India, now termed 'Viceroy', was the formal representative of Queen Victoria, and the people of India were now British subjects directly under the rule of the British monarchy. The Mutiny meant that the government had to reconsider how it might represent itself as an imperial power. It was within this milieu that an alternative and more powerful vision of the empire ensued – one that reached its peak in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The pursuit of this vision also heavily conditioned the workings of the PWD. In fact, in many ways, the PWD was envisioned to forge, in concrete form, the material systems and artefacts of progress and the later, more visible presence and authority of the empire.

Much of the success of the mutiny in de-stabilising British government in India (at least in the initial stages) was attributed by some to the inefficient bureaucracy of the East India Company. One being that governance of India had so far remained within the clutches of the covenanted civil servants, with no inclusion of non-official Europeans or Indians themselves.⁵⁴ But just as the civil service was criticised for its exclusivity and monopoly over the higher offices,

⁵² The Sanitary Commissioners' Report in 1866 suggested radically new designs for barrack and hospital designs, as well as for overall designs of colonial civil and military stations with view to better drainage, ventilation and lighting. See *Abstract of the proceedings of the Sanitary Commissioner with the Government of India* (Calcutta, Government Press, 1868-73).

⁵³ Thomas R Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 1998) 43.

⁵⁴ The Indian Civil Services did not have any Indian recruits till 1864, when the first Indian joined it in the judicial service.

there were equally influential figures, like John Stuart Mill, who, professing that India was not ready for representative government, actually spoke out in favour of the civil services: ‘the “monopoly” of the Civil Service, so much inveighed against, is like the monopoly of judicial offices by the bar; and its abolition would be like opening the bench in Westminster Hall to the first comer whose friends certify that he had now and then looked into Blackstone’.⁵⁵ In fact, the civil servants found even more substantial support later in the early 1870s, in people like James Fitzjames Stephen⁵⁶ with the doctrine of authoritarian liberalism. Stephen’s ideal ruler was the trained bureaucrat of the Indian Civil Service constituting a ‘benevolent but strong government of Englishmen’.⁵⁷ In many ways therefore, in the new imperial era, the legitimacy of the Civil Service as bearers of governance was reinstated with even more power.

A ‘robust’ bureaucratic machinery, the seeds of which had already been sown by the Governor General Lord Dalhousie, thus became a hallmark of governance. But more significantly, under the rule of the Crown, bureaucratic zeal was potently overlaid with departmental specialisations. The PWD became an iconic example of this nexus, as well as of that between bureaucracy and technocracy. In the following years, it developed into a giant machine with an intensely hierarchical structure and branched out into different segments of specialised construction work such as those for buildings, embankments, railways, communications, roads and bridges. As architectural historian Peter Scriver describes it: ‘The commitment to construct irrigation canals, railways, and other works of “public improvement” with which the new Public Works Department was mandated was an important first step along the path of a more stridently rational and authoritative approach to the colonial government of India by central authority.’⁵⁸

In terms of provincial governance, powers were redistributed. While in 1837 the offices of the Collector and the Magistrate had been separated (although combined in 1831), in 1857, in the new imperial era, the role of the District Collector as the chief executive officer of the district was revived. The Collector was once again endowed with the combined responsibility of magisterial as well revenue collection duties, making him the most powerful administrative authority in the district. Yet, in many ways, such a new placement of power was at odds with the concept of departmental specialisations like public works. In the period of the East India Company, the district officer, aided by his local support network of building contractors and artisans, doubled up as building advisor. Local officers, like Collector-Magistrates or Judge-Magistrates, were in effect multipurpose figures who not only looked after revenue or judicial duties but were also the key figures in building design and execution. For example, the Collector of Midnapur was virtually the key figure, along with his native staff, in the design changes within the *cutcherry* in 1851, and he even personally designed details of embankments for demarcating

⁵⁵ John Stuart Mill, ‘Of the Government of Dependencies by a Free State’, *Considerations on Representative Government* (London: Longmans, Green, 1868), 139.

⁵⁶ James Fitzjames Stephen was an English lawyer, Judge and political writer. In the summer of 1869 he was appointed a member of the Colonial Council of India.

⁵⁷ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 56.

⁵⁸ Peter Scriver, ‘The Public Works Department of British India’, in Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash (eds.), *Colonial Modernities. Building, welling and architecture in British India and Ceylon*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 78.

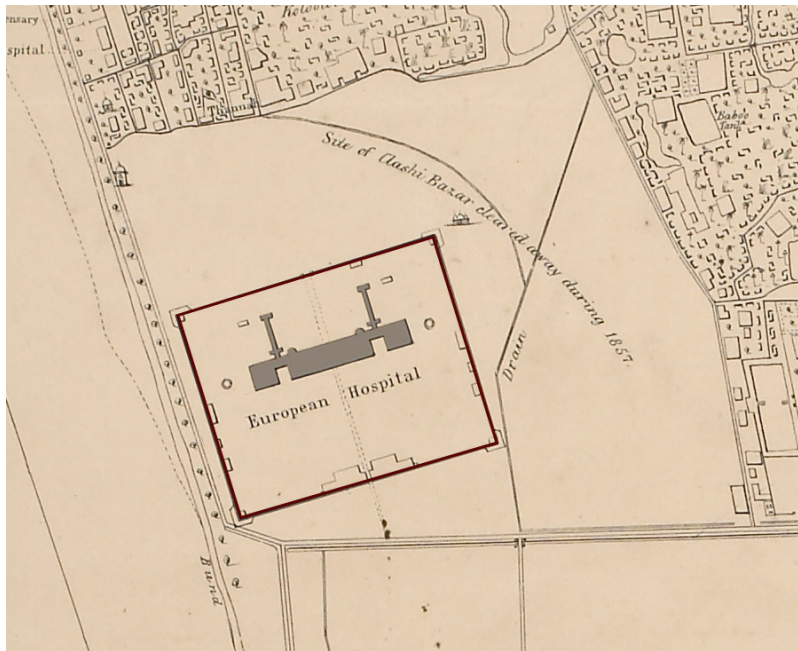


Fig. 4.17 The boundary wall erected around the European hospital in Berhampur after the mutiny of 1857.

Source: Base map - British Library Maps Collection, India Office Records.

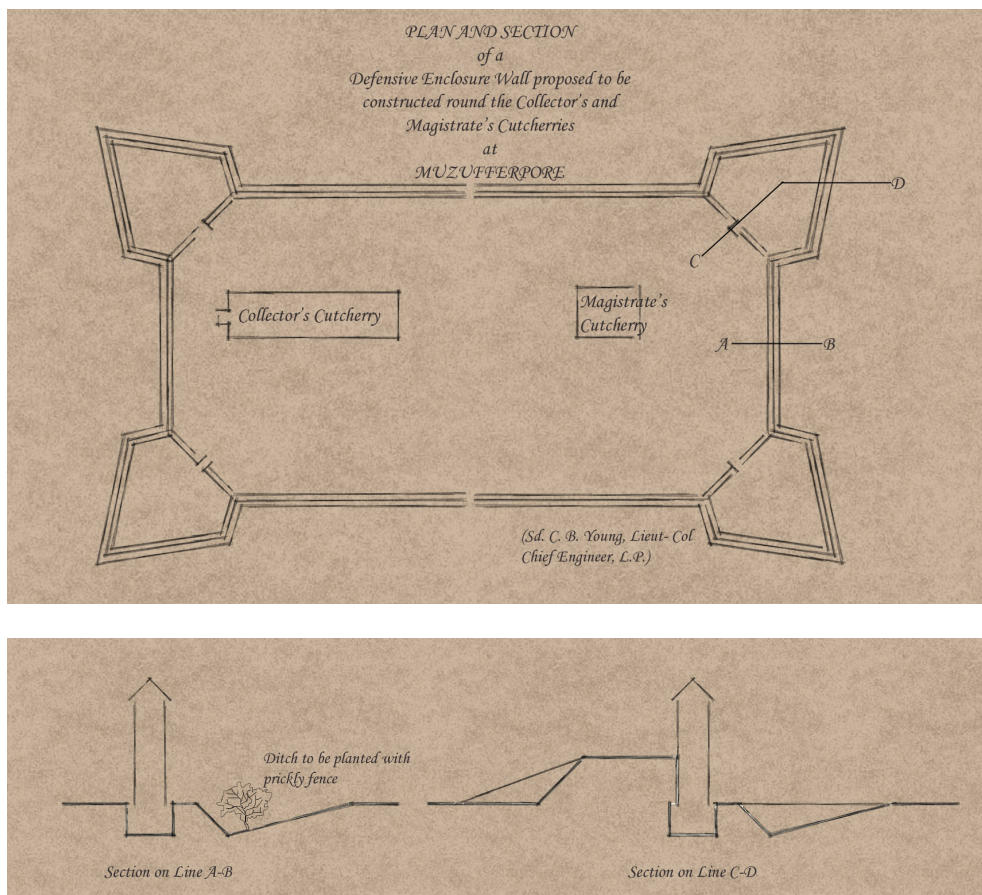


Fig. 4.18 Proposed fortifications around the *cutcherry* in Muzafferpur after the mutiny of 1857.

Source: Drawing based on drawing no. 251 of Proceeding for Dec 1861. British Library, Bengal PWD Proceedings for Dec 1860, BL IOR/P/16/48.

Appendix D.

boundaries of agricultural land.⁵⁹ The district officer, in turn, drew most of his labour resource and building knowledge from local areas. After 1858, decision making in building activity was to be guided far more by the centralised systems of the PWD than by the locally acquired common-sense knowledge of the district officer and local contractors or artisans. Yet, as the later parts of this chapter and the next will reveal, the process of decision making in building design and construction was still, in reality, far more complicated than the linear simplicity of decisions emanating from a centralised and specialised body like the PWD. This was all the more true of provincial public architecture, stemming from the fact that it was already rooted in a culture of dependence on local officers, local know-how and skill and a certain informality and flexibility of functioning. In fact, this ambiguity in articulation of authority and agency in building activities was something that never really found a clear resolution. Contrary to the imagined flow of specialised building knowledge from the higher to the lower levels of the PWD hierarchy, and then into interior areas, local issues and apparently ad-hoc practices continuously cropped up, and constituted as much the landscape of the architecture of provincial governance as did the centralised prescriptions.

4.2.4 Post -Mutiny building work

The first impact of the Mutiny in terms of building activity was a sudden lull. In July 1857, a circular was passed by the Government of India to suspend all building work other than military and defensive ones.⁶⁰ The three to four year period afterwards saw an organised stock-taking of existing defensive resources as well as a number of new buildings to house more troops. For example, an exhaustive list of all fortifications and strongholds belonging to the Bengal Government, including their situation, condition, holding capacity (in the eventuality of a repeat of the 1857 events), and the presence or absence of formal plans of these on record, was drawn up in 1860.⁶¹ There was also a spate of building of defensive enclosures around functions that, it was felt, needed higher protection. Some buildings like hospitals which could hold a large number of people and had become the refuge for Europeans during the Sepoy Mutiny, were formally provided with high-walled enclosures in order to augment their defensive capacity. The European hospital in Berhampur was a classic case in point. It was virtually fortified into an enclosure with a high wall which, given the fact that collective confinement environments largely required similar typological formats, later facilitated its easy conversion into a jail (Fig. 4.17). Interestingly, therefore, a defensive device put up purely as a contingency measure actually became the agent for the building's later use for a completely different function.⁶² Many of the provincial *cutcheries* in *sadar* towns had also been direct targets of the Mutiny rebels, being often seen by Indians as extreme sites of colonial authority. They had been the natural targets of the mutineers and especially during the various peasant uprisings in Bengal.⁶³ They were also the

⁵⁹ H.V. Bayley, *History of Midnapore* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1902), 112.

⁶⁰ BL/ IOR/ Government of India letter no. 1203, dt. 10th July 1857.

⁶¹ See "List of Forts and strongholds in the several Executive Divisions in Bengal, called for in Bengal Government No 3543, dated 1st September 1860", in BPWD Proceedings, December 1860, BL IOR/P/16/ 48, 150-152.

⁶² In fact, such use of modifications was a pervasive way of harnessing the advantages of transfer of new functions into largely compatible formal types.

⁶³ For an authoritative analysis of the various insurgencies in Bengal during colonial rule, see Ranajit Guha,

workplaces of the few Europeans who lived in *sadar* towns. Consequently, after the Mutiny, these were also identified as key sites which, due to their crucial role in the delivery of governance, as well as being storehouses of colonial wealth were seen as needing the highest protection (holding as they did land records, administrative records and the treasury). The *cutcherry* in Muzaffarpur, for instance, was proposed to be converted virtually into a fortress, with ramparts and ditches all around, and only two controlled entry and exit points (Fig. 4.18). It was also to be further fortified by the deployment of 350 Gurkhas at the station and by keeping some more troops at hand at a short distance in Pusa. Although many of these measures were not actually used,⁶⁴ in a majority of ways they transformed the conception of many provincial *cutcheries* back into the defensive forms reminiscent of the East India Company's early factories. This time, however, it was not simply the case of a commercial establishment of foreign traders trying to protect its wares from external threats, but, ironically, it was a government trying to protect its own sites of administration from the very people it was in the process of governing.

Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India (London: Delhi, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁶⁴ William Wilson Hunter, *A Statistcal Account of Bengal*, Vol 13 (London: Truebner, 1875-77), 215. See also, Bengal PWD Proceedings for Dec 1860, BL IOR/P/16/48..

Chapter 5 ■

Administrative architecture 1860 - c.1900

**Introduction**

This chapter deals with a period in which, following substantive developments in the larger apparatus of governance, there were massive attempts to centralise decision making and to install ‘order’ in building practices. It also looks at the related issue of how, especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a larger imperial vision permeated into the architecture of provincial governance. Both these were buttressed by the emergence of the Public Works Department from 1855. This was a period when the means became more important than the message of building, and the sheer bureaucratic process of design decisions, became an end in itself. The chapter also looks at how such attempts at centralisation affected the actual designs of buildings of provincial administration in Bengal in terms of the production of materials for construction as well as the technology used in building. It also traces how agency in building practice (design decisions, construction, and post-construction modification and appropriation) had changed with respect to the first half of the nineteenth century, and also within the period in question. Most importantly, the chapter also demonstrates the instabilities and inconsistencies in/of such attempts at centralisation and investigates how formal and informal practices, centralised and local interventions in effect intersected and often collided to create a still heterogeneous landscape of public architecture in provincial areas – a far cry from the desired form envisioned



Fig. 5.1 The Collector's and Judge's *cutcherry*, Suri

by agencies like the PWD. Much of these operated from within the crevices of formal normative frameworks, demanded adjustments of the frameworks themselves in individual and local contexts, and thus resisted the outright implementation of centralised building practices. How centralised norms actually played out in provincial areas, how they were received, to what extent they were accepted, shared, propagated, appropriated or modified, manipulated, subverted or negotiated, is what this chapter explores.

In 1865, a new Collector's *cutcherry* was built in Suri, the *sadar* town of Beerbhoom district. Three years later, in 1868, another near-identical building arose right next to it, along the same linear axis, forming virtually a continuous composition with the earlier one (Fig. 5.1). This second one was the Judge's *cutcherry* of the same station. Situated exactly between them, small and diminutive, but central to the spatial scheme, was a guards' station. All of these buildings bore considerable similarity to the barrack-type *cutcheries* that had developed in Bengal between 1820 and 1855. But it was a similarity that was perhaps more superficial than fundamental – for in reality, as discussed in Chapter 4, major changes had taken place in the overall political, ideological, regulatory, social and psychological landscape of colonial governance by 1860, and the Suri buildings were products of a very different conception of governance. A deeper engagement reveals that even as spatial entities, despite the continuation of certain formal aspects, the new government buildings were fundamentally different from their predecessors.

5.1 The emergence of standard designs

Starting from around 1858–59, with building activity finally picking up after the pot-mutiny period of suspension following the mutiny, a fundamental shift in the conception of public buildings emerged with full force. It was arguably the single most dominant force to guide the physical character and production of government buildings for the next eighty odd years (up to and, in fact, even after India's independence). This was the ethos of creating 'standard designs', and the acutely augmented role of the PWD in all aspects of building. Standardisation in building design was not happening in isolation. Centred on the sphere of law and legal practices, codification was the prevailing norm of the day. In 1833, Thomas Macaulay had been appointed as the first Law Member and head of India's first Law Commission to codify Indian law into "one great and entire work symmetrical in all parts and pervaded in one spirit". As a result, the Code of Civil Procedure (1859) the Indian Penal Code (1860) and the Code of Criminal Procedure (1861) were formalised. Though equity of justice was at one level its guiding philosophy, legal codification stemmed very much from a need to simplify the apparently baffling range and multitude of laws and legal practices that were followed in different parts of India, and to control the scope of interpretation left to the individual judge's discretion. Codification was seen as a legitimate and desirable way of setting up normative frameworks that could homogenise diverse conditions and practices into a universally comprehensible and manageable monolith. In provincial governmental architecture too, standard designs and codes of practice were envisioned to address the "confusion" brought in by the plethora of existing

designs - accompanied by the equally varied range of building materials, methods and actors involved in design and construction processes – which has been characteristic of late-eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century. Interestingly although the design of major buildings in the headquarters at Calcutta continuously occupied the PWD, these were one-off, special designs without any real need for replication. It was provincial areas that provided the apt ground for the 60-70 year long project of standardisation of public architecture – made up as it was, inherently, of multiple, cellular, territories that were, to the imperial administration, near-identical districts connected by near-identical functions of governance. In fact, even if there was an understanding that all of Bengal province in effect represented a fairly heterogeneous land, there was apparently still the hope that the diversity of practices could actually be brought to grip through a set of standardised designs and building practices, albeit with some allowances for minor local variations.

Not surprisingly, the impetus and precedence for standardisation in building design came largely from the military domain, the harbinger of the catalogue architecture of barrack design from almost a century back. After 1857, the government had decided to increase the provision of troops manifold and so a large number of temporary barracks were constructed. In fact, in Bengal during 1858-59, the lion's share of building expenditure – an amount of 27,60,000 Rupees – went on military fortifications and accommodation for troops, compared to just 5,10,000 for civil buildings. The mutiny had raised afresh serious questions about the fitness and health of European troops in India, which had been a mounting concern since the early-nineteenth century.¹ It was reasonably clear by the mid-nineteenth century that most of the mortality and morbidity had to do with the difficulty of European troops in adjusting to India's climate and exposure to the elements. But there was considerable hope that by locating troops in 'healthy' areas during peace-time, and by improving the design of accommodation for troops, much could be achieved. Within such a milieu, interestingly, the temporary barracks in the post-mutiny period virtually served as the laboratories for spatial and building design experiments that would slowly infuse, in many ways, the sphere of civil architecture as well. One of the key issues that the new temporary barrack designs seemed radically to address was the matter of 'space standards', or 'space per person'. New "liberal scales" were now applied for spatial provision for troops, "from 30-50% in excess of that heretofore allowed". Space per person was increased to over 1000 cubic feet, so much so that although 'temporary', the new barracks were considered by the Public Works officers to be far 'superior to those formerly erected in this country [India] as regards accommodation and comfort of the soldier'.² The temporary barracks also became experimental grounds for technological innovations such as the design of iron-framed structures (discussed in more detail later).³ Other than bringing in deliberations about aspect of building

1 As emphasised by Mark Harrison, "the mortality and morbidity of European troops in India – which numbered 24,500 in 1808, rising to 45,522 on the eve of the Rebellion in 1857 – was usually far higher than that of the *sepoys* of the Company's regiments." Only a small percentage of hospital admissions of European troops were actually attributable to wounds inflicted in battles. Mark Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India 1600- 1800* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 129.

2 British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Annual Report for 1858/ 58 - 1862-63, V/ 24/ 3333.

3 Consisting of iron beams or trusses for the roof, connected and forming a frame, to a system of iron stanchions



Fig. 5.2a Officers' residence and *cutcherry* on the same site: Site plan, Sub-divisional Magistrate's house and *cutcherry* in Cutwa, Burdwan district.

Source: British Library, IOR, PWD Proceedings for March 1881.

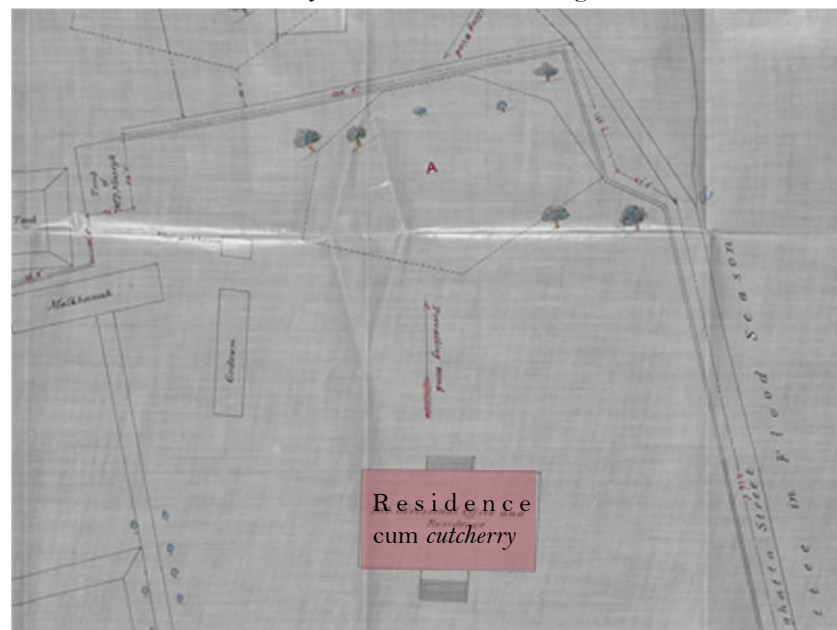


Fig. 5.2b Combined officers' residence cum *cutcherry* : Site plan, Sub-divisional Magistrate's house cum *cutcherry* in Jangipur.

Source: British Library, IOR, PWD Proceedings for February 1881.

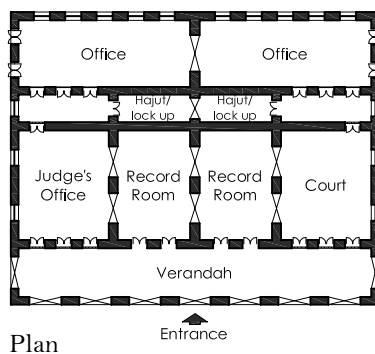


Fig. 5.3 Single storey sub-divisional *cutcherry*, Burdwan.

like space standards and technological innovations (which would later culminate in the creation of sanitary improvement codes for barrack design as a whole), the military domain also produced the first set of formal 'standard building designs' for governmental buildings in the years 1858-59. Since permanent barracks already existed, and the temporary ones built immediately after 1857 were intended to last out until later developments in barrack design, most of these standard designs were for subsidiary functions in cantonments. For example, in 1858-59 some standard designs were drawn up for a hospital for women and children, plunge bath, bakery for 1500 men, artillery buildings, guard quarter and cells for a regiment, privy for European troops, wash house and urinary, urinal, and temporary out-offices for European barracks in Cantonments.⁴ Predictably, the buildings were either directly connected with practices of hygiene and health, or else incorporated health and hygiene as their dominant design parameters.

5.1.1 Design of sub-divisional *cutcherries*

While the health of troops was always a prime consideration, and spatial designs for their accommodation was of the highest priority, the ethos of standardisation soon diffused into the sphere of civil buildings. In the following year (i.e. 1859), standard designs were produced by the PWD for sub-divisional *cutcherries*, the first to be standardised within provincial civil architecture. The existing sub-divisional *cutcherries* represented an especially mixed lot. Unlike the *zilla sadar cutcherries* which, due to their prime role at the district level, had largely been purpose-built at least since the early-nineteenth century, sub-divisional *cutcherries* had continued, as was the common practice, to be housed in a variety of residential buildings rented or bought from local elites. There was also the fact that, though it existed in some form right since, the late-eighteenth century,⁵ the Sub-division itself emerged as a crucial unit of revenue administration, reinforced by the creation by Governor General William Bentinck of the post of the Deputy Collector (in charge of the Sub-division) from the 1830s.⁶

Being in closer contact with the hinterland, the regional Sub-division was thus a vital site of provincial governance and was seen, by the late-1850s, as requiring consolidation in terms of 'designed' provisions.⁷ Around this time, a number of new sub-divisional towns were also being set up, making them virgin ground for using standardised designs.⁸ A set of six building types

embedded in the walls.

4 British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Annual Report 1858/ 59 in volume 1858/ 59 - 1862/63, V/ 24/ 3333, 76.

5 As evidenced by the case of Chandkhali, Jessore district, which virtually functioned as a subdivision, and arguably the earliest one in Bengal, since as early as 1786. See James Westland, *A Report on the District of Jessore*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1871, pp. 141 (new book – need to check old book)

6 See L.S.S. O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service 1601-1930*, London: John Murray, 1931, pp.

7 H.V. Bayly, *History of Midnapore*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1902, pp. 8

8 1858-59 was a period that witnessed an intense spate of setting up of new sub-divisional towns - Perozpur in Backergunj district, Kissonaganj in Mymensingh district, Tarragoneah in Nadia district, Bhowaneegunj and Tilaya in Rajshahi district, Habeebgunj in Sylhet district, Panchkoora in Burdwan district some of the many examples. In fact, there were considerable deliberations on the location of sub-divisional towns in the office of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal at this time as well. The sub-division appears to have been a much dwelt upon administrative hierarchy at this stage. British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings, Jan 1860, nos. 89- 101, P/ 16/ 37.

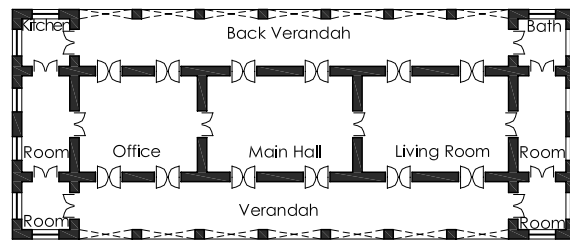


Fig. 5.4 Single storey sub-divisional officer's residence, Ranaghat

was hence drawn up for the sub-divisional level: 1. single-storey *cutcherry* (Fig. 5.2a, 5.3), 2. single-storey dwelling house (Fig. 5.4), 3. single-storey dwelling-cum-*cutcherry*, 4. two-storey dwelling-cum-*cutcherry* (*cutcherry* on lower floor, dwelling on the upper floor) 5. assistant's dwelling, and 6. out office. The Commissioners of each Division were asked to choose or express preference for one or the other, depending on their suitability in a specific context.⁹ The designs seemed to work still on some notion of modular components (like *cutcherry*, dwellings, out-offices) and clubbing these up either horizontally or vertically. The *cutcherry* could either be separate from or part of, the sub-divisional officer's dwelling. It is important to note here that, as seen in Chapter 3, the practice of a combined work-cum-living unit was a well established and widely practiced one in provincial governance. Though there was obviously a certain acknowledgement of this tradition in the standard designs, they also attempted to introduce new types like separate dwelling and *cutcherry* units. Interestingly, other than in one case, all the Commissioners expressed preference for the mixed-use, combined *cutcherry*-cum-dwelling, either single or double-storey. In some cases they lent weight to such choices by referring to the other key parameter in provincial functioning – considerations of climate and site characteristics – by saying, for example, that “an upper roomed dwelling and *cutcherry* is [was] the best adapted to the damp and unhealthy climate” of the place in question.¹⁰ In others, the Commissioners simply legitimised such choices saying that “they are [were] best adapted to the districts of eastern Bengal”, possibly both in terms of lifestyle as well as climatic criteria. The spatial overlap of home and work spheres had thus become a way of functioning that was inherently tied to the idea of provinciality – and as the later sections of this chapter will demonstrate, the practices in local areas to preserve this link as an essential aspect of provincial governance survived right through the nineteenth century.

The central idea behind these standard designs – even if they continued notions of modularity or inter-meshing of work and home spheres – was to homogenise building designs and practices across a range of locations. What was critical therefore was that a finite (and rather limited) set of designs be replicated in large numbers. As Peter Scriver articulates, the PWD's practice of standard designs did build on the basic idea of precedence, and so drew from already existing designs.¹¹ In that sense the standard designs were not entirely original conceptions. However, the process of standardisation allowed the system to ‘pick and choose’ and validate or certify as appropriate only a very limited range of options. It thereby discarded a far larger range of options in the process, which had until then existed as a result of the varied demands of different areas, existing building practices and the varying ability of the local officer to negotiate different design solutions with the higher authorities.

⁹ British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings, January 1860, nos 89- 101 of 19th Jan 1860, P/ 16/ 37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ In looking at the practices of the PWD in India between 1855 and 1905, Peter Scriver discusses such use of ‘precedence’ as a methodological tool for the PWD to effect economy and speed in delivery of design and construction. Peter Scriver, “Empire building and thinking in the Public Works Department of British India” in Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash (eds.), *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007, 84.

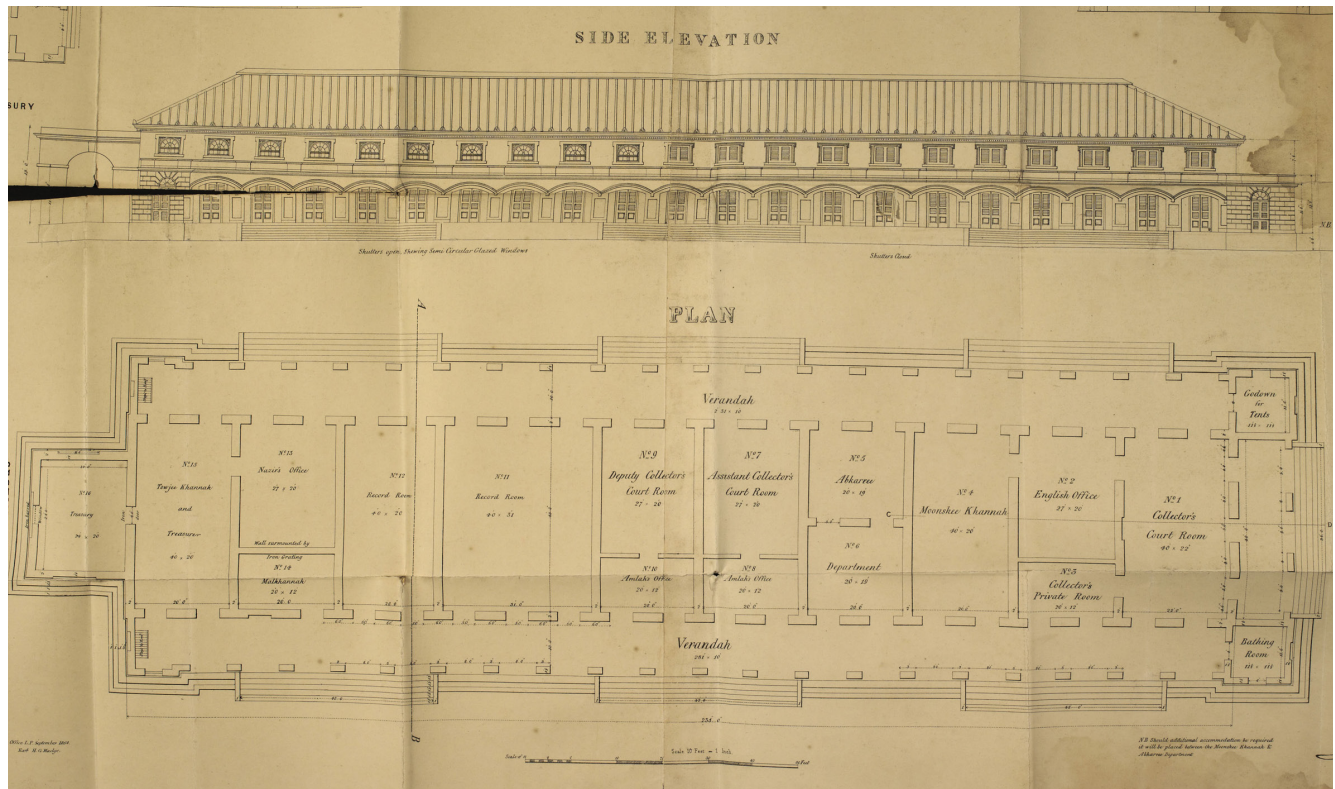


Fig. 5.5a Standard design for Collector's *cutcherry* (plan and elevation)
Source: British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings, May 1860.

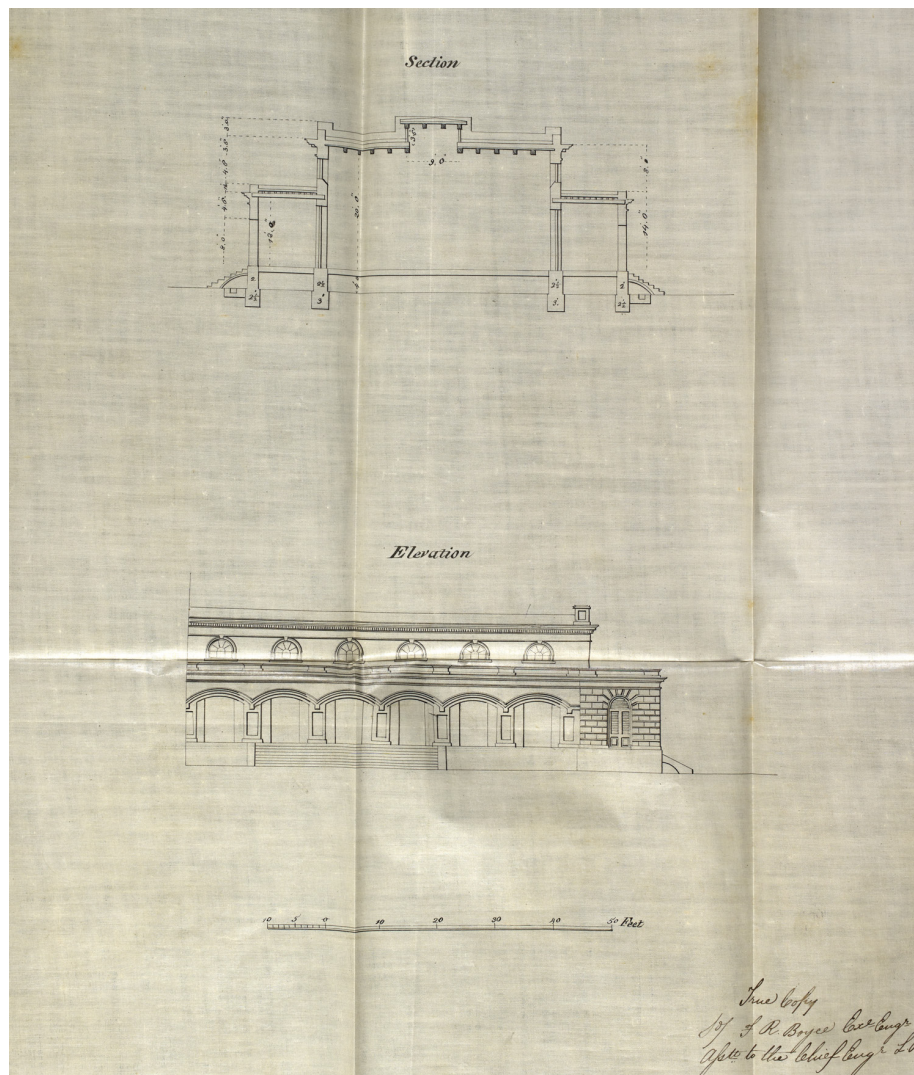


Fig. 5.5b
Standard design
for Collector's
cutcherry (detailed
section and
elevation).
Source: British
Library, IOR,
Bengal PWD
Proceedings, May
1860.

5.1.2 Design of *sadar cutcherries*

By 1860, the hitherto expenditure pattern in building activities had been reversed. For the year 1860–61, 20, 80, 000 Rupees was spent on civil buildings as against 8, 50, 000 Rupees on military buildings. With the immediate need for military-related construction having been addressed by the end of 1850s, an intense spate of work on civil buildings characterised the following decade. The foundation of the physical infrastructure of provincial governance under imperial rule was now to be established through a robust body of governmental buildings which would act as nodes of power in the provincial landscape. In 1860, arguably the most representative and potent set of designs epitomising the ideal of standardisation and centralised decision-making were formulated. And through spatial design, they were to effect a conceptual re-definition of provincial governance itself. The designs in question were those for provincial *cutcherries* in *sadar* towns – in specific, 4 types of buildings, viz. Collector's *cutcherry*/ court, Judge's Court, Magistrate's Court and *Sadar Ameen's* Court. The centre-point of the deliberations on the standard *cutcherry* designs was now the Collector's *cutcherry* (Fig. 5.5a and 5.5b), commensurate with the substantial consolidation of the Collector's role in Bengal in the post-mutiny scenario (when he was made the chief executive functionary of the district, combining the Magistrate's and Collector's posts).¹² From the basic design of the Collector's *cutcherry*, the other designs were derived (Fig 5.6). It is this set of standard designs that the buildings in Suri, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, were based on.

At a superficial level, the *cutcherry* designs from 1860 seem to be strikingly similar to the barrack-type *cutcherries* of the period between 1820 and 1855. Like the earlier types, they consisted of a series of spaces linearly strung together, with courts or treasuries at the ends accessed from the shorter sides. In fact, they were very obviously a direct take-off on the 'simplified' *cutcherries* (discussed in Section 4.1.4 of Chapter 4), that had been built between 1840 and 1855. But the new standard designs also represented a different generation altogether in terms of the very conception or idea of design. Central to this was the notion of the *type* itself. While buildings of the first half of the nineteenth century represented a range of possibilities that grew as a response to different combinations of parameters in different situations, the new designs were defined, finite entities. As mentioned at the end of Chapter 3, *cutcherries* between 1800 and 1855 in effect followed a latent systemic principle; the parts were largely determined, and a set of principles governing their combinations came to be established through practice, but the whole was never determined by any centralised authority. In contrast, the standard designs from 1860 were the result of a system in which the product itself was determined centrally and furnished. Comprehending and accepting variety had always been an uneasy task and the varied

¹² It is important to remember here that the Collector had a relatively lesser role in Bengal till 1857 (except between 1831 and 1837 when the Collector also carried out magisterial duties), compared to Madras Presidency or the North Western Provinces. In the latter places, the (Thomas) Munro model was followed, which was based on the Romantic notion of the Collector-magistrate as the benevolent paternal figure, with an individual style of functioning. Post 1857, Bengal too witnessed a transformation to such a conception of governance. See, e.g., Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.).

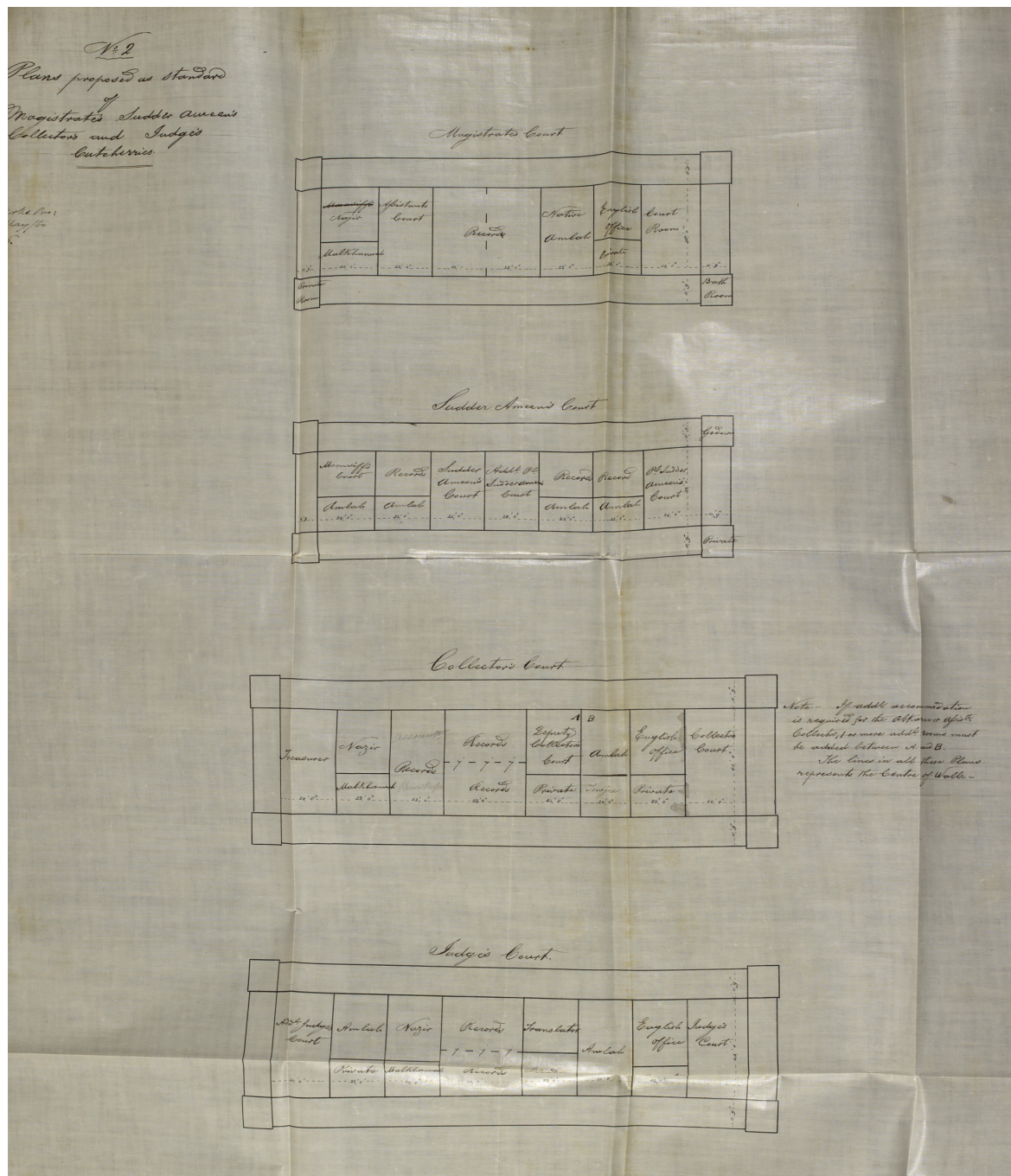


Fig. 5.6 Standard designs for Magistrate's, Sadar Ameen's, Collector's and Judge's cutcherries.
Source: British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings, May 1860.

practices across regions had obviously long been a source of discomfort to central agencies. Even during the era of the Military Board this was revealed in the attempt, in 1823, to make a comprehensive compilation of drawings of all provincial public buildings (however varied) in Bengal, bringing them into visibility and comprehension as a wholesome group. This had also been accompanied by the issue of the building manual of 1821 by the Military Board, in which there was an early attempt to effect, across different situations all over Bengal, general improvements in the construction techniques prevalent at the time. This, however, mainly affected the design of parts and there was no prescription about the overall design itself. Within the post-mutiny zeal for rationalisation and centralisation, however, standard designs of provincial *cutcheries* became powerful tools for control of provincial building practices. They also ensured that, to those in the headquarters of the PWD and the centre of local government at Calcutta, its own spaces of governance in interior areas were now 'known' entities. By corollary, the designs were no longer to be determined at local levels through understanding of local situations but were essentially to be types designed and disseminated by the central body of the PWD in Calcutta, apparently ready for use in a diverse range of situations, and at best modified to suit local circumstances. The genetic code of the mother cell, with only ever minor modifications, was here to stay. Standardisation and centralisation were two sides of the same coin.

The potency of the *cutcherry* designs created in 1860 was not just in the ideology of typification. It lay also in the nature of the product itself. A closer scrutiny reveals that the new *cutcherry* designs apportioned the space of the *cutcherry* into near-identical, repetitive spaces, with very little to distinguish one from the other. The most common sub-unit was a clear space of 20-24 feet by 32-42 feet. In the new scheme of things, a record room, for example, as a spatial entity, thus had no fundamental difference from an office or a court room. Gone were the modular articulations of functional parts characteristic of the earlier *cutcheries*. The provincial *cutcherry* was now a mere aggregate of similar spaces arranged in a non-hierarchical fashion, tied by the equity of a stringed composition and accessed equitably by the continuous stretch of the *verandah* at the front and back. Ironically, this virtual collapse of hierarchies in the spatial organisation was not really representative of the value system for the actual functioning of the *cutcheries* – which was characterised rather by increasingly hierarchical administrative structures – but was more just a way of forging a convenient system of going about building activity.

Similarity and lack of hierarchy also brought in a new kind of anonymity. While in the earlier *cutcheries* the barrack form served just as a starting point, and was then developed into a nuanced entity through articulation of parts and a sophisticated circulation system, in many ways, the new *cutcheries* had reverted back to the most basic form of barrack design. Interestingly, the flexibility that such repetitive and similar modules might have brought – of the possibility of interchange between and expansion-contraction of individual functions and their spaces – was totally compromised by the strongly compartmentalised notion of governance, characteristic

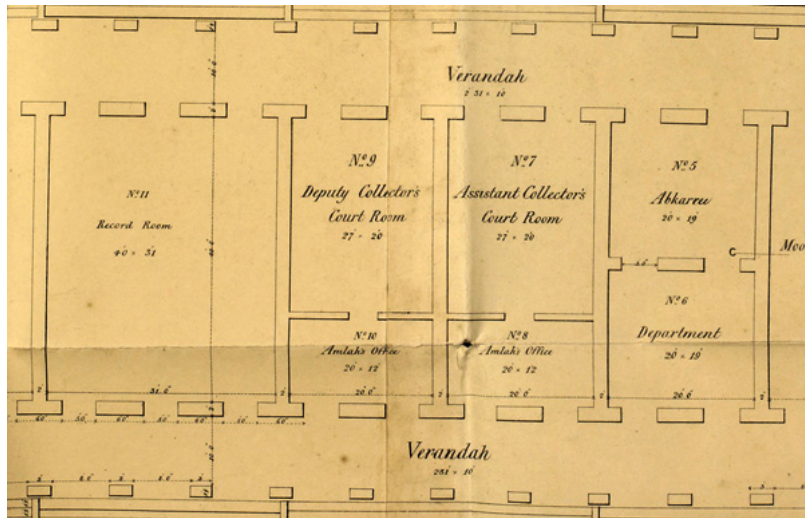


Fig. 5.7 Compartmentalised spaces in the new standard designs of sadar *cutcherries*.
Source: Base plan - British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings, May 1860.

of the post-mutiny era.¹³ Each function was fixed spatially and locked into the overall layout and allocated named spaces like Collector's/ Judge's/ Magistrate's/ Sudder Ameen's Court, Additional Judge's/ Additional Principal Sudder Ameen's/ Munsif's Court, officers' private chambers, English office, *Munshikhana*, *Malkhana* (Commissariat), Records, Treasury, Treasurer's office, Nazir's office, Pleader's [lawyers']¹⁴ office and native *amlah's* office – a clear departure from the reticence to name or designate spaces that characterised the pre-PWD period. Within an otherwise anonymous arrangement, this act of naming became the only way to distinguish between spaces. The informal practices of labelling *cutcherry* spaces between 1830 and 1860 now became firm assignments. Contrary to the provisional partitioning systems prevalent even till the early-1850s (as in the Midnapur *cutcherry* discussed in section 4.1.2 of chapter 4), in the new *cutcherry* models, the spaces were firmly segregated or subdivided with permanent (mostly load-bearing) walls (Fig. 5.7). But the most radical distinction between the 1860 *cutcherry* and the earlier ones was in the circulation system – i.e. the way the *cutcherry* staff and people needed to move through its spaces. In a radical departure to all practice heretofore, most departments now had no direct links with any other. They were all accessed by the 'neutral' connector, the *verandah*. Departments were segmented off from each other with floor-to-ceiling transverse walls that had no openings – a far cry from the porous layout and the near-continuous chain of interconnected spaces characteristic of the earlier *cutcherries*. After all, weakening the link different between parts is one of the key instruments of most centralised systems. As a result, the entire spatial formation was virtually fragmented into a series of independent functional cells, each with little to do with the other. Certain spaces or departments could be accessed through other spaces or departments, virtually embedding them deeper within the spatial scheme, and usually indicative of a higher location in the hierarchy of governance. For example, one had to move through the *amlahs'* space to be able to access the Deputy Collector's court, or through the Treasurer's office to access the *Nazir's* office. In a strange way, an apparently non-hierarchical arrangement generated small local loops of hierarchy, while being totally divorced from other such formations within the *cutcherry*.

The new standard design of the *cutcherry* thus struggled with totally contradictory principles and a virtual mismatch of its functional and formal content. On the one hand it strongly divided and segregated the *cutcherry* into its functional parts more than ever before. On the other, it homogenised these in physical terms. In sharp contrast with the earlier *cutcherries*, the parts were now totally subsumed within the whole, to the point where they were hardly legible. Again, in formal terms, this was made complete by choosing – following the principle of precedence – to adopt the roof form used in the *cutcherries* built between 1840 and 1855, i.e. a single large roof over all the rooms, save for the *verandah* layer. In the new arrangement, only the ends, occupied typically by the principal courts, gained any prominence and legibility.

¹³ Such a strongly departmental conception of governance was rooted, in more recent times, in the rule of the Governor General Lord Dalhousie from 1848 to 1856. It was based on development of specialised expertise, mostly centred on provision of physical and social infrastructure (e.g. railways, telegraph, public works, education), of different government departments. The culture of multiple departments had also permeated into provincial governance.

¹⁴ 'Pleaders' was the term used in colonial courts to denote lawyers.

At the level of the individual spatial unit, the principle was to work with the lowest common denominator (typically the 20-24 feet by 32-42 feet module), an average that roughly suited all functions¹⁵. Here, it was driven by the other key value emerging in governmental design thinking at this time, which was the ideal of *simplification*. Simplification was above all seen as something that made logistical sense. Standard roof spans meant that they opened up the possibility of mass-processing the structural members. They also meant that spaces attained standardised geometry. Compositional conceptions in fact celebrated the abstract order of standard geometry or symmetry. This was revealed potently in a communication issued from the office of Seton-Karr, the Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, informing the Secretary to the Government in the Public Works Department, of the final decisions made by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal regarding the design of provincial *cutcheries*:

The great flight of steps now at the side to be shifted to the centre of the building in all the *cutcheries*, and not to be placed at unequal distance from the two ends of the buildings.

....A small flight of steps and a portico to be added in all *cutcheries* at the treasury end of the side, in buildings where there are treasuries, to correspond with those at the other end of the building.
....The windows to be symmetrically placed in all the court rooms. At the ends in the plan they are somewhat lopsided.¹⁶

In a curious half-way stand between an anticipatory celebration of 'modernist' simplicity of rationalisation on the one hand and a passion for classical symmetry on the other, the *cutcherry* design produced in 1860 thus pursued an essentially abstract order with zest.

In terms of functional disposition, certain fundamental changes also became legible. The provincial office of the second half of the nineteenth century was indeed an elaborate bureaucratic set-up. The passion for bureaucratic divisions, especially celebrated and evolved during and after Dalhousie's time, crept into provincial administration as well. The number of departments had increased substantially. The basic spaces and departments in each of the new *cutcheries* were:

Collector's *cutcherry* or Collectorate

Collector's court and private chamber

Assistant Collector's court and *amlah's* office (second in rank to Collector)

Deputy Collector's court and *amlah's* office (in charge of *Sadar* subdivision)

Munshikhana and English office

Abkaree or customs department

Record rooms

Malkhana or Commissariat

¹⁵ I would like to recall here Peter Scrivener's assignment of such tendencies as a 'satisficing' one, which refers to a 'making do' mentality resulting in sub-optimal solutions. Originally coined by decision theorist Herbert Simon, from the words 'satisfy' and 'suffice', it has been used in architectural and environmental design thinking more recently. As discussed in Scrivener, 'Empire building and thinking', 73, and note no. 11, appendix.

¹⁶ British Library, IOR, Bengal Judicial Proceedings no 108, November 1860, P/ 146/ 33.

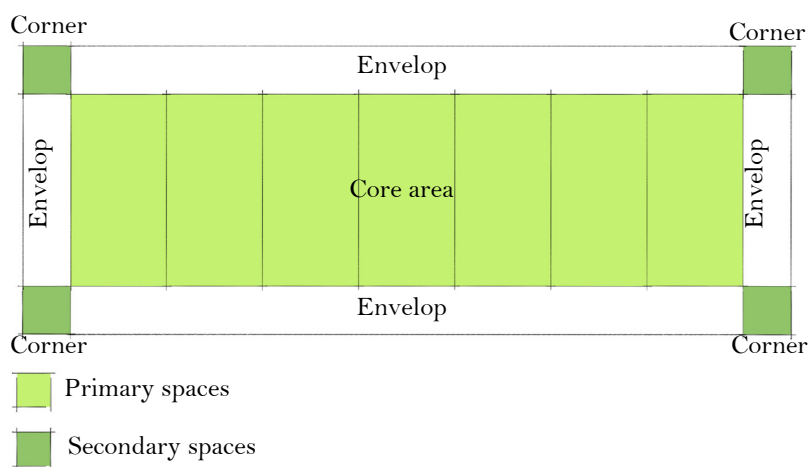


Fig. 5.8 Standard designs for *sadar cutcherries* - conceptual diagram showing primary and secondary spaces.

Treasury office, *Nazir's* office and Treasury
 Service spaces (e.g. store, godown and bath room)

Judge's court or *cutcherry*

District Judge's court and private chamber
 Additional Judge's court and private office
 Native *amlah* and English office
 Pleaders and translators
 Record rooms
Nazir's office
Malkhana or Commissariat
 Service spaces

Magistrate's court or *cutcherry*

Magistrate's court room and private chamber
 Adjutant court
 Native *amlah* and English office
 Record rooms
Nazir's office
Malkhana or Commissariat
 Service spaces

Sudder Ameen's court

Principal *Sudder Ameen's* court and private chamber
Sudder Ameen's court
 Additional Principal *Sudder Ameen's* court
Munsif's court
 Record rooms and their *amlah*
 General *amlah*
 Service spaces (e.g. godown)

Using a different type of categorisation, the broad functional categories across the *cutcheries* at this stage were:

Public Courts
 Private chambers
 General offices
 Primary storage and collection areas
 Service spaces and secondary storage areas
 Circulation spaces

The overall formation was that of a linear core consisting of a series of similar spaces

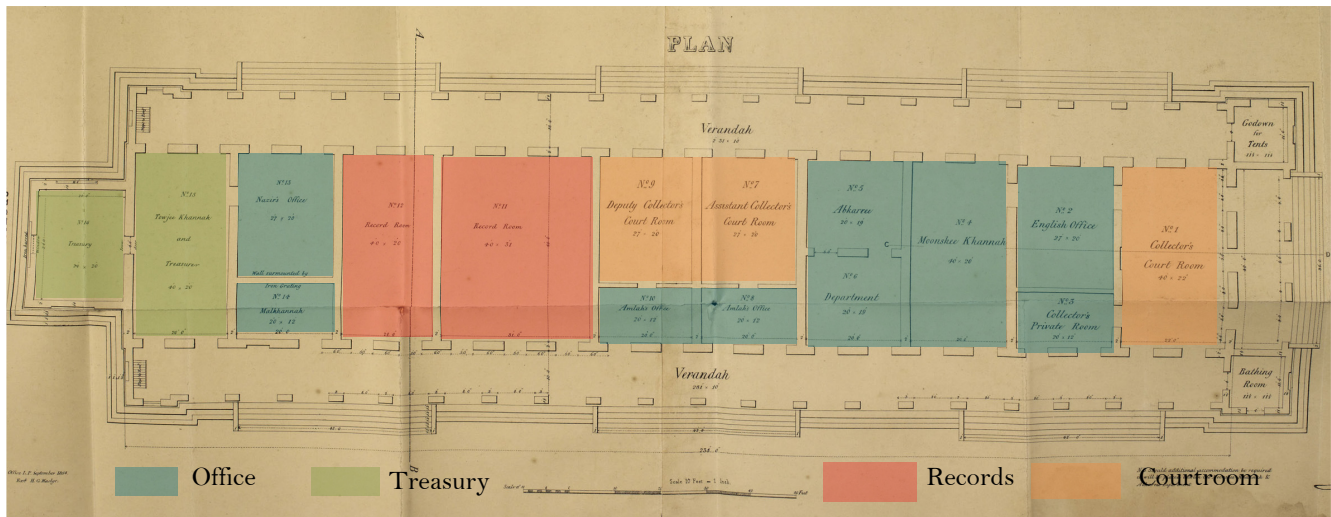


Fig. 5.9 Comparative proportion of office areas and other spaces - standard cutcherry designs.

which contained the main departments, ringed by *verandahs* on all sides, and with secondary spaces like private offices, witness' chambers or service spaces like warehouses and bathrooms at the four corners (Fig. 5.8). One of the most striking departures from the earlier *cutcheries* was the loss of the central role of records. Fused into intricate departmental divisions, increasing court functions and clerk-heavy spaces, the record room now had the status of just one of the many functions in the *cutcherry*. In fact, compared to the relatively low allocation for office spaces in the earlier *cutcheries*, in the new bureaucratic genre propped up by a new '*amla-raj*'¹⁷, the highest proportion of space (relative to other functions) was actually dedicated to various types of offices for clerical work (Fig. 5.9), followed by the courts. Private chambers were now formally provided for the higher officials. Main departments or courts were backed up by subsidiary spaces for support staff or the *amlahs*. The end bays (courts) had a span of 24 feet, while all intermediate bays (mostly offices) had a span of 22 feet, the larger dimension of the former resulting from the layout requirements for court function. On the other hand, its limits were set by limiting sizes of sal wood beams, which prevented use of a clear span higher than 26 feet.¹⁸ However, space standards for clerical work still left much to be desired – often a 20feet by 12 feet space were occupied by 10-12 *amlahs* (amounting to barely 20 square feet space per person including circulation space), whereas a similar space was to be used for single occupancy in the Collector's private office. Apparently similar spaces therefore could mean very different levels of provision depending on the density of occupation and the manner in which they were occupied.

In reality, however, much of such apparently generous allocation of spaces for higher officials got severely diluted. It is important to remember that spaces like the Collector's office or Judge's court, for example, could be fairly populated – typically with parties waiting, orderlies attending and junior officers taking instructions, on an almost continuous basis. A description of the Magistrate's court in Hooghly by Pearychand Mitra in his famous semi-satirical Bengali novel, *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (The Spoilt Son, 1858) gives a telling picture of the quality of experience that such spaces had:

As soon as Magistrate *sahib* entered his *cutcherry*, everyone stooped till the ground in salute. *Sahib* whistled away as he took his seat - the attendant brought his *hookah* [water pipe] – he lay half-reclined on his bench with his legs raised up on the stool, inhaled now and then from the *hookah*, and wiped his face frequently with his lavender scented handkerchief. People swarmed into the *Nazir's* office – the clerk was recording statements for the case - but he who has the riches, wins – the *Sherestadar* [native head clerk] in his best outfit, the *Khirkidar* in his special headgear, reading out bundles of papers (Michhil) in ballad-like chants to *Sahib*. *Sahib* read the day's newspaper, scribbled a couple of important letters along the way, and as soon as a bundle was read out, hailed "Well, *Kya hua* [what happened]?" The *Sherestadar* explained exactly as he chose to and whatever his conclusions, were *sahib's*. Baradababu¹⁹ [the defendant]²⁰ stood in one corner of the room with Benibabu and Ramlal on his side.

17 Dominance of the *amlas* or administrative clerks.

18 Subsequently, at the end of the same year i.e. in Nov-Dec 1860, internal design of courts themselves were actively deliberated upon and standard designs drawn up.

19 The suffix '*babu*' attached to a proper noun or name was the usual way of addressing especially (but not limited to) people of the middle and upper classes in nineteenth century Bengal. Its use was roughly equivalent to that of 'Mr.' in the English language.

20 Pearychand Mitra, *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, 1940), originally pub. 1858, 200.



Fig. 5.10 The *cutcherry verandah* as a versatile space with a range of uses



The officer in the provincial *cutcherry* was thus rarely left alone. He was also integrally dependent on his support staff. It is the presence of such a variety of people, multiple interactions or transactions (often simultaneously within the same space) and the ensuing social and sensory environment that, despite its ambitions for order, the *sadar cutcherries* could never cast off. The cost for such anonymity was that its spaces could even be physically appropriated generously by its staff and the public. Similarly, in its attempt to achieve a simple chain of similar spaces, all accessed with equal ease from the *verandah*, the new *cutcherry* by default also became a particularly *exposed* entity. In the early *cutcheries*, the *verandah* had been used somewhat selectively, mainly as public access space for courtrooms and sometimes for staff access into office areas. In fact, its potential as a climatic device doesn't seem to have been fully realised at that stage. As such realisations came about, *verandahs* were incrementally added to all *cutcheries* – either as a climatic layer or simply to absorb spill-outs of functions and people from interior spaces and increasingly as a general shelter. A more generous use of the *verandah* as a near-continuous envelop had been seen in the *cutcherry* designs between 1840 and 1855. This became formally absorbed and codified within the 1860 *cutcherry* model. The *verandah* now occurred with very similar physical attributes (e.g. identical depth, length and treatment of its external face with arches and piers) on all sides of the building, so much so that the distinction between a 'front' and a 'back' of the building virtually no longer existed. The *verandahs* were also typically the spaces where the multitude of people coming for litigation or to pay revenues, or secondary service providers,²¹ would spend much of their time (Fig. 2.10). This was also fuelled by the fact that there were very little designed provisions within the *cutcherry* complex to provide shelter for the public. In the earlier *cutcheries* the access for public could be more tightly controlled since the court areas (having maximum public presence) were located at the ends. In the new scheme, because of the way that smaller courts and offices needing public contact were distributed within its length, staff and public access could not in effect be separated. Such a role for the *verandah* as a space of overlap between the *cutcherry's* employees and the visiting public had to be, it seems, by default accepted. In the final deliberations on the design, it was suggested by the Divisional Commissioners that the *verandah* depth be increased to 12 feet, from the proposed 10 feet. The basic function of access, or shelter from rain and sun, could even be fulfilled by a lower depth.²² It seems fairly likely therefore that this increase had to be made on account of its function also as a space to house visitors.

In fact, the *verandah* was not only a space used by outsiders, but also by the *cutcherry* staff themselves. Lower-level *cutcherry* staff like orderlies and *chapraseses* had very little formal space-allocation within the *cutcherry*. As mentioned in Section 4.1.3 of Chapter 4, they were largely

²¹ This comprised of a range of services such as writing petitions, organising 'stamp duty' for governmental applications, acting as informal negotiators between different groups involved in litigations.

²² The average sun angle in lower Bengal has an elevation of 70 degrees in summer. Most arches in the *verandahs* had a springing point at about 8'-9' from the floor. This would mean that a depth of 4'-5' would have been sufficient to ensure that the inside wall was shaded. A similar depth would have sufficed even for the purpose of accessing the *cutcherry* functions.

Table 2. List of secondary architectural devices in the provincial *cutcherry*

AV, AP, AD - Direct access control (visual, physical or auditory)

CL- Climate Control **SY**- Symbolic Barrier

Device	Location	Purpose
Punkhah (fans)	Office areas, courtrooms, rooms	Ventilation within spaces (Optimisation of number of punkhahs often determined internal sub-division of spaces) CL
Louvered door-cum window, lower level fixed	Exterior wall in offices, courtrooms	Cut out the sunlight, allow air flow, selectively allow daylight. Allow independent operation of top portion as window and bottom purely for ventilation/light. CL
Louvered doors	Entrances to offices, courtrooms	Cut out sunlight, allow air flow. Selectively allow daylight. CL/ AV/ AP/ AD
Foldable glass doors	Entrances from verandah	Cut out physical access, allow daylight. CL/ AP
Panel doors	Entrances to important officials' chambers	Bar auditory, visual and physical access. Symbolic barrier. AV/ AP/AD/ SY
Saloon doors	Entrances to offices from Verandah or transition spaces like halls	Bar visual access. Allow daylight and auditory access. Symbolic barrier. AV/ AP/ SY
Low railing doors	Entrances to courtrooms	Bar physical access. Allowed auditory and visual access. AP/ SY
Grille door with padlock	Treasury entrance, between record room and public waiting areas	Security, tamper-proofing AP
Tatties	Entrance of rooms	Screening or visual privacy, cooling. AP
Platforms of different heights	Courtrooms	Delineation of different grades/ group of government staff and general public SY
Low railings	Courtrooms (witness stand)	Delineation of domain AP

Table 2

mobile actors who also controlled visitors' access to higher officials' chambers and courtrooms and typically took up intermediate locations at the interface between the main spaces and the *verandah* – close to the entrances of these spaces. A description by Herbert Compton, a judicial officer in Bengal in the late-nineteenth century, gives us some idea of the role of such lower-level office staff and their ability to greatly control access to higher officials. This, as Compton's account suggests, was largely enabled by virtue of their location within such in-between zones as the *verandah* within the *cutcherry*'s overall spatial scheme:

Perhaps the most wonderful Jack of all is the *chupprassi*, who is a creation peculiar to the East, and a sort of janitor at the verandah. He announces your arrival, runs errands, performs petty commissions, and is a blend between an office-boy and a *commissionnaire*. He lives within hail of his master, and is supposed to possess his ear. You would not credit him with transcendent powers, and yet the way that lowly individual can coin money out of his own post passes conception. He is the front-door bell, and there is no seeing the master unless he is rung. "Wait; the sahib is busy," is all he says, and you may wait till doomsday if you fail to fee him. The well-to-do native has a distinct disinclination to being made to wait; it is far more derogatory in his eyes than you would suppose, and he willingly pays toll, or, as you may say, tolls the bell. The poor suppliant with a petition seeks advice from the *chupprassi*, asking if the sahib is in a good temper to be approached, and this Jack in Office has always a sound opinion to sell. The power and influence accredited to him are extraordinary; he is in and out of his master's room; he knows all his moods and humours; he will unfailingly tell you when is the best moment to make appeal. It may appear preposterous, but such information in a land where despotism rules supreme has a market value, and the *chupprassi* makes the most of it. I have heard of a case of one man on a wage of six shillings a month who contrived to increase it to as many pounds by the exercise of his peculiar talents in imposing on the credulous and exacting toll from the ignorant.²³

The *verandah* was also not simply a functional space for waiting, selling stamp paper, providing lower-order legal advice or trading fake witnesses, but equally actively a *social* space for having a smoke, exchanging court and town gossip, even settling down for long periods of time for a nap, or meeting with groups of acquaintances (Fig. 5.10). It was thus not merely a dynamic space for movement, access and circulation but in effect a static one as well – a hub where people slowed down, engaged in relatively sedentary activities, where social clusters formed. An idea of such multidimensional character of the *verandah* is also available from the description of a court in Pearychand Mitra's *Alaler gharer Dulal*:

The moment the session started – even before it was ten o'clock – the verandah of the upper court filled up with people. Lawyers, councillors, petitioners, defendants, witnesses, lawyers' assistants, jury, police sergeant, jemadars and messengers were all over the place In a while the prisoners' carriage also arrived from the jail. The moment the clock struck two, the centre of the verandah was emptied out – people just moved to the sides. The court watch-guard kept asking people to keep quiet. People were excitedly awaiting the arrival of the judges, when suddenly the sergeant and his assistants turned up with swords and spears, followed by the Sheriff and the Deputy Sheriff with their sticks.²⁴

Given the formation of the *cutcherry* – as a central core for 'official' work, enveloped by a highly nebulous domain of mixed activities and occupancy – mechanisms to preserve the 'sanctity' of its internal functions needed to be put in place. Design of the interface to control visual and aural parameters became crucial (refer Table 2). The rooms in the core area were mostly ill-lit by default, resulting in a reduced visibility of the interior in any case. Despite

²³ Herbert Compton, *Indian Life in Town and Country* (London: George Newnes Pvt. Ltd., 1904), 55.

²⁴ Pearychand Mitra, *Alaler gharer dulal* (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, 1940, originally pub. 1858), 242.



Fig. 5.11 Typical door between office/ courtroom and *verandah*



Fig. 5.12 The *saloon* door

the use of reasonably large doors (typically 4 ft x 8 ft) and upper level ventilators, the issue of lighting had never really been fully resolved and a room depth of 40 ft. - 50 ft never really allowed adequate penetration of light. This was further worsened by the placement of furniture and heavy storage systems within the rooms. The standard design of doors between the main rooms and the *verandah* consisting of a double-leaf glass shutter and a wooden louvered shutter (in existence and relatively unchanged since long) allowed either for light to come in fully but no air-flow, or, when the wooden shutter was closed, for some airflow, but relatively little penetration of light (Fig. 5.11).

One of the trade-off's was the *saloon* door which allowed a bit of both (Fig. 5.12). But most importantly, while doing this, it also controlled visibility. The *saloon* door was not a new invention, and had been used in very specific situations earlier in governmental architecture in Bengal (e.g. in the Bankura Collector's office, acquired in 1825, discussed in Chapter 1). But in the precariously exposed formation of the main spaces of the 1860 *cutcherry* design, it found a profusion of application. The *saloon* door was double leafed, started at 1'6" or 2' from the ground, finished at around 5' and effectively masked what was going on inside. But then, it was equally easy to part a little or tiptoe on one's feet to have a peep inside. It also provided only rudimentary auditory privacy. In fact, the presence of a certain ambient sound environment seems to have been by necessity come to be reasonably well accepted within governmental functioning and more emphasis seems to have been placed on controlling visual access to inner areas than auditory ones – through the use of devices like the *saloon door*.

There were other interfaces where auditory privacy was considered crucial, though. One such was centred on the separation of 'witness' areas from the general public. Witnesses played a key role within the delivery of justice and during the deliberations on the 1860 *cutcherry* design, demands for providing dedicated witness' spaces were made by the Divisional Commissioners. They also had to be 'sheltered' from contact with the general public, the petitioners or defendants, since there was deep mistrust – within the government – of the natives' sense of integrity. It was finally decided that a witness-room will be added to the Judge's *cutcherry* in place of the private chamber of the Additional judge (which was to be moved to the corner location). An instruction from the Lieut. Governor's office to the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal in the Public Works Department, regarding the space standards (which were relatively generous since witnesses had to be kept in a healthy and alert state) and interface design of 'witness' rooms well articulates these considerations:

All the rooms for the Witnesses to be made twelve feet wide at least, and their windows, which are necessary for ventilation, to be placed high up in the walls, so as to prevent communication with the people outside.To Mr. Young [one of the Divisional Commissioners]'s Plan, for a green baize door for the Witness Room, there is no objection.²⁵

Contact of the witnesses with the general public was thus meant to be heavily controlled.

²⁵ British Library, IOR, Bengal Judicial Proceedings no 108, Nov. 1860, letter no. 6027, dated the 10th November 1860, P/ 146/ 33.

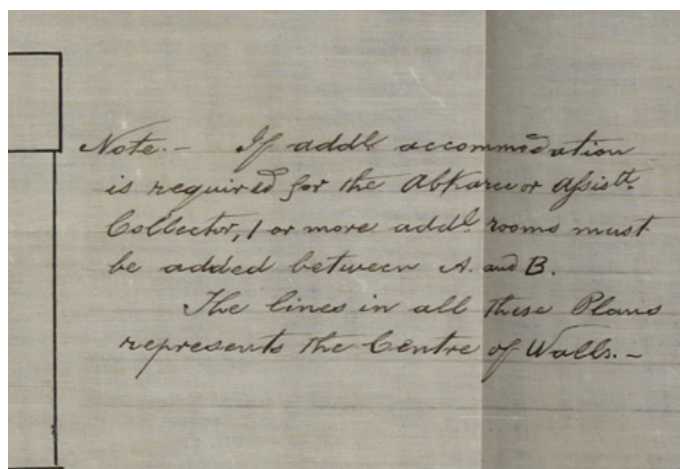
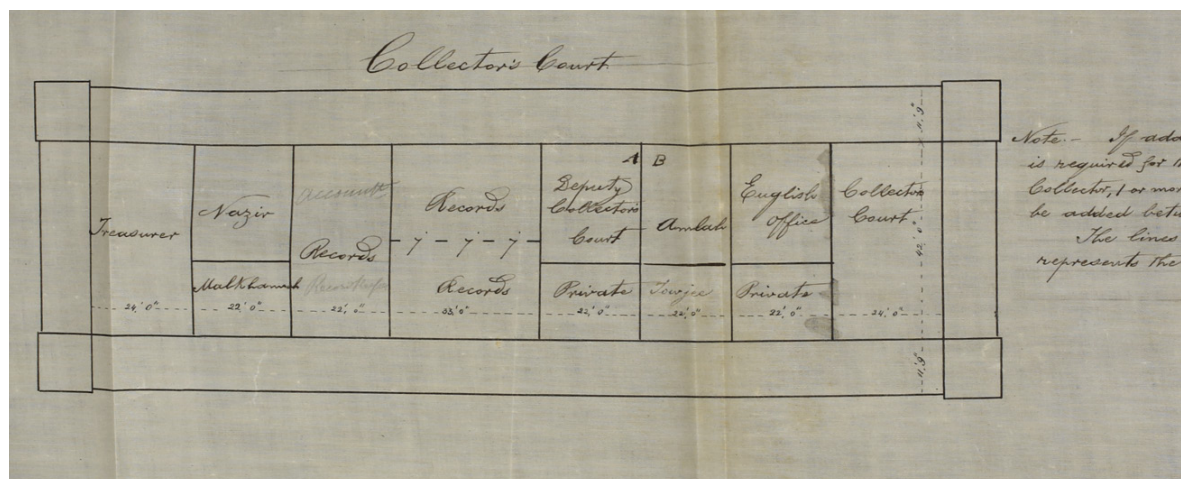


Fig. 5.13 PWD drawing specifying the exact location where additional spaces could be incorporated.

Source: British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings, May 1860.

The use of the “green baize door” was particularly interesting in this context. In medium and large houses of Victorian Britain, a green baize door was used to separate the servants’ area from the rest of the house – it was considered a firm dividing line and marked the threshold of a ‘no-go’ zone. Main members of the household and guests were not allowed to go beyond this, though it was open for the servants’ to-fro movement. The layer of baize (a felt-like material) aided in auditory insulation as well. What is interesting is the import of the green baize door – deeply rooted otherwise in the domestic cultural context of Britain – to the very interior areas of Bengal and into spaces of provincial administration – apparently confident of a smooth flow of its functional and semantic content as well. In any case, provincial *cutcherries* were especially intensive on such devices, but their manipulation was also equally possible, as seen in the case of the *saloon* door. Even the meaning and efficacy of the green baize door was most probably all but lost, initially because of the sheer gap between its intended and received meanings in two completely different cultural contexts, and at a more pragmatic level, since one could, with relative ease, actually “buy witnesses” within the open premises of the *cutcherry*, completely subverting all such measures.

An interesting aspect of the standard designs was the idea of ‘allowances’. If there was to be any hope for standardisation to work, some allowances for local and individual variations needed to be built into them. In fact, in a PWD Circular in 1865, Lt. Col. C.H. Dickens, PWD Secretary to the Government of India, actually clarified the extent to which standard plans were to act as sources of individual designs in each case:

Standard plans are only intended to show the general arrangement and extent of accommodation to be provided, and should not be considered in the light of ‘working drawings’ as showing structural details which should be invariably followed. Such details should be left to be worked out by the officers of the Department under the orders of local governments.²⁶

However, it is interesting to take note of the fact that the leeway left for local interpretation was really only in terms of structural details and not in the overall planning. Even structural details were to be worked out by “officers of the Department under the orders of local governments”, which corresponded to the three Presidencies, with vast territorial jurisdictions, Bengal presidency being especially large.²⁷ This meant that decisions taken under strong dictates of local governments were still substantially removed in hierarchy from the actual sites of building. In the actual plans of the *sadar cutcherries*, too, it was specified as to where exactly modifications were to be made in case they were required in a particular context. In effect, this meant that even such modifications of the design were largely pre-determined. For example, a set of notes made on the drawing for standard *cutcherries* said the following:

if additional accommodation is required for the *Abkaree* and Assistant Collector, one or more rooms

²⁶ PWD Circular no. 76 of 1865: (Mly. Wks.) Simla, 15th May 1865.

²⁷ It is important to remember here that the term ‘local government’ is deceiving in this context, since they applied to the Presidencies which were large territories, Bengal being the largest. The various new territories like North Western Provinces, Sindh, Punjab, Berar and Oudh that had been annexed between 1801 and 1856, had all been added to Bengal Presidency, making it a huge unit of ostensibly ‘local government’.

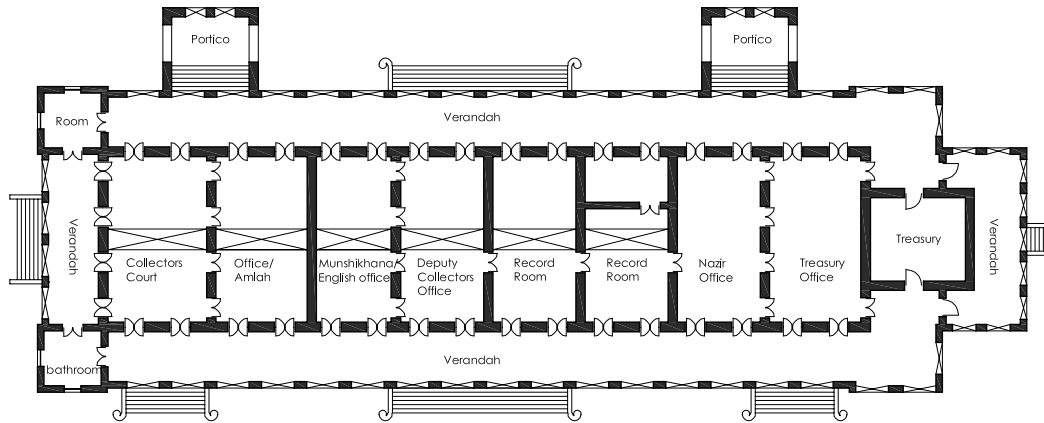


Fig. 5.14 Collector's cutcherry, Suri

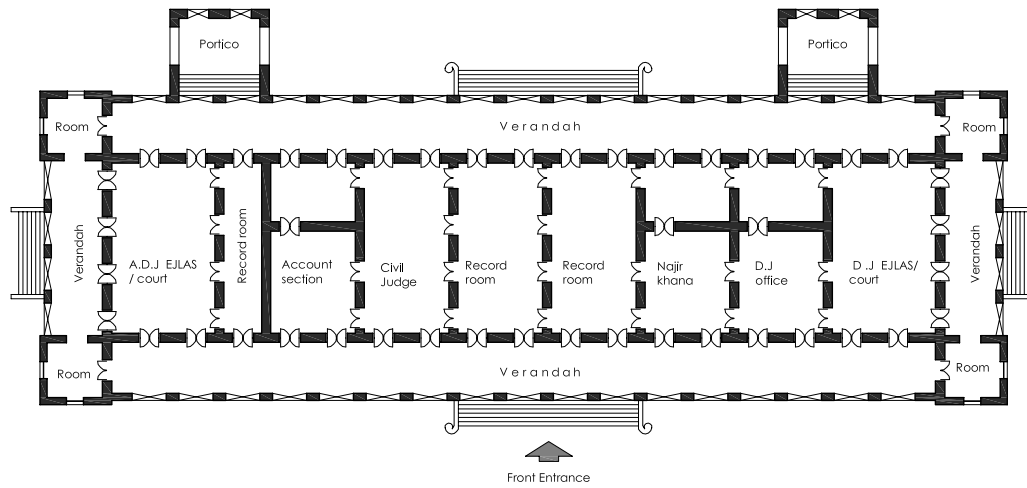


Fig. 5.15 Judge's cutcherry, Suri

must be added between A and B. [A and B being the Deputy Collector's court and the office of the Collector's *amla* respectively, marked clearly on the drawing].²⁸ (Fig. 5.13)

and that -

Should additional accommodation be required it will be placed between the *Moonshee* Khanah and the *Abkaree* Department.²⁹ (Fig. 5.13)

There was thus little left, in terms of actual design modification, to be decided at the local level. Ideas like 'precedence' (legitimising ancestry), 'simplicity', 'order', 'allowance' and the over-arching value-base of 'standardisation' *per se* (in turn linked to values like homogeneity, constructional clarity) as a tool to even out irregularities figured conveniently within the working manner of the PWD and as a way of legitimising its designs. In fact there was a genuine conviction amongst its officers about how the ethic of standardisation could actually improve and help the progression of governmental architecture to a modern genre of building design and practice.

The standard designs were directly applied in *sadar* towns like Bhagaulpur and Mozafferpur in Bihar, and Suri and Dacca in Bengal. These were among the few towns where new buildings of provincial governance were required at the time. The reasons behind this requirement were varied and often the outcome of specific local factors. For example, the demand for modifications to the existing *cutcherry* in Suri had been around for quite some time. In 1856, an estimate had been sanctioned by the Government of Bengal for certain alterations to the *cutcherry* at Suri, which were not actually taken up for construction because of the suspension of building activity after the Mutiny. In 1860 the Executive Engineer Mr. Forbes argued in favour of abandoning the scheme since the requirements did not hold any more. However, the *cutcherry* must have faced increasing requirements since an altogether new one as per the standard plan was sanctioned in 1862 and completed in 1865 (Fig. 5.14).³⁰ This was followed in 1868 by a Judge's *cutcherry*, also as per the standard plan (Fig. 5.15). What is interesting though is that the designs were adapted somewhat to fit local requirements. The original standard design had a sloping roof, with a four way slope. In the Suri instance, the sloping roof was done away with in favour of a terraced roof. The climate of Suri was largely dry, with a high rainfall for only two months of the year (July, Aug) – the automatic choice was thus the flat, terraced roof. This of course was within the band of structural changes that the standard design in any case anticipated. But a closer inspection reveals a change that was not apparently legible but in real terms significant. The final building that was built actually restored largely the porous character of the earlier *cutcheries*. Except for a few exceptions, doors (sometimes up to three) were provided on most of the lateral walls of the *cutcherry* reclaiming back the connection between the departments – an

²⁸ Plans proposed as standard of Magistrate's, *Sudder Ameen's*, Collector's and Judge's *Cutcheries*, Drawing No. 2, May 1860, Bengal PWD Proceedings, IOR/ P/ 16/ 41, India Office Records, British Library.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Bengal PWD Proceeding no. 106 of May 1860, Office Memorandum from Lieut. Col. C.B. Young, Chief Engineer, Lower Provinces (letter no 145, 7th May, 1860). IOR/ P/ 16/ 41, British Library.

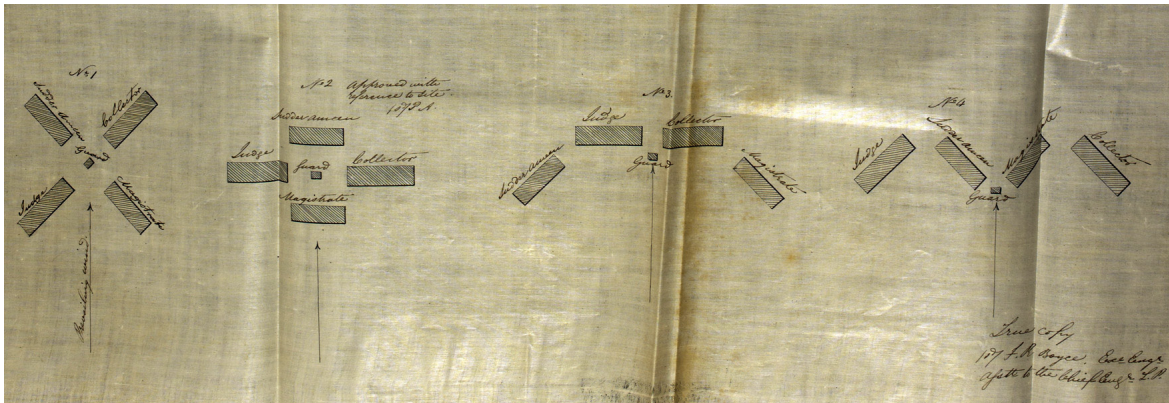


Fig. 5.16 Proposed arrangement of the *cutcherries*

act obviously carried out during the actual building process at the place. However, it was obvious that the overall lee-way for deviations was still rather limited.

5.1.3 Spatial inter-relationship between *cutcherries*

The spirit of standardisation and homogenisation, inevitably bartered for hierarchy or distinction, continued into the relationship *between* the various *cutcherries* as well. In terms of design, the different *cutcherries* were virtually identical, save for the fact that the *Sudder Ameen's* and the Magistrate's *cutcherries* were smaller, purely due to functional reasons, than the other two. Despite the fact that the allocation of authority between the Collector and the Judge in the District had historically been uneven and ambiguous, the standard designs reduced the Collector's and the Judge's *cutcherries* to mere functional entities which performed near-identical functions. But the evening out of difference in building design was compensated by the new overarching principle of abstract order that bound all the buildings with the unified idea of provincial government as a singular authority, the parts of which were indistinguishable, or almost irrelevant. It was thus reflective, not of a new democratic structure of governance, but in fact, of a more consolidated idea of the centre itself and its representation at the provincial level.

The standard designs not only laid out designs of individual *cutcherries* but also their spatial inter-relationships. They prescribed three different layouts for the arrangement of the four *cutcherries* (Fig. 5.16). The drawings seem to be governed by certain basic thematic principles – viz. an abstract compositional order, a concentration on security, and a consideration of climatic factors like the direction of wind.³¹ In all the arrangements, the Judge's and the Collector's *cutcherries* (with virtually identical designs) were aligned to constitute a continuous composition and the *Sudder Ameen's* and the Magistrate's *cutcherries*, another. All four also formed a strong overall composition. The first arrangement was a radial one emanating from a central point which was the guards' chamber. The second was a linearly 'layered' arrangement, and the third a simple linear arrangement with the Magistrate's and *Sudder Ameen's cutcherries* tilted slightly at an angle to define a concave space in front, with the guards' chamber at the centre of all the arrangements.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the East India Company's official architecture in provincial areas had largely grown out of the pragmatics of governance and the shaping of its arms of administration to suit each of their purpose, through a careful orchestration of building elements. For the first time since the early *cutcherries*, design imagination seemed to take an emphatically symbolic turn – and underlined a one to one relationship between authority and abstract unity. The functional criteria of prevailing wind in a hot humid climate meant that ideally, physical overlap between buildings was avoidable to ensure through air flow.

³¹ Considerations of a north-south solar orientation was well established and much too obvious by this time, so it may safely be assumed that the predominant orientation was meant to be that anyway.

This meant that compositional possibilities could be explored only within certain constraints or range. However, it was the classical trade off between the pragmatic mileage gained from standardisation and a symbolic purpose. Also, within the post mutiny psyche of insecurity, the guards' chamber suddenly became the pivot of the composition. Its location had a pragmatic as well as a symbolic purpose, in making visible the core security-node to the public. Its location in the scheme was also used to harness maximum efficiency even otherwise – it was specified that the Collector's *cutcherry* should be placed such that the treasury faced the guards' quarters. Security and a psychology of fear was such a pervasive aspect of post-mutiny governance that, in a communication to A.R. Young (Secretary to the Government of Bengal), from H.U. Browne (Junior Member and Secretary of the Committee for the Improvement of the internal arrangement of the court-rooms of Judges and Magistrates in the Lower Provinces), Browne communicated the design-issues of the overall layout of the *cutcherry* complex in the following manner:

I am to add that in the opinion of Mr. Lautour, it is not advisable to build new cutcherries [*cutcheries*] standing in isolation, but in each District to build a quadrangular range of Public Offices, with an entrance through a single archway; three sides to be occupied by the Offices of the Judge, Principal Sudder Ameen, and Sudder Ameens, the Commissioner, the Collector, the Magistrate, and their Subordinates; and the fourth by the Records, Treasury, &c., with wells at each corner. Thus the public would be greatly benefited by the centralization of all the Offices, while one Guard would suffice, and all the entrances to the different Offices being within the quadrangle, in times of disturbance there would be a suitable building for the protection of the whole European community, capable of easy defence by the European population alone, should such an emergency arise. Whenever the finances of the State will admit of it this plan might be commenced at Arrah [a station in present day state of Bihar] (placing the building in the Collector's compound) and afterwards introduced in other districts; the present Public offices which are not suited for dwelling houses, being disposed off by sale as the new cutcherries become available. The Committee generally concur in Mr. Lautour's opinion, that Cutcherries [*cutcheries*] should be built on the quadrangular plan described for the future.³²

Centralisation of the public offices by clubbing them together and arranging them into a defensive enclosure was the essence of such a scheme. The proposed formation was clearly similar to the typology of the Factory. Interestingly, it was also strikingly similar to the basic typology of many of the *zamindari cutcherries*³³ – with *cutcherry* functions wrapped around an introverted courtyard. These also possibly acted as sources of form. In any case, as seen earlier, the Factory itself had been directly derived from indigenous courtyard forms prevalent in large parts of India. Once again, the demands of defence and a tight cohesive arrangement of functions curiously found appropriate forms largely from within local sources.³⁴ Also, the need for such a blatantly defensive formation was probably felt particularly strongly at the level of provincial *cutcheries* – vulnerable as they were perceived to be, by their very nature, role and location in the provincial landscape, to possible attacks by a large constituency of native population. After all, as seen in Section 4.2.4 of Chapter 4, provincial *cutcheries* were seen as intense sites of authority

³² British Library, IOR, Bengal Judicial Proceedings no. 215, November 1860, letter no. A, dated the 21st June 1860, P/ 146/ 33.

³³ For a detailed discussion on *zamindari cutcherries*, see Chapter 6.

³⁴ It is important to note here that the members of the 'Cutcherry Committee' who put forth the proposal were mostly Judges and Magistrate's from districts and were likely to be fairly familiar with the type of *zamindari cutcherries* prevalent in provincial areas, since provincial administration was often dependent on substantial contact with the *zamindars*, especially the influential ones.



Fig. 5.17 Collector's and Judge's cutcherries, Suri
1865-68 - near identical designs in a continous
composition



Fig. 5.18 Collector's and Judge's cutcherries, Midnapur, 1912. Continuation of the theme of similarity and integrated composition

and a number of them had been targets during the mutiny. Seen from the District Judges' and Magistrates' (who constituted the Committee) perspectives, the issue of clustering together of *cutcherry* functions into one tightly-knit system seems to have been more of a logistical one - and of the greater security that increased spatial proximity of the different functions was likely to bring in the post-mutiny scenario - than the symbolic purpose of a unified whole envisioned by the headquarters of the PWD or the Government of Bengal.

On the whole, the defensive measures like enclosure wall or tight quadrangular formations and abstract arrangements of *cutcheries* could actually be applied to completely varying extents in different situations, with almost no town that could boast of a near-total implementation. Though the mutiny was widespread and perceived as a national problem for the government, and local insurgencies like the *Santhal* Rebellion (1855) in Bengal contributed to this, and though there were certain standard measures concretised in and around 1860 to render provincial public *cutcheries* more defensible - in reality, the measures could only be implemented partially depending on individual situations. First of all, the very nature of the *cutcherry's* function and dependence on public contact was such that it could actually not take on much of the defensive character. In that sense, a full-fledged reversal to the defensive factory was no longer a real possibility. In reality, even after the mutiny, virtually no *cutcherry* was actually built with the type of fortified enclosures that the scheme for the Mozufferpur *cutcherry* (refer section 4.2.4, Chapter 4) envisioned. The design of the fortification for Mozufferpur was not even actually taken up in Mozufferpur itself. Most of the abstract compositions of arrangement of Collector's, Judge's, Magistrate's and Sudder Ameen's *cutcheries* too could not be instituted due to the shape of site or pre-existence of other structures. In some instances, as in the case of Suri, it could only be partially followed. Here, the Collector's and the Judge's *cutcherry*, with matching heights and virtually identical elevations, were aligned to form a continuous composition (Fig. 5.17). But the rest of the scheme had to be abandoned.

The attempt by the PWD to equate the Collector and the Judge's *cutcheries* in spatial schemes and unifying them into a single composition - symbolic of a unified district administration and in turn, of an overarching imperial authority - continued into the early twentieth century as well. The Judge's court and Collector's *cutcherry* in Midnapur, built in 1912, for example, continued on the same theme (Fig. 5.18). The *cutcherry* complex was more and more to be seen as a consolidated seat of district administration, with its inner fragments and fissures superficially evened out. However, despite such attempts by the imperial government, 1860s onwards, to symbolically equate and unite the Collector's and the Judge's authorities through identical architectural designs arranged in a continuous building profile, the inner unrest of allocation of authority continued to simmer within their walls. Ever since the reforms of 1793, separation of power had in fact been inherently built into district administration - it had become, in real terms, bi-polar, surrounded by other smaller nodes of power like the Superintendent of Police, the Civil Surgeon, the Post-master, or the local Public Works engineer, each virtually the kings within their own departments. In fact, as discussed in Section 2.1.4 of Chapter 2, the divisions between

the different limbs of administration was reflected most tellingly in the nature of ownership of the site of the *cutcherry* itself – which was typically fragmented into different parcels of land belonging to different limbs of administration, that were continuously attempting to delineate the boundaries of their areas in numerous ways. Land and buildings also very typically moved from the ownership of one department to another on a regular basis.

5.2 Spread of standard designs

Starting from 1860, over the next few decades, the grand project of standardisation and decision making in design by central authority permeated not just overall designs, but also parts of buildings and interiors of subsidiary spaces like court rooms, record rooms and pleader's chambers. It permeated from *sadar* towns into lower hierarchies and into the design, for example, of *munsifs* courts (lower courts) in interior areas. It permeated from *cutcheries* into the spaces of other limbs of administration like jails and police stations. It permeated from administrative spaces into residential spaces of bungalows. The standardisation of each of these were taken up sequentially - moving from higher to lower hierarchies and from functions considered more crucial to those considered secondary. In fact, standard designs represented such an ideal of rationalised and 'planned' provisions that the privilege of having them was graded out as per the perceived role of any function within the governmental apparatus. On the other hand, the very formulation of standard designs for a function also became an index either of its emerging significance within governmental functioning, or of the perceived 'irregularities' in its spaces that needed active intervention, improvement and 'evening out'. In short, there was a fairly direct correlation between the evolving landscape of governance and the incremental and sequential process of codification of its spaces.

5.2.1 Design of internal spaces – courtrooms

In Nov-Dec 1860 plans were drawn up for internal layouts of Judges' and Magistrates' courtrooms in district towns. Though the courtrooms of the first half of the nineteenth century were reasonably well defined spatial modules, their internal arrangements had been loosely structured and flexible – using very basic, and few, moveable furniture like tables and chairs (Fig. 5.20). Representations of courtrooms of this period do not indicate fixed layouts that were starkly hierarchical. In fact, from visual representations as well as textual descriptions (as in the case of the magistrate's court in Hooghly discussed earlier in this chapter) in this period, one gets the impression that despite a clear gradation of authority within the courtroom, it was a space where a lot of rules broke down, and in spatial terms, physical territorial divisions between the Judge or Magistrate, his subsidiary staff, the petitioners, witnesses and onlookers could not be strictly maintained. Even descriptions of the magistrate as reclining in his seat gives the impression of a certain informality of operations, with courtrooms seeming almost like living rooms doubling up as office within a domestic set-up. Boundaries between physical domains for individual groups within courtrooms, as well as between conceptual domains like

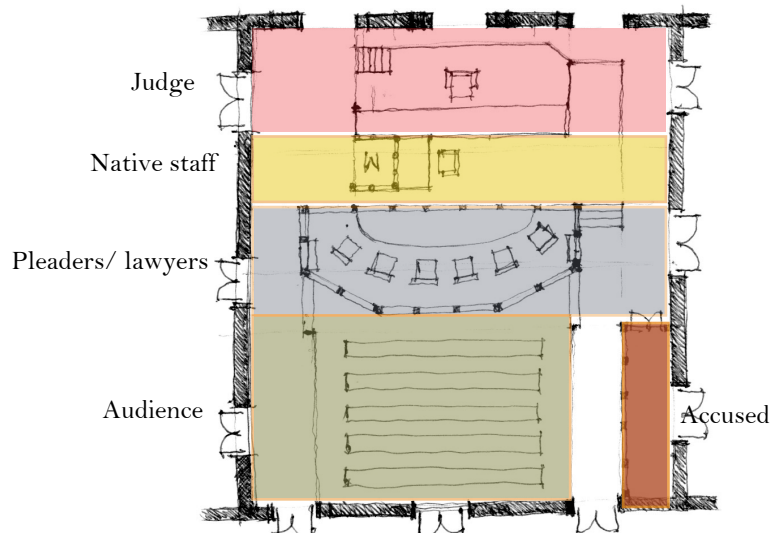


Fig. 5.19 Typical standard courtroom layout with strictly designated and layered zones for each group of occupants.



Fig. 5.20 Pre-1860 courtroom.
Source: *Curry and Rice*, George Atkinson



Fig. 5.21 The 1860s courtroom.
Source: Columbia Educational Archives.
http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/1800_1899/britishrule/judiciary/judiciary.html

'official' and 'domestic' were thus fluid. Its overall spatial boundaries might have been finite, but the behavioural code that determined the way the space of the courtroom was occupied and actually functioned was relatively loose and informal. In many ways, the court room was a space that amorphously straddled different groups of people, different types of activities and different conceptual domains like official and domestic, formality and informality. The chief object of the design of courtrooms of 1860, on the other hand, as articulated explicitly by the Government of Bengal in the call for a report on their design from the Committee for the Improvement of the internal arrangement of the Court-rooms of Judge's and Magistrate's in the Lower Provinces, was precisely to articulate and mark out these distinctions and to facilitate the increasingly formalised practices within the courtroom, being-

...to afford places for the parties – Prisoners, Vakeels [government lawyers] and Witnesses, separate from each other and from the rest of the people in the Court, but still sufficiently near each other that they shall be able to see each other distinctly; and to contrive at the same time that they shall be heard, when speaking in an ordinary tone or voice, by the presiding Officer of the Court, and by the Law Officer, Punchayet, or Jury, as the case may be. In arranging for the Witness box in particular care should be taken that it should be sufficiently isolated from the bystanders, to prevent secret prompting. The access to Witness box should be convenient from the apartment provided for them in the Court-room where they may remain after examination, in case any of them should be recalled.³⁵ (Fig. 5.19 and 5.21)

Recognising the fact that there was virtually no proper provision for witnesses and that 'witnesses before examination sometimes remained in the *verandah*, sometimes in a shed outside, but generally under a tree at a little distance from the court building, because no room can [could] be spared for them'³⁶ The Committee in their report clarified that proper provisions for witnesses within the courtrooms before and after hearings was virtually impossible given the constraints of their existing sizes (typically 40'x 24'-26' for the Judge's court and 36'-38'x 24' for the Magistrate's) and suggested that 'whenever a separate room is available for the purpose, the witnesses should be placed there; that if there is no room, a portion of the *verandah* nearest to the court room be well screened off, or else a shed be built at a short distance from it.'³⁷

Again, the ambiguous and versatile space of the *verandah* was a potential area to be appropriated for the purpose. The Committee however did manage to incorporate a lot of the other requirements for provision and delineation of spaces for different groups of people and rituals of the courtroom. An intricate exchange on each aspect of design took place between the Lieutenant Governor's office and the Committee to formulate the final design. One of the most potent aspects of the new design of the courtroom was the manner in which it not only segregated natives and Europeans, prisoners, witnesses and lawyers, but the fine gradation of hierarchy that it built in between the different groups of people within the courtroom. The gradations mapped out not merely the distinction between government and public, but also

³⁵ British Library, IOR, Bengal Judicial Proceedings, November 1860, From Lord H.U. Browne, Junior Member and Secretary of Committee for the Improvement of the internal arrangement of the Court-rooms of Judges and Magistrates in the Lower Provinces, to A.R.Young, Esq., Secretary to the Government of Bengal. Letter no. A, dated 21st June 1860, P/ 146/ 33.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

between the various segments of governmental staff itself.

The parameters that were manipulated for spatially delineating the role and status of each group were – physical location (e.g. front, back, or side) within the room, heights of base platforms, enclosures like railings of different heights, and specific types of furniture. Hierarchy, status and privilege of watching the formal rituals of the courtroom were graded out from front to back. For example, the magistrate's courtroom was to have four clear layers of spaces in receding order of importance – the first was to be occupied by the magistrate or the presiding officer himself, the second, by his *amla*, the third by a special class of spectators and *mokhteers* [chief representatives of *zamindars* and of men of high standing] and the fourth by the general public. Prisoners were to be housed in a railed box or dock of (about 6' high) on one side of the room and witnesses on the diametrically opposite side in a witness stand with a 2'6" railing, to define each of their spaces. The other key technique employed was the modulation of the floor-plate and setting up of different levels within it to indicate role and status within the constellation of the court. The Judge or the Magistrate was located on the highest platform (2'6" and 2' respectively), commensurate with his status as well as to enable people to see him clearly. On the left of the magistrate in the magistrate's court room were located, on platforms 1' high, spectators of rank.

However, such symbolic requirements had to often be tempered by pragmatic considerations of costs, a central concern within the 'rational' ethic of the PWD. On grounds of higher construction costs as well the fact that a large difference in the height of the base platform would effectively divide up the space and necessitate the use of a separate *punkah*, the Magistrate's platform (originally proposed to be 2'6" high by the Lieutenant Governor's office) was brought down to a height of 2'. As per the advice of Mr. Montriou (a committee member), the spectators of rank and the Judge in the Judge's courtroom were finally placed all on the same platform (2'6" high, and interestingly, higher than the platform in the Magistrate's courtroom, to still maintain the gradation in authority between him and the Judge). However, status-distinction was to be preserved through differentiating the furniture – the Judge and his Assessors were to have desks, and the spectators of rank, chairs. Though placed on a lower level, the *vakeels* or the pleaders were to have armchairs to distinguish them from the rest of the crowd. General spectators and public were to have simple wooden benches. Within the neutral physical space of the courtroom (dictated by the overall design of the *cutcherry*) – the hierarchical orchestration of a whole band of secondary elements like floor levels, railings and furniture had to be necessarily mobilised to articulate distinctions between categories of people and sites of different types of rituals.

Visibility and audibility were critical aspects of the courtroom. Its entire functioning was pivoted on the ability to modulate sound and vision. It was not just a functional necessity, but also a symbolic one. Equally important was to selectively filter out sound and control auditory access. The Judge typically had one or two indispensable native clerks like the *peshkar* or the *mohuree* sitting right next to him or in front on the sides. Spatial proximity also meant that low-

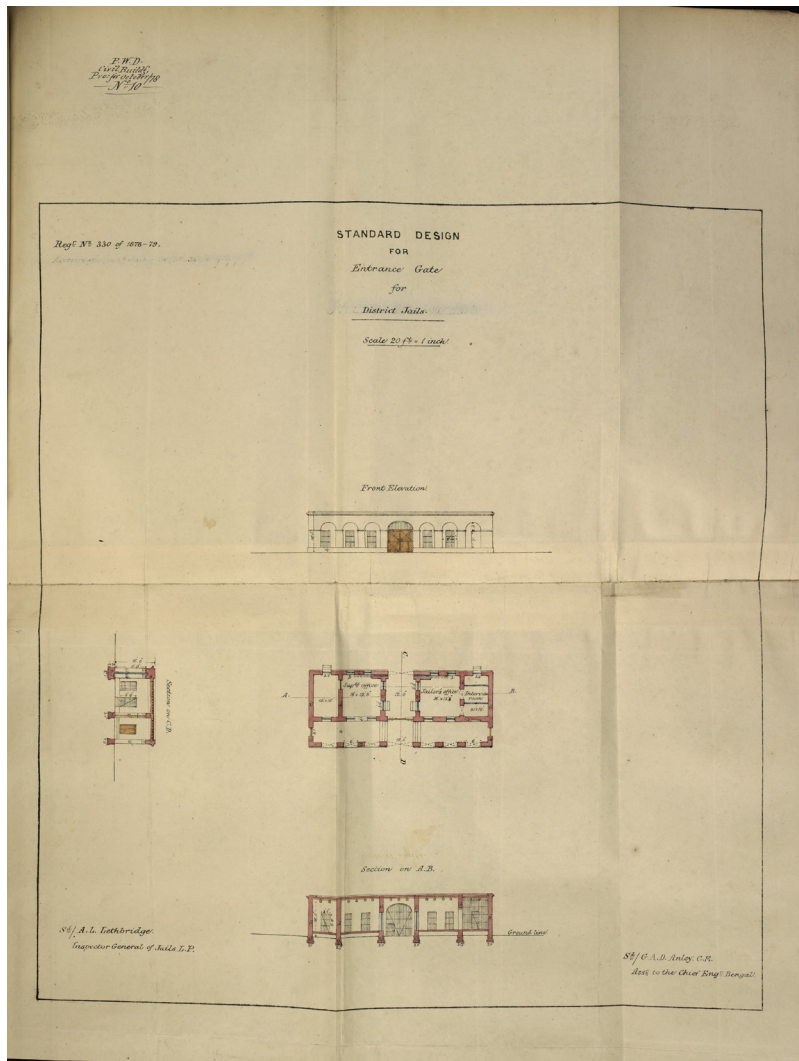


Fig. 5.22 Proposed design of entrance gate for district jails. British Library, IOR, PWD Bengal Proceedings, Oct 1878.

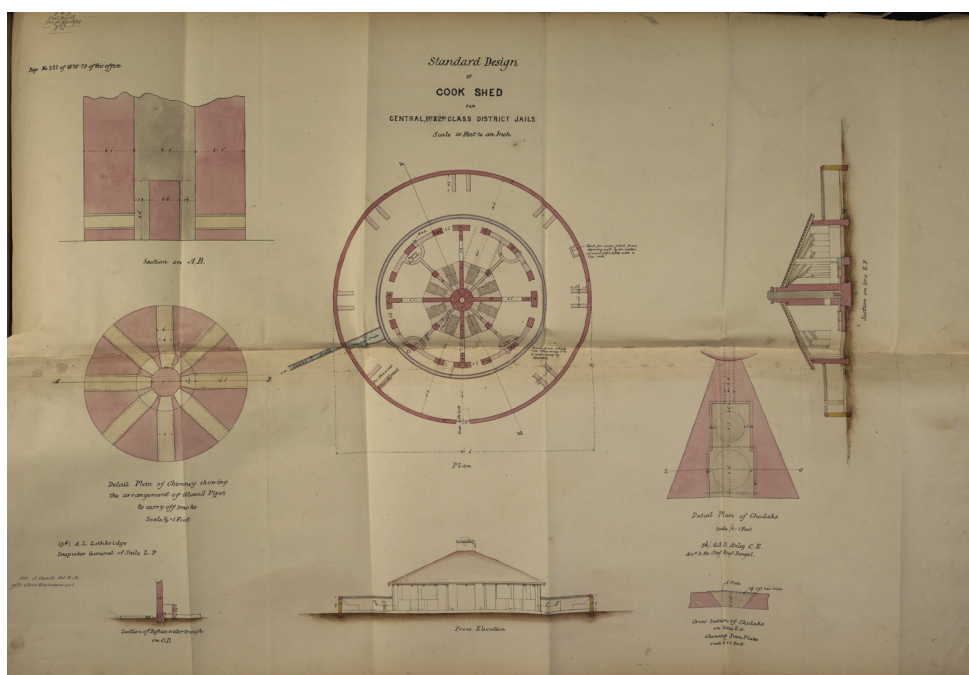


Fig. 5.23 Proposed design of cooking shed for district jails. British Library, IOR, PWD Bengal Proceedings, March 1878.

whisper exchanges between the Judge or the magistrate and his *amla* would hardly be audible to the general public or the defendant or witnesses. Proximity between two specific groups could thus mean virtual exclusion of others. One of the significant aspects of the courtroom designs of 1860 was the role of the PWD as well as the District level officers as cautionary and 'moderation' mechanisms – driven by the pragmatics of construction and cost as they were – while the central Government seemed to be pre-occupied largely with its symbolic purpose and the representation of governance itself. As a result, the design of the new courtroom had to in effect be a trade off between actual functional requirement of court operations, its symbolic purpose and the logistics of economics. Other than strict demarcation and delineation of people and their spaces, the courtroom was a particularly ritual-intensive arena. Perhaps no other space within the colonial *cutcherry* saw its operations ritualised to the extent that the court-rooms did. From the process of bringing in the convicts, to recording of statements, to the entry of the Judge through a separate point, to the presentation of the case by the *peshkar*, to the calling of the witness, the pleading by the lawyers – it was a highly orchestrated performance for which the physical setting literally served as the stage. It was virtually an arena for performance of the State through space, personnel and rituals.

5.2.2 Designs for jails

In 1878-79, standard designs for parts of provincial jails such as entrance gate and cook sheds were developed (Fig. 5.22 and 5.23). Here, the ideal of standardisation now started potently to overlap with the ideal of improvement. The jail, like cantonments, had long acted as a site which heralded the beginnings of the project of improvement even before the formation of the PWD or the resumption of organised building activity after the mutiny. As seen earlier – centred mostly on health, hygiene and sanitation – introduction of organised drainage schemes, construction of night privies, conservancy arrangements for removal of night soil and incorporation of new ventilators in jail wards had been major thrusts of the building activity of the 1850s. But such measures were mostly taken on a case to case basis. By late 1870s improvements and vigilance mechanisms in Jails were transformed into a formal project for organising a corpus of standard designs and details that could be spread across the entire provincial prison infrastructure. This was also a direct outcome of the fact that in 1870-71 there were radical reforms in the prison sector and a number of central jails came up in the next 6-7 years. Provincial jails were probably taken up for active reforms right after this.

But it is important to note here that since jails were one of the earliest sites of penal governance that had come up in *sadar* towns (most *sadar* towns had jails built by late eighteenth and the first ten years of the nineteenth century and the main ward areas in them were upgraded from *kutchra* to *pucca* construction over the next 20-30 years), the basic physical infrastructure for the jails therefore was already firmly established and could possibly not be wholly re-cast due to logistical and cost implications. The nature of intervention was therefore mostly of two or

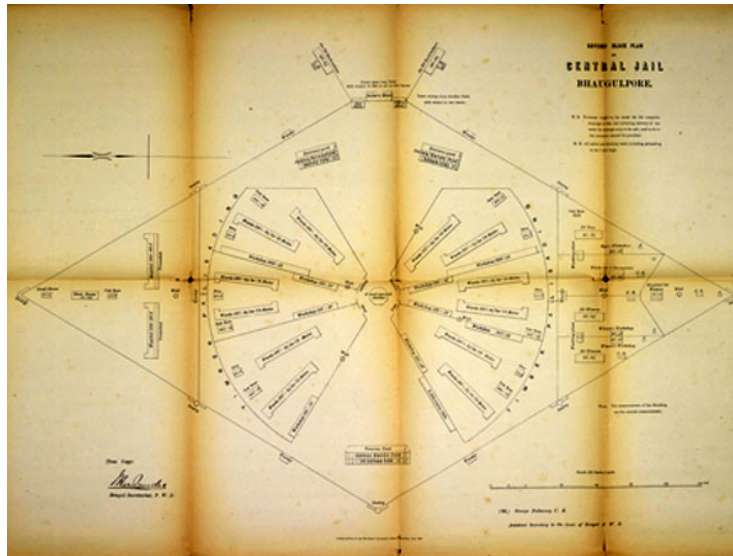


Fig. 5.24 Proposed design of central jails.
Source: British Library, IOR, PWD Bengal Proceedings, 1872.

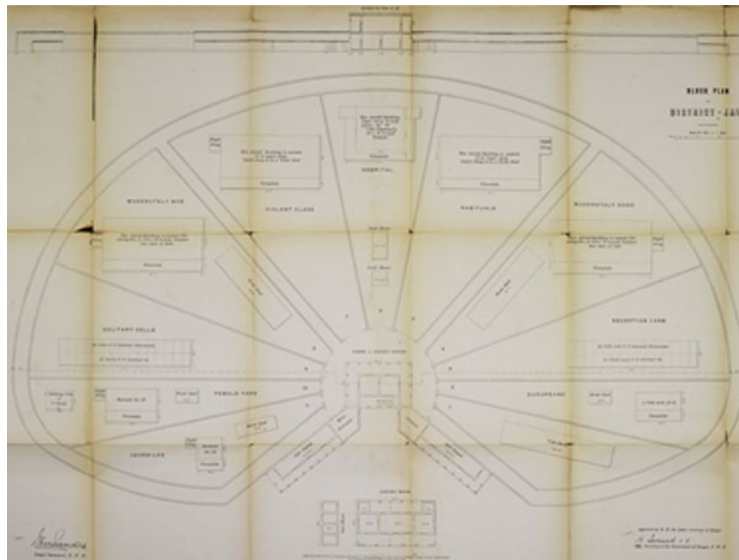


Fig. 5.25 Proposed design of district jails.
Source: British Library, IOR, PWD Bengal Proceedings, 1872.

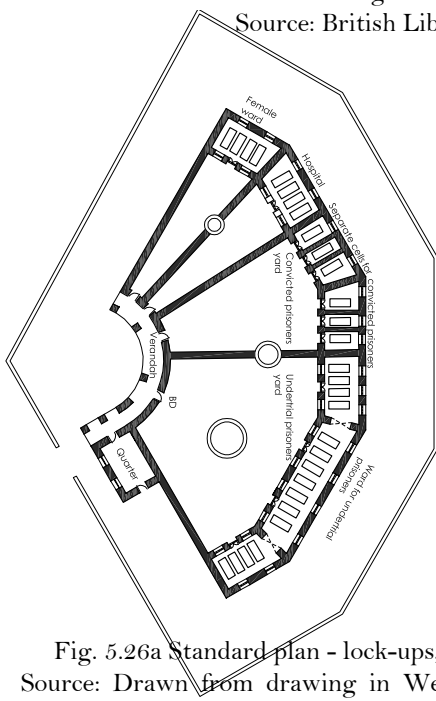


Fig. 5.26a Standard plan - lock-ups, 1880s.
Source: Drawn from drawing in West Bengal State Archives, PWD Bengal Files, 1881.



Fig. 5.26b Superimposing the panopticon form on existing sites - lock up, Madaripur, 1881.
Source: British Library, IOR, PWD Bengal Proceedings, 1881.

three types that could be carried out within an existing fabric – first, there was the layer of site-level interventions, second, there was the layer of infill-buildings based either on new functions or new ‘improved’ designs of old functions, third, there was the layer of addition-alteration of building components. Each of these were in turn centred on issues like health and hygiene, security and vigilance, ideas of labour as a form of punishment or productive labour as a capital resource, and prison discipline. Issues of custody and confinement of the accused and prisoners were not only limited to jail premises but had intricate relationships with the workings of the *cutcherry* precinct. Offenders arrested by Magistrates had to be necessarily held in temporary captivity close to the magisterial courts. Prisoners going through trials also needed to be housed before and after hearing of court cases. The decades of 1860 and 1870 witnessed especially intense spate of building of *Hajuts* and lock-ups (temporary confinement of the accused on arrest and before trial respectively) therefore, within *sadar* and sub-divisional *cutcherry* premises. Combinations of different levels of intervention and the nature of issue involved played out in different building and spatial elements of the jail complex and the *cutcherry*-site as shown in the chart below (compiled from the range of interventions undertaken by the PWD in the period).

A. Intervention in existing jails, within jail sites

	Health and hygiene	Security & vigilance	Productive labour
Site and infrastructure	drainage schemes, conservancy systems	new boundary wall, increase in existing wall height. Gas lighting systems	
Infill buildings	Cook sheds, night privies	Entrance gate Jailor’s house etc.	Workshop sheds
Building components	Increased ventilators,	Grilles, pad-locks	

B. New provisions in *cutcherry* sites

	Conduct of governance/ Security and vigilance
Infill buildings	<i>Hajuts</i> and lock-ups in <i>sadar</i> and sub-divisional <i>cutcherries</i> .

In 1872 standard designs were developed for central and district jails (Figs. 5.24 and 5.25), followed in the 1880s by designs of smaller units such as provincial lock-ups (used to

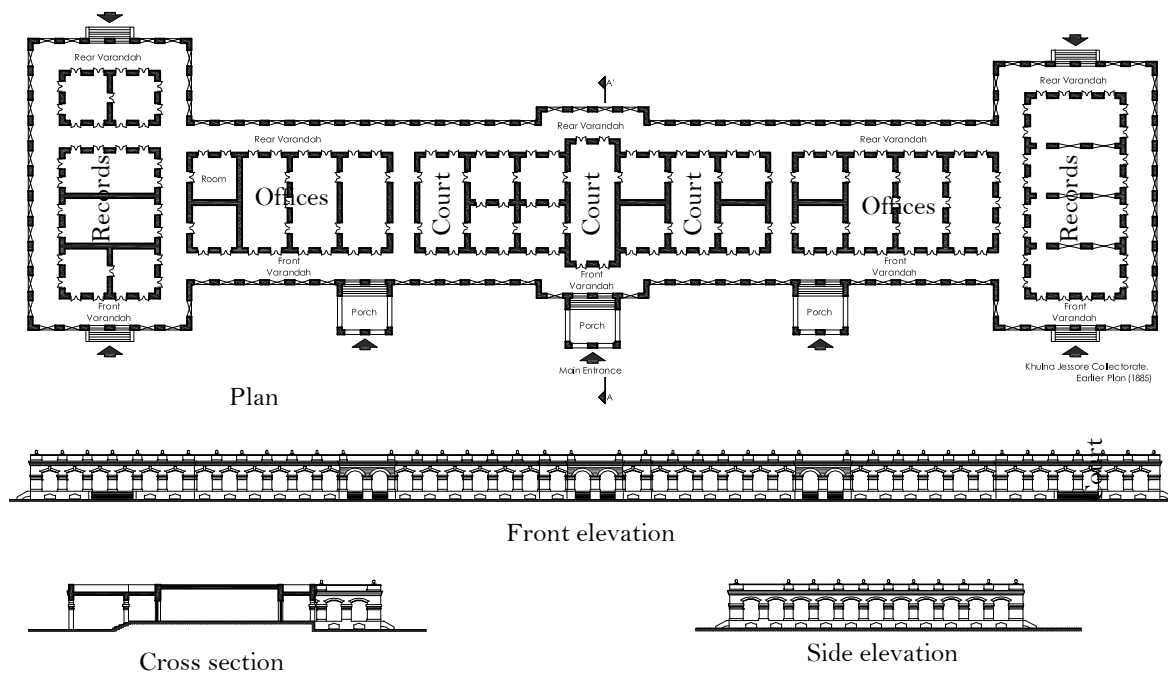


Fig. 5.27 Collector's *cutcherry*, Jessore - new standard design 1880-81

temporarily hold prisoners in magisterial custody or before presentation in district courts). Inspired by Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, these designs were based on radial plans with a core space for keeping vigilance over the convict wards. However, the idealised abstract order of the Panopticon presented an especially uncomfortable fit with the specificities of site geometry and site conditions of provincial prisons in most cases. The awkward struggle by PWD designers to fit these designs onto actual sites is blatantly apparent from certain site-layout drawings of jail buildings of this period (Figs. 5.26a and 5.26b). Equally problematic were the actual architectural implications; forcing the Panopticon plan within constraints of available area, for instance, often meant massive compromise in the efficiency and quality of spaces – giving rise to individual spaces (in this case, e.g., convict wards, single cells or communal open courtyards) of nearly unworkable geometry or usability. Above all, since most jails already existed in *sadar* towns since as early as the late-eighteenth century, the scope for introducing radically abstract designs which fairly literally envisaged building in one-to-one relationships between power relationships within the prison and its spatial configuration – was extremely limited.

5.2.3 New generation of *cutcherry* design (1880-81)

In 1880-81, a new generation of standard designs for Collector's and Judge's *cutcheries* were drawn up. Almost twenty years had passed since the development of the first standard plan of the *cutcheries* that virtually became a milestone for governmental architecture in the provinces. A few new *sadar* towns were now being set up. For example, Khulna, which was till then a sub-divisional town under the purview of the *sadar* town of Jessore, was declared the *sadar* town of the new district of Khulna, carved largely out of the district of Jessore. Space requirements in some of the older *cutcheries* had also increased manifold. The new designs were primarily targeted for the emerging *sadar* towns or for upgrading provisions in some of the existing ones. However, the basic code of the 1860s *cutcherry* was the vital under-layer, the blue-print, of the later designs, which were essentially based on similar ideological premise and were simply elaborated in formal terms in order to accommodate expanded functions (Figs. 5.27 and 5.28).

To meet higher space requirements, the buildings were modified to an H or C form in order to increase the linear length. By 1883, two storied versions were also added to the catalogue. But there were certain aspects that witnessed significant developments, the seeds of which had already been planted in 1860. The ideology of imperial governance was now to express itself more strongly than ever before. The pursuit of a symbolic representation of authority had begun to be legible even in the 1860 *cutcheries* – through its use of abstract orders, the unified forms of individual *cutcheries*, as well as of their overall compositions. The symbolic expression of provincial governance as a seat of authority, as an extension of the imperial government – represented by its key figures and core functions in the districts and articulated in architectural terms – found full expression in the *cutcherry* of 1880 and thereafter. Such ideology of governance as an overtly imperial force was the direct fall out of developments back in England. In 1860



Fig. 5.28 Collector's *cutcherry*, Khulna -
new standard design 1880-81



Fig. 5.29 Collector's *cutcherry*, Midnapur, 1912

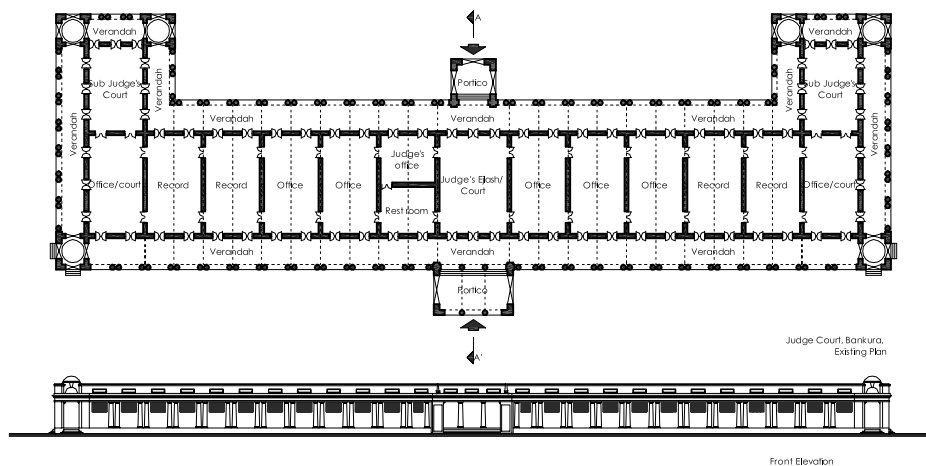


Fig. 5.30 Judge's *cutcherry*, Bankura, 1920

the idea of imperial power had been somewhat nebulous and embedded in an under-layer – not very explicit. In any case it was a ground being barely carved out after only a few years of assumption of rule by the Crown and within the still pervasive spirit of liberalism – by carefully differentiating the colony within a liberal framework, through a gentle, benevolent, paternal mode. In 1866, the Tory party came to power in England. Under the leadership of Benjamin Disraeli and as symbolised in his famous speech of 1872, the Empire was now brought straight to the heart of British politics. A new, more forceful, imperial vision was born. By the 1870s, liberalism was on a clear decline and a new conservatism had taken its place. In 1876, Disraeli formally orchestrated the proclamation of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India. The vision of the Empire was thus getting directly and intricately enmeshed with Britain's own national identity. Added to this were the emerging ideas of different types of colonies (e.g. colonies that could be long term white settler-colonies and colonies that would always remain difficult to inhabit) and the growing racial ideology characteristic of late Victorian England. As analysed succinctly by Thomas Metcalf, aspects like the formal inclusion of the English working class in government in England only served to reinforce the divide between whites and non-whites, since, being thus elevated culturally and politically, all English people were now avowedly superior to Indians. As Metcalf describes it, by 1870s, J.S. Mill's ideas of similarity between Britain and India had thus largely transfigured into the idea of "enduring difference".³⁸ Recognition of stark difference set up the framework for the formal and confident pursuit of a full and blatantly imperial vision and assertion of the colonial State as a coercive and authoritative force.

Once again, the key prop of this authoritarian government was to be its bureaucratic apparatus. It was this representative role, more than ever before, that the provincial *cutcherry* of 1880 was expected to play. In the new design, the main courtroom was now seen as the key-stone of provincial governance; it occupied the centre-stage, flanked by subsidiary courts and other offices. Within the overall scheme, the central courtroom now represented not just the court-functions but the symbolic location of the seat of provincial governance, and of the Judge or the Collector, its figureheads. The centre was articulated by enlarging its size laterally, so it projected out beyond the building line and was legible as a distinct entity. The centrality of the location of authority was also reinforced through the use of elements like the triangular pediment atop the central court room.

The other significant element gaining ground was the portico – of which there were now three (to separate out the entry points for different categories of staff), but the central one was clearly differentiated from the others through its grander scale and detailing. This was to serve as the Judge, Magistrate or Collector's entry, while the ones on the sides were to serve as entries for other judicial officers and higher administrative staff.³⁹ The portico itself, used in the

³⁸ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 27.

³⁹ One of the first mentions of a formal introduction of a portico in a governmental office building seems to be for the North-Eastern entrance of the Sudder Court in Calcutta, sanctioned by the govt on 11th oct 1851, "for the convenience of the Judges of the court from the want of the portico in question". British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Annual Report for 1851/52 – 1853/54, V/24/3332. The 1860s provincial *cutcherry* design initially did not have a portico, but during the deliberation on its design it was introduced.

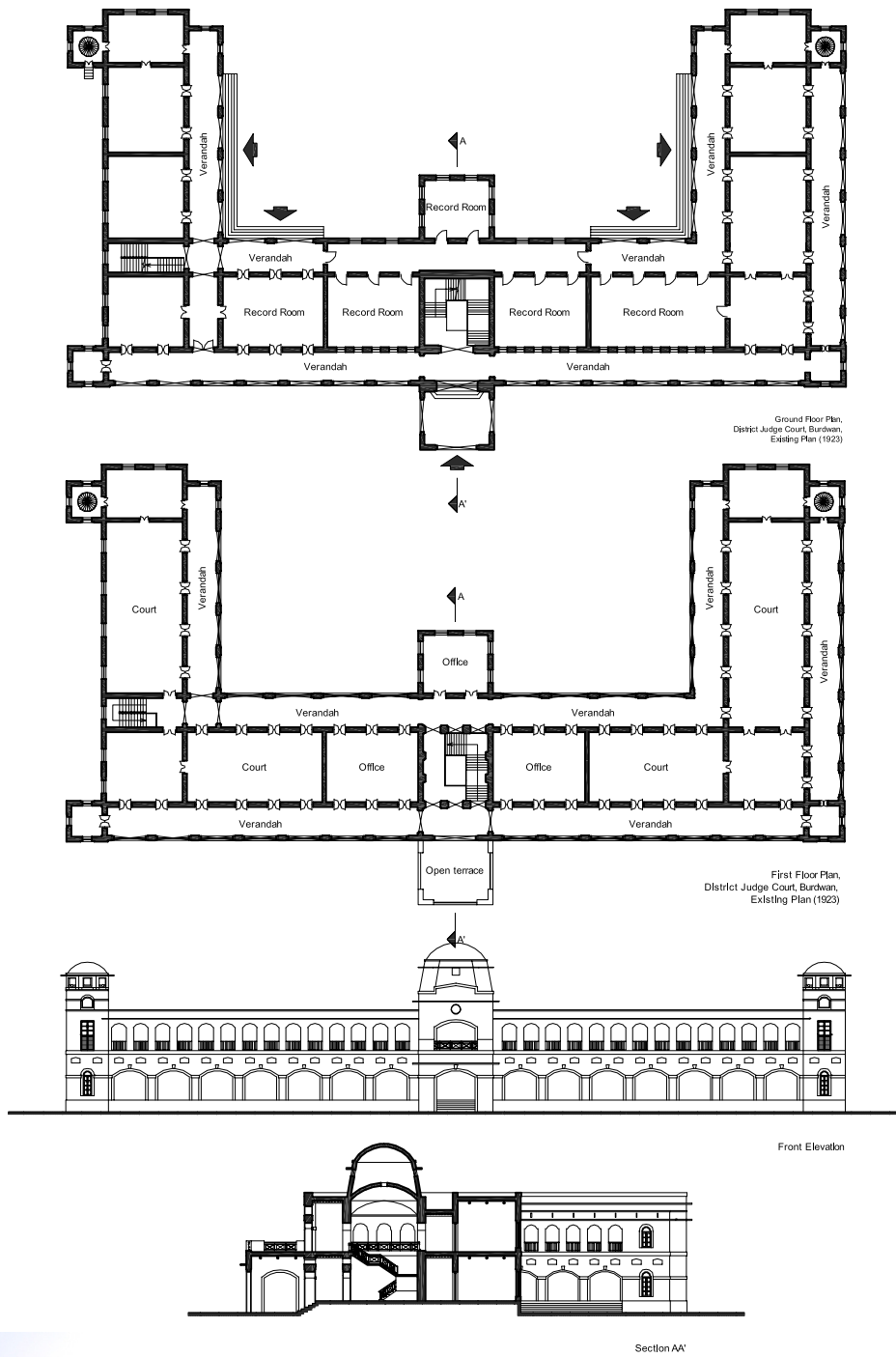


Fig. 5.31 Judge's court, Burdwan, 1923

1860 building mainly as a functional element, for receiving horse carriages and for officials to alight under shelter, now in 1880–81 became an intensely symbolic space as well. This is where the keepers of provincial government would be most visible, albeit for just a few moments, to the general public waiting in the *cutcherry* precinct. The *cutcherry* precincts in Bengal were usually large areas with buildings in a sparse, low-density formation (following the hot-humid climate of the region) with generous spaces between buildings. The Judge's or Collector's carriages would thus be visible from a distance as they entered the precinct and the portico literally signified the termination of that movement and the formal beginnings of the procedures of the court. This, combined with the long hours of wait for common public that provincial *cutcheries* were characteristically associated with, lent the portico a unique potency and made it an especially charged transition space – one that housed the ritual of District officers alighting from the carriage and being ushered into the building.

In the new design, collection and storage based functions, viz. the records and treasury, were now pushed to the sides, but developed into full-fledged wings on either side (Fig. 5.27). Colonial wealth and materialised knowledge thus formally gave way to the performative role of governance by its personnel and through its rituals. The priorities for provincial governance had clearly flipped in 80 years, since the beginning of the nineteenth century; the machinery of its operations and rituals had clearly become a formidable force within the *cutcherry* apparatus, and the impulse to collect revenue and materialise information had to be housed in spaces that now played clearly secondary roles in terms of their representative potential. In fact, for the first time, the buildings were blatant in the representation of their symbolic function as seats of provincial governance. The Khulna collectorate was finally built in 1885. A new building on the same design was also built in Jessore town the same time to replace the old Collector's *cutcherry*. The pragmatic architecture of the defensive factory of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, followed by the architecture of 'guarding' (of colonial wealth) of the early nineteenth century, and subsequently the architecture of rational simplification of the early years of the PWD, had now transformed into a potently symbolic architecture.

It was a trend that continued right into the twentieth century. In 1912, the Collector's and the Judge's *cutcheries* in Midnapur (Fig. 5.29), followed in 1920 by the Judge's *cutcherry* in Bankura, were all built along similar lines (Fig. 5.30). The basic format was elaborated further in the Judge court in Burdwan later in 1923, with the plan form developing into a deep U-shape to accommodate the expanding requirements (Fig. 5.31). The Burdwan building was especially intricate articulated in terms of expression of its parts (e.g. that of the corners), emphasis on a central axis with the use of the distinct shallow dome and a portico. In a strange way, the identity and legibility of parts characteristic of the earlier *cutcheries* were revived in a new incarnation in the post 1880 *cutcheries*. But though apparently similar in formal terms, it was a legibility that arose from a totally different impetus, through the pursuit of the representation of a centre, whereby the other functions became defined merely by being delineated with respect to the centre. Its parts were now articulated to clearly map out the grades of intense hierarchy

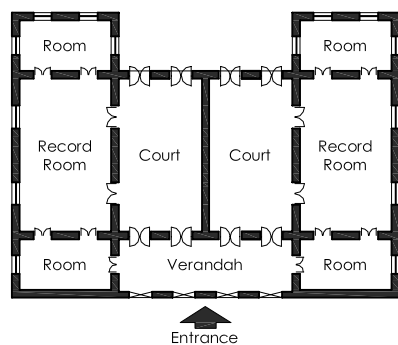


Fig. 5.32 Double-*munsifi*, Barasat

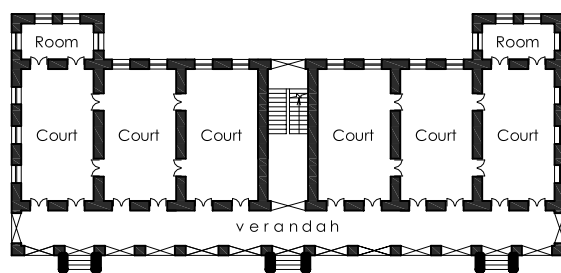


Fig. 5.33 Eight-courtroom *munsifi*, Barisal
(some of the courts were on the first floor)

within provincial governance and between government and people.

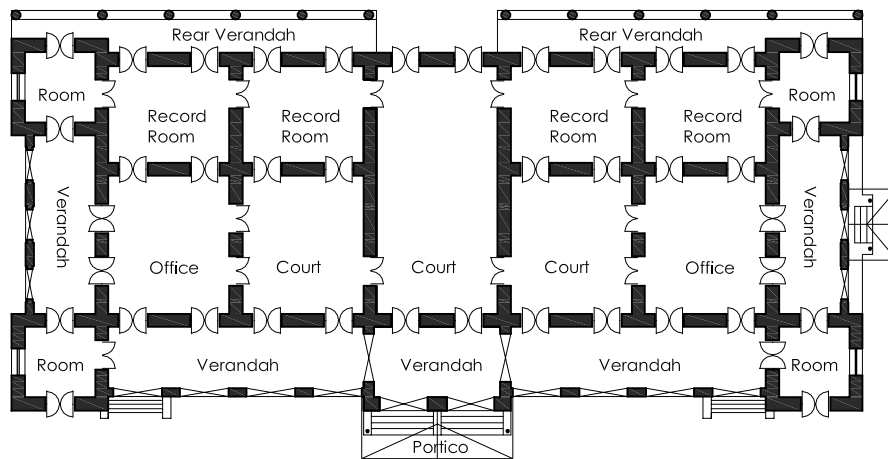
Unfortunately for the colonial authorities, standard designs represented an ideal but posed acute logistical problems in being actually implemented. In reality, most towns had existing *cutcherries* of reasonably robust construction and albeit in various levels of wear and tear or degradation, did not justify full-fledged replacement with the new designs. In effect, every town had various generations of buildings and if at all buildings built on standard designs did exist, they were simply one of the many in an overall, very heterogeneous landscape of provincial governmental architecture, built up over a period of time. The standard design of 1860, for instance, was used in some of the newly annexed territories, in a few *sadar* towns of Bihar and only in the town of Suri and Dacca, in all of lower Bengal. The 1880 *cutcherry* design too was used in the towns of Khulna and Jessore and hardly anywhere else. Despite being handed out by the central agency of the PWD, often, local affinities became the basis for spread of the designs. For instance, the new *cutcherry* of Khulna in the 1880s was a take-off on the standard design used in Jessore, from which the district of Khulna had been carved out in the first place and with which it had close operational ties and even shared the corpus of PWD officers. In most other towns, the *cutcherries* simply continued operating from the older structures. In any case, Bengal represented one of the earliest landscapes of British colonial governance and was interestingly least affected by the actual instrumentality of standard designs.

5.2.3 Design of *munsif's* courts (1892)

In 1892 designs for *munsif's* cutcherries were formulated by the PWD. *Munsif's* cutcherries were lower courts conducted by native Judges meant for cases of lower denominations, and strewn all over Bengal, both in the *sadar* towns as well as in interior areas. Predictably, tucked deep within interior territories and representing relatively low priority for the central government, these were one of the last within the governmental *cutcherries* to be standardised – a good thirty years after the first set of standard designs for provincial *cutcherries* in 1860. Even within an environment in the late nineteenth century when the imperial zeal and centralised authoritarian rule reached its zenith, and when governmental buildings were being actively cast within this imperial mould of uniformity, unity and order, the more interior the area, the less its functioning and nature of spaces, were, by default, touched by the formal dictates of a central authority. From a description given by John Beames, the Commissioner of Chittagong, around 1871, one gets a fair idea of the rather marginal perception of the *munsif's* court within the overall structure of provincial governance. Beames also describes the type of architecture that Munsif's courts were usually housed in, till late nineteenth century –

Fortunately for me I was not often compelled to go into such places. As judge I had to inspect the munsifis⁴⁰ every year, and they were in out-of-the-way places. But I took this duty rather lightly. I had an Additional Judge – a sort of a coadjucator – to whom I freely and undisguisedly left as much of the

40 The judicial territory and operations of the *munsif*.



Front Elevation

Fig. 5.34 Magistrate's and *munsif's* court, Burdwan, 1894

judicial work as I could, and he did not mind taking a trip to inspect a munsifi now and then. These inspections in Bengal were rather a farce. Munsif in Bengal is the title of a Judge of the lowest grade, who has power to try civil suits of small value and simple nature. In every district there are four or five of these petty courts dotted about the country, so as to bring justice close to everyone's door – a much valued boon in a land where litigation is the principal amusement and joy of all men. Chittagong, the litigious district *par excellence* of all Bengal, supported twelve such courts! One there was picturesquely perched on a hill by the side of the Chittagong river, some twenty miles above the town. It was a small, square building with mat walls and a thatched roof containing one centre room furnished with bench for the Judge, the witness box and seats for the 'local bar' (as the pleaders love to call themselves) and side rooms for clerks and records.⁴¹

The *munsifi* was thus a territory rarely visited by the Commissioner or higher officials and its architecture consisted essentially of a hut with a *verandah* all around. At its core was the courtroom, flanked by subsidiary functions like offices and records. From the description of its overall form and mud and thatch construction, it is apparent that the built-form was obviously directly rooted in the place where it was located. In interior areas, therefore, the *cutcherry* still looked very much like a domestic bungalow or hut. Other than the function that was enacted in it, there was virtually no typological distinction between the *cutcherry* and a domestic unit. Though 1860s onwards formal 'designed' provisions all but eliminated the bungalow as a form of official architecture, it survived in such interior areas and in the architecture of lower-order governmental spaces. These also continued on similar notions of inter-changeability of formal and functional types (work and dwelling typologies) that had characterised the early *cutcheries*. Though considered secondary in terms of formal provisions, *munsif's* courts were actually vital props of colonial provincial administration since the sheer volume of cases they dealt with (petty offences) in totality were far higher than those handled by the district level *cutcheries*. They in effect represented a dispersed network of smaller, but large number of, justice delivery units. The density of litigations and court cases was not of even spread over the landscape either – some areas characteristically had more disputes between *zemindars*, *ryots* (peasants) and revenue authorities, or were considered more litigation-prone. In some areas the *munsif's* court simply had a larger geographical area or more dense areas as its catchment than in others. All this meant that in some areas one could make do with just one or two court rooms, while in some like the *sadar munsif* courts (*munsif's* court in the *zilla sadar* town itself), one could need as many as six to eight. Standard designs were drawn up therefore for *munsif's cutcherries* housing one to eight courtrooms. Most of these followed the basic principle of barrack architecture – with rooms arranged in a row and a *verandah* running in front (Fig. 5.32). In the more elaborate six to eight roomed, two-storied types (as seen e.g. in the civil courts of Barisal built in 1896), the centre was separated out as a staircase, and following the 1880s spirit, the portico and the pediment were used to express it (Fig. 5.33).

As seen earlier in this chapter, The 1860s standard *sadar cutcherry* design had hardly made any distinction between the front and the back of the buildings. There, a *verandah* of similar depth and design was wrapped around the core-spaces as a blanket envelop. The nature

⁴¹ John Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian: the Lively Narrative of a Victorian District Officer* (London: Eland, 1984), 296.

of interface between the core-spaces and the *verandah* was identical along the two long sides. The *verandah*, however, was usually modified incrementally over a period of time, due to changing functional and spatial demands. It thus gradually transformed into two very different types of spaces at the front and back. By the end of the nineteenth century, in the designs of the *munsifs cutcherry*, this distinction seems to have been formalised, with a clear front and back aspect of the layout. In fact, in the combined magistrate's and *munsifs cutcherry* in Burdwan, a distinct layer of spaces (offices and records) was strung along the entire length at the back (Fig. 5.34). Though this building still had a back-*verandah*, its nature was very different from the one in front. The front *verandah* was deeper (to absorb the higher public access), lined with segmental arches on substantial brick piers and was articulated with a projecting portico. It was designed as a functional entity in terms of climatic protection and space to house visitors, and as a symbolic entity in terms of reflecting the magisterial presence and the main entry. Even the entrances from the side *verandahs* to courts on the sides were provided with smaller articulated roofs. The back *verandah* on the other hand was clearly a secondary layer of lesser depth - with a lean-to roof supported on iron pillars forming a lighter, more delicate layer almost like an 'addition' to the more solid main structure - while it still offered the advantages of climatic protection and an additional back-access for staff.

However, in any case, the designs of the different types (for one to eight roomed *munsifs*) and in different towns showed considerable variations. This was also aided by a move towards a more decorative architecture (discussed in the next section) - whereby ornamental elements were combined in a variety of ways. In a strange way, the uneven distribution of litigations and the catchment of the courts, and the range of designs that this demanded, in effect subverted the very purpose of homogeneity and standardisation - and in reality many different designs had to be produced. Homogeneity thus remained an ideal, with the practice on ground being fairly mixed. What did transform though, was the notion of permanence and a certain firmness of provision in the functioning of provincial governance which did begin to penetrate even interior areas with these designs.

5.3 The decorative turn 1880 - 1910

The representation of governmental authority of the 1880 *cutcherry* design was mobilised emphatically through an interesting shift - that of a decorative turn in public architecture. This was part of and contributed to a larger development in the nature of architecture being pursued by the colonial Government of India in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. From its early days up until the 1870s, governmental architecture in provincial areas had been characterised by a large degree of pragmatism. Even when it pursued abstract orders (e.g. under the PWD in the 1860s), the latter were still centred on the idea of 'simplicity' as an apparently 'modern' ethic. It is only in the late-nineteenth century that the issue of style was actually brought formally within the purpose of governmental architecture. Much has been written by historians and architectural critics of colonial India on the forging of an over-arching imperial architecture

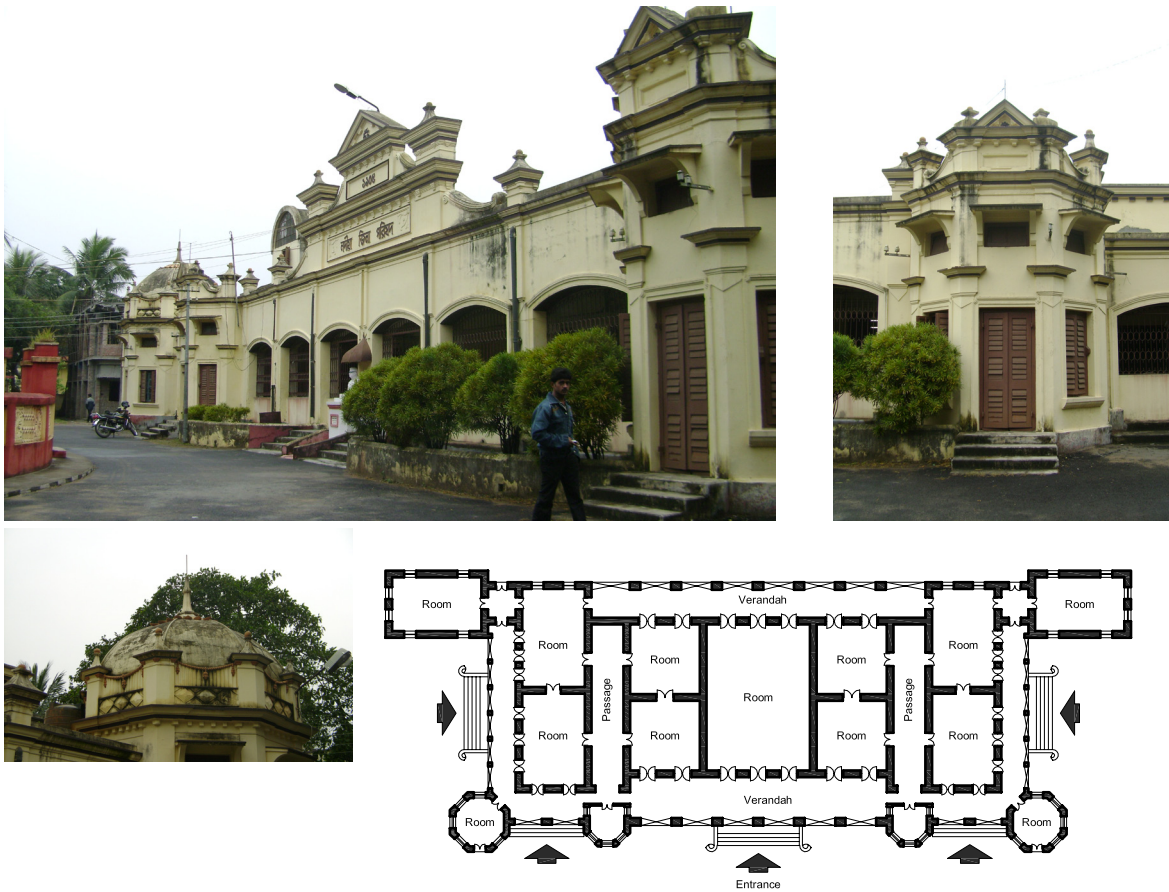


Fig. 5.35 District Board office,
Krishnanagar, 1905

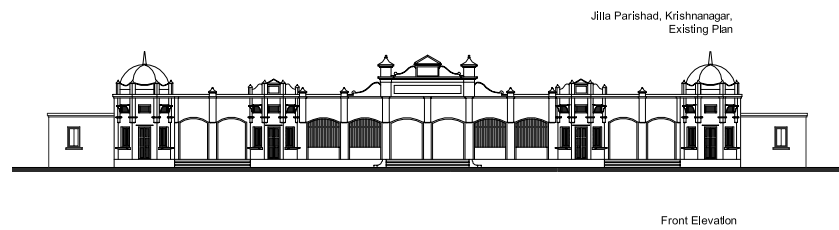


Fig. 5.36 Record room, Barisal, 1904

of governance.⁴² In fact, as pointed out by architectural historian Arindam Dutta, the long debate over the formulation of a style that could effectively represent the acutely imperial spirit of the late-nineteenth century and the emergence of a body of work which culled together European and 'Indian' elements of style (known as the 'Indo-Saracenic') has in fact received some of the most intricate attention in the historiography of colonial architecture in India.⁴³ However, most of these have focused on and cast the Indo-Saracenic as being exclusively represented by the more visible and iconic public buildings, usually designed by eminent architects.

In the provincial context, the new stylistic pre-occupation of governmental architecture, however, played out somewhat differently. The decorative turn also happened to take place in simultaneity with certain specific changes in governance. As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, in the early 1880s, under the Governor General Lord Ripon, local self-government as an ideological premise as also an economic and logistical need for colonial governance, gained currency. One of the implications of this in the sphere of production of buildings was the formation of the District Boards (which looked after the physical infrastructure such as roads, water systems and buildings for the district at large). The post of the District Engineer was created and building activity in districts was now clearly segmented into 'provincial' (i.e. those for local departments, e.g. district *cutcheries* and other local offices), and 'imperial' (those for central departments such as the postal department). A number of the newer buildings in *sadar* towns under the 'provincial' category, especially from the 1890s, were designed locally by District Engineers. Classic examples of these were the District Board or municipal offices themselves (e.g. the District Board offices in Krishnanagar - Fig. 5.35, and Barisal, the municipal offices in Berhampur and Bankura) as well as a number of new record rooms built in the early-twentieth century (e.g. the second record-room in Barisal, Fig. 5.36), which increasingly incorporated a profusion of decorative stylistic elements, culled together from a varied range of sources. The sources ranged from catalogues such as Jeypore Portfolio of architectural details⁴⁴, to elements of regional architecture prevalent in the specific localities in question. Interestingly, though the plan-forms were largely similar (and these in turn, owed their ancestry right back to the DNA of provincial governmental architecture, the 'barrack' form), there seems to have been a huge stylistic variety in the buildings produced in the different *sadar* towns – something which underlines the local nature of the production of such architecture. In the domain of 'style' the District Engineer had evidently found some freedom of architectural experimentation.

The fact that the apparently 'low-key' corpus of provincial public architecture made

⁴² See e.g. Thomas Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); GHR Tilotson, *The tradition of Indian architecture: continuity, controversy and change since 1850* (New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁴³ Arindam Dutta, 'Strangers Within the Gate: Public Works and Industrial Art Reform', Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash (eds.), *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 99- 106.

⁴⁴ Produced as a compilation by Samuel Swinton Jacob in 1890-98, the Jeypore Portfolio attempted to encapsulate numerous so-called 'Indian' elements that could be assembled in different combinations towards the production of a pan-Indian Indo-Saracenic architecture. Samuel Swinton Jacob, *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details* (London: B.Quaritch, 1890-98)



Fig. 5.37 The development of the cutcherry precinct into a complex space of official and social transactions

a significant contribution towards the overall landscape of the 'Indo-Saracenic' and that they in many ways deviated from the more normative pan-Indian architectural models, warrants recognition. That these buildings were far more numerous, and represented a far larger territorial spread, also in effect asks for newer readings of the Indo-Saracenic style itself – as also comprising a more heterogeneous set of building-practices than mere iconic buildings built by eminent architects would suggest.

In some ways therefore, although only at a somewhat superficial stylistic level, the role of the 'local' in the production of governmental buildings was thus yet again recovered in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. Within the PWD's own apparatus, it was apparently almost impossible – and possibly no longer felt necessary – to institute uniform codes of building across the Bengal landscape. In a curious way, the project of standardisation was subverted by the very internal dynamics of colonial governance and of the emerging constellations within the PWD's departmental structure, as also by various local influences.

5.4 'Complexity and contradiction'

The provincial *cutcherry* grew to be an increasingly complex space. The amorphous space between buildings came to be thickly populated by a huge range of secondary activities. On one hand, these external spaces acted as extensions or 'spill-over' of the nebulous spaces of the *verandah* of the *cutcherry* buildings. On the other hand, they assumed a life of their own. The very fact that formal provisions by the government for certain groups of official staff, visitors and the public at large were minimal, in effect opened up the channel for various groups to claim and articulate their spaces within the *cutcherry* site. Shops appeared, temples and mosques grew, fortune tellers set up base predicting the outcomes of court-cases, middle-men hovered around selling goods and services (Fig. 5.37). During the construction of a treble *munsifi* at Tamluk in 1894, for instance, the District Judge impressed upon the central PWD authorities to acquire a large amount of land since otherwise the un-acquired portion 'would at once be taken up for huts by *mokhteers*, shopkeepers and others' and 'not only would there be damage from fire, but the appearance of the premises would be greatly marred'.⁴⁵ The account seems to clearly suggest the perceived lack – on the part of district officers – of any comprehensive control of the way the open spaces around the *cutcherry* were likely to be used and a deep fear of their 'mis-use' by the 'natives'. The degree to which each group could negotiate their spaces within the *cutcherry* premises varied, but all had a go. Formally structured professional groups such as pleaders were more successful in claiming 'organised' space (e.g. with legal allocation and ownership of land and permanent buildings); bar libraries and association buildings thus became integral components of the *sadar cutcherry* precinct. Put under pressure by the public, in addition to planting banyan trees to provide shelter for visitors as mentioned earlier, witness' sheds and visitors' pavilions were sometimes built by the government as well.

⁴⁵ West Bengal State Archives, Bengal PWD Proceedings, File no 3c/ 14 of 1894, July, nos. 70– 82. Note from J. Pratt, District Judge, Midnapore, attached with letter no. 181, dt. Burdwan 25 Jun 1894, from R.C. Dutt, Officiating Commissioner of Burdwan Division, to the office of the Chief Engineer of Bengal, PWD.

During the PWD era decision making in building work was gradually centralised more and more. PWD's correspondences of this period clearly indicate that most key decisions, even for district level work, were now being made by the Divisional Commissioners (rather than district officers) who had many districts under them; it was impossible for them to have any detailed knowledge of each locality. On top of this, every decision had to be validated by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, to the extent that he actually made numerous design-decisions (e.g. court designs, final designs on district *cutcherry* designs). The assumption behind a centralised system was that expert knowledge produced at the centre would flow into lower hierarchies and interior areas – but ironically, this implied that sometimes even specialised decisions were taken by top level bureaucrats with little or no contact with ground situations or technical knowhow. The tussle between technocracy and bureaucracy thus also became proverbial.⁴⁶ While in the years right after mutiny it involved tussle between district officers and local PWD engineers (e.g. Executive or Assistant Engineer), by the late-nineteenth century it increasingly translated into more complex tensions between District officers, lower level PWD officers, higher level PWD officers and higher level bureaucrats.

Curiously, despite an apparently centralised framework, most of the PWD's work was still inherently dependent on local labour, artisans and a whole band of lower level native employees (such as overseers or sub-overseers). In fact senior PWD engineers often willy-nilly acknowledged their deep dependence on the know-how and working methods of local construction workers.⁴⁷ As pointed out by Arindam Dutta, the PWD, by necessity, also had to, by necessity, absorb and assimilate existing caste-based labour and skill categories within its framework.⁴⁸ Yet, as apparent from the list of personnel within the PWD's structure and their skills/ qualifications (see Table 4.1, Chapter 4) – the native labourer (head *mistry* and daily wage) was often cast as being 'hard-working', possessing good qualities like 'temperance' (as against the European officers) but also as docile, ignorant of engineering theory and incapable of taking lead roles.⁴⁹ Native Overseers and Sub-overseers also wielded immense power within the PWD's set up. Often, they even took up private contracts for the very government jobs they were representing.⁵⁰ The distinctions between categories like governmental and private, government and contractor were thus extremely fluid and posed continuous problems for an

46 In connection with the construction of the 'standard' sub-divisional buildings (discussed earlier in this chapter), in 1860, this ambiguity of custodianship of building work became particularly evident. The district officers (Collector-Magistrates, i.e. bureaucrats) were extremely unwilling to completely entrust the responsibility of construction to the local PWD engineers, saying that the while the latter could undertake the construction of the two-storey types, they themselves were perfectly capable of handling the construction of all the other (single storey) designs and that they had been doing this all along until then. Local experience and precedence was therefore being directly used to lay claim to custodianship of building work. Though the PWD increasingly wielded higher powers in this aspect, there were frequent tensions between the bureaucrats and the technocrats. British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Proceedings nos 89 - 101, Jan 1860, P/ 16/ 37.

47 Lulus George Medley, *India and Indian Engineering* (London: n.v., 1872), 44, 59, 62.

48 Dutta, 'Strangers within the gate', 100- 107.

49 Medley, *India and Indian Engineering*, 44.

50 This is a recurrent theme in numerous PWD communications, with higher PWD officials trying to find ways to stop such practices. Despite circulars against taking up any part of PWD's construction contracts privately, native Overseers and Sub-overseers evidently continued these practices. See British Library, Bengal PWD Proceedings, 1855 - 1905.

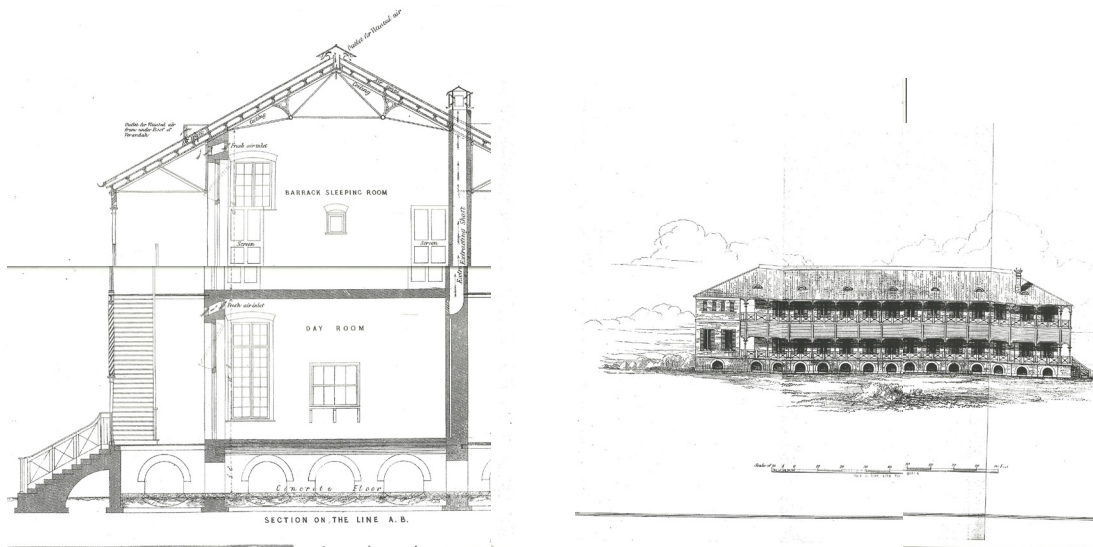


Fig. 5.38 Barrack design (plan and elevation).
Source: Sanitary Commissioners' Report 1866.



Fig. 5.39 Circuit house, Burdwan, late 1860s



Fig. 5.40 Ramdas Sen's *baithak-khana*, Berhampur, late 1860s/early 1870s

organisation trying to set up a clearly structured normative framework. Often, thus, there was also tacit acceptance of locally prevalent 'un-official' practices and working with them.

There were giant attempts by the PWD to centralise the production of building materials as well. The Akra brick factory, on the outskirts of Calcutta, for example, was a mammoth brick manufacturing site and regularly supplied bricks for provincial building as well. But more importantly, it was virtually a construction laboratory, from where colonial building knowledge was being disseminated. During the 1870s it saw particular intensification of experiments with load bearing capacity and construction of walls, foundations etc.⁵¹ An iron bridge yard was set up in 1860-61; centralised steam saw mills were imported from England to standardise Sal wood processing for beams, the variable costs of which (a natural outcome of varied local situations) had been a source of much headache for the central PWD engineers. Laboratory and site experiments were translated into material form as well – reports were published; among many others, for instance, was one in 1860 on the various types of roofing system in Bengal and the ability of the new technology of iron-framed buildings to take their respective loads and in 1872 on the findings of the Akra brick factory experiments.⁵² On the other hand, by the late-nineteenth century much of this centralised production infrastructure had to necessarily be privatised and sold out to private parties, whereby comprehensive and uniform state-control of these aspects was heavily compromised.

Perhaps most crucially, aspects of building design themselves traversed complex trajectories, making it extremely difficult to preserve the purity of normative frameworks or to de-limit them to governmental buildings alone. A classic case in point was the design of barracks proposed by the military engineers of the Sanitary Commission in 1866 – elevating the lower floor a good 8 ft. from the ground to ensure freedom of dampness and unhealthy conditions, and which was then to be used as a service area.⁵³ Though this was originally devised for soldiers' barracks to ensure soldiers' health, one finds a few instances of civilian buildings (e.g. the second circuit house in Burdwan) in the late 1860s/70s where the same design-details were then used. One also finds, for example, the *baithak-khana* (guest entertainment room) within the residential premises of the Sen family in Berhampur in the late 1860s, where similar details had been incorporated. A closer investigation reveals that the last building was designed by Capt. Layard, a top-level military engineer (later made the Civil Architect of Bengal), posted in Berhampur at the time.⁵⁴ Obviously, other than his official duties, Layard was also instrumental in designing local elites' house/s. The design principles in this case thus moved from governmental military (barrack) architecture to civilian official architecture and then onto the private residential architecture of native inhabitants of the *sadar*. All this also meant that various aspects of building design

⁵¹ British Library, IOR, Bengal PWD Annual Report 1871/72 - 1875/76, V/24/3334.

⁵² BL, IOR, 'Strength of iron framed roof systems' P/16/37, 1860; 'Report on roofing systems in Bengal', P/16/42; 'Brick Foundations and load bearing walls', 1872, V/24/3333.

⁵³ 'Sanitary Commissioners' Report on Barrack and Hospital Design', PWD, 1866.

⁵⁴ The fact that Capt. Layard designed the *baithak-khana* of the Sen family in Berhampur is well-established in local knowledge and in the Sen family's historical narratives. From numerous PWD documents it is apparent that Layard was posted in Berhampur (as the Superintending Engineer) in late 1860s-early 1870s.

gradually flowed across categories like governmental or private, residential or administrative, military or civil – and preserving the ‘purity’ of governmental architecture, claims to exclusivity or harnessing design-features solely for the official representation of governance was virtually impossible.

The overall landscape of administrative architecture in the *sadar* towns by the late-nineteenth century was thus immensely complex, determined by the interaction between numerous parameters and agencies – both the colonists and natives, as also the sub-groups within these categories. Above all, at any point of time, a particular *sadar* town consisted of a range of buildings built incrementally over time, in response to incrementally changing or shifting needs, constituting a mixed, fragmented and heterogeneous landscape that, by its very process of making, resisted homogenisation.

Chapter 6 ■

Between work, home and leisure:
architecture of domestic and public life

There is something uncanny about empire. The entity known by that name is in essence, mere territory. That is, a place constituted by the violence of conquest, the jurisdictions of law and ownership, the institutions of public order and use... As such it requires no home... Yet as history shows, empire is not reconciled for long to this abstracted condition. ... Towns and settlements grow, as empire too is seized by the urge to make a home of its territory.

Ranajit Guha, 'Not at home in Empire', *Critical Enquiry*, 23 (Spring 1997), 482-484.

Introduction

This chapter looks at the architectural character of the extended sites of work, home and public life in the *zilla sadar*. These in fact constituted the secondary sphere around the core sphere of governmental functioning that the life of the *sadar* was otherwise pivoted on. In that sense, they represented the wider process of settlement and 'making a home' of provincial towns – both for British officers as well as for migrant Bengalis. What makes a look at these spaces especially relevant is that within the provincial milieu, colonial governance was linked – far more than in metropolitan contexts – to domestic and public life, and thus to a secondary work-sphere. In many ways, governmental work itself spilled over into domestic spaces, and vice versa. Also, for all practical purpose, revenue governance was conducted not merely from governmental *cutcheries*, but also through the tax-collection network of *zamindars*. *Zamindars*

even enjoyed informal judicial powers since many local disputes were actually settled within *zamindari cutcherries*, without recourse to formal judicial processes.¹ The latter, in some ways, therefore acted as sanctioned extended sites of provincial governance.² There were also other secondary sites of work, like the lawyer's or the businessman's *cutcherry*, which propped up the workings of the *sadar*. These too had integral relationships with, and were usually part of, domestic environments. Distinctions between home, work and leisure were also somewhat blurred in the provincial context. More often than not, leisure and public life overlapped with domestic set-ups. Leisure time also ate into 'office hours' and leisure activities crept into governmental and *zamindari* spaces.³ On the other hand, public spaces for leisure, entertainment and civic functions often acted as sites from where popular ideas of governance were mobilised. In short, boundaries between domains were fuzzy and in hindsight it is virtually impossible to clearly segregate the space for work, leisure, and domestic activities in *sadar* towns of colonial Bengal in the nineteenth century. In fact, it was precisely this fuzziness that lent a generous degree of malleability to the spatial networks of provincial governance *per se* - quite different from those at the colonial headquarters in Calcutta. Around such notions of work, home and leisure on the one hand, and of urban and rural identities on the other, developed much of the architectural character of the secondary spaces of work, home and public life of the *sadar*. These therefore need to be understood within the framework of such plural attributes.

6.1 Officer's bungalows

6.1.1 Spatial-temporal geographies of work, home and leisure

Provinciality provided the ground for a fluid spatial culture. It allowed overlap, transgression or collapse of clear-cut spatial and operational categories like 'work', 'home' and 'leisure', which were otherwise getting increasingly articulated into distinct spatial spheres in cities like Calcutta, directly connected to industrial metropolitan ideas.⁴ By mid-nineteenth century, the Collectorate or *cutcherry* complex in the *sadar* consolidated into a thriving administrative precinct and came to be the nerve centre of the town, distinct from the residential bungalow zone of European

1 See, for example, the following remark by Prasannamayee Debi, from the mid-to-late nineteenth century: 'In those times, it was considered below one's dignity to resort to formal courts of law at the drop of a hat; the *zamindars* routinely sat in the Judge's throne in their own *cutcherries* and pronounced judgements.' P. Debi, *Purbakatha*, (Calcutta: Aadi Brahma Samaj, 1919), 94. The eminent Indian nationalist leader, teacher, journalist, orator and writer, Bipin Chandra Pal, also wrote on the substantial role of *zamindari* administration within the larger landscape of provincial governance up to the 1860s and 70s. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Memories of My Life and Times* (Calcutta: Sri Sudhir Kumar Bose, on behalf of Bipin Chandra Pal Institute, 1973), 2nd revised edition, 114-130.

2 This happened despite the fact that the *zamindars* themselves were often at loggerheads with the provincial administration over land-settlement, law and order disputes, or tax defaults.

3 An example of such mixing of work and leisure time is seen in the humorous description of a typical day for the Collector in a district town in Madras Presidency - where the Collector clearly shirked his official work and took off prematurely to the local club for leisure and entertainment within office hours - as given in C.P.S. Nayudu, *Character Sketches, Containing a Series of Dramatic, Comical, Humorous and Descriptive Account [sic] of the Official and Home-Life of the Revenue Officials in the Mofussil*, (Madras: Gopaul Naidu and Co., 1898). Reprinted from *The Madras Times* and *The Christian Patriot*, 8 Dec. 1897.

4 There was growing discomfort within governmental circles with this overlap of work, home and leisure spheres and spaces in Calcutta already by the late-eighteenth early-nineteenth centuries. Writer's Building, built for 'writers' (accountants and clerks) of the East India Company as a hostel and office, was apparently used also for private affairs and merry-making. The unease that such practices later gave the Company government had the premises vacated temporarily. In 1836, the Governor General William Bentinck banned the 'haphazard' use of the building altogether, and set it aside for classified uses only.



Fig. 6.1a The home-office - the Officer with his *duftaree* (office assistant).
Source: Curry and Rice, George Atkinson, 1859.



Fig. 6.1b The home-office seen from bungalow drawing room, Sitapur, 1880.
Source: Columbia Online Educational Archives

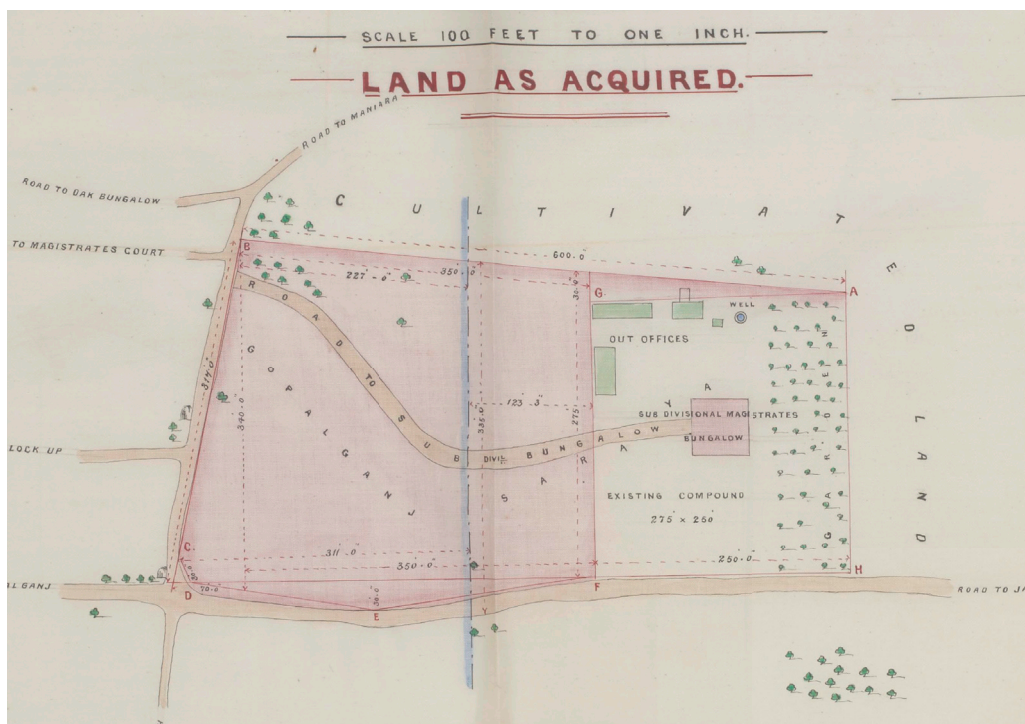


Fig. 6.2 Site plan of sub-divisional officer's residence showing bungalow and out-offices.
Source: British Library, IOR, PWD Proceedings Nov. 1885.

officers or the dwellings of the native population. In function, however, the domains were far from sovereign. In the early-nineteenth century, as discussed in Chapter 2, mobile governance through Circuit Courts had found architectural expression in the form of 'Circuit Houses' built in each *sadar* town. These served as offices for holding courts as well as temporary residences for officers on circuit. Even when governance itself became more decentralised and stabilised at the district level, the composite spatial entity of the home-cum-office flowed seamlessly into the architecture of Collector's and Judge's *cutcherry* as well as their residential bungalows. The Collector's home was also his office, while his office or the *cutcherry* also partly his home. Usually the ground floor or the front portion of the District Collector's or Judge's bungalow was devoted to a home-office arrangement (Fig. 6.1a and 6.1b), along with associated spaces for office personnel, as the following observation by a Bengal civilian in the 1860s revealed:

... him [the Commissioner of Patna Division], we found hard at work, with bundles of papers tied with red tape before him, in his 'dufter khana' [office], or library, the name given by natives to the room kept in the house of every official for writing [official]⁵ purposes, and where, thanks to the absence of housemaids, the most comfortable untidiness exists.

The home-office was thus obviously also a domain where the usual domestic frameworks of the house did not apply. In addition, often there were 'out-offices' for secondary office staff within the bungalow compound (Fig. 6.2).⁷ The *cutcherry* on the other hand contained - either attached to the Collector's or Judges' office - full-fledged rest rooms (known as the *khaash karma* or special private chamber) with, for example, a bed, easy chair, couch, small dining table and private library - in short, a small slice of a domestic environment. Work and home spaces thus ran into each other.

One reason behind the fact that residential bungalows also housed office areas and vice versa, was the sheer distance between the European dwellings and the centre of these *sadar* towns (to the latter of which the *cutcherry* was proximate) for this was otherwise crucial, in the colonialists' perception, to preserve their distinctive quality of life within European bungalow zones. Hence the British residential bungalow areas were on an average about 1-3 miles away from the *cutcherry* complex (Fig. 6.3).⁸ The idea of taking up residence close to the *cutcherry* in the vicinity of dense native towns, though not unheard of, was considered highly undesirable. In fact, any interaction with the physical space of the native town - epitomised by its bustling

⁵ The term 'writing' in the context of colonial governance in India meant official work. Writers, as explained earlier, were clerks appointed for different kinds of administrative work ranging from accountancy to letter writing, or simply the job of a scribe.

⁶ Account by an ex-civilian (anon.), *Life in the Mofussil - or the Civilian in Lower Bengal*, (London: C. Kegan Paul and Co, 1878), 66.

⁷ See, for instance, the inventory and estimate of proposed buildings and spaces (pertaining to one of the three design schemes being considered) within the bungalow compound of the Collector of Durbhanga in the late-nineteenth century: Main Building (1 dining room, 1 drawing room, 3 bedrooms, 1 office and 1 nursery) - Rs. 18,745; Out-offices, out-houses, well etc. - Rs. 22,083, showing clearly the persistence and substantial proportion of office spaces (and corresponding costs) within residential premises even as late as the late-nineteenth century. West Bengal State Archives (WBSA), PWD File 17/ 1883, nos. 16-18, 'A' Proceedings for November 1888, nos. 22-30.

⁸ This figure is based on the author's physical survey of the *sadar* towns, as well as from mid-nineteenth century town maps and descriptions of towns in District Gazetteers and various personal accounts of the period.

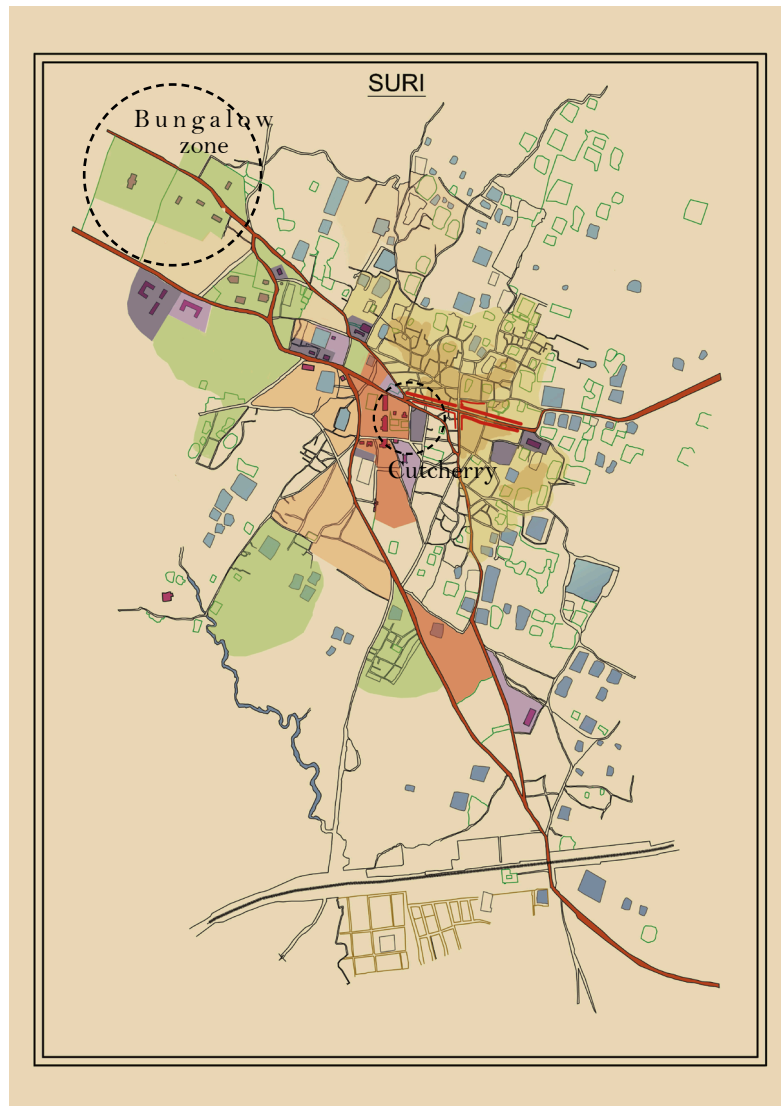


Fig. 6.3 Suri: relative locations of bungalow and *cutcherry* areas
Source: Base plan developed by author from contemporary maps



Fig. 6.4 Representations of the bungalow and the bazaar.
A. Bungalow life, 1890. Source: Columbia Online Archives.
B. *Bazaar in a sadar town, Curry and Rice*, George Atkinson, 1859.

bazaar area - was considered to be avoided to the maximum extent possible.⁹ Any association with the *bazaar* area of the *sadar* town was seen by colonists as being the worst possible thing, and the perceived contrast of its quality of environment to the European bungalow zones is evident in numerous accounts of civilian officers (Fig. 6.4).¹⁰ It was possibly due to the ensuing need to preserve this physical distance - which in turn posed difficulty in the movement between work and home spaces - that meant that residential buildings also developed secondary offices, and parts of offices were shaped into quasi-domestic environments.

However, the relationship between the bungalow and the *cutcherry* itself showed signs of change during the course of the nineteenth century. The distance between the two areas was increasingly felt to be logistically too hazardous and the issue surfaced actively especially in instances where new residential infrastructure was being set up.¹¹ When the public buildings for the new *sadar* town of Khulna were established from around 1883, in a clear departure from prevailing custom, the *cutcherry* sites were located right next to the bungalows, which in turn were not far away from the native settlements (Fig. 6.5).¹² In 1888, the Collector of Durbhanga actually articulated the issue in a strong letter of complaint to the Lieutenant Governor's office in Calcutta, actively pushing for the proposed (new) officers' bungalows to be located closer to the *cutcherry* -- making a direct correlation between commuting distance to work, productivity of provincial officers and its implication for the costs of the government:

For some inscrutable reason which has ruled its actions, Government has deliberately selected a site for its *cutcheries* and jail full four miles from the only possible houses in Durbhanga, where its officers can reside. Each officer loses one full hour's work a day, driving to and from office and the Government work suffers greatly by this. Say that on the average I work eight hours a day, here is one eighth of my salary absolutely lost to Government.¹³

Another letter from the Commissioner of the Patna Division stated that:

9 Such perceptions are evident, for instance, in the observation by H. Beadon, the Collector of Durbhanga district, about the residence of an engineer: 'There is absolutely no other house fit to live in [in Durbhanga]. The house which was formerly occupied by Mr. Boxwell is now tenanted by the District Engineer. It is moreover in the middle of the bazaar, a mere barrack and dangerously out of repair.' WBSA/PWD 17/1883, PWD Files 'A' Proceedings for November 1888, nos. 16-18, Letter from H. Beadon, Collector of Durbhanga district, to S. Trevor in the Lieutenant Governor office, 10 Mar. 1887. Another young civilian chose to continue living in the *dak*-bungalow in Durbhanga in preference to the residence set out for him, on account of the fact that the latter was 'dismal', while the former was 'situated just outside the moat surrounding the rajah's palace, and well away from the native bazaar, which was a great consideration.' Anon., *Life in the Mofussil*, 199.

10 See for example the following description by a civilian in Lower Bengal, travelling through the city of Patna: 'by 4 30 pm I was at the entrance of the Patna bazaar, some nine miles in length, and thirty-three miles from Barh; ... The last portion of my journey through the bazaar was anything but pleasant; the dust was choking, and the stench of oil and rancid ghee was overpowering. It being the cold weather too, a great number of wood fires were lighted, the wood being by preference damp, and emitting a most pungent smoke, hostile indeed to mosquitoes, but very trying to the eyes and sense of smell. The latter, I imagine, natives do not possess, or only in some very modified form... At length, after nine miles of native huts, smells, and noises, without seeing one single European, I reached, about 6 30, the old "Foujdari Cutcherry" [Criminal Court House], in a portion of which my next host had taken up his residence.' Anon., *Life in the Mofussil*, 62-63. Talking of the transition from the *bazaar* of the native town to the European quarters, he also observed: 'The narrow road of the native portion of the town here widens out into a spacious plain of a circular shape... and the open green space, with its fine trees, is very refreshing to the eye after the long, dusty, narrow bazaar.' *Ibid.*, 65-66.

11 This is especially true of a number of towns like Durbhanga or Muzaffarpur in Bihar Province (within the Bengal Presidency) the building infrastructure of which was the PWD's most significant engagement in the 1860s and 70s.

12 It is interesting to note here that this was nearly a century after the setting up of the first set of *sadar* establishments starting from 1786 (when the District Collector's post was formed) and intensifying in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

13 WBSA/ PWD 17/1883, 'A' Proceedings for November 1888, Letter from H. Beadon, Collector of Durbhanga, to S.T. Trevor, at the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Nos. 22-30, 10 Mar. 1887.



Fig. 6.5 Khulna: relationship between the bungalow zone and the *cutcherry* sites
Source: CS Survey map 1919-1923.



Fig. 6.6 The clock tower and bell on top of post 1860 *cutcherry* buildings
Ironically, in some cases (e.g. in Suri,) the clock was given as a gift to the provincial authorities by a local *zamindar* as a way of reinforcing his own presence in the town

Fig. 6.7 The sub-divisional officer's home-cum-*cutcherry*,
Jungipur, 1881. Source: British Library, IOR, PWD
Proceedings, Feb. 1881.



By fixing the houses of the gazetted staff not more than 2 miles away from the courts, Mr. Beadon [The Collector] says that a focus would be established around which the ministerial offices would cluster, and that the break of a short drive going and coming from office would be pleasant without being wasteful.....Laheria Sarai is in the closest proximity to the cutcherries but it is nearly four miles from the resorts of pleasure and recreation, and Mr. Beadon does not therefore recommend that the house for the Collector should be built at that place..... There is a tank, called Ganga Sagar, which is said to be less than 2 miles from the cutcherries and 1 ½ miles from the Maharaja's grounds (in which all amusement are centred) and the ground around it is reported to be high. The Collector thinks that the Government would be better advised to take up sufficient land around the Ganga Sagar, and build its officers' houses there for reasonable rents. Mr Beadon says that there would be ample accommodation round this tank for the private residences of the officials, and that the district officer would be in the midst of all institutions of the town that require his attention and attract him.¹⁴

The Collector in question finally managed to negotiate the location of the bungalows at a distance of less than two miles from the *cutcherry* (literally halving the distance of travel) in an area proximate to the entertainment hub of the officers --the *zamindar's* palace grounds. Within the limited world of provincial living, access to leisure facilities competed with access to work in the choice of site for residences. The Durbhanga communication threw up issues of threshold distance that could be an acceptable trade-off between closeness to the *cutcherry*, adequate distance from the 'dins and dirt' of the native town and the necessary between work, home and leisure areas.¹⁵ Such demands from provincial officers thus built up pressure on the central authorities at Calcutta and sometimes had an implication on the effective distance between native and European settlements in the late-nineteenth century.

The fluidity between work and home spheres was not limited to the physical juxtaposition of spaces within the bungalow and the *cutcherry*. Equally important was the space-time correlation that was actualised in these locations in terms of the management of work and domestic time. Typically, the Collector conducted office from his bungalow in the first hours of the morning period, after which he travelled to his *cutcherry*, came back home for lunch and afternoon rest, and went back to his *cutcherry* where he stayed often till late evening - a temporal rhythm clearly very different from emerging concepts of British 'industrial time' (9am to 5pm) that had increasingly begun to be normalised in cities such as Calcutta.¹⁶ During the East India Company's rule, the Collector apparently did not have a huge volume of work, but had to act virtually as a multipurpose administrator - his duties ranging from revenue, magisterial to general managerial tasks.¹⁷ According to an account given by F.J. Shore, a Judge/Magistrate, even as early as late-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter of 30th July 1887, from R.H, Commissioner, Patna Division, to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.

¹⁵ It is important to note here that for the larger part of the nineteenth century, most district officers travelled by their horse carriages to the provincial *cutcherries*. By the time the motor car found its way into provincial areas of Bengal (in the first decade of the twentieth century), the core physical infrastructure of governance - bungalows and *cutcherries* - had already been established. The motor car therefore did not play a critical role in the spatial relationships of these functions within the town. Within the limited options for mobility, even up till the 1880s, the distance between bungalow areas and the *cutcherry* was clearly felt to be problematic.

¹⁶ As an extension of the industrial work culture heavily taking root in Britain, the 'official' working hours of 9am to 5 pm was introduced for the East India Company servants in India as early as the late-eighteenth century. This meant a clear segmentation between work time and space on the one hand, and domestic time and space on the other. However, in the *mufassal* [provincial] towns, such rigid distinctions between official and non-official time and space seem to have been rarely adhered to.

¹⁷ L.S.S. O' Malley, *The Indian Civil Service 1601-1930*, (London: John Murray, 1931). This is also evident from

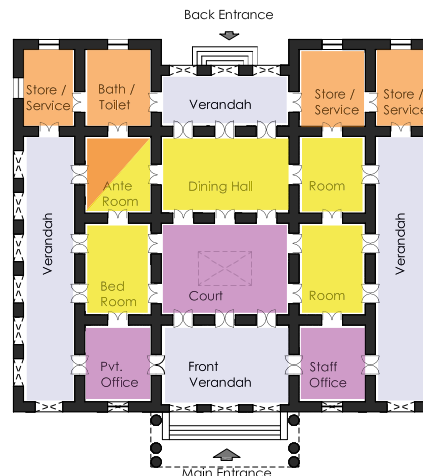


Fig. 6.8 Circuit House, Midnapur

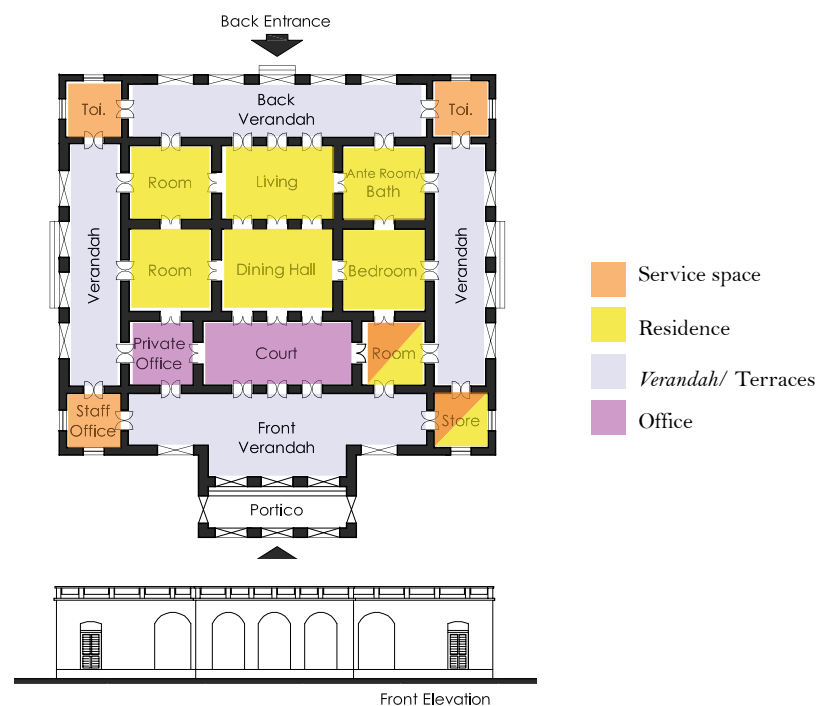


Fig. 6.9 Circuit House, Bankura

eighteenth century, work had to be done by officers both before and after office hours, and some even had police reports read to them during their breakfast. With the taking over of governance by the British Crown in 1858, while on the one hand the specialised departments were formed, on the other the hierarchical and centralised character of the administrative machinery was reinforced more than ever, demanding an enormous amount of paperwork in the administrative loop - and hence, adding to the workload of provincial officers. J.F. Bignold, a Bengal civilian, echoed this feeling in a poem called *The Successful Competitor* from 1873:

The crack Collector, man of equal might,
Reports all day and corresponds all night.

In the 1860s, there were clear attempts by the PWD authorities to regulate 'official time' through the introduction of clocks and bells on top of *cutcherry* buildings. However, despite such attempts, the notion of time within provincial life remained fluid, with an unusually high overlap between work and domestic time and space compared to major urban centres.

6.1.2 Residential, office and leisure spaces within the bungalow

As mentioned earlier, combined 'home-office' and 'office-home' spaces appear to have been a direct result of the physical and psychological distance between European and native areas (which in turn was proximate to the *cutcherry*) - which, though increasingly challenged, never quite collapsed. It is interesting to note here that even in the standardised designs for sub-divisional buildings formulated by the Public Works Department (PWD) in 1858-59 (as discussed in chapter 5), the inter-relation of the two domains - work and home - was a major design-driver behind the conception of the typological series.¹⁸ Despite the choices they were offered by these designs, most Commissioners seemed to settle for the combined *cutcherry*-cum-home option. In the *zilla sadar*, the *cutcherry* and the bungalow, though they shared considerable overlap of functions, were located in separate areas. In lower hierarchy towns like sub-divisions, however, they virtually shared the same precinct (Fig. 6.7). Here the residential bungalow was not just the home-office, it was also the governmental *cutcherry* itself.

In architectural terms, a look at the typological character of early circuit houses - which were forms of work-home units associated with colonial administration in provincial areas - is useful. Circuit houses were usually built on a 'core-and-envelop' bungalow form, as typified in those at Midnapur (1795), Bankura (1825), Barisal or Krishnanagar (before 1850)¹⁹ (Figs. 8,9,

other accounts like that of the Collector of Midnapur H.V. Bayly in the 1840s and 50s, where he describes how he took an active part in the internal design of record rooms, made engineering sketches for the construction of embankments in the region, other than attending to his usual executive duties. H.V. Bayly, *History of Midnapore*, (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1902).

¹⁸ These were primarily conceived as work and home modules that could either be housed as separate single-storied units on the same site, a combined single-storey unit, or a combined double-storey unit.

¹⁹ The circuit houses of Barisal and Krishnanagar both appear in the mid-nineteenth-century maps drawn up by the

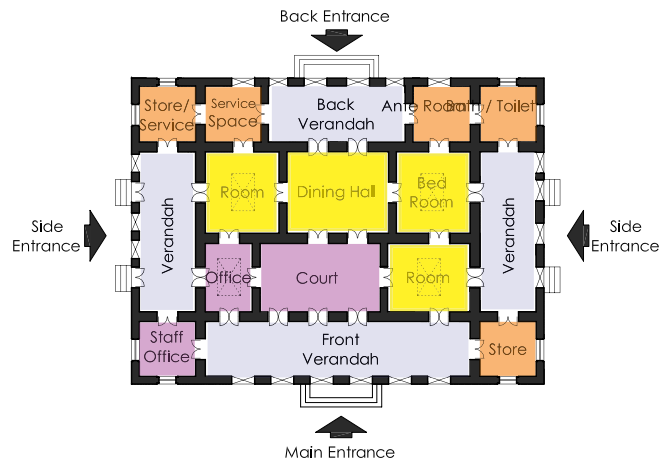


Fig. 6.10 Circuit House, Krishnanagar

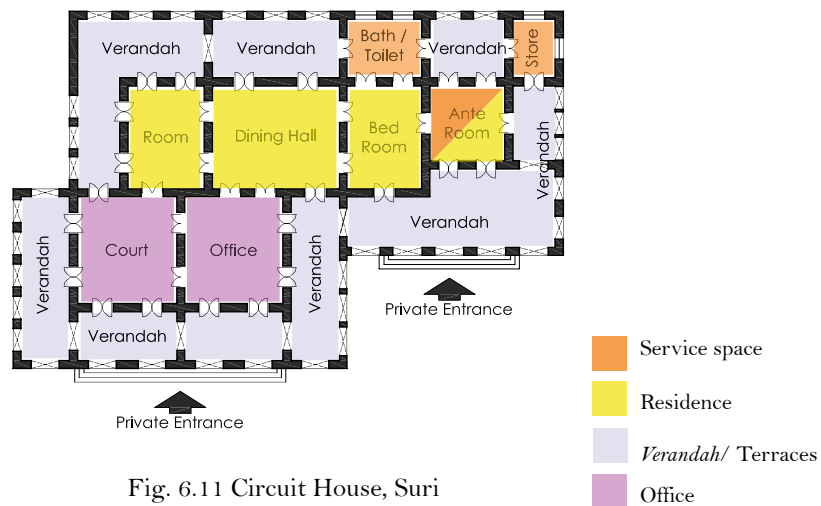


Fig. 6.11 Circuit House, Suri

10). The core consisted of a 3x3 or a 3x2 matrix of cellular main spaces, and the envelope of a *verandah* with other portions (usually corners) enclosed to form secondary rooms. The spaces in the core functioned in receding layers -- the one in front being the public layer for court-related activities, those at the back being the private residential layer. One usually entered the courtroom from the *verandah*; this in turn had the Judge's private office off it on one side, and a guest room or general multipurpose room on the other. Behind the courtroom was the dining hall, off from which were bedrooms, which in turn connected directly, (or through ante-rooms), to toilets and bathing spaces. Open *verandahs* on all four sides meant that the building was accessible in a number of ways. It is likely that the residential entry happened on one side, while the service staff entered through the rear *verandah*.²⁰ The dining hall -- the nerve centre of the scheme -- negotiated between the residential and official sections of the building. Far removed from the modern concept of dedicated dining spaces, it also doubled up as a central circulation area. It was in fact one of the most non-exclusive and active busiest spaces, criss-crossed by movement between the rooms -- and not unlike the central courtyard in the indigenous houses of Bengal.²¹ In this sense, it was very different from the exclusive use of the Great Hall or dining room as a space for specially designated use in nineteenth-century domestic architecture in Britain. In fact, most circuit houses had no separate entrance hall -- the *verandah* played much of this role.²² There were instances (e.g. in the circuit house at Suri, built in 1806) where non-symmetrical formations distinct from the core-and-envelop form was used, but even here the basic concept of the building as a layering of work and residential spaces seems the organising principle (Fig. 6.11).²³ Although the circuit houses in different *sadar* towns did share a basic typological format, given localised nature of provincial building activity in the early-nineteenth century, their designs were not identical. Very few of them had two storeys, possibly due to the fact that circuit houses were considered only temporary (and hence not full-fledged) residences and so the amount of spatial provision wasn't that elaborate.²⁴ In any case, they were virtually identical

Survey Department of Government of Bengal, and therefore pre-date that period. However, their layouts, wall thicknesses and other design details are very similar to those in Midnapur or Bankura (for which definite dates are available). They thus appear to have been constructed around the same time, i.e. by the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

²⁰ One gets an idea of the basic components of a circuit house from the PWD Building Register Bengal 1884. For example, the circuit house compound in Bankura contained 1. Main circuit house building (pucca, flat roof, terraced floor), 2. Cook house (mud wall, thatched roof, mud floor), 3. Stable (-ditto-), 4. Well. Writers Building State Secretariat Library Calcutta (WBSSLC), *Register of Buildings Borne on the Books of PWD, Bengal, 1884* (2), XXIII8.

²¹ It has been suggested for instance by the architectural historian, Swati Chattopadhyay, that the central space in bungalows -- also reasonably well-lit through the use of skylights or clerestory lights above -- was actually an equivalent of the courtyard in the traditional dwellings of Bengal, rather than owing its ancestry to European prototypes. This is especially true in terms of the way it actually functioned, like the courtyard, as the most active core-space through which access to most other spaces of the house was negotiated. Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationism and the Colonial Uncanny* (London: Routledge, 2005), 120 - 125.

²² The absence of entrance halls was noted by Herbert Compton, a judicial officer in the late-nineteenth century: 'very few bungalows have [entrance] halls, the *verandah* in the front of the house doing duty for such'. But this does not seem to be universally true of provincial Bengal, since the author himself found quite a few bungalows built in the early-nineteenth century onwards that contained halls. But as will be discussed later in this chapter, the character of these halls was quite different from their European counterparts. H. Compton, 'Bungalow life', *Indian Life in Town and Country*, (London: George Newnes Limited, 1904), 212.

²³ In the Suri circuit house (built 1806), two court rooms were housed in the front layer, slightly to one side, ringed by their own *verandahs* on three sides; the residential layer was organised at the back, with its own front entrance, and service *verandahs* and spaces in the rear.

²⁴ Bankura Circuit-Judge's house, mentioned in Chapter 3, was more of an exception. Among other exceptions was the second circuit house at Burdwan, commissioned for use around 1896-97. But it was earlier the Divisional Commissioner's residence-cum-office, and its double-storey form seems to have been linked more to its predominantly residential function.

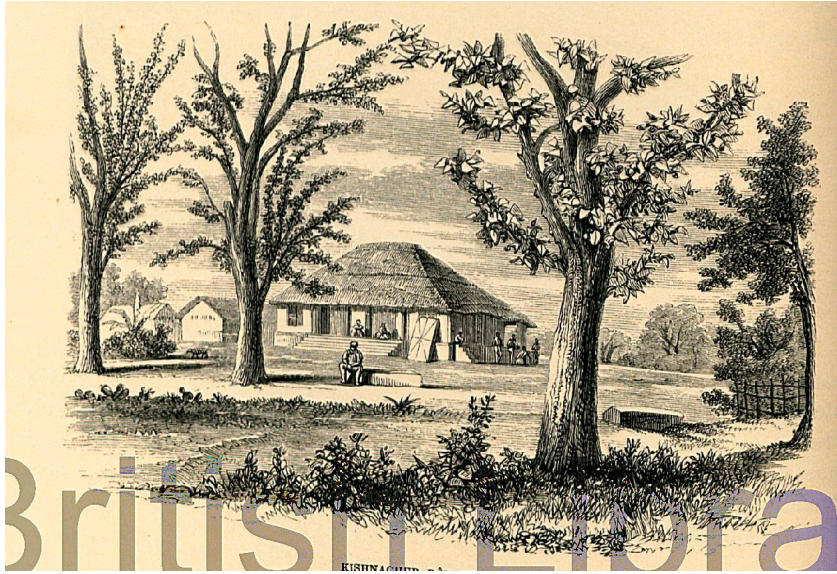


Fig. 6.12a Officer's bungalow, Krishnanagar, early-nineteenth century.
Source: *Rural Life in Bengal*, Colesworthy Grant.



Fig. 6.12b *Dak* (travellers bungalows provided by the Postal Department) bungalow, Krishnanagar, early-nineteenth century.
Source: *Rural Life in Bengal*, Colesworthy Grant.



Fig. 6.13 Palladian mansion probably in Madras 1835 - large double storey residence as an indicator of status.
Source: British Library Images Online Collections.

to simple forms of the early nineteenth-century residential bungalow in Bengal (Fig. 6.12a and 6.12b).²⁵ In fact, on many occasions their activities were simply housed in former residential buildings, or they shared the same building as a European officers' residence or travellers' (*dak*) bungalow – again, both trends that continued well into the late nineteenth-century.²⁶ The basic typological requirements of circuit houses, residential bungalows or travellers' bungalows were thus considered to be virtually the same, and the uses highly compatible with each other – it made functional and formal interchange easy.

While in big cities like Calcutta or Madras the use of double storey residences was clearly associated with status or affluence (Fig. 6.13),²⁷ in the *mufassal* (province) the number of storeys seems to have been chiefly a function of the geo-climatic conditions of the location in question – at least during the first half of the nineteenth century. It is possibly no coincidence that almost all the residential bungalows of district officials built in *sadar* towns of southern Bengal (e.g. Krishnanagar, Burdwan, Barisal, Jessore, Khulna, Hughly), a region subject to heavy damp rising from the ground, had two storeys, while those in hotter and drier areas like Suri, Bankura or parts of Bihar were single-storey buildings. In fact, dealing with dampness was a continuing refrain in numerous accounts of domestic and official habitation in colonial Bengal right from mid-eighteenth century.²⁸ As mentioned in Chapter 5, during the building of sub-

For a discussion on the re-use of the earlier Commissioner's residence cum office as the circuit house, see WBSA/PWD 3C/121, no.8, letter no. 308 J.G. from G. Stevenson Esq., Officiating Commissioner of Burdwan Division, to Secretary to Government of Bengal in the PWD, Burdwan 3 Oct. 1896.

²⁵ Period accounts of the simple forms of the late-eighteenth early-nineteenth century bungalows talk of a central core area made up of two or three rooms, surrounded by an annular *verandah* – showing that circuit houses in effect shared their typological format with these. For descriptions of bungalow architecture between the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century, see e.g. Capt Thomas Williamson, *The East India Vade-Mecum; or Complete Guide to Gentlemen Intended for the Civil, Military or, Naval Service of the East India Company* (London: Black, Parry and Kingsbury, 1810); R. M. Martin, *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1838).

²⁶ A few examples of this are given below:

In 1864-65 for example, a house was bought at Chittagong to be used as a circuit house cum police Superintendent's office cum a travellers' (*dak*) bungalow. While negotiating such a mix of use, W. Gordon Young, the Commissioner of Chittagong Division used 'precedence' of practice, giving the example of Noakhali where the circuit house, being larger than necessary, was also shared by the Magistrate's residence. BL, IOR/P/16/67, PWD Bengal Proceedings, April-June 1864, letter no. 1315, from W. Gordon Young, Commissioner of Chittagong Division to the Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 29 Feb. 1864.

The office-cum-residences of the Commissioner and Divisional Judge of Chittagong was also converted into a circuit house cum *dak*-bungalow in 1894. BL, IOR/ P/ 4533, PWD Bengal Proceedings, January- June 1894, proceeding number B 24-33, January.

The second circuit house in Burdwan, for example, was a conversion, in 1896-97, of the earlier Divisional Commissioner's residence-cum-office. WBSA, PWD 3C/121, Letter no 308 JG, from G Stevenson, officiating Commissioner of Burdwan Division to Secretary to Government of Bengal, Burdwan 3 Oct. 1896.

²⁷ This is evident, for example, from a comment by Mrs Clemons, when talking of houses in Madras: 'The style in which these houses are built is pretty; they are situated in the middle of a garden, and the greatest number only have a ground floor; some that are of a very superior description, have one storey above.' Mrs. M. Clemons, *The Manners and Customs of Society in India; Including Scenes in the Mofussil Stations; Interspersed with Characteristic Tales and Anecdotes; and Reminiscences of the Late Burmese War. To which are added Instructions for the Guidance of Cadets, and the Young Gentlemen, During their First Years' Residence in India*, (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1841), 10.

²⁸ Mrs Sherwood, the wife of a military officer, for example, said of the damp in their bungalow at Berhampur in 1806: 'Our house was large and convenient enough, but the mats which we found on the floors were perfectly decayed in some parts of the room, and dropped to pieces when we took them up. The walls were discoloured with damp. And the whole air was pervaded by a certain sweet and sickening odour which depressed the spirits and caused headaches...the buildings which formed the cantonments, though having generally only a ground floor, were handsome, being built much in the same style as those at Dinapore, and stuccoed with *chunam* [lime]. But, alas! There was nothing in which the damp appeared more decidedly than in the discolouring of these buildings, which, from white, became almost black after one rainy season.' M. M. Butt, *The Life and Times of Mrs. Sherwood (1775-1851)*, based on F.J. Darton (ed.), the diaries of Captain and Mrs. Sherwood (London: Wells Gardner, Darton & Co. Ltd., 1910), 286-287.

See also the account of Captain Williamson on the problematic construction and dampness in the late-eighteenth century bungalows in Bengal. Capt. Thomas Williamson, *The East India Vade Mecum; or Complete Guide to the Gentlemen Intended for*



Fig. 6.14 District Judge's bungalow, Krishnanagar, first decade of the nineteenth century

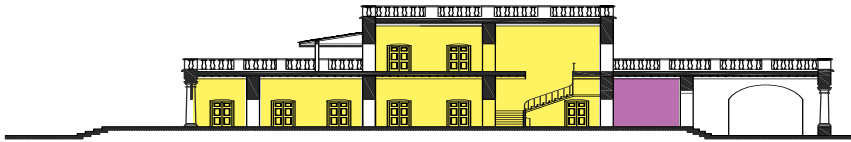


Fig. 6.15 District Collector's bungalow, Bankura, mid to late nineteenth century

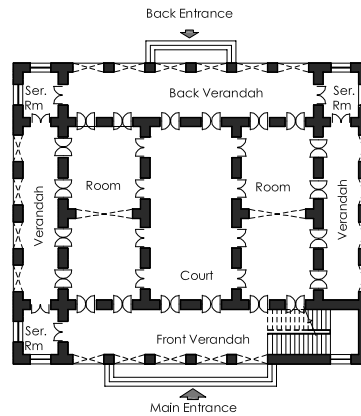


Fig. 6.16 Sub-divisional officer's bungalow, Khulna, early-nineteenth century. Note the similarity with early circuit house designs.



Fig. 6.17 Judge's bungalow, Krishnanagar - use of an indigo planter's bungalow as the residence of a district officer

divisional residences in the late -1850s, the consideration of dampness was actually articulated by the Commissioners as a criterion for choice of an appropriate building-type: 'an upper roomed dwelling and *cutcherry* is [was] the best adapted to the damp and unhealthy climate" and that "they are [were] best adapted to the districts of eastern Bengal'.²⁹ Along the way, with a particularly thrifty colonial state evolving in mid-to-late nineteenth century,³⁰ and the PWD's general pre-occupation with economy in building, there were obvious trade-offs to be effected here between convenience and cost. The aforementioned communication from the Commissioner of the Patna Division to the Lieutenant Governor's office, regarding the construction of the Collector's bungalow at Durbhanga in 1888, reveals such considerations:

...the Collector objects to living in any but a double storey house owing to the swampy nature of the ground. The Commissioner has suggested that a well-raised plinth would answer the purpose, whilst it would not be as expensive as a double storied building. The superintending Engineer states that if the plinth is raised two feet above surrounding ground, thus making the floor level five feet above the surrounding ground, the extra cost of building will be around Rs. 2,500 or total cost of Rs. 30, 064.³¹

By the late-nineteenth century it was obvious that the double-storied official residence bungalow was becoming a commodity difficult to ensure a free supply of. Yet it still thrived as the predominant dwelling type in large parts of lower Bengal. Another of the other reasons why a two-storied design of a bungalow was preferred³² was its ability to make the conjugal relationship between work and home spaces operate effectively. It enabled the two to be coupled, while also allowing some degree of separation. And as a result, the connection between the dwelling and office sections of the house became a key driver of the layouts of bungalows for provincial officers. Typically, in the single-storey version it involved a front-back layering, and in double-storey versions, a vertical layering with the residential quarters on top and the Collector's private office and staff offices below (Figs. 6.14 and 6.15). The ground floor also housed the public reception and dining areas, which were central to the rituals of entertainment in provincial official life. On the whole, the design of residential bungalows, whether single-storey or double-storey, revolved around the specific relationships between a few categories of generic spaces:

- Office areas (Collector's/ Judge's office and staff office)
- Public / guest entertainment areas (drawing room, public dining room)
- Residential areas (bedrooms, living room, private dining room, nurseries, bathing rooms)
- Service areas (kitchen, storage areas, outhouses, stables)

the Civil, Military or Naval Service of the Hon. East India Company vol. 2 (London: Black, Parry and Kingsbury, 1810), 6-9.

²⁹ British Library, IOR, PWD Bengal Proceedings, Jan 1860, nos. 89-101, P/ 16/ 37.

³⁰ The fact that the colonial state in late-nineteenth century India was particularly cautious about departmental spending is very apparent in governmental documents of the period across the board – especially in those like the PWD or the Education Department. Minimising costs or abandoning projects because of cost, appears to have been a recurrent theme.

³¹ WBSA/ PWD 17/1883, 'A' Proceedings for November 1888, Nos. 22-30, from Commissioner, Patna Division, to the office of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Letter of 11 Nov. 1885.

³² There are numerous instances where this preference comes through. Most of the Commissioners opted for the two storied type of sub-divisional building in 1858-59. The Durbhanga Collector in fact categorically stated his preference for a two-storied dwelling (despite its cost implication) on account of dampness, whereby the lower floor was not suitable for residential use, but could be used for the 'office within the house'. *Ibid.*

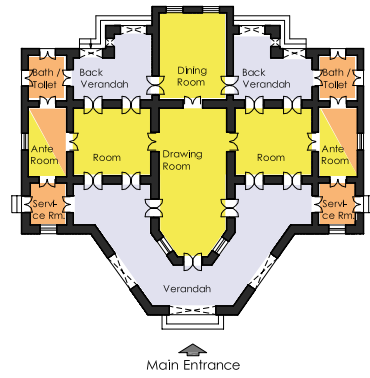
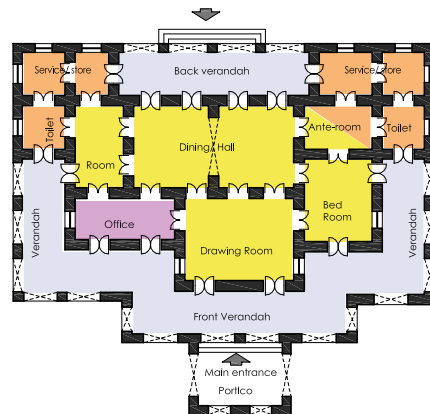


Fig. 6.18 Civil surgeon's bungalow, Bankura, 1830s.



- Service space
- Residence
- Verandah/ Terraces
- Office



Fig. 6.19 Civil surgeon's bungalow, Suri, 1890s.

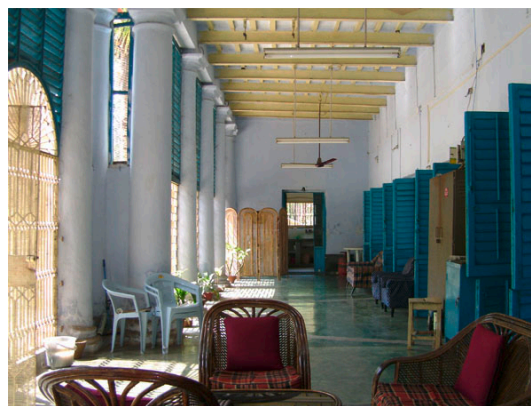
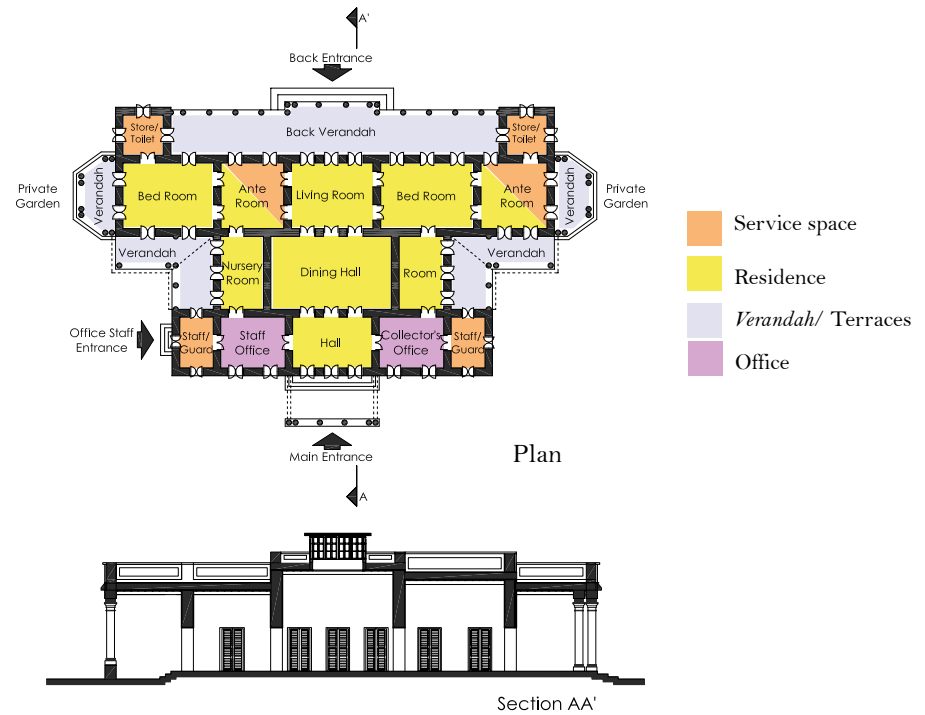


Fig. 6.20 Collector's bungalow, Bankura, 1870s

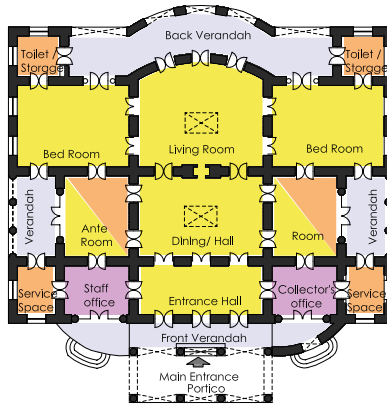


Fig. 6.21 Collector's residence, Suri, 1903

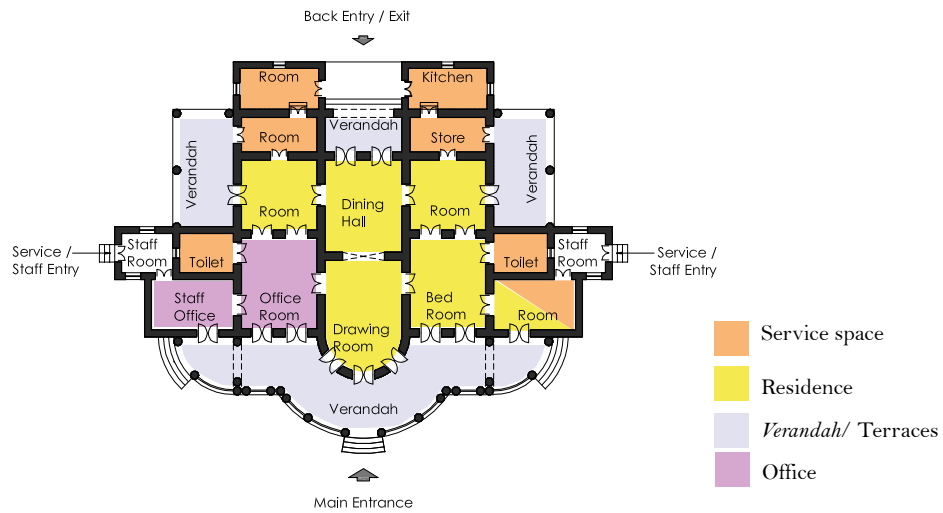


Fig. 6.22 Police Superintendent's bungalow, 1905

- Leisure areas (*verandah*, terrace, garden and the bungalow grounds)

In essence, the plan of the single-storey officer's bungalow was an elaboration of the basic principles seen in the earlier circuit houses (Fig 6.16). It is important to note here that a number of residential bungalows in *sadar* towns were not custom designed for officials, but were either bought or leased from European planters or *zamindars* in the area (Fig. 6.17).³³ Even when constructed specifically for the purpose, they were mostly built along the lines of European residential architecture generally prevalent in the locality. In any case, residential buildings for provincial officers were largely³⁴ not subject to a centralised design 'type' or decision-making (other than in matters of cost) until much later on, from around 1920-25. Their designs remained mostly in the hands of District officers and, after 1855, in those of local engineers (i.e. the Executive Engineer and from the 1880s, the District Engineer). A look at designs of single-storey bungalows in district towns of Bengal from the early-nineteenth to early-twentieth century reveals fairly elaborate developments compared to the basic form of the circuit house. While the basic 'core-and-envelope' form and the layering of work and home spaces still remained, the buildings increasingly reflected a far more differentiated system of spaces and circulation systems to suit different groups of users. The out annular spaces too took on a variety of forms and functions. In the Civil Surgeon's bungalow in Bankura (built in the 1830s), for example, the back *verandah* was split into two 'L-shaped' portions, and the side-*verandahs* were enclosed to create another layer of service spaces and ante-rooms (Fig. 6.18). In the Civil Surgeon's bungalow in Suri, built along similar lines (as late as 1892), the service spaces were wrapped around the back corners. (Fig. 6.19) From around the 1870s – as evidenced, for example, in the Collectors' bungalows at Bankura (built 1870s) and Suri (built 1903), and the Police Superintendent's bungalow at Bankura (built 1905) – official residential bungalow designs became particularly nuanced and elaborate (Figs. 6.20, 6.21, 6.22). One of the key features was the skilful apportioning of the *verandah* space into different segments, articulated differently and each playing different roles. It could thus be attached to different rooms, have different shapes (curved, segmented or angular) and absorb either a secondary space or part of a main space within its depth, while roughly retaining its annular continuity. There was also increasingly more flexibility in the 3x3 or 3x2 arrangement of rooms in the 'core', with some of the layers (depth-wise) expanding to the sides to include more rooms (Fig. 6.20). The 'core-and-envelop' plan thus tended towards a generic matrix of spaces, enabling more options in terms of hierarchical structure and sequence of access.

A particularly skilful handling of the relationship between official and residential spaces within the two-storey bungalow was visible in the Collector's house at Krishnanagar (built probably in the first quarter of nineteenth century). Here, a front portico (to receive horse

³³ As mentioned earlier, the Judge's bungalow in Krishnanagar had formerly been an indigo planter's house. In some cases, *zamindars* also undertook the construction of bungalows of provincial officers and designs were sourced from *zamindari* buildings. In Durbhanga, for example, the design of a bungalow originally built for the Maharaja (used then by Capt. Kunhardt, a military official) was copied – albeit in a diluted form – sometime later, around 1888, for the design of the new Collector's residence. Two of the seven new officials' bungalows were also constructed by the Maharaja. Letter of 30th July 1887, from R.H, Commissioner, Patna Division, to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Bengal.

³⁴ With the exception of the sub-divisional residence and *cutcherries*.

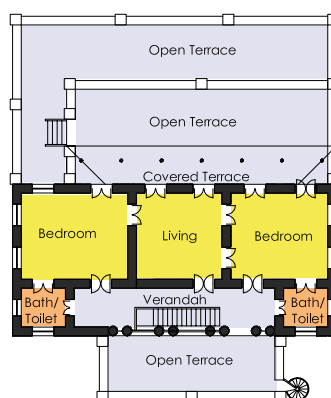


Fig. 6.23 District Collector's bungalow, Krishnanagar, early to mid-nineteenth century

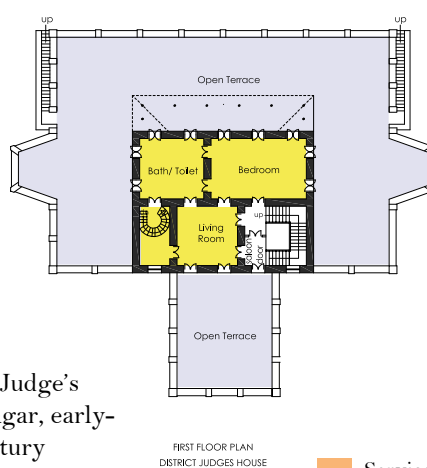
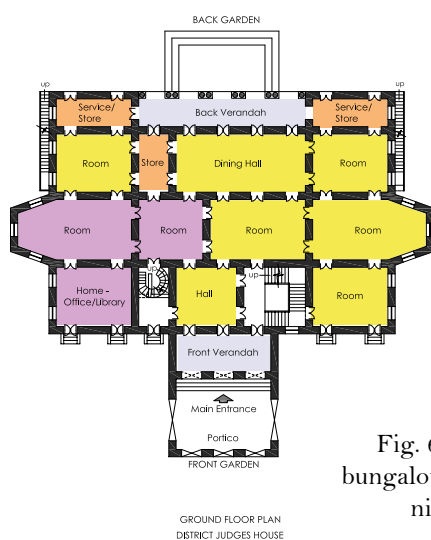


Fig. 6.24 District Judge's bungalow, Krishnanagar, early-nineteenth century



- Service space
- Residence
- Verandah/ Terraces
- Office

carriages and later, motor cars) led to the front *verandah* and then onto the ground-floor entry halls, the latter gave access to the public drawing and dining rooms, and through a staircase to the residential quarters upstairs (Fig. 6.23). The Collector's office and the staff office were located on one side and approached by visitors from a *verandah* on the side. The Collector had a private entry to his office through the main hall, and the staff had an entry to their office directly off the front *verandah*. However, the entrance hall – unlike those in nineteenth-century English houses where the circulation was heavily controlled³⁵ – had a highly porous periphery. Numerous doors opened from it into different spaces which were themselves inter-connected. The rear *verandah* stretched out along the length of the drawing room and the Collector's home-office suite, and opened up to the back garden. On the first floor, leading off the front *verandah*, was the family living room, with bed rooms and bath-rooms on either side. A separate service staircase for servants' use led directly up to this upper floor.³⁶ The Judge's bungalow in the same town was another example of a two storied type, (again built in the early-nineteenth century).³⁷ Here too, one entered through a front portico onto a front *vernadah*. However, in this case, the hall did not include the staircase, which was instead located in a separate space adjacent to it – hereby clearly separating out the access to the official and other public functions on the ground floor, and to the residential functions on the first (Fig. 6.24). Its ground floor had an elaborate array of rooms, arranged in three layers depth-wise, and three bays width-wise (the most central of these being further sub-divided into two or three smaller bays). This was possibly rooted in the building's previous use as an indigo planters' *kuthi* [estate-house] with extensive offices, entertainment areas (e.g. drawing room, dance hall, public dining room), storage, warehouse and staff areas. However, at this relatively early stage, the designs seem to not have found full resolution, since at least two of the central rooms on the ground floor did not receive any natural light. This may have also been linked to a fear of the tropical sun, especially in early-nineteenth century, whereby the 'core' areas of bungalows were kept relatively dark to regulate the penetration of heat and light. By the mid-nineteenth century, double-storey official bungalows were restricted to a two-bay depth for the core areas whereas single-storey bungalows were invariably built with central skylights allowing natural light in all spaces and suggesting a degree of naturalisation towards the local climate. However, most rooms still did not have direct exposure to the sun, and opened out through large doors to the *verandah* instead. On the other hand, the high level of connectivity

³⁵ The Great Hall in nineteenth-century domestic architecture of Britain – especially in somewhat comparable contexts such as country houses – usually had a single entry to another room which further led to a sequential chain of spaces, creating clearly directed lines of movement through the house.

³⁶ Such separation was especially true of service-access to bathing and toilet areas. Bathrooms usually had two doors such that there was no overlap between the cleaner's access and the residents' access. However, separate access to toilets in Bungalows was possibly also linked to traditional notions of pollution and purity prevalent in Bengal at the time, whereby areas like bath and kitchen were considered 'impure' and contaminated, and kept away from the main house. They were cleaned and the night-soil removed from them by a separate caste of people (the *jamadars* and *mathors*) through segregated passageways which did not interfere with the 'clean' areas of the house. Following European practices, toilets and baths were later included within the main bungalow. However, due to its heavy dependence on local personnel, their servicing systems had to build on prevalent local practices and associated social-occupational systems.

³⁷ The exact date of construction of this building is not known. However, its construction technique, wall thickness and stylistic features are nearly identical to the Circuit Judge's house in Bankura discussed at the beginning of Chapter 3. Bankura Collectorate letters clearly state that the latter was constructed in 1808, making the early-nineteenth century a reasonable assumption for the time of construction of the former.

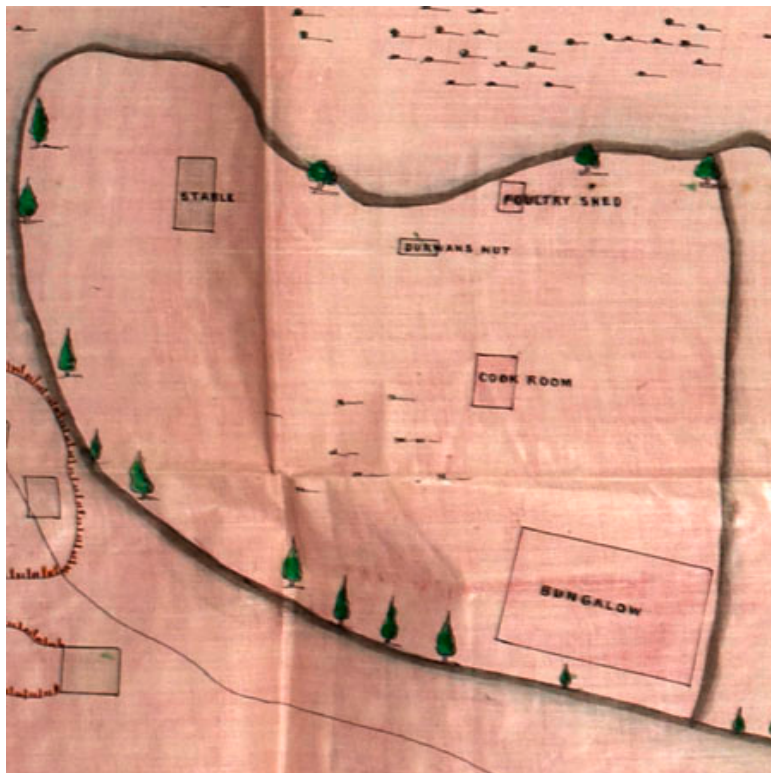


Fig. 6.25 The bungalow and its associated structures, Chittagong, late nineteenth century. In this case these consisted of the cook room, stable, poultry shed and the *durwan's* (guard's) hut.

Source: British Library, IOR, PWD A Proceedings, Sept. 1885.

between spaces allowed air to flow through and daylight to be borrowed from one another.

6.1.3 Environmental competence, domesticity and everyday life

In terms of the colonial lifestyle, the province stood between the urban and the rural. To British officers posted to provincial areas via Calcutta, the *zilla sadar* clearly represented a move to the countryside. By the late-eighteenth/early-nineteenth centuries, the pressure on urban land in Calcutta was already acute. A range of letters from the 'Unpublished Records of the Government' between 1748 and 1786 dealt with subject matters like land scarcity and instructions to East India Company officers not to indulge in having gardens and outdoor cook-houses in their premises.³⁸ In comparison, the luxurious official bungalow in the *sadar* district towns, with its vast enclosure, indulgent space standards³⁹ and large retinue of service staff, offered a completely different lifestyle. It became the symbolic universe for 'country-living'. Perhaps most crucially – through an integrated system of service personnel, built spaces and devices – the official bungalow built up a certain 'environmental competence' against 'tropical' elements, enabling adaptation to a way of life far removed from that in England.⁴⁰ Thus customised, the provincial bungalow in Bengal also represented a refuge, a healing cocoon, almost compensating for the exposure to Indian life and Indian people that workers in the provincial *cutcherry* demanded on a daily basis. It was seen as indispensable for provincial officers to be able to recede into a sheltered world between their official duties in the *cutcherry*. In that sense, the two sites – the bungalow and the *cutcherry* – were intricately tied to one another.

The provincial officer's bungalow was hence a service-heavy environment. In many ways, its spatial conception was forged around the relationship between primary 'served' and secondary 'service' spaces, and their consequent use by different groups of people. Typically, in continuation of the trend seen in early circuit houses, the service spaces occupied the corner locations. While the ones in front served as staff offices or general multi-purpose rooms, the ones at the rear were used for cooking, storage, bathing or as toilets. In any case, the official provincial bungalow was never an isolated entity but part of a 'compound', a large open and enclosed area, which also contained a number of subsidiary structures. A typical circuit house compound, for

³⁸ See Rev. J. Long, *Selections from Unpublished Records of Government, For the Years 1748 to 1767 Inclusive* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1970), Court of Directors' letter no. 312, titled "not to be lavish in Calcutta of the ground in building and gardening", 171. Such pressure on core areas of the city, for instance, was even reflected in the development of highly coveted garden-houses on its peripheries. In this connection, see, for example, S. Chattopadhyay, 'The Other Face of Primitive Accumulation: the Garden House in British Colonial Bengal', in P. Scriver and V. Prakash (eds.), *Colonial Modernities - Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

³⁹ Residential bungalow plots of district officers were regularly of sizes between 5-10 acres. In extreme cases like Anderson's *bagan* [Anderson's grove] in Bankura, where the Collector himself had a huge tract of productive land under his private ownership which also housed his bungalow, this went to figures as high as 113 *Bighas* or 37.9 Acres. Internal space standards of bungalows were also generous. Typical dimensions of spaces in provincial bungalows through the nineteenth century ranged from 16ft.-20ft. x 30ft. - 40ft. for public rooms, 20ft-24ft x 16ft-20ft for bed rooms, and 8ft-12ft x 8ft-30ft for ante rooms and service spaces, until the late-nineteenth century.

⁴⁰ The expression 'environmental competence', usually used within Environmental Psychology or Human-Environment Studies (especially in the context of vulnerable groups like children, the disabled and the elderly), refers to one's ability to cope and engage with the immediate surroundings in a constructive manner. I have found it to be an interesting lens to interrogate the colonists' relationship with the 'tropical' conditions.

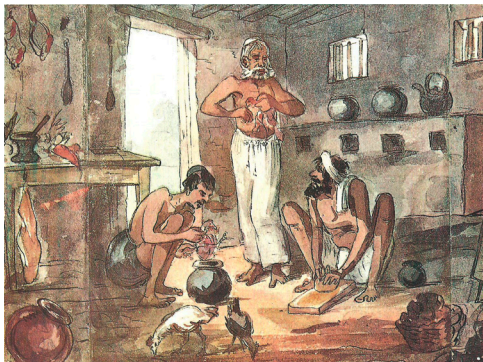


Fig. 6. 26a The bungalow kitchen.

Source: *Curry and Rice*, George Atkinson, 1859.



Fig. 6. 26b Activity in the bungalow store room or larder.

Source: *Curry and Rice*, George Atkinson, 1859.

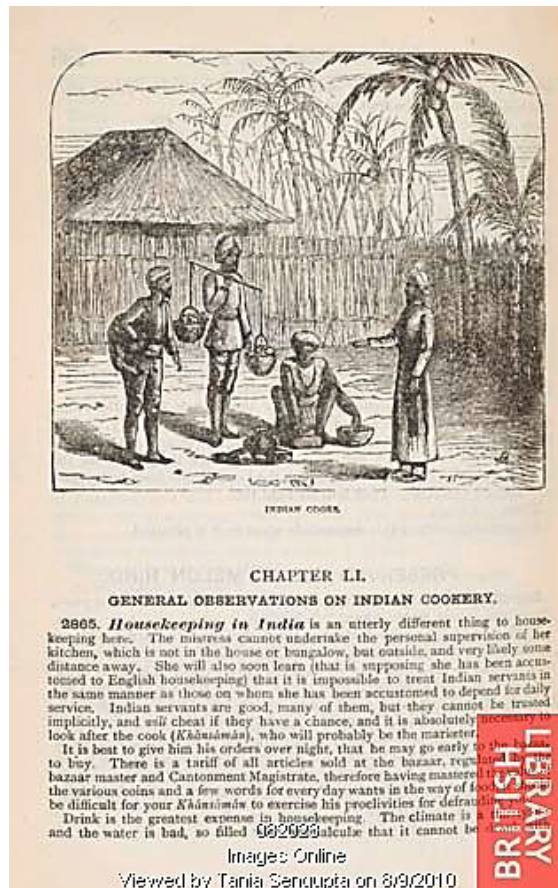


Fig. 6. 26c Depiction of a group of Indian cooks and notes on Indian house-keeping by an English lady in the late nineteenth century.

Source: Isabella Mary Beeton, *The Book of Household Management*, 1892. British Library Images Online

instance, would comprise the main circuit house building, cook-room, stable and well.⁴¹ In the residential bungalows of officers, this was expanded to include servants' quarters, out-offices and out-houses (Fig. 6.25) From the apportioning of the building costs for the Durbhanga Collector's residence (mentioned earlier), for example, it is apparent that almost 50% of the cost actually went towards these secondary structures.⁴²

A typical example of spaces that propped up the functioning of the main bungalow was thus the 'cook-room' [kitchen], which was usually a detached structure behind it. Attempts to keep the 'messy' life of the kitchen outside the perceptual world of the bungalow were common (Fig. 6.26a, 6.26c). In fact, very few European ladies were apparently aware of what went on inside the kitchen (typically in the native cook's custody), as Mrs. Clemons observed in the early-nineteenth century:

We have certainly improved them [the 'natives'] in the art of cooking, for there is scarcely anything which they cannot prepare in a superior manner. Few people however, think it necessary to visit the cook-room (by which name all kitchens are called), and as this is some distance from the house, none of the disagreeables of that department are ever seen. Perhaps the sight of place and of the manner⁴³ in which many a dainty dish is prepared, might affect the delicate stomachs of our country-women.

However, the same account also indirectly suggests that the cook-room was a site where hybrid practices developed, in the sense that European recipes were assimilated by native cooks and modified to suit Indian ingredients. In fact, the bungalow kitchen, along with other sites like public restaurants and kitchens in native middle and upper-middle class houses, was a site where, the whole genre of Anglo-Indian cooking largely developed.⁴⁴ Another interesting description of the cook-room and its everyday connections with the main house is found, for instance, in the following account by H. Compton, a civil judge in the late-nineteenth century:

The kitchen is a detached building erected as far away as possible from the bungalow. The only connection with your commissariat allowed in the dwelling is the storeroom, invariably known in India as the "godown"; and the sole domestic duty of the diligent Anglo-Indian housewife is to "do her godown" every morning. The cook comes with an assortment of plates and pots, makes his suggestions for the menus of the day's meals, and proceeds to help himself to the exact amount of ingredients necessary for them... In the kitchen, the cooking arrangements are primitive. The "range" consists of half a dozen small open fireplaces, each about eight inches square, grouped in a nest on the floor, or on raised masonry, and the fuel is wood or charcoal. Natives are so accustomed to the floor that they prefer to work on it; and a cook stirring a saucepan, is much more comfortable squatting on his haunches, than in a more elevated position.⁴⁵

⁴¹ WBSSLC, *Register of Buildings Borne on the Books of Public Works Department, Bengal, 1884* (2), XXIII.8.

⁴² Building specifications were also graded – with the service spaces being usually of *cutch* construction (mud wall, thatched roof, mud floor) as compared to the *pucca* construction (brick wall in mud or lime mortar, terraced roof and floor) of the main building. Since the cost of secondary structures was substantially lower than that of the main building on account of their *cutch* construction, in certain cases the total quantum of building accounting for secondary structures was actually higher than that of the main house.

⁴³ Mrs. M. Clemons, *The Manners and Customs of Society in India*, 187–188.

⁴⁴ For detailed works on colonial culinary history and the genre of Anglo-Indian cooking see, for example, D. Burton, *The Raj at Table: a Culinary History of the British in India* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1993); J. Brennan, *Curries and Bugles: a Memoir and Cookbook of the British Raj* (London: Viking, 1990); D. Burnett and H. Saveri, *The Road to Vindaloo: Curry Cooks and Curry Books* (Totnes: Prospect, 2008).

⁴⁵ H. Compton, *Indian life in Town and Country 1853–1906* (London: George Newnes Limited, 1904), 158.



Fig. 6.26d Indian staff laying out the dining table in the bungalow.

Source: *The European in India: from a collection of drawings by Charles D Oylly*, Capt. Thomas Williamson, 1813. British Library.

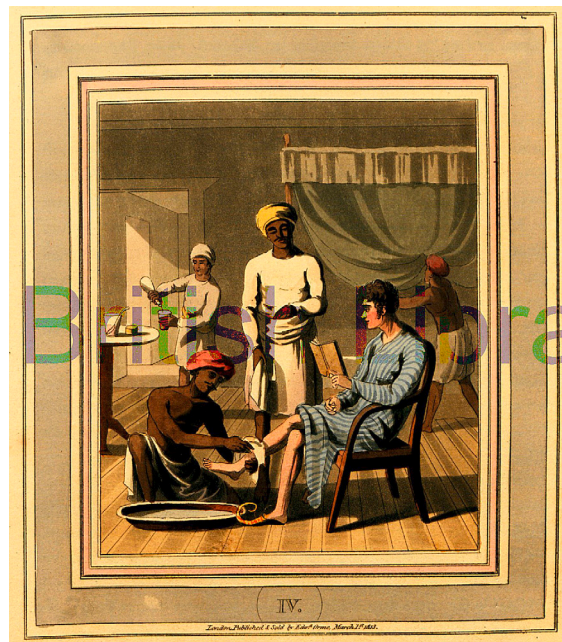


Fig. 6.27 Bodily rituals in the colonial bungalow.

Source: *The European in India: from a collection of drawings by Charles D Oylly*, Capt. Thomas Williamson, 1813. British Library.

It was spaces like store-rooms for cooking provisions which, as part of the rear service-layer, acted as the interface between the cook-room and the main house, the domain of the House-Lady (Fig. 6.26b). The detached location of the kitchen, its internal layout and workings essentially drew more from local lifestyles than European paradigms. So too was its architecture modelled on local building practices – it was usually an 8ft wide and 10ft deep structure with thatched roof on mud walls between wooden posts, few openings, and a continuous *verandah* in front, effectively identical to the kitchen in a standard Bengali household.⁴⁶ Another revealing account of accidental connections between the main house and the cook-room was again given by Mrs. Clemons:

On one occasion...I determined just to peep into the cook-room....On putting my head within the door, I found everything dished and placed on the ground without covers, in regular order, as if on the table, and the butler and the cook disputing in high terms. On my inquiring the reason of all this, they told me they always laid the dishes thus, to see which way they would look best when placed on the table!⁴⁷

This narrative tellingly reveals how, in the absence of a 'real' physical place within the official residence itself, the cook-room simulated the anticipated spatial arrangement and presentation of food in the bungalow dining room (Fig. 6.26d). The account also reveals how such 'mimicking' of real situations and spaces was used as an effort to bridge the gaps in comprehension between apparently diverse cultural practices. Interestingly, it also suggests the inevitable gaps in any such attempts, and the channels through which Indian sensibilities of food arrangement might have also infiltrated their way to the European dining table inside.

In climatic conditions that Europeans perceived as ever difficult to acclimatise to,⁴⁸ massive value was placed in the official provincial bungalow on bodily rituals like bathing, rising early, maintaining a good diet and temperance – all heavily recommended (though not always followed), from the late-eighteenth century in numerous private accounts, handbooks, travel guides or lifestyle manuals given to Company and later Crown servants coming to work in India (Fig. 6.27).⁴⁹ A piece of advice by Mrs Clemons to officers embarking on a career in India encapsulated the role of such bodily rituals effectively:

I have mentioned that early rising is required on account of duty...But should this not be the case, it is essential to health that you should rise at this hour, for the purpose of enjoying cool refreshing morning air...Bathing is also another essential in the preservation of health. The best time for using the bath is an hour or two after breakfast, when the atmosphere becomes hot, and you begin to feel a

⁴⁶ The detached kitchen was a typical feature of Bengali houses, stemming, as mentioned earlier, from the socio-religious notion that contact with food represented 'contamination'. In the bungalow there seems to have been a tacit acceptance of going by local practices for domains which were clearly in the custody of native staff. Compared to Bengali households, in the bungalow the detached kitchen also served to separate out servants' areas (seen commonly in nineteenth-century houses in England). However, despite such physical separations, the occupation pattern of its spaces rendered such distinctions within the bungalow in many ways redundant.

⁴⁷ Mrs. M. Clemons, *The Manners and Customs of Society in India*, 188.

⁴⁸ As mentioned in Chapter 1, such perceptions gained even stronger currency in late nineteenth century, with the emerging racial theories. These in effect implied that adjusting to 'tropical' conditions were virtually impossible due to the 'constitutional' difference between European and Indian bodies.

⁴⁹ For a detailed account of the bodily practices of British men and women in India during the Raj, see e.g. Elizabeth M Collingham, *Imperial bodies: the physical experiences of the Raj* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001). Collingham demonstrates how the discipline, management and display of bodies by the British played a crucial role in the development of British presence in India from commerce through territorial control to imperialism.

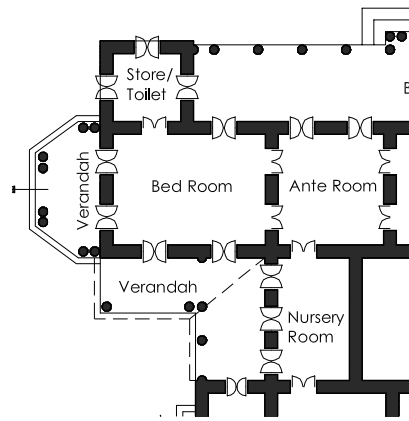


Fig. 6.28 Cluster of composite spaces in the bungalow

lassitude creeping over you. All the houses have baths attached to them, which are daily filled, and you will always find that the plunging into the cold water and remaining in it for five minutes will refresh you for some hours afterwards. ... I have known many who regularly bathed twice a day during the very hot seasons...⁵⁰

Spatially, these rituals to keep the body in reasonable order caused circuit houses and official bungalows to develop particularly elaborate toilets and washing / bathing areas. Not only were significant proportions of space dedicated to these functions [fig.], but, crucially, the temporal rhythm of the bungalow in terms of the use of spaces at different times of the day was largely determined by them. Such temporal cycles and rituals were intrinsically bound with spaces having distinct physical and experiential characteristics – such as waking up early and going for a walk in the vast and open bungalow grounds, or having breakfast in the shaded *verandah*, taking a bath in the generous bathroom preferably twice a day, an afternoon nap in the cool dark interior of the bedroom or retiring to the cool, breezy *verandah* for drinks after dinner. In drier areas like Bankura, Suri or parts of Bihar, the bungalow was virtually ‘shut up’ during the daytime to keep the hot air out.⁵¹ Significantly, such domestic cycles also directly moderated the temporal rhythm of ‘official’ work. A bath two hours after breakfast obviously meant one continued to be at home at an hour that would otherwise in Britain be ‘office time’ or it involved making a trip home at noon, possibly combined with lunch and an afternoon nap. Domestic rituals thus intermittently intersected with official ones, just as much as the other way around.⁵²

As well as the service spaces, the official provincial bungalows also had a range of intermediate spaces such as ante-rooms, nurseries or multipurpose rooms – these were usually attached to principal spaces like bedrooms, or were located between these and the service spaces to the rear. Sometimes a few rooms functioned together as a unit, constituting composite clusters such as ‘bedroom, nursery, ante-room, bathroom, toilet’, or ‘home office-staff office-toilet-store room’ (fig. 6.28). Again, as in the *cutcherry*, the factor that most aided such spatial and functional clusters was the characteristic porosity of bungalow environments.⁵³ Fanny Parks, a European lady travelling through eastern and central India, noted in the second quarter of the nineteenth century:

The style of Indian [Anglo-Indian] houses differ altogether from that of one in England...The windows and doors are many; the windows are to the ground, like the French; and on the outside, they

⁵⁰ Mrs. M. Clemons, *The Manners and Customs of Society in India*, 316-317. See also the comment by Herbert Compton, a civil judge in the late nineteenth century: ‘the Anglo-Indian is, or should be, an early riser. To lie late in bed is called a “Europe morning.”’ H. Compton, *Indian life in Town and Country*, 164.

⁵¹ An account of this is available in the following observation by Herbert Compton: “In the hot weather, it is customary to ‘shut up the bungalow’ at about seven in the morning, ...Every door and window is closed, and thereafter the greatest care taken to make entrances and exits as quickly as possible, for a door left open for any length of time soon raises the temperature. If kept carefully closed, it is remarkable how cool the room keeps compared with the heat out of doors.” *Ibid.*, 165.

⁵² Incidentally, Mrs. Clemons also warned against bathing in the sea (because of sharks) and in rivers (because of crocodiles) finally summing up that ‘your bath in the house is the only secure and comfortable accommodation of the kind’. This is particularly interesting in the manner in which it rendered the external environment to be all of a threat, clearly positing the (bath in the) bungalow against it as the ‘safe haven’. Mrs. M. Clemons, *The Manners and Customs of Society in India*, 316-317.

⁵³ This is amply evident from the plans of bungalows right through the nineteenth century.



Fig. 6.29 Bungalow Interior, early nineteenth century.
Source: *The European in India: from a collection of drawings*
by Charles D Oylly, Capt. Thomas Williamson, 1813.
British Library.

are also protected by Venetian windows of the same description. All the rooms open into one another, with folding doors⁵⁴

Herbert Compton also noted similar attributes in officers' houses in the late-nineteenth century:

Every room has direct access to a verandah, and all enter one into another, for there are no passages. Each bedroom has its own bath and retiring room, there being no drains in India. A room with a single door in it is unknown; all have two, and many three, four, and even six, and those leading into the verandahs are generally glazed, which saves windows.⁵⁵

The absence of corridors and passages to mediate the relationships between rooms, and the access to one room through others, also shows the more flexible notions of privacy in provincial domestic set-ups. It would of course be misleading, however, to assume that the numerous doors and windows implied a freely connected, non-hierarchical spatial scheme. Instead, it's very potential lay in the possibility of a range of spatial relationships – in terms of clusters, hierarchies and access sequence – through the selective opening or closing of doors. Thus it was the combination of non-deterministic, flexible spaces that could take on a range of functions on the one hand, and the potential spectrum of connectivity created by multiple doors and windows on the other, which accounted for the versatility of bungalow environments.⁵⁶ Residential environments took on a provisional and ever-changing character.

Another dimension of this provisional character arose from the use of furniture within officers' bungalows. Up to the mid-nineteenth century, provincial bungalow-interiors seem to have been rather sparse, with few pieces of furniture, as various visual representations (Fig. 6.29), reveal. Typical comments of the time include:

The interior appears to the new comer, to be quite unfurnished, for there are neither curtains nor fireplaces, and seldom is a carpet to be seen.⁵⁷ The sleeping apartments contain only the bed, which is generally placed in the middle of the room.

None of the houses, however, could be said to be over-furnished, and there was space enough to move about without knocking things down.⁵⁸

In fact, within the official provincial bungalow, rather than fixing a particular furniture layout or a set manner of using them, there seems to have been a culture of leaving a generous amount of space free to absorb temporary or provisional arrangements. Although this had

⁵⁴ F. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque, During Four and Twenty Years in the East; with Revelations of Life in the Zenana*, (London: Pelham Richardson, 1850), 21.

⁵⁵ H. Compton, *Indian life in Town and Country*, 157.

⁵⁶ Interestingly, both of these were in radical contrast to their nineteenth-century British counterparts. Nineteenth-century domestic architecture in Britain was particularly characterised by deterministic designation of spaces and development of specialised rooms with dedicated functions. The circulation pattern was also heavily controlled, with a limited number of doors, and their careful positioning, to regulate the overall connectivity. This has been highlighted by Swati Chattopadhyay in the context of discussing domestic spaces in Calcutta in the nineteenth century. See S. Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 115 - 117.

⁵⁷ Mrs M. Clemons, *The Manners and Customs of Society in India*, 10.

⁵⁸ Anon., *Life in the Mofussil*, 112.



Fig. 6.30 Bungalow interior, late-nineteenth century
- chance collection of items, Gorakhpur 1893.
Source: Columbia Online Archives

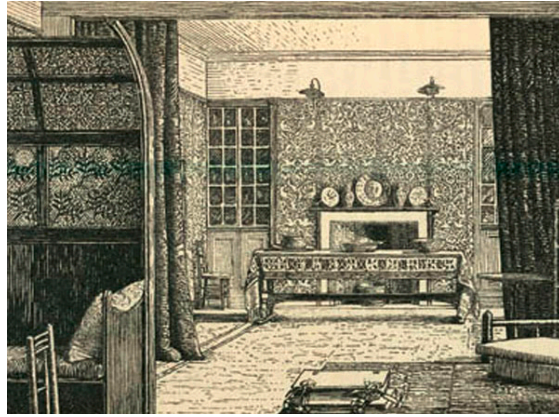
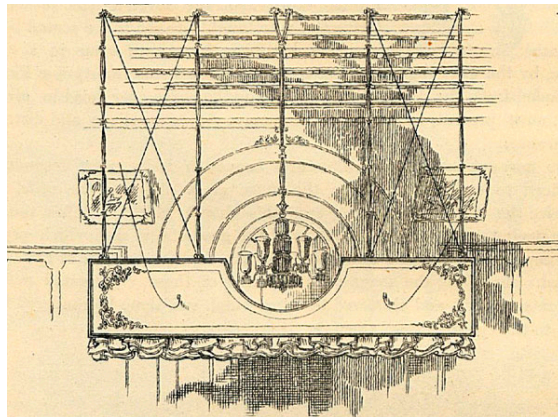


Fig. 6.31 Late-nineteenth century interior in
England (designed by William Morris).
Source: Original illustration from *Ladies' Companion*,
Aug. 1897. British Library Images Online.



Fig. 6.32 Bungalow devices - *punkah* (overhead fan), bungalow interior, Berhampur, 1863.
Source: 'Mrs Gladstone Lingham's drawing room at her residence in Berhampore, 1863',
British Library Images Online



transformed somewhat by the late-nineteenth century, and bungalow interiors became far more crowded with furniture,⁵⁹ an essentially flexible and ever-changing character still remained.⁶⁰ This was directly to do with the working culture of colonial governance. Official posting in a provincial station was typically on a short-term basis, with the maximum duration being about two years.⁶¹ In his description of a fellow colleague's house in a civil station in Bengal, a civilian officer observed that the used furniture was simply handed down from one officer to his successor:

One feature that particularly struck me in my visit, was the incongruous nature of the furniture. Bertram had brought his from Calcutta, and devoted some little attention to its selection; but he was quite the exception. In all the other houses the articles had been got together as they could be purchased from persons leaving the station from time to time; and as these had previously been obtained in a similar fashion, the general result can be imagined.⁶²

The outcome was a chance collection of items, including some that were seen as totally 'old-fashioned' (Fig. 6.30) -- very different from the conception of 'good living' back home in England, where interiors were becoming increasingly tied up with themes of stylistic consistency (Fig. 31).⁶³ In fact, it was also very distinct from the way such aspirations were actively being pursued in cities like Calcutta, which was evidently in direct reception of the 'finest' furniture from across Europe and copies thereof made by native hands.⁶⁴ The provincial bungalow, by contrast, tended to be an ad-hoc assembly of fragments from different officers' and families' lifestyles. But it was such chance inheritances that also lent agility and adaptability.

Like the *cutcherry*, the bungalow was heavy on everyday devices such as *punkahs* (fans), louvered and glass doors and windows, curtains, cloth-hung ceilings, bamboo *tatties*, *shataranchis* [grass floor mats], louvered sunshades and *verandah* eaves, and specially made oil lamps⁶⁵ – most

⁵⁹ This possibly had some links with emerging domestic aesthetics in Victorian England, riding on the prosperity brought about by the Industrial Revolution and its subsequent colonial expansions. The typical middle-class drawing room was crammed full of furniture, with intensive use of fabrics, and knick-knacks. In fact, bareness in a room was considered to be poor taste.

⁶⁰ In this context, art historian Prasannajit De Silva has provided some analysis of representations of domestic interiors in colonial India. De Silva showed how late-nineteenth century paintings and images reveal a more crowded and dense distribution of furniture within residential interiors as well as the way the apparent 'order' of the household seemed to break loose, compared to the 'spare' and more controlled quality of interiors in the early-nineteenth century. P. De Silva, 'Representing home life abroad: lifestyle manuals for Company men', paper presented at conference on Britain and India: intersections in visual culture, 1800-1900, Department of Art History, University of York, (2009).

⁶¹ Such transience was a vital aspect of provincial lifestyle and is reflected, for example, in the following observation by a civilian officer in the 1860s: 'for in most parts of India it is even more necessary to "speed the parting" than "welcome the guest"'. Anon., *Life in the Mofussil*, 56-57.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 111-112.

⁶³ Tendencies of creating interiors with consistent elements from a style were visible in England especially from the eighteenth century in the works, for example, of Robert Adams or William Chambers. Although the Victorian era was characterised by rich interiors with a profusion of objects from different parts of the world, thematic consistency of main elements like walls and furniture was still considered to be important. This was especially true of popular mid-to-late nineteenth century movements like the Arts and Crafts, where furniture, furnishings or wallpapers were all designed to tie up with each other.

⁶⁴ See for example the comment by Fanny Parks regarding the availability of furniture in Calcutta in mid-nineteenth century: 'The most beautiful French furniture was to be bought in Calcutta of M. de Bast, at whose shop marble tables, fine mirrors and luxurious couches were in abundance. Very excellent furniture was also to be had at the Europe shops, made by native workmen under the superintendence of European cabinet and furniture makers;' F. Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*, 21.

⁶⁵ Oil lamps for residential interiors in India had to be specially fabricated. Due to the larger ceiling heights (typically 15ft-20ft), the amount of light required was higher, demanding larger lamps. See in this connection the comment by Herbert Compton '...lamps are made especially for India, the ordinary English ones being of little use in the bungalow's large rooms, often with dark ceilings that absorb a great deal of light. I once took out half a dozen duplex-burner lamps

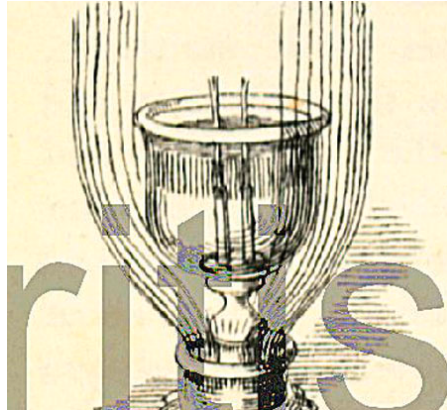


Fig. 6.33 Oil lamps in bungalows.

Source: A. *Sketches Illustrating the Manner and Customs of the Indian and the Anglo-Indian*, 1842. British Library Images Online. B. *Rural Life in Bengal*, Colesworthy Grant, 1860. British library.



Fig. 6.34 Bungalow devices: louvered and glass shuttered doors.

Source: *The European in India: from a collection of drawings by Charles D Oyley, Capt. Thomas Williamson*, 1813. British Library.

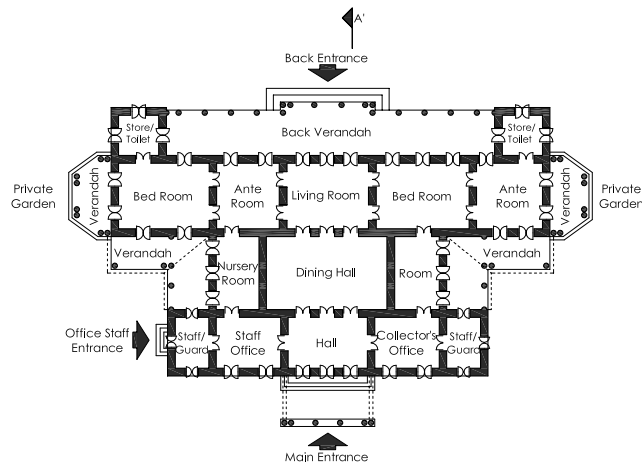
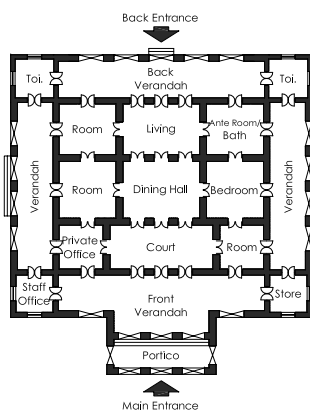


Fig. 6.35 Development of elaborate forms of residences: A. Circuit House, Bankura, early-nineteenth century B. District Collector's bungalow, Bankura, 1870s.

of which were geared to regulating heat, sunlight, rain and dampness, or to enable different levels of physical, visual and auditory privacy (Fig. 6.32, 6.33, 6.34). The bungalow's brick-and-mortar physical envelop was thus only a basic framework; the mobilisation of its organic functioning was integrally tied to this complex system of servicing paraphernalia. In fact, In Bengal, most of these devices were being used in bungalows in Bengal before they found extended use in official *cutcherries*. The transfer of such secondary apparatus across functional domains like the bungalow and the *cutcherry* was also a natural outcome of the residential roots of office architecture. Furthermore it is possibly the presence of such a wide range of largely non-fixed secondary apparatus that accounted for the official bungalow's intensive reliance on native support staff to install, operate, maintain or replace them.

The provisional bungalow's character was also largely determined by the notions of domesticity it nurtured. Until the 1820s the officers of the East India Company were not allowed to bring wives to India, resulting in a largely male European expatriate population. With this policy being eased from the 1820s, official provincial bungalows gradually came to function as genuine domestic environments.⁶⁶ Spatially, this shift is perhaps best portrayed by the complex spatial organisation of late-nineteenth century bungalows compared to the relatively simple spatial framework of early circuit houses (Fig. 6.35).⁶⁷ By the end of the nineteenth century, when Indians were also being recruited to high district ranks⁶⁸, the provincial bungalow could provide a significant conjugal space – removed from the exposure of big cities – for Indian officers and their wives who would otherwise typically be living in low-privacy extended family environments. Spaces like the garden or the back *verandah* (used to take breakfast or tea) became vital sites for the enactment of such conjugal everyday rituals (Fig. 6.36). A description by Mrs. Clemons also suggests the dominant presence of children in officers' bungalows, revealing other spatial dimensions of familial life:

from England, and discarded them all within a month, as they were utterly powerless to perform their purpose'. Compton, *Indian Life in Town and Country*, 163.

⁶⁶ It is well documented in numerous studies that till about the 1790s, it was common practice for civilian or military officers and soldiers to have Indian and half-Indian ('Anglo-Indian' or later, 'Eurasian' as they were called) mistresses or wives. Until then it was usual for parts of bungalows to be set aside for them and domestic set-ups to follow many Indian customs. The tightening of morality due to the sudden increase in the Christian invasion of India by Protestant and evangelical missionaries, as well as the Governor General Wellesley's disapproval of open cohabitation with Indian women, stood in the way of such partnerships. From around 1860s, there was massive social taboo about such practices. The formal encouragement by the government for officers to have European wives, combined with the increasing psychological divide between the British and Indians after the Mutiny – as well as the arrival of large numbers of eligible British women who subsequently got married to officers – created the formally recognised basis for domesticity. This also meant the pursuit of a more 'English' notion of domesticity. However, this still had to be substantially tempered by the inevitable demands of adapting to local practices – such as getting used to the presence of native staff within domestic spaces – as a way of survival, as well as a way of maximising the benefits reaped from them. For detailed works on colonial family life, sexuality, race and class, see, e.g. R. Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), K. Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980); E. Buettner, *Empire Families* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁷ Many late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century bungalows also had complex spatial arrangements, but these were mostly associated with private premises like planters' estates, which had their own requirements of an elaborate range of spaces, not necessarily to do with familial life. Early-nineteenth century government bungalows consisted typically of fairly basic provisions.

⁶⁸ In 1864 the first Indian judge was appointed in the judicial service. However, the British authorities felt that administration was an area that could not be entrusted to Indians. It was only in 1882 that Rameshchandra Dutta was appointed as the first Indian District Collector and Magistrate of Backergunj district.



Fig. 6.36a Family gathering at tea outside bungalow. Source: IOR, British Library.



Fig. 6.36b Breakfast in the bungalow grounds, Sitapur, 1880s. Source: Columbia Educational Archives



Fig. 6.36c Provincial bungalow, north-eastern India, 1880s. Source: Columbia Educational Archives



Fig. 6.36d European with child and Indian domestic servant in the *verandah*. IOR, British Library.

Fig. 6.36 The provincial bungalow as domestic space



Fig. 6.37a 'The *Burrah Khanah*' [big feast], by Charles D Oyley, in Capt. Thomas Williamson, *The European in India*, 1813.



Fig. 6.37b 'The *Burrah Khanah*' [big feast], George F Atkinson, *Curry and Rice*, 1860.

... On entering a family house in India, you can scarcely make your way through toys of every description; every room seems equally a nursery; dining and drawing rooms, bed and dressing rooms, alike appear the property of the young people.

It was therefore not so much the physical fabric of the official bungalow, but the way its spaces could adapt and change their meaning in different contexts, and in light of different patterns of inhabitation, which constituted the essence of its environment.

6.1.4 People within spaces

The official provisional bungalow compound was not surprisingly a populated place. It was meant for a single family only, but in a very rudimentary sense. Within the limited range of options for entertainment, there was the social custom – and social pressure – to offer public entertainment (such as the ‘*burra-khana*’ or grand dinner) within private premises (Fig. 6.37).⁷⁰ Here, given the limited size of *sadar* towns,⁷¹ official and social networks largely coincided and interconnected relationships flourished.⁷² Official events such as the seasonal arrival of the Circuit Judge, for instance, precipitated these as social events. Provincial bungalows also routinely received colonial visitors – friends, relatives and fellow servicemen. Most officers on a new posting were initially housed in other servicemen’s residences.⁷³ Interestingly, such extended margins of hospitality, described sometimes by Europeans themselves as being ‘Indian’ or specific to Anglo-Indian living, and thus distinct from notions of hospitality in England⁷⁴, involved accommodating and entertaining visitors as a central function of official bungalows. It is important to note that because of their often remote locations, visits to provincial bungalows were never frequent, but still held immense value for a community in scant contact with ‘civilisation’ *per se*. On the other hand, such visits were generally perceived as not warranting formal spatial provision. This led in turn to a necessary elasticity whereby everyday spaces could be shaped to also function as spaces for guests when needed. The *verandah* was a classic example that was routinely cordoned off in portions with temporary devices like bamboo mats or *tatties* to create impromptu guest rooms. An officer travelling through the station of Sultnaganj described one such experience:

...at the house on the hill I was received as if I had been an intimate friend of the family. My host was married, and all the rooms in the bungalow were occupied, but a portion of the *verandah* was quickly

69 Mrs. M. Clemons, *The Manners and Customs of Society in India*, 183.

70 There are numerous accounts of provincial official life describing such social gatherings and entertainment, including those of Mrs. Clemons, Fanny Parks, Emma Roberts, Herbert Compton, George Atkinson etc. See also W.H. Carey, *The Good Old days of Honourable John Company 1600 to 1858* (Simla: Argus Press, 1882-87) and A. Dutta, *Glimpses of European Life in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Calcutta: T.K. Mukherjee, 1995).

71 As mentioned in a different context in Chapter 1, most of the *zilla sadar* towns were only 6-9 square miles in size, of which the European bungalow zones comprised some 2-3 square miles.

72 Of course, in this context, this refers to the work and social networks amongst Europeans.

73 An illustrative example of this is that of George Graham, a young officer, who on his journey in the 1860s through different provincial stations in Lower Bengal to reach his district-posting in Muzafferpur, was housed in local officers’ bungalows at every station. Anon., *Life in the Mofussil*.

74 See, for example, the observation by a civilian officer on the nature of hospitality in Europeans officers’ households in Muzafferpur, a provincial town in Bengal Presidency: “There had come too, as a guest, an irregular cavalry officer, a cousin of Bertram’s, who had intended to spend a portion of his leave with him, not knowing of his transfer elsewhere. With the usual Indian hospitality, he had been asked to stay at the Doctors; as long as he liked.” Anon., *Life in the Mofussil*, 112.



Fig. 6.38 Indian domestics.

Source: *Chambers History of the Revolt in India*, London, 1859. Columbia Educational Archives.



Fig. 6.39 Servants in the bungalow. Photo from a British album, 1885. Source: Columbia Educational Archives



Fig. 6.40 Provincial bungalow on the outskirts of Calcutta. Pervasive presence of Indian servants within bungalow grounds. Watercolour on photograph, James Fiebig. Source: IOR, British Library.



Fig. 6.41 Servants in the back verandah. Source: British Library Images Online



Fig. 6.42 Kidmutgar serving tea. Source: Columbia Educational Archives

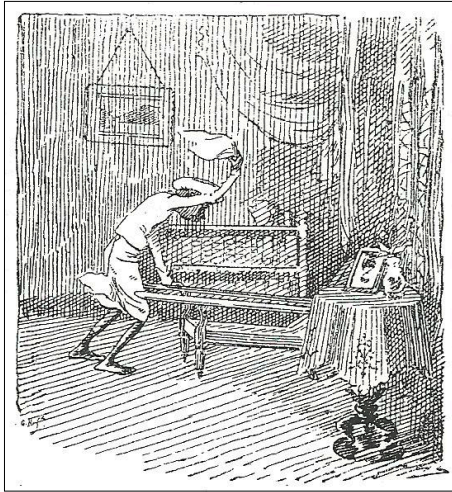


Fig. 6.43a and 6.43b Domestic cleaner and tailor in the bungalow.

Source: E.H. Aitken, *Behind the Bungalow*, 1889.

THACKER, SPINK & CO., CALCUTTA.

New Work by the Author of "The Tribes on my Frontier."

BEHIND THE BUNGALOW

BY E.H.A.

WITH VERY MANY CLEVER SKETCHES.

By the Illustrator of "The Tribes."

CHAPTERS:

I.—ENGAGING A BOY.	XII.—R. R. THE PUNDIT.
II.—THE BOY AT HOME.	XIII.—HURREE, THE DIRZEE.
III.—THE DOG BOY.	XIV.—THE MALEE.
IV.—THE GHORAWALLA, OR SYCE.	XV.—THE BHEESTEE.
V.—BOOTLAIR SAHEB, ANGLICE— THE BUTLER.	XVI.—TOM, THE BARBER.
VI.—DOMINGO, THE COOK.	XVII.—OUR "NOWKERS"—THE MARCH PAST.
VII.—THE MAN OF LAMPS.	POSTSCRIPT.
VIII.—THE HAMAL.	THE GOWLEE, OR DOOD- WALLAH.
IX.—THE BODY GUARD.	THE MISCELLANEOUS WALLAHS.
X.—THAT DHOBIE.	
XI.—THE AYAH.	

Fig. 6.44 Advertisement for *Behind the Bungalow* by E.H. Aitken, enlisting the retinue of domestic staff.

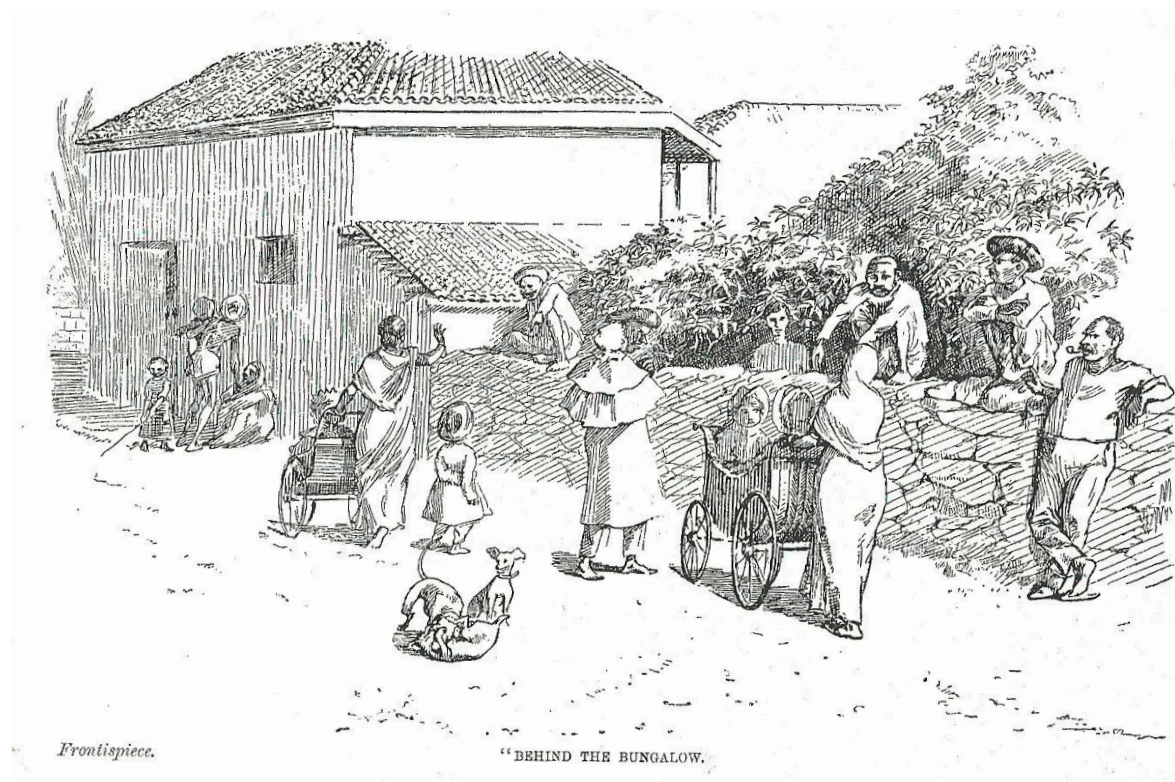


Fig. 6.45 Life behind the bungalow.
Source: *Behind the Bungalow*, E.H. Aitken, 1889.

converted into a room by the erection of some bamboo mats, in which I was enabled to pass the night very comfortably.⁷⁵

The populated character of the provincial officer's bungalow drew most heavily from the presence of native staff, and especially the large number and range of servants (Figs. 6.38 -6.42). Ironically, although the servants' quarters were invariably kept farthest from the main house, the deep dependence of Europeans on native staff for everyday functioning implied an environment laden with their presence throughout the bungalow premises,⁷⁶ as noted by Compton:

The servants' 'lines' are a row of huts, often mere hovels, adjoining the stables, and in the most distant corner of the compound..the servants form a small colony in the compound, and a very moderate householder may find he is in practice the supporter of twenty human beings.⁷⁷

In his humorous account of the behind-the-scenes life of the bungalow, E.H. Aitken, a civilian officer in the late-nineteenth century, described how he would find his bungalow *verandah* completely taken over by his wife's Indian tailor and sewing accessories, or how he was routinely woken up in the early morning by the sounds of a servant cleaning furniture (Figs 6.43a, 6.43b and 6.44).⁷⁸ Aitken's account, though no doubt exaggerated for effect, seems to suggest a domestic environment in which the officer had little *defacto* control or possession of his surroundings or its temporal rhythm, which seemed to be virtually determined by the support staff. Interestingly, such surrender into the hands of native servants seems to have aroused a range of emotions – from irritation to gentle indulgence, humour or sheer decadent pleasure. For some colonial officers in Bengal, being attended to had become an indispensable luxury and the resultant diffusion of 'personal space' a compromise not without its rewards.⁷⁹ Aitken also gave a fascinating account of how the rear areas of bungalows and back lanes housed another world – a full-fledged native community with its own dwellings and lifestyle (Fig. 6.45). Aitken's representation clearly cast it as a 'counter-site', possessing radically different characteristics, yet his descriptions also show how intimately the indigenous lifestyle infused the official bungalow, and how bungalow premises remained anything but purely British in character.

6.1.5. Spaces of domestic leisure – the *verandah* and the terrace

The provincial officer's bungalow also allowed enjoyment and apparent control of the abundant land around, the boundaries of which were virtually invisible; perceptually it seemed

⁷⁵ Anon., *Life in the Mofussil*, 58.

⁷⁶ The pervasive presence of and dependence on service staff within European officers' bungalows is a recurrent theme in numerous memoirs and accounts of Anglo-Indian provincial life. This was true of bungalows in cities as well. For accounts of provincial bungalow-environments in this context, see e.g. E. H. Aitken, *Behind the Bungalow*, (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1889); George Graham, *Life in the Mofussil or the Civilian in Lower Bengal (by an ex-civilian)*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1878); G. F. Atkinson, *Curry and Rice*, (London: W Thacker & Co, 1911); W.W. Hunter, 'The Cook's Chronicle', Appendix C., *Annals of Rural Bengal*, (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1868).

⁷⁷ H. Compton, *Indian life in Town and Country*, 159.

⁷⁸ E. H. Aitken, *Behind the Bungalow*, 61, 105.

⁷⁹ The following comment by Mrs. Clemons sums up this dependence fairly well: '...it is some time before you can readily conform to the manners and customs of the East; but when the habit has once reconciled you to them (and this is the case in a few years), you begin to wonder how you could have formerly dispensed with your numerous attendants and other appendages to an Indian residence' Mrs M. Clemons, *The Manners and Customs of Society in India*, 181-182.

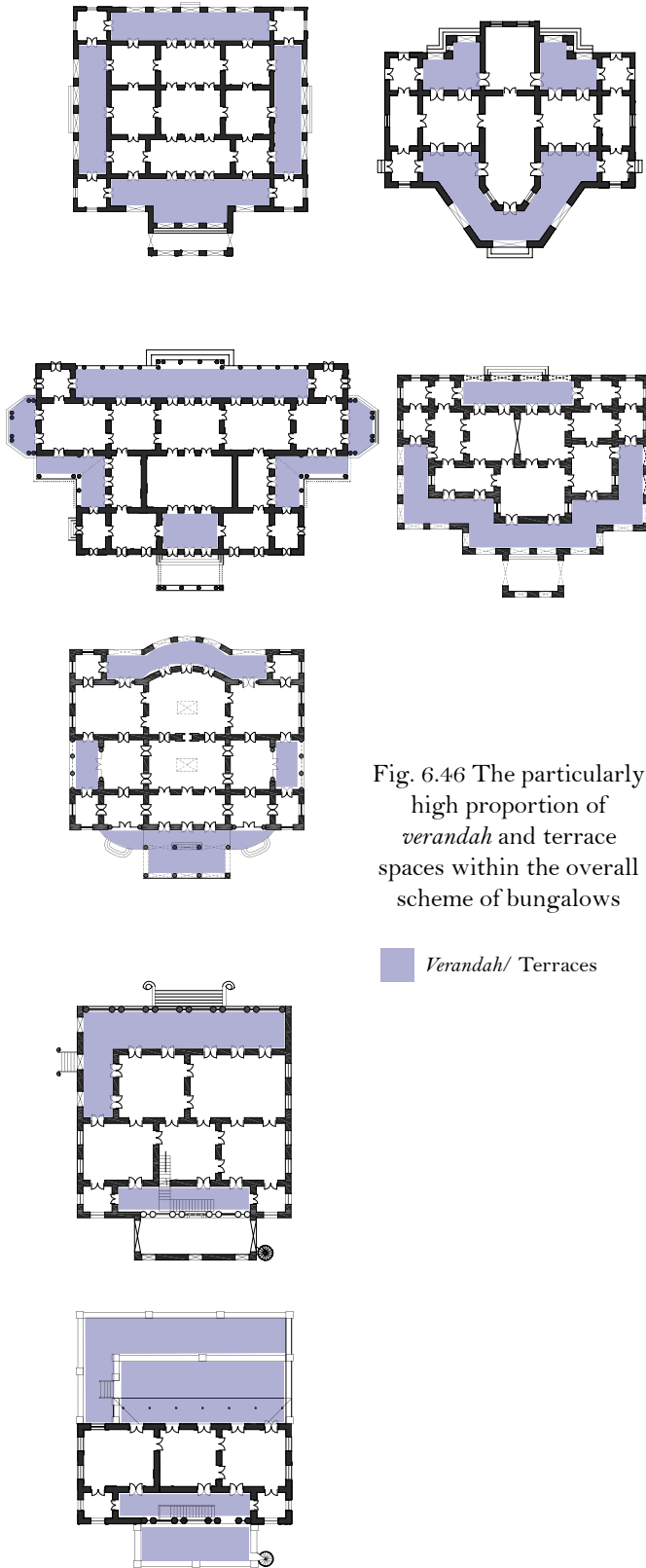


Fig. 6.46 The particularly high proportion of *verandah* and terrace spaces within the overall scheme of bungalows



Fig. 6.47 Views of and from *verandahs* and terraces

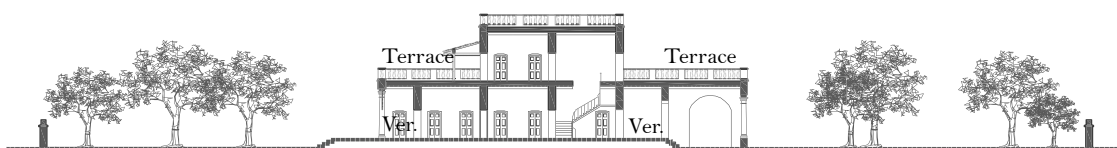


Fig. 6.48 Relationship of *verandah* and terrace areas with surrounding landscape

to extend right into the countryside. The most potent sites to experience this were the extensive *verandahs* and terraces, which were positioned tactically with respect to views of exterior resources like open land or rivers (Fig. 6.47). *Verandahs* and terraces also constituted a huge proportion of the overall built up space of the bungalow (Fig. 6.46). The deep *verandah*, ranging from 8 ft to 14 ft in depth wrapped around the bungalow as a climatic buffer and also connected the interior spaces with the exterior land. In the *sadar* districts, the juxtaposition of a generous *verandah* and the vast bungalow grounds enabled a sense of command over space – a distancing and a gaze perhaps like nowhere else (Fig. 6.48). The *verandah* in the provincial bungalow thus became a key site of aesthetic and sensory consumption, as well as for the experience of power. It was here that an essential, pragmatic, bodily environmental competence started to fuse into realms of leisure, pleasure, voyeurism, consumption and control. The following reminiscence by Herbert Compton alludes to this complex relationship:

Looking back on Indian life, the one place in the bungalow that always recurs to my memory with pleasurable sensations is the verandah. There is nothing like it in English homes. There you always find the most comfortable armchairs, each with its small teapoy by its side to hold your peg-tumbler. With the chicks down, the glare kept out, and the sun round at the other side of the house, the shady verandah becomes the abiding-place. It is generally festooned with creeping flowers, and you can see to read in it without that straining required in the darkened drawing-rooms of Anglo-India. And it is inseparably associated with that delicious hour after dinner, so cool and sleepy and lazy, when you lay yourself out for perhaps the only part of the day free from positive physical discomfort. It has, too, many other associations; here your dogs, best companions of your lonely exile, lie and stretch themselves all day long; hither are your horses brought to receive their morning treat of bread or sugar-cane. From here you can loll and watch the sparrows and the squirrels and the minahs, and last, but not least, the crafty crows, that each and all 'have a song to sing, oh!' if you can only understand their language, and enter into their idiosyncrasies. And here you receive your guests, if there is any intimacy between you and them, without stiff formality. I vow it is the pleasantest spot in Anglo-India; the one associated with its pleasantest moments, and to which memory recurs with just a soupçon of regret that in returning to England we have cut ourselves off from verandah life...⁸⁰

Much of the phenomenal experience of the *verandah* derived from the proportions of its generous height and depth (Fig. 6.49), the constant air-flow through it, and the diffuse light modulated by louvered panels hung between its tall columns.⁸¹ The *verandah* mediated the relationship between the interior and the exterior of the bungalow; the dark core-spaces and the blazing sun outside, and between insiders and outsiders. It also allowed the ambiguity of a space where less formal relationships and rituals could also be accommodated.

The *verandah* gradually grew to be an incredibly diverse space. From the largely

⁸⁰ H. Compton, *Indian Life in Town and Country*, 167.

⁸¹ Assuming an average depth of 10ft, and a typical height of about 15ft (based on the bungalows studied by the author in lower Bengal), the *verandah* had roughly a 2:3 proportion of depth to height. Wooden louvered eaves were usually dropped till a depth of about 8ft on its outer edge. Where the *verandah* had a separate (tiled) sloping roof, it sloped from a height of about 12ft at the inner edge to 8ft on the outer. In both these cases, considering a summer sun angle of 70deg (typical of the region), this would mean that a depth of almost 7ft (i.e. 70% of the overall depth) would remain shaded, the walls between the *verandah* and the core area being completely shaded through the day. Air flow was obviously abundant. This, in terms of the comfort conditions it offered in the hot-humid climate of Bengal, made the *verandah* a particularly suitable space for a variety of use.



Fig. 6.49 Typical proportions of the *verandah*



Fig. 6.50 The versatile tile role of the verandah
Source: IOR, British Library

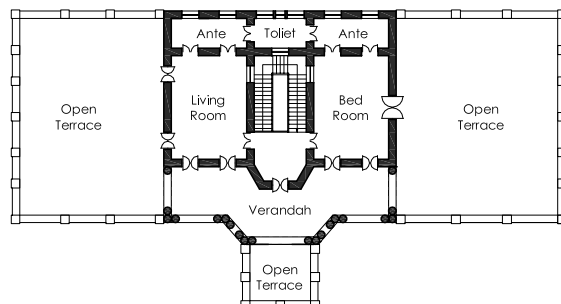
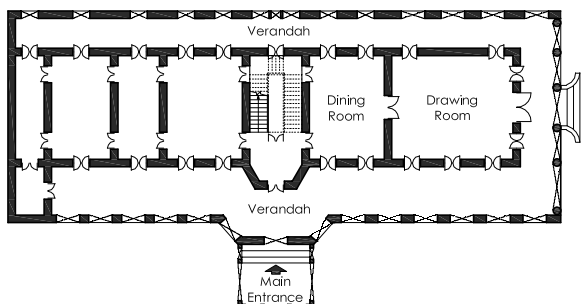


Fig. 6.51 District Collector's Bungalow, Burdwan

undifferentiated climatic envelope of the early-nineteenth century, it had found much more differentiated forms by the last quarter (Fig. 6.50). Two architectural operations helped in this transformation: first, an apportioning into different segment; and second, the manipulation of its enclosure-quality through the erection of different types of temporary partitions (curtains, mats or *tatties*) and shading devices. In terms of use, the front *verandah* came to be perhaps the most versatile of all spaces – a place to visit, an area to receive guests, a provisional nursery, a space to screen visitors, a sewing room, or a temporary guest room. The rear *verandah* was more specific in its usage; usually restricted to a depth of about 8ft, it provided access for servants and an extension of service spaces, but if this depth was to 12-14ft, it could be used as a leisure space to enjoy view of the back garden. It of course worked in conjunction with the differentiated roles of the front and back gardens; while the ornamental front garden created the visual setting for the official bungalow, the back garden was the prime resource for private leisure. The latter was also often a productive site, with mango and lychee groves and even small paddy-fields, elements that also helped mobilise its ‘country-estate’ image. [GARDEN – curry and rice]. Consequently, in many instances the rear *verandah* gained more importance than the front one, suggesting an opening up of the overall bungalow form towards the back garden. Typically even the terrace on the upper floor was split into two parts, the front one above the entrance portico being smaller and more public, while the back one was often vast, with three-sided views, and more private. In terms of sheer quantum as well as disposition, the terrace and the *verandah* clearly dominated the bungalow’s spatial scheme.

On the whole, the provincial officer’s bungalow posed simultaneous and contradictory relationships. While the European officer wanted to enjoy its generous provisions, he was equally limited by his dependence on them – by the incumbency of the *verandah* and the compound wall to shield him, by the necessity of specific spaces, devices and rituals to make everything work. In an environment punctured by numerous doors and windows, and full of the presence of native staff, bungalow life also came hand-in-hand with a necessary compromise between the notions of privacy that the provincial officer had carried with him from home back in Britain.

6.2 Barrack-type European residence

From around the 1860s, a significantly different paradigm made an appearance in the residential buildings for provincial officers in Bengal, as designed by governmental agencies. It involved a shift towards a barrack-like typology and away from the ‘core-and-envelope’ bungalow form. Now the principal rooms were arranged in a single linear chain, accessed equally from the *verandah*, virtually identical to a barrack. Some of the earliest examples of this type in lower Bengal were the Collector’s and Judge’s bungalows in Burdwan (Figs. 6.51, 6.52), both built possibly in the 1860s.⁸²

⁸² The railways were introduced to Burdwan in 1855, which helped open up a new tract of land on the north-east

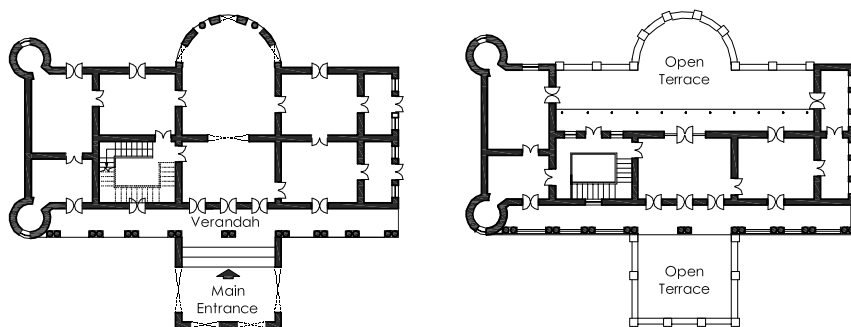


Fig. 6.52 Judge's Bungalow, Burdwan

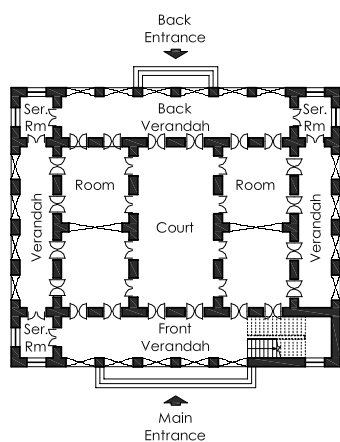


Fig. 6.53 Sub-divisional officer's residence, Khulna, early nineteenth century

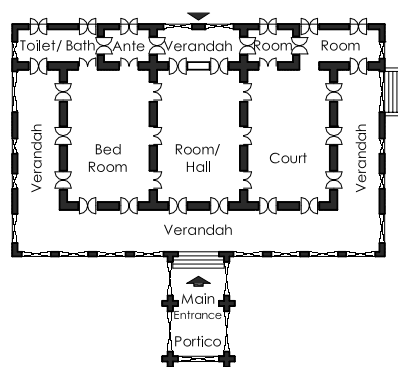


Fig. 6.54 Circuit House, Khulna, ~1885



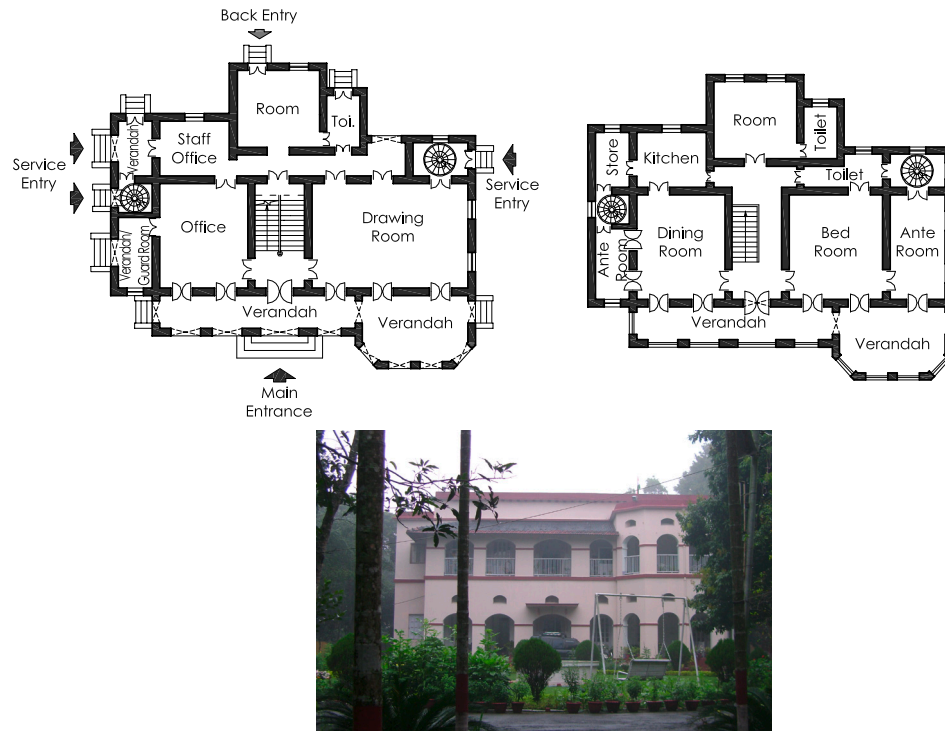


Fig. 6.55 Police Superintendent's bungalow, Krishnanagar, ~ 1925

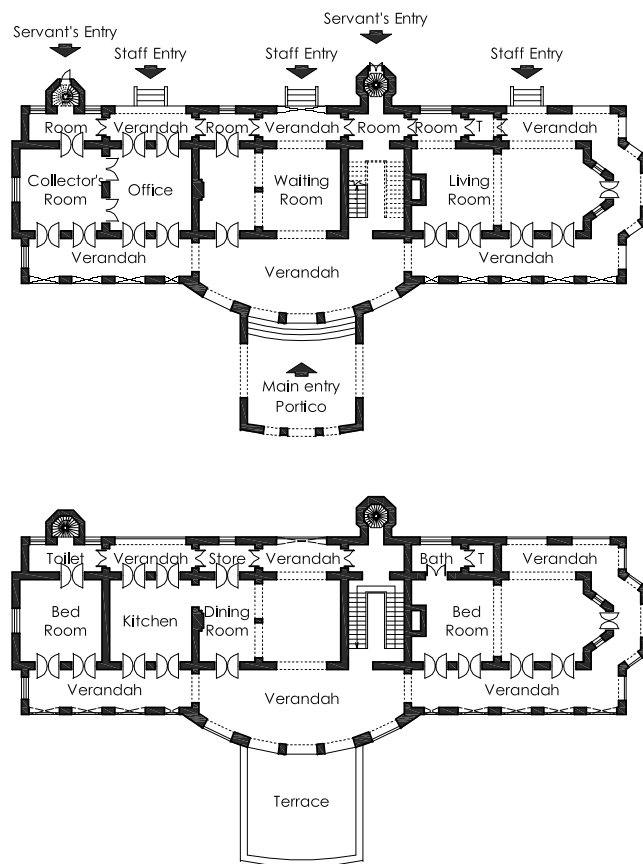


Fig. 6.56 District Collector's bungalow, Barisal, ~ 1930

The circuit house at Khulna, built later in 1885 (Fig. 6.54) also reflected the tendency for the layered character of the dwelling 'core' to be simplified into a barrack-like linear chain of rooms. It bore a fair resemblance to an earlier dwelling for the sub-divisional officer in the town (Fig. 6.53), suggesting that the use of a barrack-like form was not an altogether new phenomenon. However, the increasing occurrence of this type after 1860 does suggest a possible connection with the PWD's barrack-type designs for *sadar cutcherries* and sub-divisional house cum *cutcherries* of 1858-60.⁸³ By 1924-25, a standard design for Police Superintendents' bungalows had been drawn up by the PWD; curiously it was a hybrid of the bungalow and the barrack forms. Perhaps one of the best examples of an advanced form of the barrack-like design was the Collector's bungalow in Barisal, built as part of a larger scheme of standardisation of Collectors' bungalows in 1930-31.⁸⁴

In the barrack-type residence, the centre of the whole composition was now the staircase, which was used to effect a four-way division of space. This corresponded to creating a segment for the home-office, another for public entertainment and guest areas also on the ground floor, and then one for private living-dining and another for private bedrooms/bathing on the first floor. While this typology did attain a level of clarity in spatial parcelling and functional articulation, it also represented a far more deterministic assignment of space – and a substantial dilution of the flexibility and multiple possibilities offered by the previous 'core-and-envelope' matrix form.

However, perhaps the most striking aspect of the barrack-based design was the altered relationship between primary and service spaces (Fig. 6.57). In a substantial move, a large proportion of service structures such as the kitchen and its ancillary functions – hitherto typically distributed over the bungalow compound – were now brought right into the main building, attached to the bungalow at the rear. While this may have been linked to logistical issues like food getting cold while being transported from a detached kitchen,⁸⁵ it also seems to suggest an increasingly higher dependence on native staff and service functions, whereby their

corner of the town for European inhabitation. Most of the bungalows in this area were probably built starting from a few years after this. The Judge's bungalow appears on the personal photographic collection of W.H. Nightingale dated 1870-73, BL/ IOR/ Photo 897/2 (2). It is likely therefore that it was built in the decade of 1860s. There are stylistic similarities between the Judge's and the Collector's bungalows (including the red exterior paint of post-railways architecture) which makes a time assignment of 1860s-70s for the two buildings a reasonable assumption.

⁸³ Residential buildings, though not subject to centralised standard designs at this stage, were still sometimes designed by government agency in the PWD era – usually the Executive Engineer in charge of a Division, or later, the District Engineer (heading the District Board). Though the designs varied in each case, these officers had direct access to the type-designs formulated by the central PWD of Bengal for reference.

⁸⁴ Though the residential sector did not witness standardisation till the first quarter of the twentieth century, in 1930-31 there were standard designs drawn up for Collectors' bungalows in *sadar* towns. This was preceded by standard designs for Police Superintendents' bungalows in 1924-25. BL, IOR/V/24/3337, PWD Annual Report 1924-25 and BL, IOR/ V/ 24/3337, PWD Annual Report for 1930-31.

⁸⁵ Mrs Clemons noted this, talking of the detached kitchen in the bungalow: 'the only fault is, that they are seldom placed on the table very hot from the fire, owing to the distance everything has to be brought through the open air, as well as from other causes.' Mrs M. Clemons, *The Manners and Customs of Society in India*, 188.s

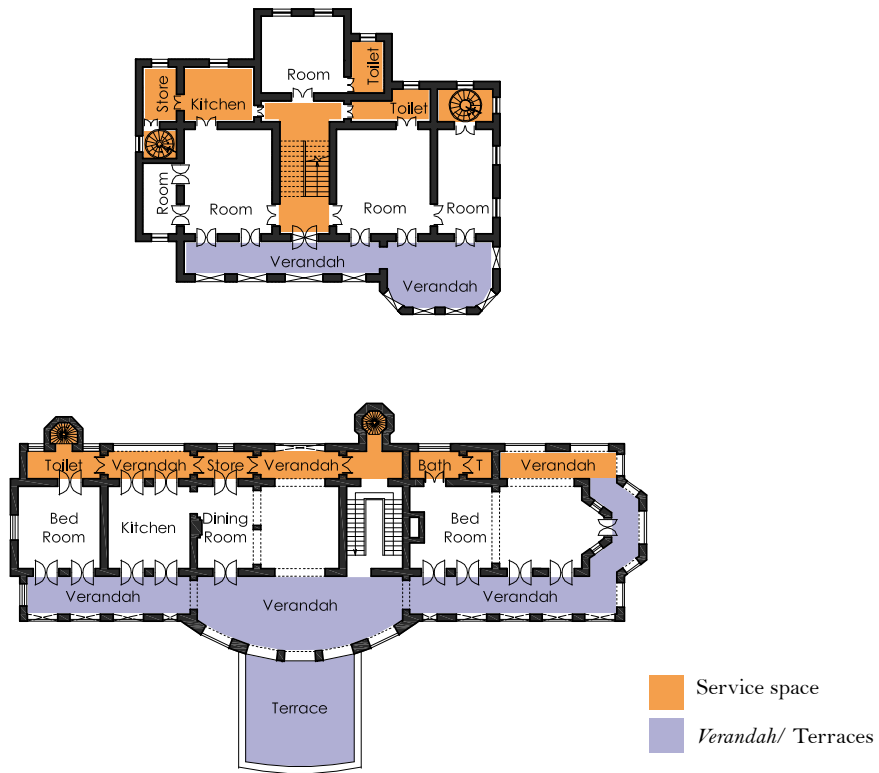


Fig. 6.57 Service spaces in barrack-type bungalows

actual physical proximity became indispensable.

However, although they were now being brought into the main house, by the first quarter of the twentieth-century, the actual space standards for service areas clearly became even more constrained. Spaces like that for the bath, usually enjoying generous space standards (typically 12 ft x 12 ft up to 16 ft x 16 ft), now became smaller and relegated to a relatively narrow 6 ft average depth in the back-layer. The service spaces themselves developed into a variegated range of clusters, as could be seen in the Collector's bungalow at Barisal, with separate service entries for each group. The allocation of space for the *verandah* also became reduced, and there appears to have been large gaps between the perception of spaces held as precious by provincial officers and those valued by the central authorities. Due to the continuing pressure within the imperial State for economy, it was ironic that the most coveted of all the spaces in the bungalow – the *verandah* – was now evidently seen as a nonessential provision that could take a good bit of scissoring. Despite its vital place in the everyday life of the official bungalow, within the PWD's utilitarian conception, the *verandah* was largely marginalised in official residential design by the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The annular character of the *verandah* also underwent diffusion. As a far cry from the early-nineteenth century circuit house, it was now mainly provided as a layer in front of the bungalow, and in some fragmented bits at the back. While the early nineteenth-century circuit house had been a versatile four-sided entity which offered combinations of work, domestic and service clusters a hundred years later, the PWD residential designs were characterised by a firm 'front' and 'back', corresponding respectively to main official and secondary service spaces. In a curious way, the inherent formal possibilities of creating a hierarchically neutral structure via barrack-type residences, in effect the typology delineated firm spatial divisions, and functional hierarchies. Also, as if in continuation of their almost inseparable affinity, the provincial office and its associated domestic architecture had once again converged towards each other; in formal terms, there was very little distinction between the late-nineteenth-early twentieth century *cutcherry* and the barrack-like officer's residence. It presented an inter-changeability that found ready application even within governmental design.

It is important to note, however, that in the period up to the first decades of the twentieth-century, the 'core-and-envelope' bungalow forms still continued to be widely used in new designs of officers' residences.⁸⁶ There were thus overlaps between the two typologies and in fact these were paradigms that coexisted. Such a coexistence was largely made possible by of the persistence of the localised nature of production of colonial residential architecture till as late as 1925.⁸⁷ Ironically, even after 1925 and despite standard designs for residences being firmed up – the fact that very little governmental building infrastructure was being constructed anew in

⁸⁶ Throughout the last forty years of the nineteenth century, alongside the elaborate developments of the bungalow type, barrack-type residences had also made their appearance.

⁸⁷ As against office architecture, strongly subjected to centralised 'type' designs since 1858.

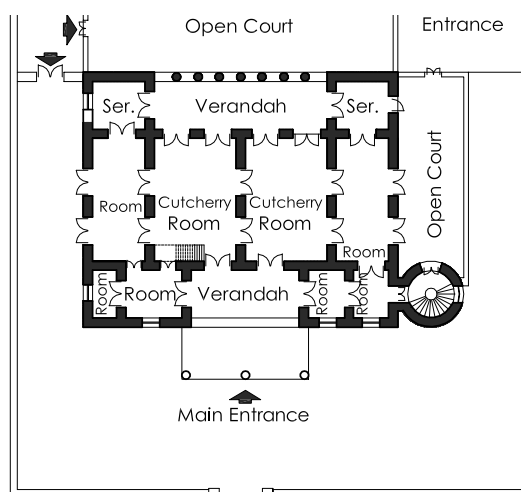


Fig. 6.58 Pavilion type *cutcherry*: *cutcherry* of the Hetampur *zamindars*, Suri

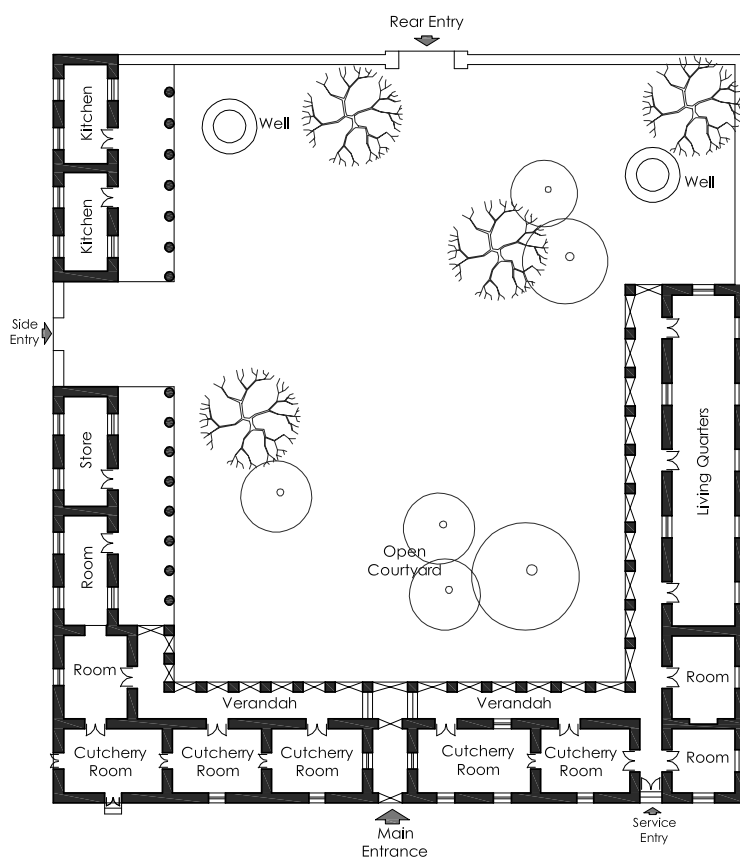


Fig. 6.59 Courtyard type *cutcherry* - *cutcherry* of the Narail *zamindars*, Jessore

Bengal, it means that the official designs never really found broad-based application.

6.3 *Zamindars', lawyers' and businessmen's cutcherries*

Colonial governmental functions within the *zilla sadar* gave rise to a range of secondary sites for work, such as the *zamindar's*, lawyer's or businessman's *cutcherries*. In some ways, the *zamindari cutcherries* enjoyed a degree of social acceptance and legitimacy that was more extensive than the mainstream provisions of formal colonial governance. Other than their public role, the *zamindari cutcherries* also became the key sites for account-keeping and managing the plethora of litigations in which all *zamindars* were routinely embroiled.⁸⁸ The second quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed substantial development of the urban bases of *zamindars* in *sadar* towns. As a direct offshoot of the demands of colonial administration, the 1830s witnessed the emergence of a burgeoning professional class among Bengalis as well. The mid-to-late nineteenth century saw the development of the *sadar* also as a commercial venue, centred on *bazaars*, and other entrepreneurial enterprises in the hinterland for which it provided the urban node.⁸⁹

In architectural terms, the different types of native *cutcherries* in the *sadar* took on two basic forms, the detached pavilion type and the courtyard type (Fig. 6.58 and 6.59). These existed either as stand-alone structures or in conjunction with domestic premises for the *zamindar* and his family. The pavilion type was an elongated version of the 3x3 room matrix of spaces (or one of its 2x2, 3x2 or 4x3 variants). Its core was the main *cutcherry* room, the central bays in the front and back were *verandahs*, and the side bays, usually narrower, served as ancillary spaces accommodating record rooms or subsidiary offices. It is interesting that this was a format identical to the early-nineteenth century *cutcherries* discussed in Chapter 3, or the PWD's late-nineteenth early-twentieth century designs for single or double *munsifs*' courts discussed in Chapter 5 (Figs. 6.61 and 6.62). In other words, this basic typological format was pervasive across time and across these different segments of building, whether native or European. The second type, based on the courtyard form, consisted of spaces wrapping around a central open area to form a tight, walled enclosure with a controlled entry through a passage. Here, the public functions of the *cutcherry* were housed in the outer segment, and ancillary functions like sleeping rooms or kitchen were located in the inner segment. The use of one or other type of native *cutcherry* seems to have been a decision based on the amount of built-up area required, the amount of land that was available for it, along with individual preferences. Though the courtyard type clearly derived from indigenous roots (i.e. rural houses and pre-colonial administrative *cutcherries* in Bengal), it was evidently not rigidly adhered to, within the space constraints of urban conditions in *sadar*

⁸⁸ It is important to note here that since British revenue collection system was based as much on the modified remains of the earlier Mughal tax-collection apparatus as formal governmental machinery, the *zamindars* conducted their office not from within formal governmental spaces but from their own premises.

⁸⁹ These comprised entrepreneurial ventures by both European and Indian companies in domains such as coal and mica mining, wood logging or ironworks.

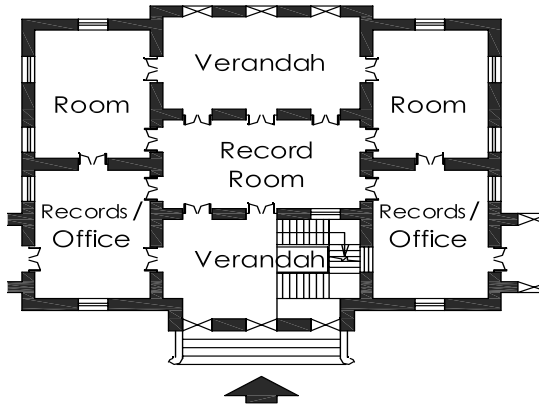


Fig. 6.61 Early-nineteenth century governmental *cutcherry* - Bankura, 1808

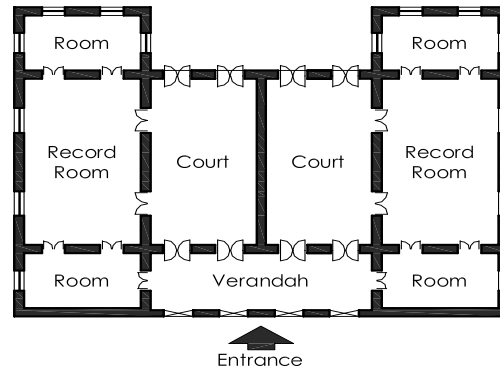


Fig. 6.62 Late-nineteenth century governmental *cutcherry* - *munsif's* court, Barasat, 1890s

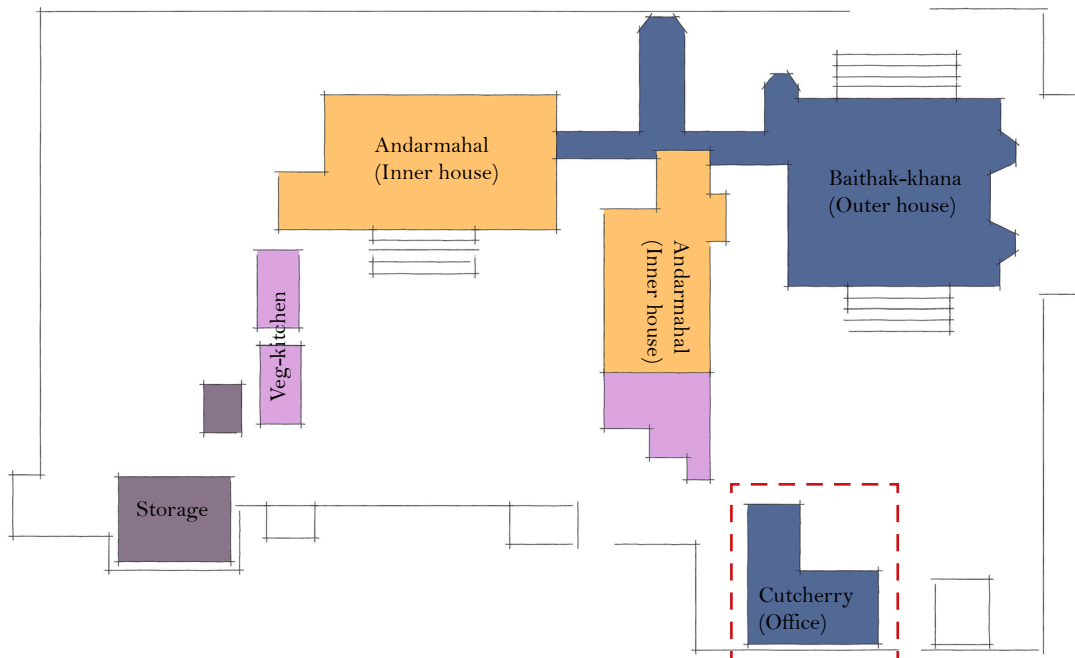


Fig. 6.63 *Cutcherry* as an integral part of domestic space - Chakrabarty family residence, Dangalpara, Suri

towns, the aforementioned compact matrix format was also used profusely.

Stand-alone *cutcherries* were usually associated with a period when native *zamindars* principally operated from their estates in hinterland areas, with their role in *sadar* towns limited chiefly to occasional official work. These represented therefore a split between the home-base in the village and the work-base in the *sadar* town. The Hetampur *zamindar's cutcherry* in Suri (bungalow-type), or that of the Narail *zamindars* in Jessore (courtyard-type), are examples of stand-alone *cutcherrie*.⁹⁰ But all the stand-alone *cutcherries*, however rudimentary, nevertheless contained some residential spaces.

This intermeshing of work and home spheres was perhaps most integrally manifested in the emerging pattern of domestic spaces for *zamindars* from the mid-nineteenth century. As the *zamindars'* role in *sadar* towns came to be consolidated, their *cutcherries* increasingly had to become a more complex domestic set-up. Here, home and work were domains sharing the same physical site (Fig. 6.63), and as such the *zamindari cutcherry* also came to represent the work aspect of a work-leisure-home configuration, they were the male aspect of a male-female territorialisation, the public face of a public-private entity. This was true also of lawyers' or businessmen's *cutcherries*, which were also often housed in residential premises.⁹¹ The spatial relationships of native *cutcherries* were therefore closely linked to the development of urban domesticity amongst an emerging middle-class Bengali population. However, even in late-nineteenth century, work-only types were still built – depending, for example, on the level of consolidation of the urban base for a particular *zamindar* family. Any assumption of a linear development of native *cutcherry* forms, from the stand-alone to the spatially-composite type, will therefore be erroneous. Instead, native *cutcherries* continued to be a mixed lot, representing different levels and types of relationships with the *sadar* town at any given point of time.

Equally, however, each of the two basic forms of the *zamindari cutcherry* could be part of a residential base. The *cutcherry* of the Maharaja of Burdwan, set within the Raj family's vast premises, was an iconic example of the courtyard-type as part of a larger and extremely complex scheme of spaces (Fig. 6.64). The building, called Anjuman Bhavan and built in 1846-47, was arguably one of the most elaborate versions of the courtyard-type *zamindari cutcherry* in lower Bengal. Built around two courtyards – one, as the heart of the public zone, the other, as an inner, more restricted zone – it included areas for visitors, courts, offices and staff rooms, *zamindari*

⁹⁰ This type was also commonly used for commercial offices (such as that of the Bengal Coal Company in Suri) in the *sadar* which represented the urban bases of private companies having operational bases in the hinterland. One of the reasons for the use of the same type for *zamindari* and commercial *cutcherries* could possibly be the fact that many commercial enterprises in Bengal also had direct connections with *zamindari* establishments. Coal mining, for instance, was dominated in the second quarter of the nineteenth century by Dwarakanath Tagore, one of the most significant *zamindars* in Bengal who set up the Carr and Tagore Co. in 1835. They later joined hands with Gilmore, Hombray and Co. in 1843 at the behest of William Princep to form the Bengal Coal Company. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asansol> accessed 13 July 2010.

⁹¹ The buildings being referred to here were private offices. Collective offices, as represented, for instance, by Bar Association buildings for pleaders [lawyers] were built – usually with collective private funding – from around the 1870s in *sadar* towns. But private offices still accounted for a huge proportion of the larger work-sphere of these towns.

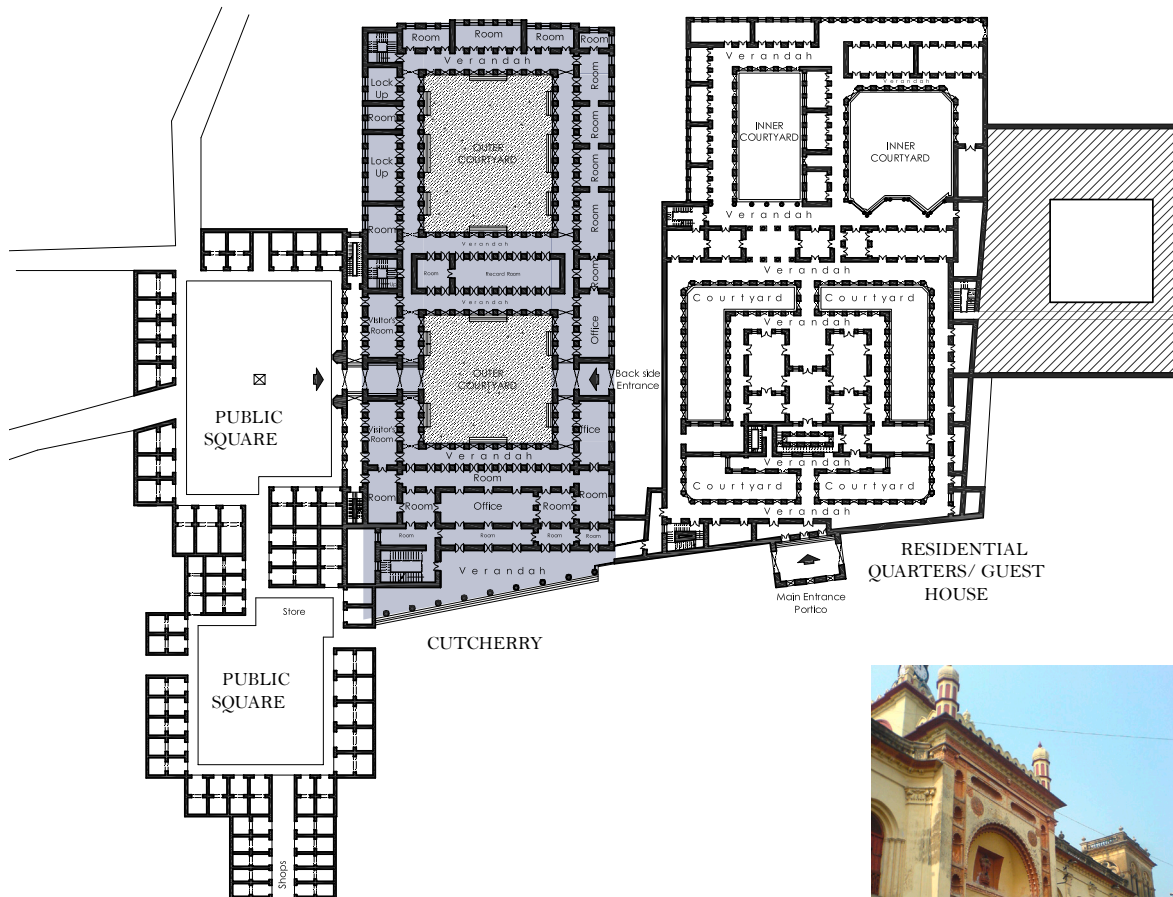


Fig. 6.64 Anjuman *cutcherry* of the Maharaja of Burdwan, 1846-47

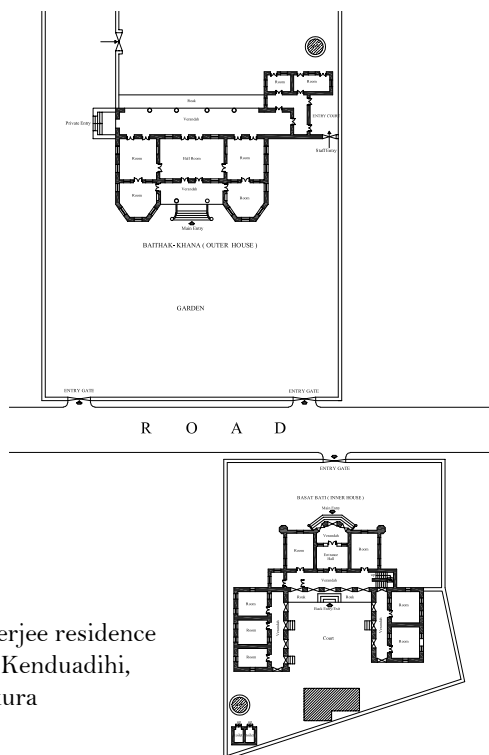


Fig. 6.65 Mukherjee residence and *cutcherry*, Kenduadihi, Bankura



record rooms and even lock-ups for offenders. More commonly, though, it was the compact pavilion form that was most readily absorbed within urban domestic set-ups, since it provided a good fit with small and medium-sized land-holdings as well. Depending on the context, the pavilion-type could also remain free standing, or else attach itself along one or two of its sides to a section of an overall building layout. In certain cases, like the Mukherjee residence in Kenduadihi on the fringes of Bankura town (Fig. 6.65), the *cutcherry*⁹² was in fact moved out to occupy a separate site opposite the main house, with a public road cutting through them.

6.4 Native houses – for *zamindars* and middle-class Bengali officials

6.4.1 Work, home and leisure spaces within the house

The native *zamindari cutcherry* was only one of the many components of residential premises that developed in *sadar* towns from mid-nineteenth century onwards. It is the inter-relation between these functions – work, home, leisure and service spaces – that determined the nature of the composite domestic space and its social relationships.

Typically, in its most elaborate form (e.g. an entire *zamindari* establishment), the key elements of urban dwelling in the *sadar* were (Fig. 6.63):

The outer house [<i>bahir mahal</i> or <i>bahir bari</i>] (work and leisure) (guest entertainment and leisure area)	- <i>Cutcherry</i> (office) - <i>Baithak-khana</i>
The inner house [<i>andar mahal</i> or <i>bhitor bari</i>] (home)	- Residential quarters - <i>Atur-ghar</i> (maternity room) - Children's tutorial spaces - <i>Ranna-ghar</i> or <i>Goshol-khana</i> (kitchen, utility areas) - Bath, toilets - Storage - Servants' quarters - Other ancillary spaces (e.g. stables, cattle shed, rice husking area) - Domestic temple and/or shrine

In its most rudimentary form, e.g. for lower level office clerks' or other lower-middle class households, the urban dwelling consisted of (Fig. 6.66):

⁹² Incidentally, in this particular case the *cutcherry* was a combination of the courtyard and the pavilion types.

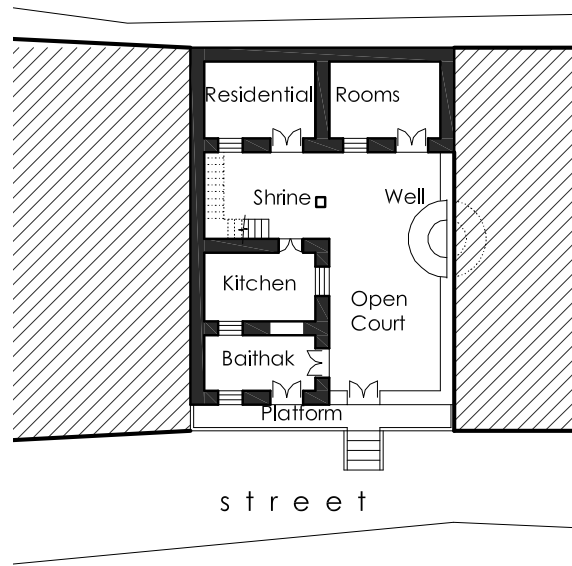


Fig. 6.66 Lower-middle class house at Patpur, Bankura, mid-nineteenth century.



Baithak-khana cum cutcherry cum living quarters - Mukherjee house, Krishnanagar



Baithak-khana cum living quarters - Ramtanu Lahiri's house, Krishnanagar



Baithak-khana - Sen family, Berhampur



Baithak-khana - Lala family, Suri

Fig. 6.67 Combinations of *cutcherry*, *baithak-khana* and living quarters

The outer domain (work and leisure)	- <i>Baithak-khana</i> (outer room)
The inner domain (home)	- Residential room/s - Kitchen, washing areas - Bath, toilets - Domestic shrine

Interestingly, these rooms and spaces were not necessarily discrete units. The primary functions regularly overlapped with each other. For example, the very same building could double up as a *cutcherry* and a *baithak-khana*, or as a *cutcherry* and living quarters (usually for relatives or young male members of the family), or as a *baithak-khana* and a living quarter (Fig. 6.67). Different parts of the building were either used for varied functions, or sometimes the same spaces were used at different points of time for alternative purposes. Sometimes even such spatial or temporal distinctions ceased to exist. An evocative account, for instance, of the way that leisure and entertainment activities found their way into the space of the domestic *cutcherry* was given by the eminent Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore, speaking of his childhood in late-nineteenth century:

After lunch, Gunadada [cousin Guna] used to come to conduct *cutcherry* [office] in this building. The *cutcherry* was virtually like a club for them – there wasn't much of a separation between work and amusement. Gunadada used to sit reclining on a couch in the *cutcherry* room, and I used to, in this pretext, gradually move close to his lap. He used to regularly tell me stories from the history of India.⁹³

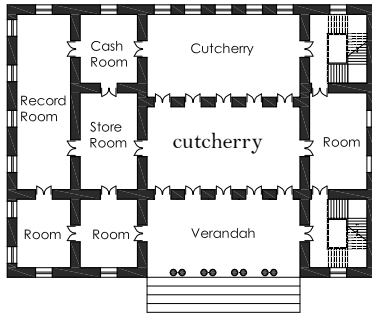
Describing his perceptions as a child growing up in Chittagong (where his father was a *peshkar*, or presenter, at the *sadar* court) during the 1860s, Nabinchandra Sen also described the chameleon-like character of spaces such as the *baithak-khana*, which dramatically changed its nature between daytime and evening:

My father exercised immense influence at the time. In the morning he sat down for his prayers; people swarmed into the *baithak-khana* – Hindustani cloth merchants with bundles of cloth, shopkeepers with their accountancy books, hungry applicants, relatives, people wanting appointments, a theatre leader and his troop of long haired boys, Brahmins who come from afar, a couple of *sadar-ala* munsifs, ameen, *sadar ameen* – filled up the *baithak-khana*, and made it an intensely noisy place...

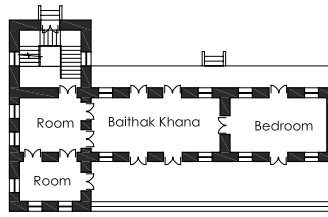
In the evening the *baithak-khana* was a different scene altogether; flooded with dazzling lights, filled with music and sounds of pleasure. The contortions of many an Ustad's (maestro) face and gurgling voice, the mellifluous sounds of gifted singers – I can hardly forget. People playing cards in one corner, chess in another; a comedian friend of my father eliciting giant eruptions of laughter in yet another portion of the *Baithak-khana*; huge consignments of food like sweets, fish and meat arriving as gifts from people who had just won a court-case in the morning.⁹⁴

⁹³ Rabindranath Tagore, 'Barir Abohaoa' [My home environment], in *Jibansmriti* [Recollections of my life] (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, 1967), 128. The title of the piece itself also shows how much a part of the home environment the *cutcherry* was, since it was being described directly in the context of describing a domestic environment. Note also the use of furniture like the 'couch' in the *cutcherry* – suggestive of its informal and 'domestic' character.

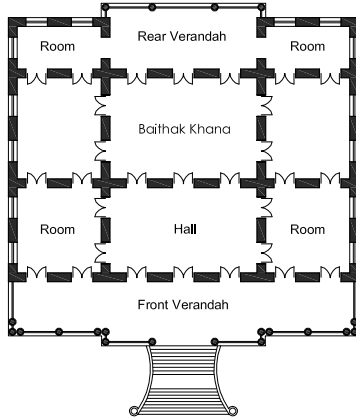
⁹⁴ N. Sen, *Amaar Jiban* [My life], S. Das, ed., (Calcutta: Sanat Kumar Gupta, Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, 1959), 11-12.



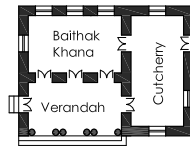
Cutcherry, Shashibhushan Mukherjee's house, Ghatbandar Berhampur



Baithak-khana cum living quarters - Ramtanu Lahiri's house, Krishnanagar



Baithak-khana, Sen family house, Khagrabazaar, Berhampur



Baithak-khana cum cutcherry - Mukherjee house, Krishnanagar

Fig. 6.68 Comparative plans - *cutcherry, baithak-khana, dwelling-cum-cutcherry/ baithak-khana*

Fig. 6.69 The minimal furniture in the *baithak-khana* or *cutcherry* - floor rugs or the low height *takhtaposh*



In the house of Narahari Mukherjee, a lawyer practising in the District Court in Krishnanagar in the 1860s, the *cutcherry* was an office in the daytime, but also served as the *baithak-khana* in the evening and was then converted into a sleeping space for male relatives and young boys of the house at night.⁹⁵ Within the urban domestic set-up of the *zilla sadar*, the categories of space and function (such as *cutcherry*, *baithak-khana* and living areas) or work, home and leisure activities were thus extremely fluid and malleable. This is especially true of the period up to the mid-nineteenth century.

One of the reasons why such spatial interchange was possible was that the generic nature of the basic building-type offered a reasonable fit for a range of functions. Plans of *cutcheries*, *baithak-khanas* and mid-nineteenth century dwelling-cum-*cutcherry* or dwelling-cum-*baithak-khana* buildings were virtually the same, or near-identical (fig. 6.68). All were based, in essence, on the 3x3 cellular matrix form or one of its variants. The other factor aiding multiple roles for the same building was the nature of furniture typically used in such spaces of middle-class Bengali households. These tended to be fairly minimal and flexible items, the most frequently used being simple mattresses (*gadis*) or *takhtaposh* (a low wooden platform, about 1ft high, which could be used as a work surface, a low divan to entertain visitors, as well as a bed - Fig. 6.69).⁹⁶

6.4.2 Urban-rural relationships and incremental domestic space

A significant factor affecting the character of Bengali domestic spaces in the *sadar* town was the incremental nature of development of people's urban bases. To large sections of the native population moving from villages into the *sadar*, it represented a movement to a new 'urban' location. In *Atmacharit*, his memoirs, Jogesh Chandra Bidyanidhi, a well-known Bengali academic whose father was a *sadar-ala* or sub-judge in the district court in Bankura town, he recounted his childhood impressions of their life after moving from a native village in the mid-nineteenth century:

Our house in Bankura was made up of 3 buildings – [which] belonged earlier to a west-Indian merchant. One had to enter from the east, on the right was the east-facing, single-storeyed *baithak-khana*, in front the *uthan* [open court], on the left the *indara* [well].⁹⁷ There was a nice thatched room on the right. Behind this were bel trees, other flowering trees and banana trees.

This idea of a number of discrete units with different functions, but connected by a central courtyard and enclosed by a wall, was characteristic of early-to-mid-nineteenth century

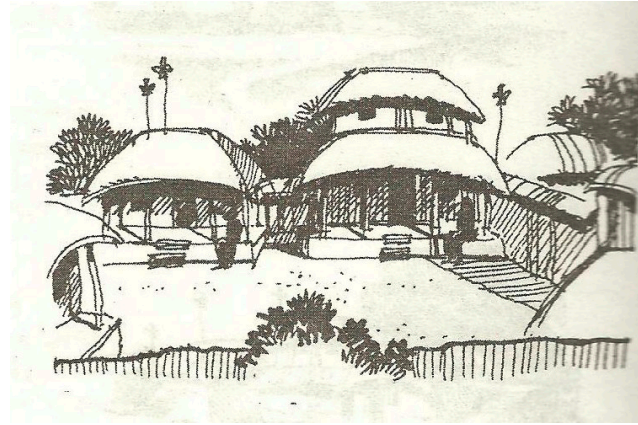
⁹⁵ This is based on an account given by Ratna Banerjee, the present occupier, who remembers her mother-in-law recounting oral narratives from still older generations dating back to the late-nineteenth century. Personal interview with Ratna Banerjee, 10 Mar. 2010.

⁹⁶ By the late-nineteenth century, European custom-designed furniture had found its way well into Bengali homes, but these were either few in number, or if used in profusion, were usually placed in a dedicated *baithak-khana* which did not share its space with other functions.

⁹⁷ Jogeshchandra Roy, *Atmacharit* [My life] (Bankura: Ananda Kumar Rot, 2002), 13.

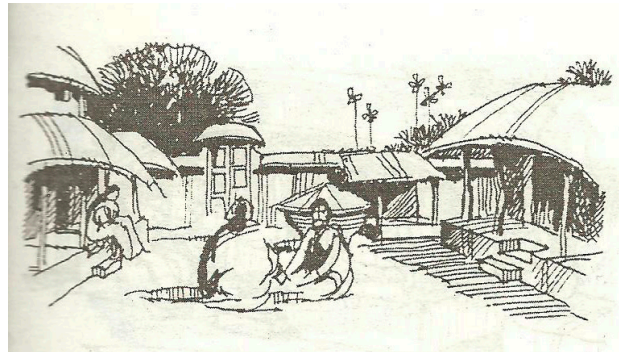


1



2

Fig. 6.70 Rural dwelling - nineteenth century Bengal. 1- the courtyard in the rural dwelling, source: British Library Images Online. 2 and 3 - discrete buildings clustered around the courtyard. Source: *Banglar Kutir*, [Huts of Bengal], Ashok kumar Kundu and Indrajit Chowdhuri (eds.)



3

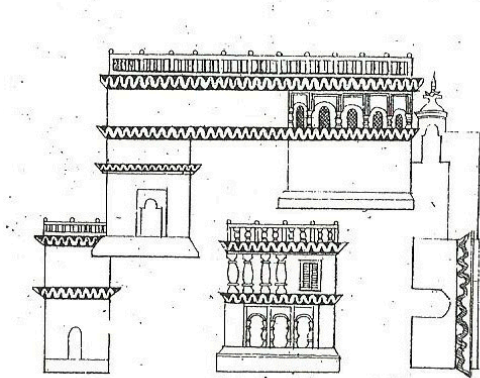
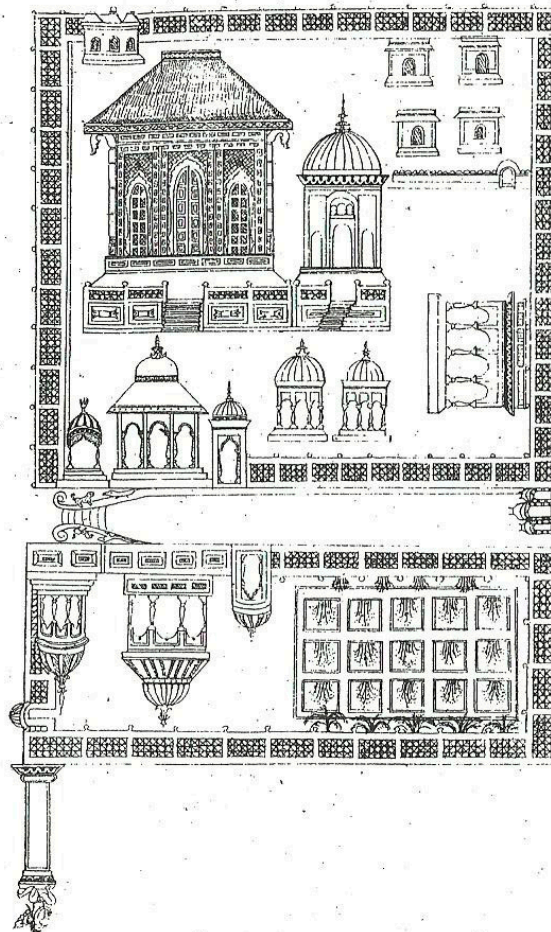


Fig. 6.71 Depiction of rural dwellings of Bengal as aggregate of discrete elements. Source: Robert Montgomery Martin, *Eastern India*, 1838.



rural habitation in Bengal (Fig. 6.70 and 6.71).⁹⁸ As is evident from Jogeshchandra's account, some of this obviously flowed out into the residential spaces of the town as well. However, more often than not, when compared to its rural counterpart, the home-base in the *sadar* town was far more minima and only grew incrementally over time. An account of such incremental development of urban dwellings was given by Kartikeyachandra when talking of his house in Krishnanagar in the 1840s:

...I finally settled for the present site [on the periphery of Krishnanagar] and first dug a tank and built a small building with a verandah. Unfortunately, I couldn't build one that was suitable for bringing my family over to stay... A few years later I embarked upon fashioning my own garden in the town... After my garden and the *baithak-khana* were completed, I used to come there every evening from Baruihuda [the ancestral village] and my relatives came from Krishnanagar. All of us spent time there until fairly late in the night. A full year passed but I could still not build a place suitable for family-living due to paucity of funds. In 1854, my middle son suddenly contracted small pox... Next day around 2 pm he passed away. Finding that it was not wise to continue⁹⁹ living in Baruihuda, I built a few more rooms behind the *baithak-khana* and moved my family there .

Another example of a basic early urban dwelling was Ramtanu Lahiri's house in Krishnanagar. Lahiri, an eminent Bengali educationist and liberal intellectual, also moved into the same neighbourhood as Kartikeyachandra in 1846. While the peripheral location of the site meant there was adequate land for a private garden, the building itself had to be modest. It consisted of a *baithak-khana*, sleeping space, store and servants' room, all in a simple linear arrangement (Fig. 6.72).¹⁰⁰ It was indeed this skeletal urban living, which many migrants from rural areas were forced to adopt in their early days in *sadar* towns that possibly created the need for composite building types such as the *baithak-khana*-house or the *cutcherry*-cum-house, thereby maximising the use from a single structure.

In the period of consolidation up to the mid-nineteenth century, the *zilla sadar* represented one end of a territorial split along gender lines between the village and the town. Save for prostitutes' and mistress' quarters that accounted for the marginal morality that the

98 See, for example Rev. Lal Behari Dey's description of a typical peasant's hut in Bengal around 1850, in the Burdwan area. Dey describes it as having a central open courtyard (*uthan*) surrounded by individual units like the principal hut (sleeping room and family storage) with a *verandah* to receive guests, the maternity room with a *verandah* for the rice husking implement, the kitchen (*pak-sala* or *ranna-ghar*), the cow-house (*gosala*), the domestic granary (*gola* or *marai*) and the straw stack (*palui*). L. B. Dey, *Bengal Peasant Life; Folk Tales of Bengal; Recollections of my School Days*, M. Sinha (ed.), (Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1969), 23-25.

See also Robert Montgomery Martin's description, in 1838, of a Bengali dwelling: 'I may state that it is not the usual custom in Bengal to build one house with a number of different apartments sufficient for the purpose of the family; but except the great, the natives in general build a separate house or hut for each purpose. The huts collectively sufficient for the accommodation of a family are usually surrounded by a common fence and are called Vati or Vari.' R.M. Martin, *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India: Comprising the Districts of Behar, Shahabad, Bhagulpoor, Goruckpoor, Dinajepoor, Puraniya, Rungpoor & Assam, in Relation to their Geology, Mineralogy, Botany, Agriculture, Commerce, Manufactures, Fine Arts, Population, Religion, Education, Statistics, etc.*, Vol. 2 (Bhagulpoor, Goruckpoor, and Dinajepoor), edited from Francis Hamilton's accounts of those districts, 1807-14 (London: W.M. H Allen & Co., 1838), 116.

99 K. Roy, *Diwan Karitkeyachandra Raier Atmajibancharit* [the autobiography of Diwan kartikeyachandra], (Calcutta: Sri Jitendralal Roy), 141.

100 The staircase at the rear gave access to rooms above but from their style and construction it seems likely that these were late-nineteenth early-twentieth century additions. Cooking, bath and toilet areas were most likely outside the main building, following prevalent Bengali customs. These were seen to directly affect Bengali notion of purity and pollution and were therefore kept detached. However, possibly due to the fact that they were constructed in temporary materials, these structures have not remained and, unlike the main house, could therefore not be authentically documented by the author.

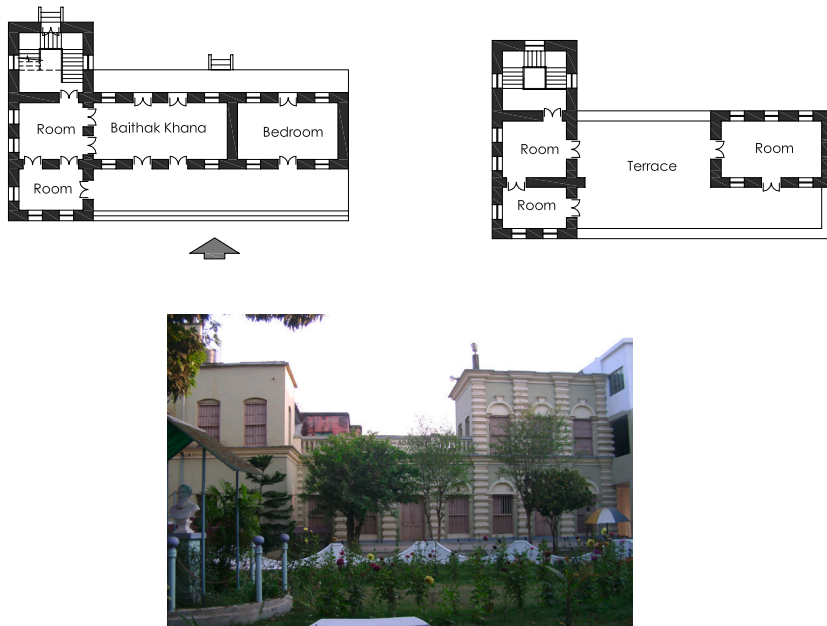


Fig. 6.72 Ramtanu Lahiri's house, Krishnanagar, mid-nineteenth century

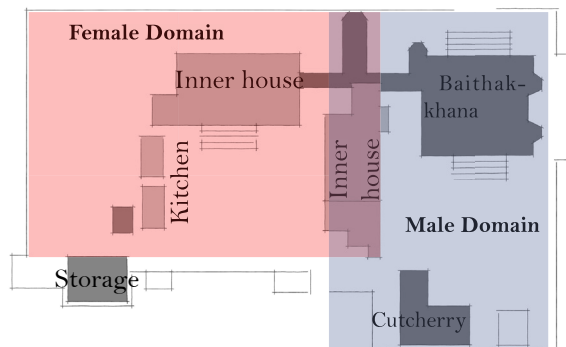


Fig. 6.73 Female and male domains, Chakrabarty house, Dangalpara, Suri - late-nineteenth century

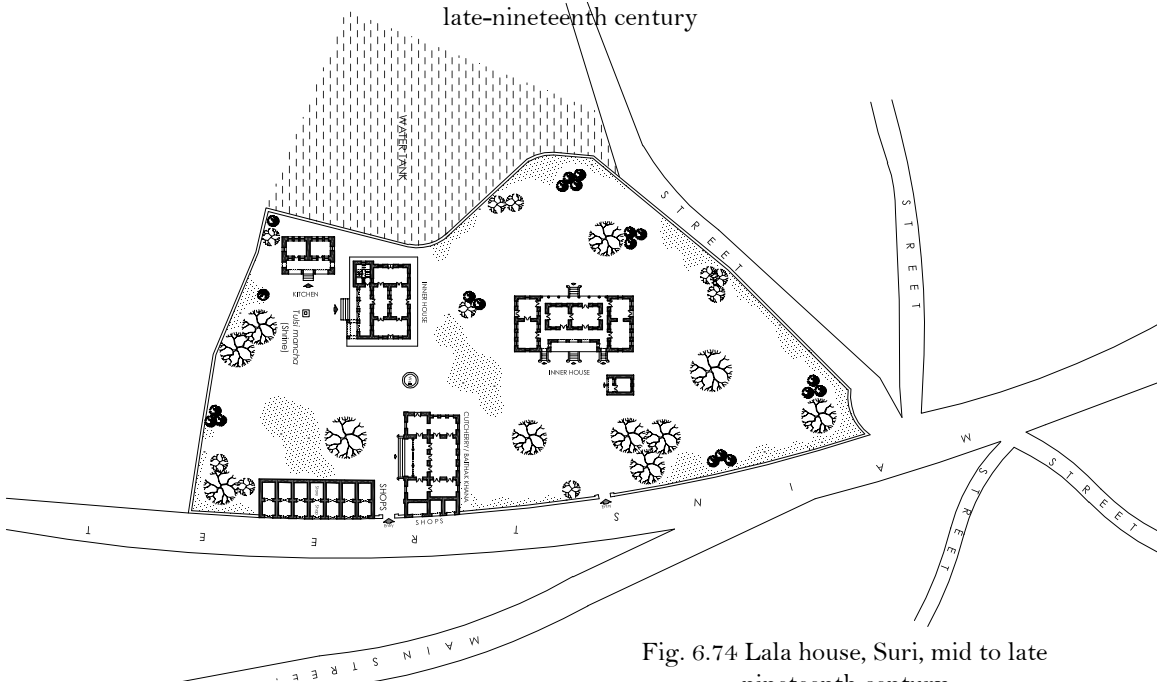


Fig. 6.74 Lala house, Suri, mid to late nineteenth century

sadar seemed to allow, these towns remained a predominantly male domain inhabited by family-members working in the town, along with their male servants. This was also reflected in the simple formations of early dwellings. In his account, Jogeshchandra also talked about how their house in Bankura did not contain a prayer space, which was an integral part of his village home, and of which the women were traditionally the custodians. Obviously, spaces specific to feminine use did not figure within these early *sadar* dwellings. Starting from around 1860s, however, Bengali families were increasingly brought into the towns, and there was a certain re-claiming of the completeness of the familial environment within the urban milieu. The components of domestic life enumerated earlier reveal the substantial proportion of spaces (e.g. the inner house, maternity rooms, shrines, kitchen and other service areas) that were primarily used by the women, or female servants of the household, starting from this period (Fig. 6.73).

As the urban domestic bases for *zamindars* or middle-class Bengali officers were augmented¹⁰¹, more buildings were added to their spatial scheme. Houses also became more layered and complex. This took a few different channels. The first was the re-creation, roughly, of the loose-aggregate form of building in the village habitat, trying to invoke a familiar lifestyle. Such dwellings were typically found in peripheral areas of *sadar* towns where the pressure on land was relatively low. The Lala house in Suri (Fig. 6.74), or the Chowdhury house in Ghatbandar on the outskirts of Berhampur (Fig. 6.75), were examples of such a type. But more commonly, in the majority of areas of the *sadar* town where land was increasingly scarce, there was a tightening of this typology into more compact enclosures which offered an easier fit with small or medium sized plots. Such a formation was seen, for instance, in the house of a barrister, Narahari Mukherjee, in the Goari area of Krishnanagar, next to the district court complex – i.e. right in the urban core (Fig. 6.76). As mentioned earlier, in this, the *baithak-khana* (built in the 1840s)¹⁰² had in its early days trebled up as a *cutcherry* and also a living unit. To this was added, in the late-nineteenth century, the inner house – a compact cluster of living areas, kitchen, maternity room and storage spaces around an inner court – to render it suitable for family living. Typologically, the compact courtyard formation was able to span a huge range, from large and medium-large plots, down to tiny *bazaar* houses. Within the wide range of social classes and groups (as discussed in Chapter 2) that the *sadar* contained, this type found particularly wide application. The courtyard type was used, for example, in the medium-sized houses of clerks in the employment of the Maharaja (*zamindar*) of Krishnanagar (Fig. 6.77 and 6.78), or that for a *nazir* employed in the Collectorate at Suri (Fig. 6.79). It was used profusely in medium or even small *bazaar* houses of merchants, as well as for prostitutes' dwellings. What is interesting is also that in many cases (e.g. the Sinha-Roy family house in Krishnanagar - Fig. 6.80), despite having substantial plot sizes, the built

101 It is crucial to understand here that such development of the domestic aspect of urban dwellings also had a direct relation with increasing surplus income of families. While in the early days of movement to the town people barely managed to eke out a living, from around 1860s there was considerable surplus income. For *zamindars* there was surplus income from the rural agricultural base. For others like lawyers, barristers or doctors, there was surplus income from flourishing urban occupations.

102 This is based on the oral account of Pradip Banerjee, present heir, talking of his ancestor who was already practising as a pleader in 1862 from the premises. Following this, the time of construction of the first building was possibly sometime around or before 1860. Interview with author on 10.03.2010.

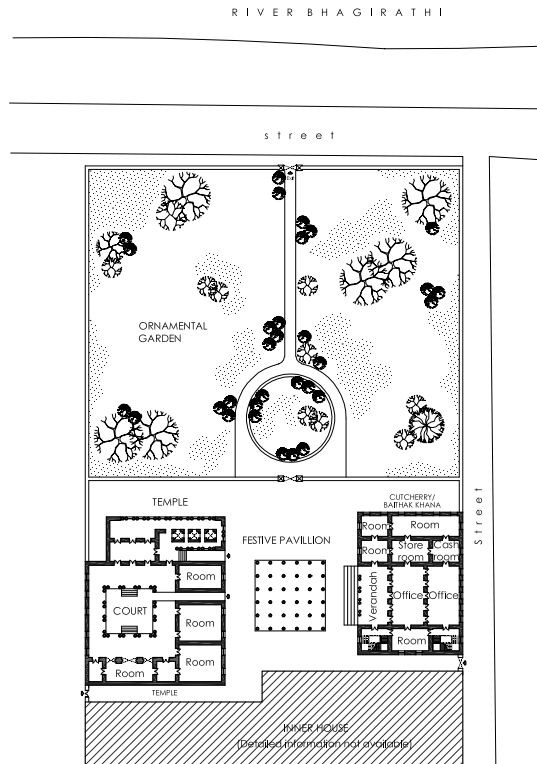


Fig. 6.75 Chowdhury family house, Ghatbandar, Berhampur, mid to late nineteenth century

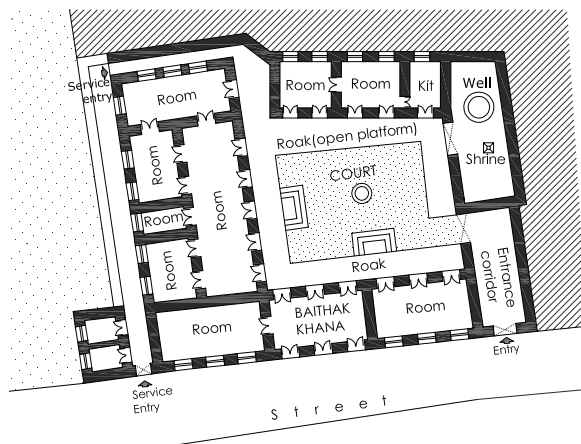
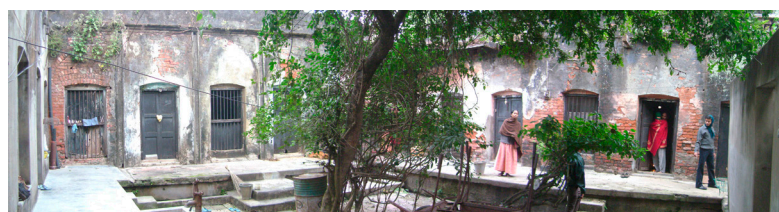


Fig. 6.77 Nayek house 1, Krishnanagar, mid-nineteenth century



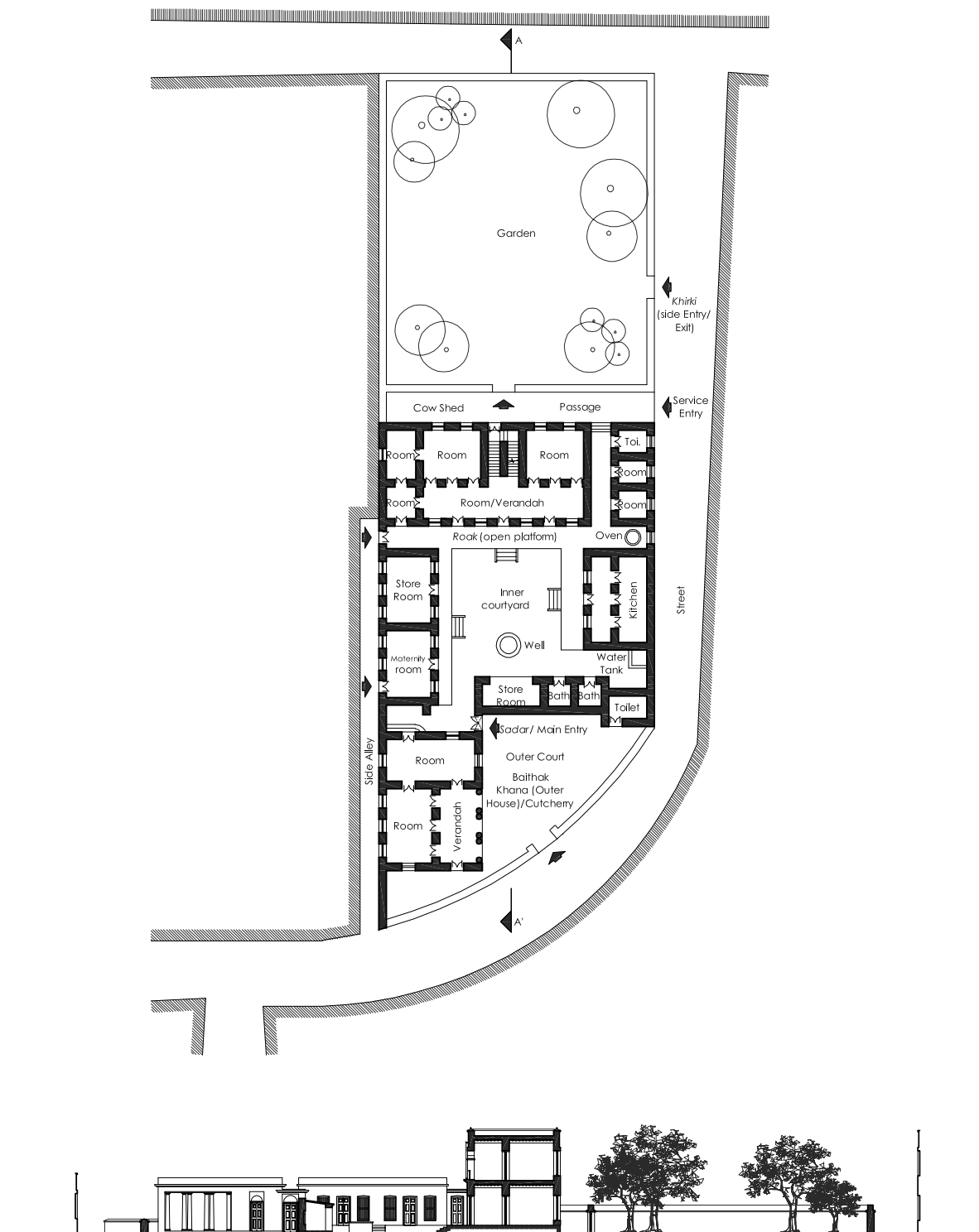


Fig. 6.76 Mukherjee House,
Krishnanagar, 1840s (inner portion
expanded 1860s onwards)

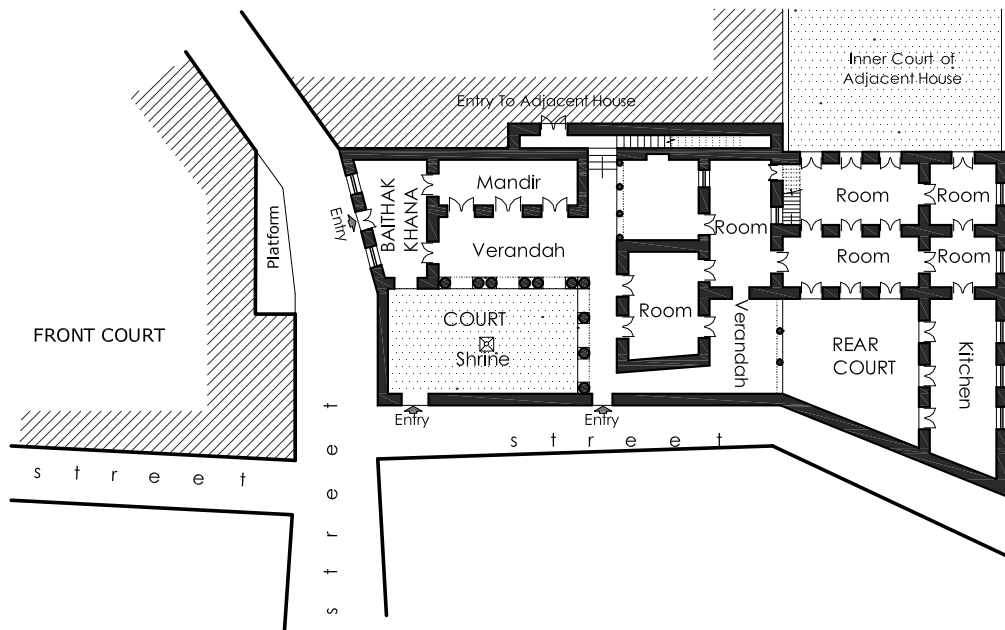


Fig. 6.78 Nayek house 2,
Krishnanagar, mid-nineteenth century

element was still highly condensed into a compact courtyard form, leaving open grounds for gardens and orchards, instead of opting for a more distended bungalow or villa form. This seems to have been a conscious choice to create a closer fit with indigenous lifestyles and their tightly-knit social and familial structures, while simultaneously allowing the large outdoor spaces found in official provincial bungalow compounds. A degree of social evolution of the European lifestyle was clearly taking place.

The other major driver dictating the development of native residential premises in *sadar* towns was the process of sub-division and densification within a given plot. Usually, each family found it had reached a ceiling in terms of land-holding size within the urban area by the mid-to-late-nineteenth century,¹⁰³ after this (or even before which), the plot was successively subdivided over generations between heirs, resulting in greater densification. A classic case of such densification were the residential premises of Guruprasad Mukherjee of Bankura (Fig. 6.81, discussed earlier in Chapter 2). This was especially true of central town areas where acquiring new land as and when needed was almost impossible. What is interesting, though, is that at every stage, and within each cellular unit, there was a continuous attempt to preserve a spatial formation that was rooted in the rural lifestyle of Bengal, while overlaying it with emerging European-influenced conceptions of urban living. Each unit thus tended to consist of a cluster of structures built around a central open space, reminiscent of the rural home, with more public rooms like the *baithak-khana* – specific to the culture of urban living – placed on its outer edge.¹⁰⁴

On the other hand, in some cases, as they expanded, some families chose not to build on the same site as their initial *sadar* dwelling; instead, further plots were acquired elsewhere within the town for different branches of the family.¹⁰⁵ This was the case, for instance, with the house of Kalicharan Lahiri, the brother of Ramtanu Lahiri (Fig. 6.82) in Krishnanagar. Such instances also caused a partial break-down of the kinship basis of territorial formations that *sadar* towns had been predominantly characterised by up to the mid-nineteenth century.

In many ways, the *sadar* was a place for trade-offs in cultural and architectural terms. Another of the common forms of dwellings, typified, for instance by the Mukherjee residence

¹⁰³ For example, in Guruprasad Mukherjee's case in Bankura, cited earlier in Chapter 2, this was about 1.86 acres of land by about 1865–70. Based on family papers in possession of Debashish Mukherjee, one of the present heirs.

¹⁰⁴ Village dwellings up to the mid nineteenth century usually did not contain a *baithak-khana*. As an observation by Lal Behari Dey in the 1840s on a typical rural dwelling in Bengal shows, the *verandah* served as the place to receive and entertain guests, there being little distinction between relatives, friends of the family, and other visitors. Dey, *Bengal Peasant Life*, 23. This particular role of the *verandah* in the village seems to have been formalised within the urban context into the *baithak-khana*, also enabling a more clear-cut division between private and public domains. There were instances where large *zamindari* houses in villages also contained a *baithak-khana*, but this spatial pattern seems to have been a flow-back into the village from the town.

¹⁰⁵ This was possibly linked to lack of availability of land for expansion of the dwelling adjacent to the existing plot. In some cases it seems to have been also linked to the notion of the 'house with a garden', perceived as an asset that fringe areas of *sadar* towns could offer, which middle class Bengalis often did not want to compromise on. As evidenced in Kartikeyachandra's description in Chapter 1, it was a model of dwelling that people like Ramtanu and Kalicharan Lahiri consciously pursued. This may have been a driving force behind not opting for further building within a plot.

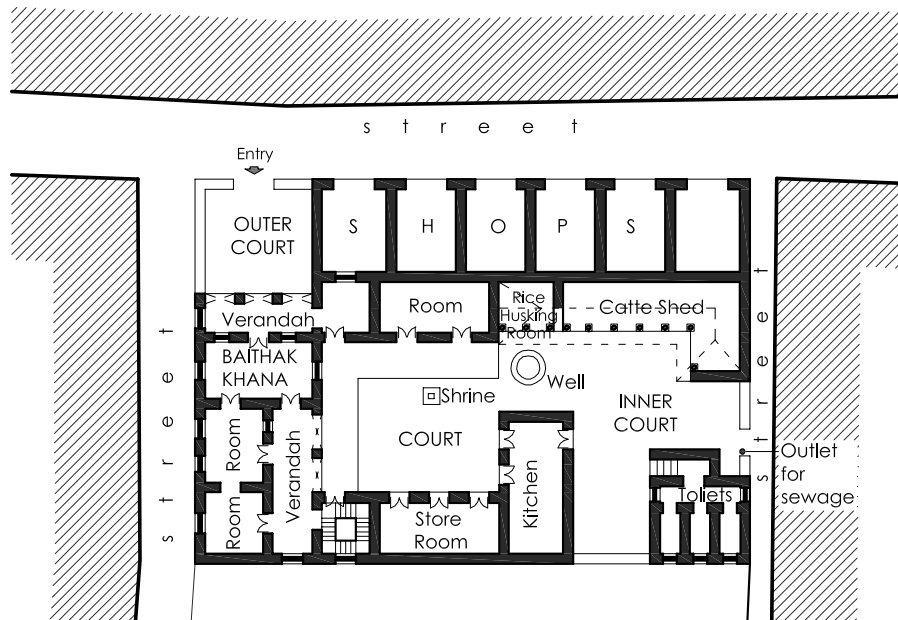


Fig. 6.79 *Nazir's house*, Suri, late-nineteenth, early-twentieth century

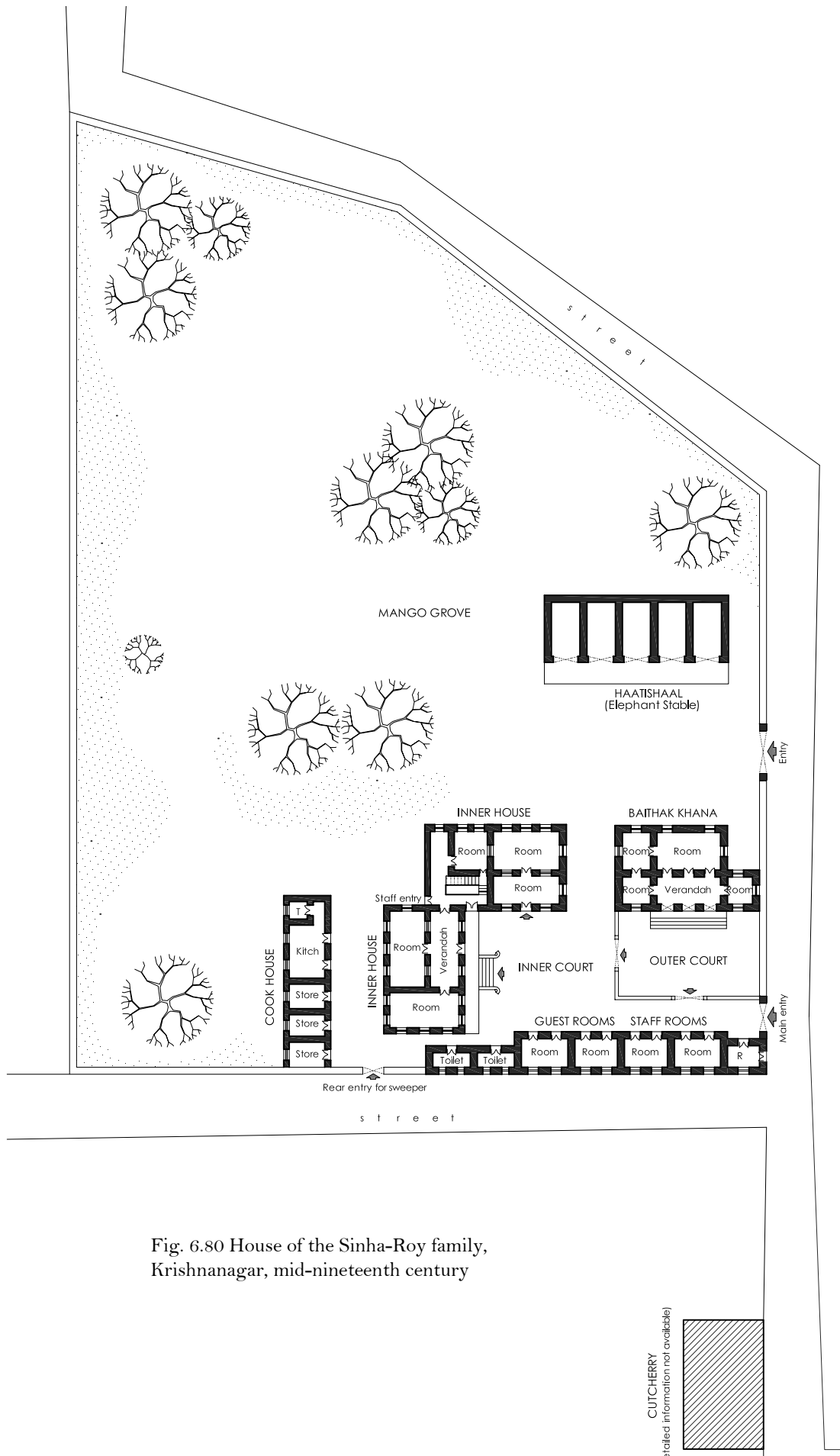
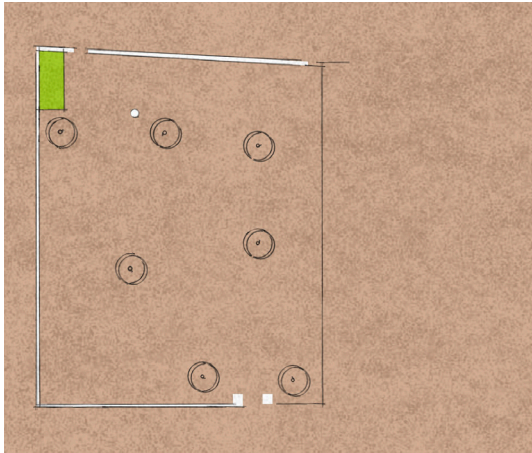
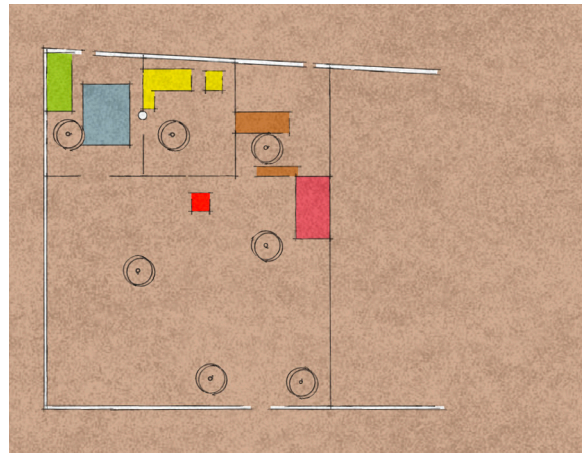


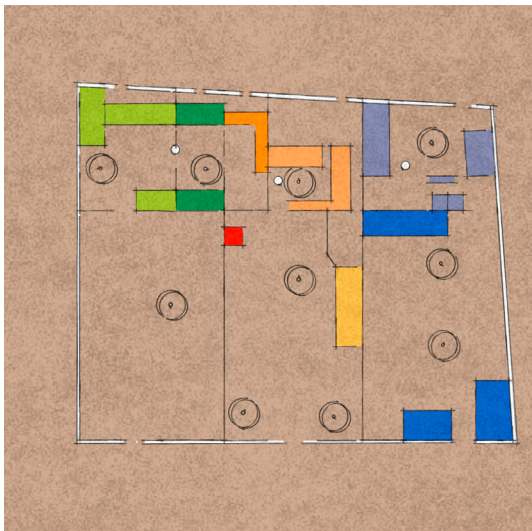
Fig. 6.80 House of the Sinha-Roy family,
Krishnanagar, mid-nineteenth century



Stage 1



Stage 2



Stage 3



Stage 4



Fig. 6.81 Successive densification of Guruprasad Mukherjee's plot (approximately 1808 - 1912). The photograph shows the portion belonging to Debashish Banerjee, the present heir. Note how the basic courtyard formation and social clustering of the rural dwelling was preserved for each cellular division.

Source: drawing developed based on interview with Debashish Mukherjee and the author's physical survey on ground.

in Krishnanagar (Fig. 6.83), was one which from the outside appeared like an extroverted villa sitting in the midst of vast grounds, but on the inside held a network of tightly knit, introverted buildings around one or more courtyards. Calibrated between urban and rural, and between European and Indian paradigms, it was a response to the simultaneous demands of exteriority and interiority that the *sadar's* 'intermediate urbanism' warranted. It was linked closely to the evolving notion of private and public domains that developed in the *sadar*, especially in the late-nineteenth early twentieth centuries, which the following section focuses in.

6.4.3 Urban-rural relationships and the inner and outer domains

It has been seen that some essential aspects of rural dwellings and lifestyles flowed into the domestic spaces of the *zilla sadar*, albeit in modified forms. However, one of the most significant aspects of the urban dwelling in the *sadar* that clearly set it apart from its rural counterpart was the strong demarcation of the *andar-bahir*, or the inner and outer domains, and now a clear delineation of the public domain in private houses (Figs. 6.84, 6.85 and 6.86). Within the simultaneous exposure and anonymity that urban living brought, this schism became a defining aspect of urban domesticity. Rabindranath Tagore's description in the novel *Jogajog* brought out this separation effectively:

In the tradition of the aristocratic rich, Mukundalal's life is also spilt into two quarters – the quarter of domesticity and the quarter of fun-n-frolic and company of friends.¹⁰⁶

Coupled with this was also the complex relationship between the rural and urban sites of domesticity. With the material substantiation of domestic spaces in the *sadar*, the conceptual world that came into question was the notion of the *home* itself – tellingly revealed in the split-domesticity of the *bar'* (the native place, usually the rural roots) and the *bash'* (the place in the town, the urban dwelling) that arose in nineteenth-century Bengal. What is critical is that both sites continued to create a kind of composite domestic sphere that spread between the village and the town. It was a tie that was not severed until well into the twentieth century. In many ways, this dialectic between the inner and outer realms, and urban and rural locations, constituted the very essence of late-nineteenth early-twentieth century residences in *zilla sadar* towns. Buildings of this period, like the Shahana residence in Bankura or the Chakrabarty residence in Suri, reflect a simultaneous attempt to articulate and expand the public-ness of the outer house on the one hand, and to reclaim the familial spaces and interiority of the inner house characteristic of village life, on the other. In fact, this simultaneous pursuit of interiority and exteriority became particularly intense and visible especially in the *sadar* houses of the Bengali urban bourgeoisie, the *bhadrolok*.¹⁰⁷ The Sahana residence, for example, was bought as a villa in the late-nineteenth

¹⁰⁶ Rabindranath Tagore, *Jogajog*, (Calcutta: Sahitya Academy publications, 1924), 3.

¹⁰⁷ The *bhadrolok* (literally meaning a 'well-mannered person' in Bengali) - referred to a new class of 'gentlefolk' in colonial Bengal. Usually from upper castes (*Brahmins*, *Baidyas* and *Kayasthas*), they belonged to the upper or middle socio-economic classes. Entitlement to being called a *bhadrolok* came with the possession of essential attributes like the refinement lent by high levels of Indian and English education, and a taste for the liberal arts. *Bhadroloks* were typically from *zamindari* backgrounds, professional classes, prosperous merchants or civil servants. Key bearers of the '*Bengal Renaissance*' (the watershed historical phenomenon marking an intense burst of intellectual and artistic energies in late-



Fig. 6.82 Territorial split of families within the *sadar* - Lahiri family, Krishnanagar, late nineteenth century. 1 - Ramtanu Lahiri's residence. 2 - Kalicharan Lahiri's residence.

Source: Base map - British Library maps collection, IOR.

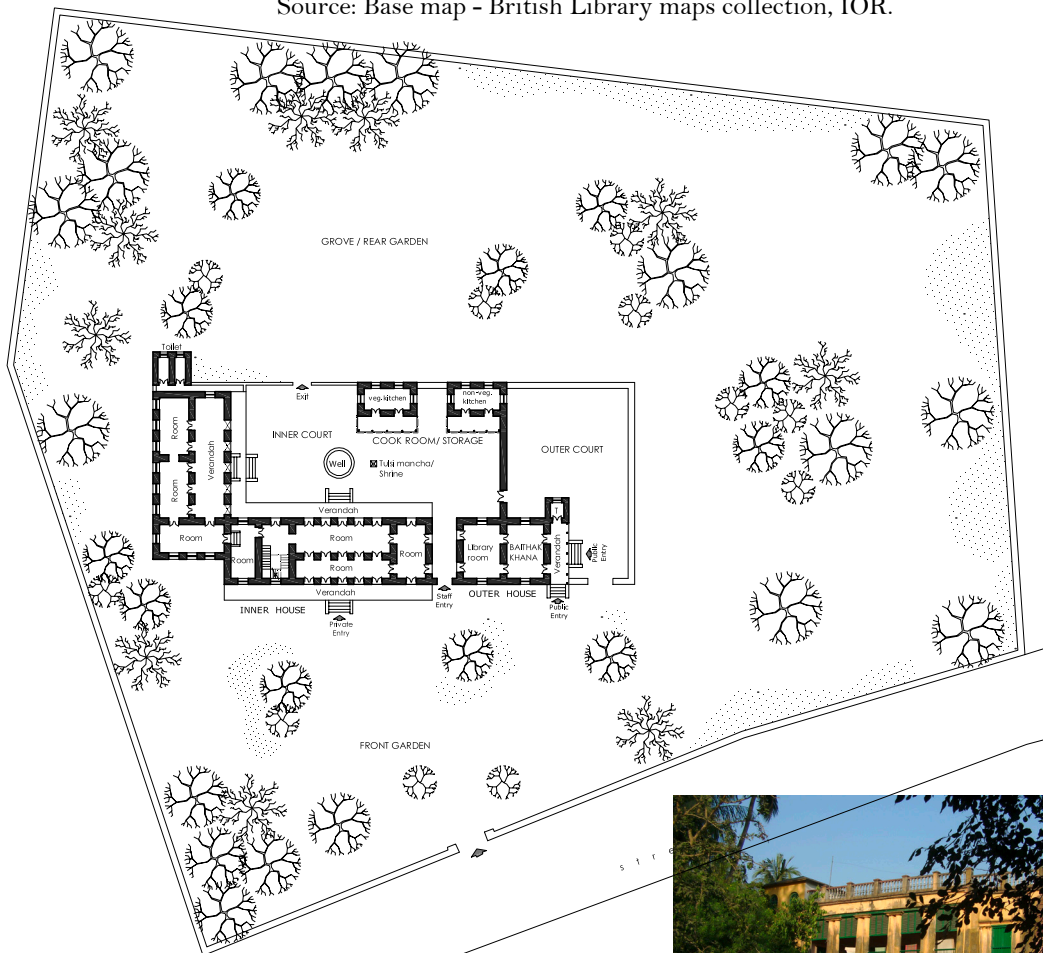


Fig. 6.83 Combination of the extroverted villa and the introverted courtyard forms - Mukherjee house, Krishnanagar.



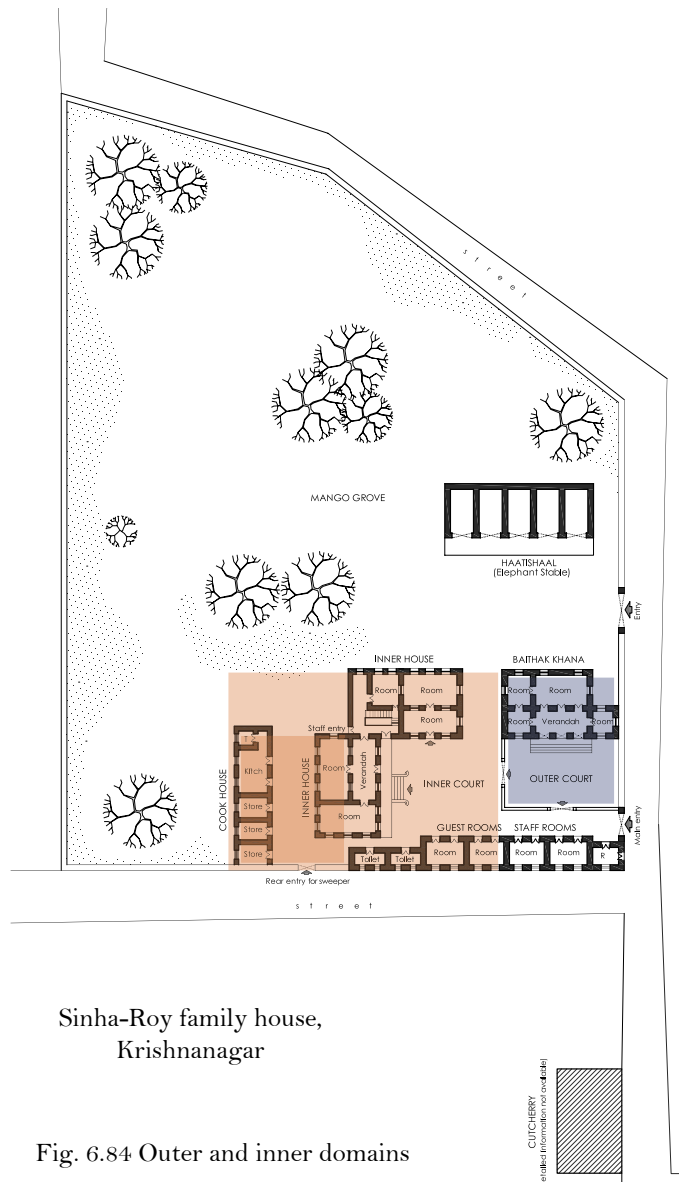
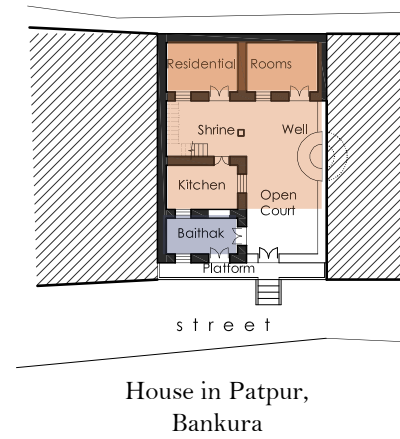
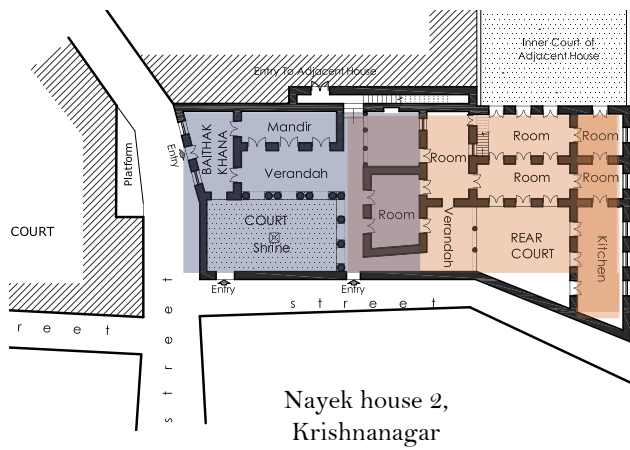
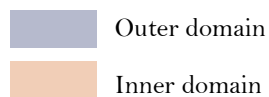


Fig. 6.84 Outer and inner domains



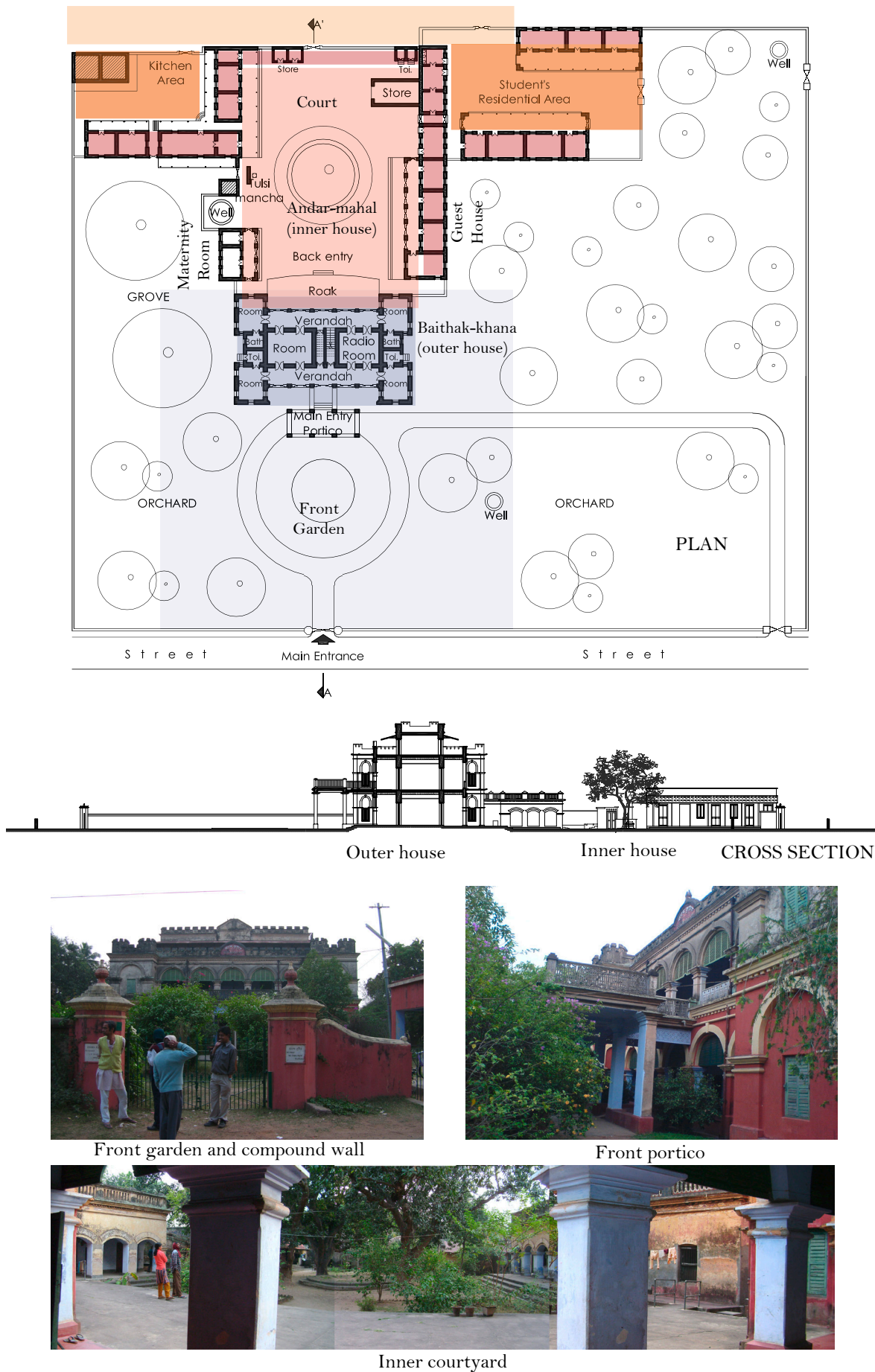


Fig. 6.85 Urban-rural relationships and outer and inner domains - Sahana residence, Bankura, late-nineteenth early-twentieth century

century by Satyakinkar Sahana, a mica merchant and chairman of the Bankura municipality, and over the next decade and half, he undertook a series of spatial interventions to expand and articulate its inner and outer domains (Fig. 6.85). A *baithak khana*, or drawing room was added to entertain guests, along with a radio room, guest rooms with attached toilets, ornamental front gardens, portico and an entrance road to receive motor cars. However, there were also other, more interior worlds being shaped within the same dwelling. A series of introverted and interconnected enclaves were added inside for cooking areas, maternity rooms, tutorial spaces for children and storage areas for provisions arriving from the ancestral village.¹⁰⁸ In such ways, the village found its way right into the spaces of domestic life of the *sadar*.

Simultaneously, the outer domain in other houses was also being systematically rendered as a continuation of the larger public domain of the town, and in turn, of the evolving urban public sphere that was becoming such a hallmark of late-nineteenth-century Calcutta¹⁰⁹. The dwellings of the Bengali provincial elite sometimes, for instance, contained public libraries¹¹⁰ and entertainment facilities. The Chakrabarty residence in Suri, for instance, boasted a grand, double-height *baithak-khana*, which became an active site for public performances routinely held on its premises (Fig. 6.86). It had an entry route through the outer court for close acquaintances, plus a separate and more grandiose entry (marked by double-height columns) direct from the street for the general public of the town. The large internal volume of its *baithak-khana* was surrounded on two sides by galleries on the upper level, edged with bamboo blinds to allow women of the house – who had direct access from the inner house into this area – to view the performances, thus allowing a trade-off between private viewing and public spectacle. *Baithak-khanas* were also the active sites for the *adda* – a quintessential Bengali pursuit – whereby people would regularly gather in the evenings to meet friends and chat intensely about anything from anecdotal humour, everyday experiences, town gossip, through to cultural and political discourse.¹¹¹ Provincial

nineteenth century colonial Bengal), the *bhadroloks* were patrons of the arts, philosophy and various political movements. Though they clearly assimilated significant aspects of western education, large sections of the *bhadrolok* community came to play pivotal roles in anti-British resistance movements starting from the late-nineteenth century.

¹⁰⁸ Based on physical survey of the residential premises of the Sahana family, personal interviews with Manik Sahana (present heir), and study of family documents by the author in 2007-2008.

¹⁰⁹ The development of the public sphere and its relationship with the private domain in nineteenth-century Calcutta and Bengal have been studied by a number of historians. See e.g. D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton N.J, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008); G. Bhadra, *Jaal Rajar Katha. Bardhamaner Pratapchand*, (Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 2002). For a discussion on the relationship between public sphere and public space in nineteenth century Calcutta, see S. Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny*, (London, Routledge, 2005).

¹¹⁰ A significant example of private book collections in *sadar* towns which expanded to become public libraries was, for instance, the Ratan Library in Suri. It was set up in the late-nineteenth century (possibly in the 1890s), by Shibratan Mitra, a Bengali officer in the Suri Collectorate, in his own house. Though he was himself just a Collectorate officer, he was a literary enthusiast and collector. By the early-twentieth century the library had a collection of over 8,000 books, including many rare ones. Its readership extended far beyond its provincial boundaries and spread wide within Bengali intelligentsia. Interestingly, it also had collections of antique sculpture, coins, images and maps in *sadar* towns. In many ways therefore, provincial private libraries served as public libraries and mini museums. See e.g. G. Mitra, *Birbhumar Itihaash*, S. Sinha, *Siuri Shaharer Itihaash* (Suri: Ujjal Sarkar), 47.

Another such collection of books was that of Ramdas Sen of Berhampur, an eminent writer and scholar in the 1860s and 70s. Sen's library (which held about 3500 books at its peak), actually occupied the central space of his outer house and also served virtually as a public library for large sections of the town's readers. Facts based on interview with Mrs. Sen, present heir, and on information from the official website of the National Library of India, Calcutta, to which the collection bequeathed in 1951. http://www.nationallibrary.gov.in/nat_lib_stat/gift_collection3.html. accessed on 27 July 2010.

¹¹¹ For a path-breaking and authoritative historical study of the *adda* as a cultural practice in colonial Bengal,

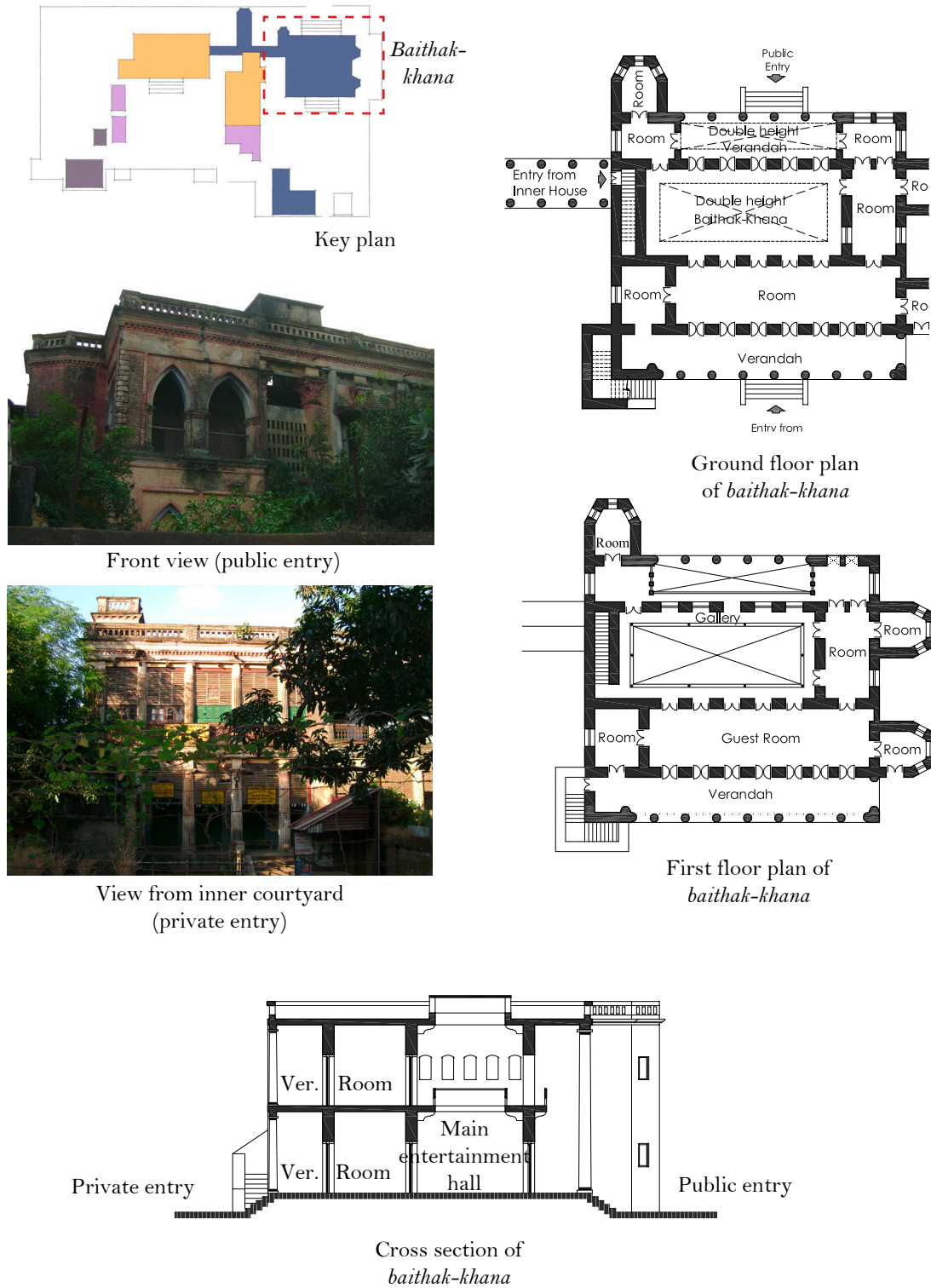
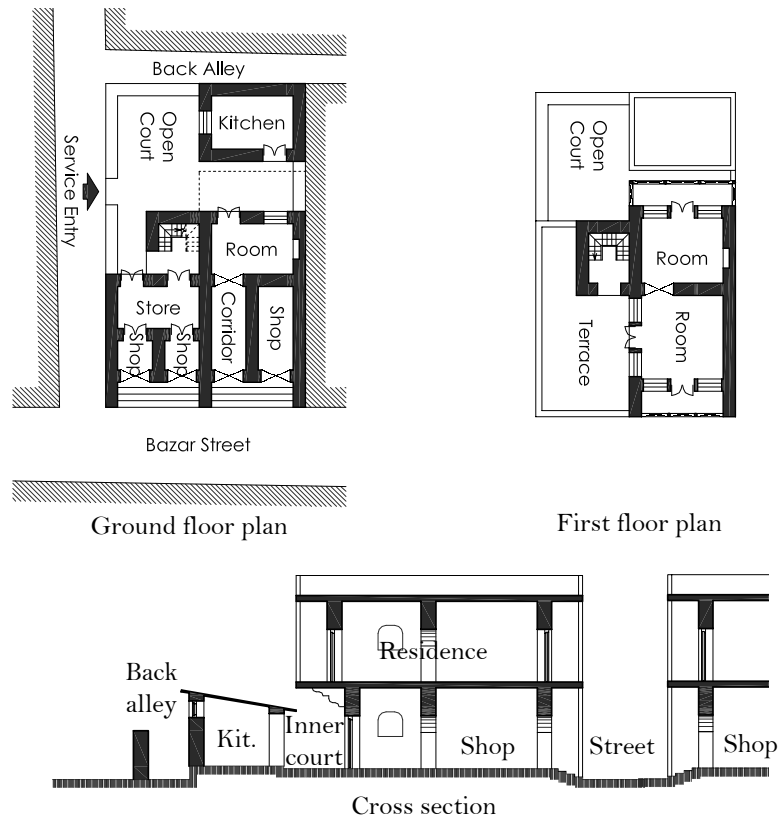
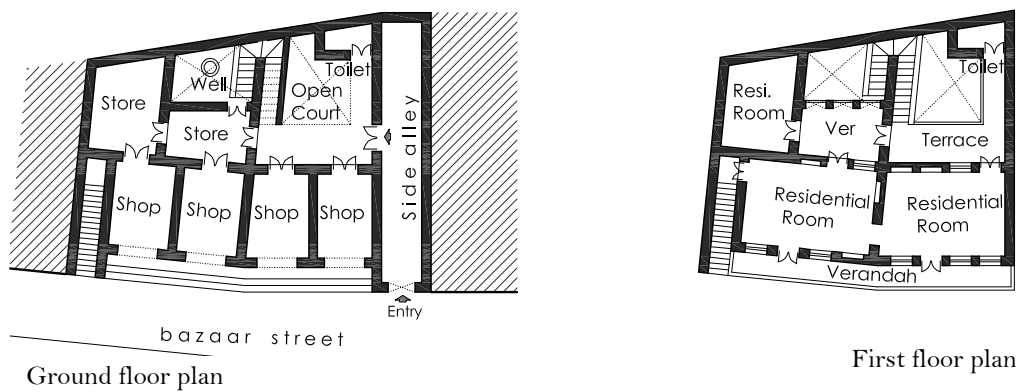
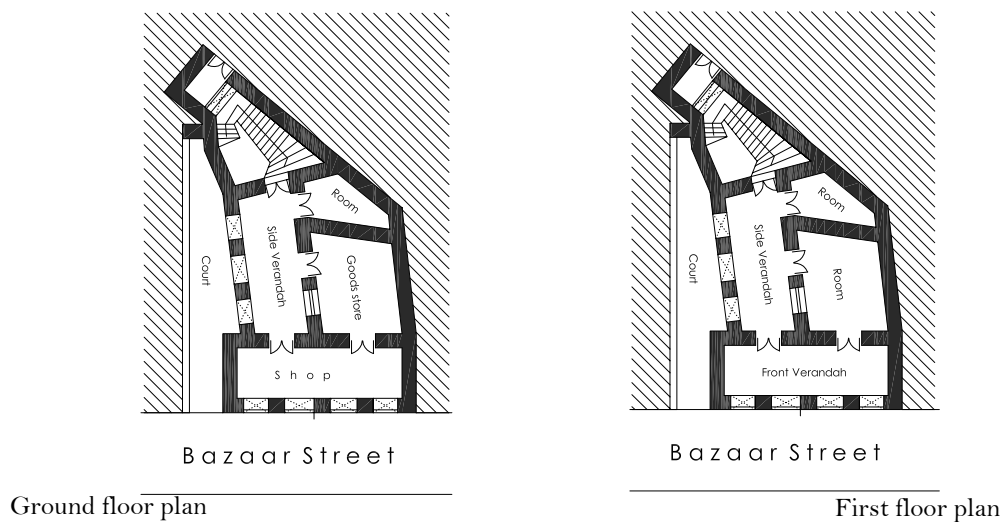


Fig. 6.86 Chakrabarty residence, Dangalpara, Suri, late-nineteenth century.

Fig. 6.87 *Bazaar house*: Churipatti, JessoreFig. 6.88 *Bazaar house* - Goari, KrishnanagarFig. 6.89 *Bazaar house* - Keranibazaar, Bankura

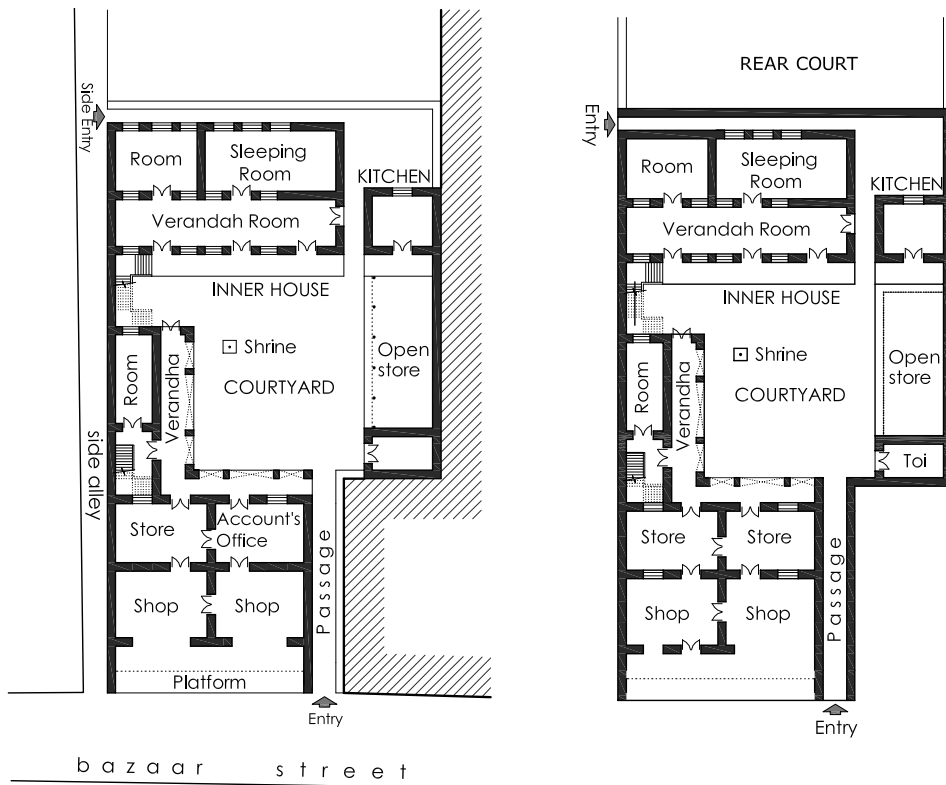


Fig. 6.90 *Bazaar house* - Chowkbazaar, Bankura



Fig. 6.91 *Bazaar houses* -
1. Keranibazaar, Bankura,
2. Chowkbazaar, Bankura,
3. Goari, Krishnanagar.





Fig. 6.92 Bazaar streets - 1. Keranibazaar, Bankura, 2. Chowkbazaar, Bankura, 3. Goari, Krishnanagar.

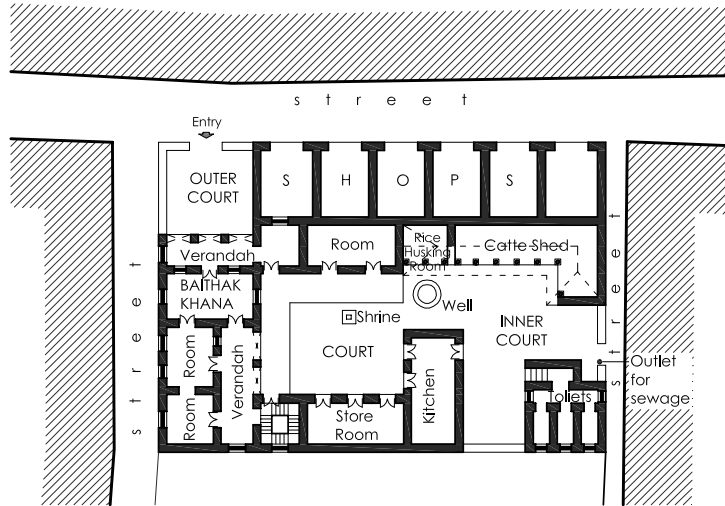


Fig. 6.93 Nazir's house, Suri

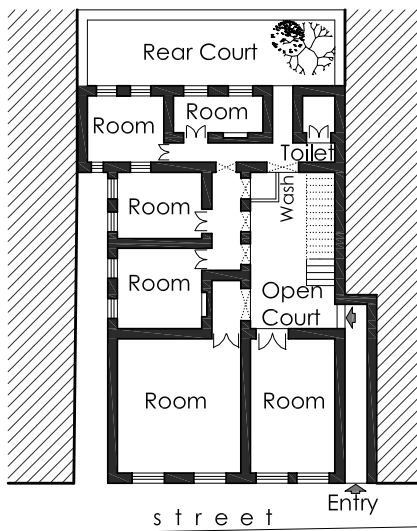


Fig. 6.93 Brothel, Khoshbagan, Burdwan

baithak-khanas were also characterised by the collection and display of artefacts from across the globe (a culture inherited at an immediate level mainly from Calcutta) which attempted to encapsulate a fantastic notion of the metropolitan world beyond.¹¹² Via its colonial cousins in Calcutta, the provincial *baithak-khana* thus became a site – a kaleidoscopic window – for bizarre connections between apparently obscure semi-rural towns in Bengal and cultural fragments from a much larger global landscape.

At all levels in the *sadar* towns, big or small, the urban dwelling played such dual roles: it was an urban entity with high public exposure, as well as a private residential realm. An aspect through which this was modulated was the manner in which dwellings fitted into the physical fabric of the urban context. While in larger plots (especially on town peripheries) the front garden mediated the relationship between the street and the house, in smaller town-houses on *bazaar* streets the front was typically given to a public layer of shops, the back to storage, and the upper level (or the rear of the house) to private residential quarters clustered around an internal court (Figs. 6.87, 6.88, 6.89, 6.90, 6.91, 6.92). In medium-sized houses on public streets, (Fig. 6.93), the front layer contained the *baithak-khana* and shops, while the rear and upper floor contained the residential quarters around an introverted court.¹¹³ But even such renditions of public and private domains had, by necessity, to be graded and varied. In prostitution quarters, for example, blatantly public rooms such as the *baithak-khana* were often non-existent (Fig. 6.94). Here the public domain was the street itself, and taking off from it were obscure alleyways, usually with at least one turn, that enabled only indirect access to the inner house, negotiating the distinction between the outside and inside. Even inside, such rooms were accessed through subsidiary spaces, or indirect routes, to give privacy and an intricate interiority.

6.5 Sites of collective leisure, entertainment and civic life

The *baithak-khana* in the houses of the urban elite of Bengal served virtually as an extension of certain other sites of collective entertainment, leisure and civic function, which gave a vital life-force to the *zilla sadar*. The ‘town in the country’ perception of the civil station played a key role in picnics or hunting expeditions outside the limits of the town, becoming particularly popular leisure activities for European officials and their families (Figs. 6.94, 6.95, 6.96). Albeit only partial, these activities seemingly represented interaction with, or territorial forays into, the countryside *per se*. Such activities also routinely overlapped with ‘official’ time and

see D. Chakrabarty, ‘Adda: A history of sociality’, *Provincializing Europe: Post-Colonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 180–213.

¹¹² Typical objects and artefacts from across the world in provincial *baithak-khanas* consisted of, for instance, Belgian glass chandeliers, mirrors, Italian hand-painted tiles, and Chinese pottery.

¹¹³ It is interesting to note here that it was usual practice in houses on public *bazaar* streets, for the doors of the *baithak-khana* to be kept generally open. With the *baithak-khana* typically having at least two to three external doors in a row, this meant a high level of connectivity and exposure to the public street. For urban houses, the key filter between the inside and the outside was therefore not at the layer between the *baithak-khana* and the street, but at the door that led from the *baithak-khana* to the inner house or at a separate door (independent of the *baithak-khana* entry) that led directly to the inner house from the street.



Fig. 6.94 'A picnic party, in a silver gelatin photo', c. 1898.
Columbia Educational Archives Online



Fig. 6.95 Shooting at the Edge of a Jungle, by Samuel Howitt (c.1756–1822). Original aquatint with hand colouring after Capt. Thomas Williamson, plate 29 from *Oriental Field Sports*, Thomas McLean, London, 1819.

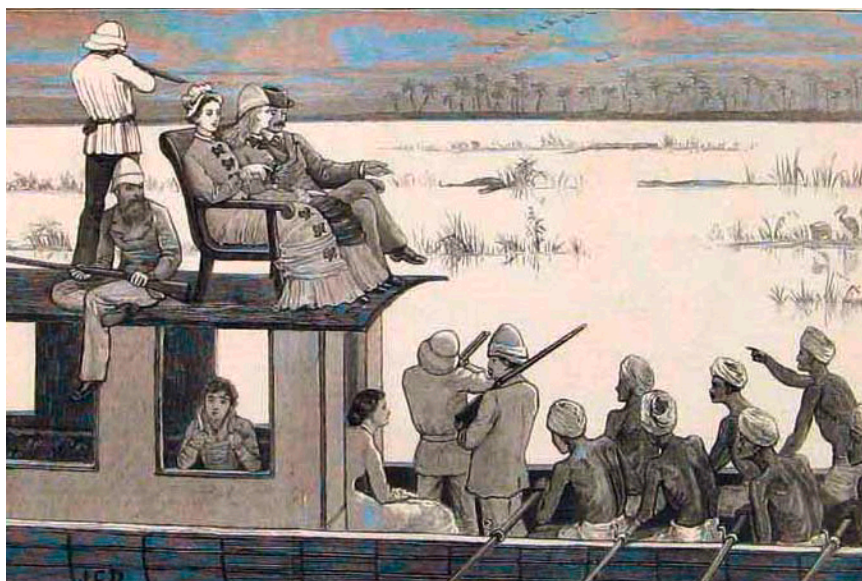


Fig. 6.96 'Shooting alligators on the way home from a picnic', from *The Graphic*, 1879. Columbia Educational Archives Online

duties, and became naturalised as a way of life in provincial postings.¹¹⁴ However, the *maidans*¹¹⁵ or big public parks which were so characteristic of large colonial cities never really caught hold of the imagination of colonial officers or native inhabitants in *sadar* towns.¹¹⁶ While spaces like the *maidan* held particular value in intensely dense urban situations like Calcutta, in the *sadar* towns – already seen as they were as ‘towns in the country’ – they were rare; the notion of leisure wasn’t formed around the need for large, green, open spaces as a constructed refuge.¹¹⁷ Instead, as discussed in Chapter 2, the slowness of the country-like lifestyle of the *sadar* was in some ways compensated by its rather *active* public spaces, usually attached to urban institutions. These were centred on collective entertainment forms like theatre, musical performances or political meetings, debates and public action. The latter was also closely linked to historical-political developments like the Indigo Rebellion of 1859–62, the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, the Ilbert Bill of 1882, the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, the Partition of Bengal in 1905, and the subsequent emergence of nationalist and resistance movements across India, which galvanised a strongly political urban culture in provincial *sadar* towns.

Eventually, a substantial dimension of the public life of the *sadar* was nurtured in internalised spaces. For the European population, these were, for example, spaces such as the colonial club or the racecourse. Though the racecourse was a relatively infrequent phenomenon, limited to very few *sadar* towns, and even then mostly located in town peripheries, the ubiquitous colonial club was a constant feature of every provincial station in Bengal (Fig. 6.97). It seemingly recreated a utopia of European life within interior areas of Bengal, as epitomised in the following observation by Francis Yeats Brown, a military officer at the end of the nineteenth century:

I had sometimes a sense of isolation, of being a caged white monkey in a zoo whose patrons were this incredibly numerous beige race. I shivered at the millions and immensities and secrecies of India. I liked to finish my day at the club, in a world whose limits were known and where people answered my beck. An incandescent lamp coughed its light over shrivelled grass and dusty shrubbery; in its circle of illumination exiled heads were bent over English newspapers, their thoughts far away, but close to mine.¹¹⁸

As the historian Ranajit Guha pointed out, the European club virtually served as a surrogate home, a space where European officers could find collective refuge, where ‘their thoughts ... [could be] turned to a place far away from this outpost of empire, a place called home, a world

¹¹⁴ In the memoirs of his days in the provincial district-town of Mozafferpur, a Bengal ex-civilian talked, for example, about how he was lured away on a bird-shooting expedition within office hours, something which, being a young civilian at the time, made him feel guilty, but was seemingly accepted practice within provincial governmental functioning. Hunting expeditions were also often part – as a leisure activity – of ‘official’ tours into interior areas of districts. Anon., *Life in the Mofussil*, 116.

¹¹⁵ The term *maidan* refers to a large and usually flat piece of open land. It was considered a typical feature of many colonial urban centres in India. Often used as a buffer area for fortifications and between European and Indian settlements, over time *maidans* came to act as important leisure areas in cities like Calcutta, Bombay and other hill stations. They thus came to be associated with activities like *haao-khaao* [literally translating as ‘inhaling good air’] which many middle, upper middle and upper class European and Indian families indulged in, and even made special trips to the *maidan* for.

¹¹⁶ In the provincial context *maidans* seem to have been only associated with military Cantonment towns. *Sadar* stations which inherited such a base (e.g. Berhampur), or which shared a contiguous territorial area with Cantonments (e.g. Patna or Muzafferpur) usually had *maidans*. Most other *sadar* towns in lower Bengal did not have a *maidan*.

¹¹⁷ Even spaces like the racecourse were not very common in most *sadar* towns. Only a few of them e.g. Burdwan, Krishnanagar, or Muzafferpur had racecourses.

¹¹⁸ F. Y. Brown, *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (New York: The Viking Press, 1930), 4–5.



Fig. 6.97 'Dacca club', unknown photographer, 1917.
Source: British Library, India Office Select Materials.

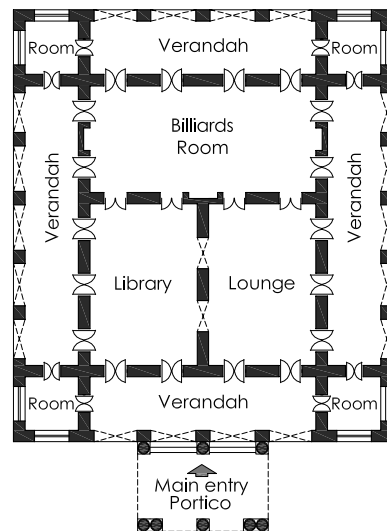


Fig. 6.98 The European club, Berhampur

... whose limits were known'.¹¹⁹ The club's role was thus simultaneously to connect to a distinct yet familiar world thousands of miles away, and to create an interiorised womb-like space where such collective incubation of nostalgia could take place. Architecturally, the European clubs in provincial *sadar* towns were virtually identical to the early circuit houses, being based on the 'core-and-envelope' matrix form (Fig. 6.98).¹²⁰ They usually contained a lounge, billiard room, library and card-playing area, with their *verandah* absorbing less specific leisure activities.¹²¹ In the club, the generic 'core-and-envelope' form took on a particularly potent meaning. While the extroverted *verandah* connected it to the surrounding landscape, the relatively dark interior spaces actually enabled a shutting out of that very context. The colonial club was also a hinge between the small *sadar* town, large urban centres like Calcutta, and Britain and the wider world. The temporal rhythms of the club's spaces were thus often subject to such external referencing as the 'English mail day'. Places like the entrance area or lounge for displaying newspapers, eagerly awaited by the European population, therefore became critical to their spatial schemes. Games such as Badminton (popular in Britain) -- introduced to India in the early 1870s and a typical activity in the provincial club-lawns, for instance, further aided such external referencing (Fig. 6.99).

The club was also defined by who it excluded as much as by whom it allowed within its folds. In George Orwell's historical novel *Burmese days*, the protagonist observed of the European club:

In any town in India the European club is the spiritual citadel, the real seat of the British power, the Nirvana for which native officials and millionaires pine in vain. It was doubly so in this case, for it was the proud boast of the Kyauktada club that, almost alone of the clubs in Burma, it had never admitted an Oriental to membership.¹²²

Physical elements like the club's compound wall, its imposing gate, "the swathes of English flowers"¹²³ in the garden, were thus laden with semiotic content defining its European ownership. Yet in many ways, the colonial club in provincial Bengal was also far more local than its European users would have liked to believe. Its 'British-ness' was an imagery tempered heavily by local parameters and forces. On certain occasions, as in Burdwan, the European club was actually built by the Maharaja (*zamindar*) himself. Orwell's description of the club garden too, interestingly, went on further to include the equally heavy use of indigenous plants and

119 R. Guha, 'Not at home in Empire', *Critical Enquiry* 23, (Spring 1997), 483-484.

120 Colonial Clubs in provincial stations came into existence from the early-nineteenth century onwards and were built through the course of the nineteenth century. However, the basic typological template seems to have been an enduring one, with not much of change to the original format.

121 See, for example, the description of the European club in the fiction of George Orwell, set in a provincial station in British Burma: 'The club was a teak-walled place smelling of earth-oil, and consisting of only four rooms, one of which contained a forlorn 'library' of five hundred mildewed novels, and another an old and mangy billiards table -- this, however, seldom used, for during most of the year hordes of flying beetles came buzzing round the lamps and littered themselves over the cloth. There were also a card room and a 'lounge' which looked towards the river, over a wide veranda...' G.Orwell, *Burmese Days* (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), 19.

122 Ibid.17. Such exclusions were not just confined to the Bengali population; Interestingly, lower-rank European officers or PWD engineers (who were never really full recognised in the social hierarchy of provincial governance) were often unwelcome in the club as well.

123 *Ibid.*, 18.

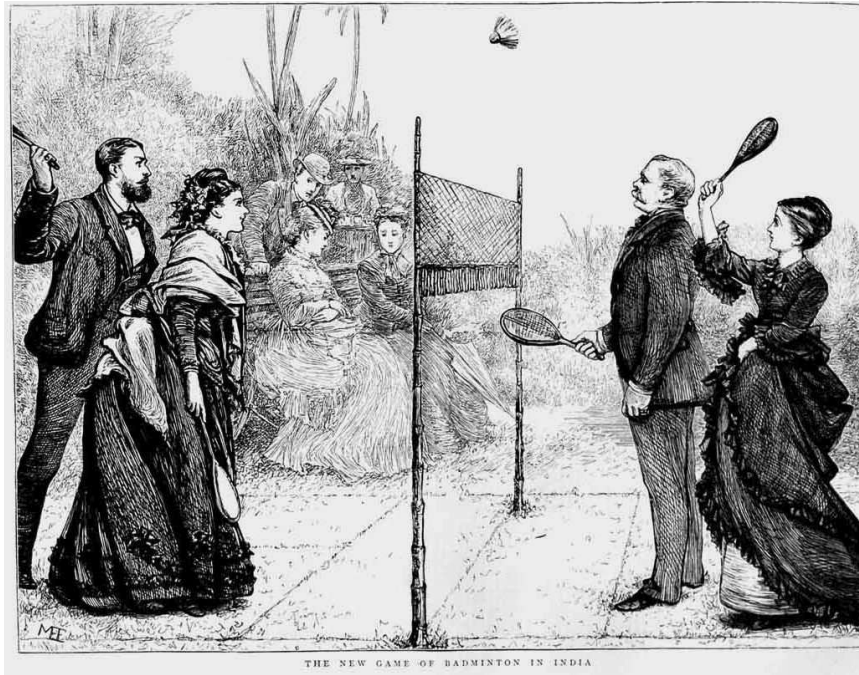


Fig. 6.99 'The new game of badminton in India', from *The Graphic*, 1874. Columbia Educational Archives Online.

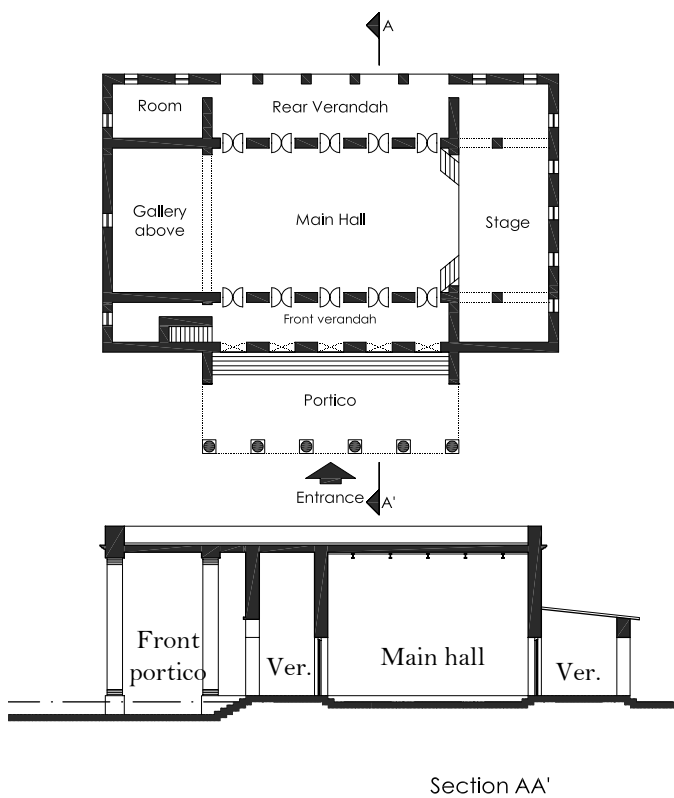


Fig. 6.100 Town hall, Burdwan, 1894.



arrangements, suggestive of a clearly hybrid landscape:

There was no lawn, but instead a shrubbery of native trees and bushes – gold mohur trees like vast umbrellas of blood-red bloom, frangipanis with creamy, stalk-less flowers, purple bougainvillea, scarlet hibiscus and the pink Chinese rose, bilious-green crotons, feathery fronds of tamamrind. The clash of colours hurt one's eyes in the glare. A nearly naked mali [native gardener], watering can in hand, was moving in the jungle of flowers like some large nectar-sucking bird.¹²⁴

The European club was also a domain that was particularly heavily dependant on Indian staff such as chefs, gardeners, orderlies, valets and porters. Above all, it's basic 'core-and-envelope' bungalow form, used right through the nineteenth century, was very far from being a European paradigm and had virtually no precedence in Britain.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a number of indigenous institutions showed great resilience and continued to thrive in the *sadar* right through the nineteenth century. This was seen, for instance, in the case of educational institutions under local patronage, and such resilience lay largely in their ability to develop eclectic spatial and operational paradigms. Other than these, the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries also witnessed an intense phase of construction of certain public institutions in the *sadar*, these were roughly modelled on the European club or town hall, but were based largely on native patronage and hence used almost exclusively by the local Bengali population. The buildings were often clubs, town halls and libraries rolled into one, straddling all these functions. In that sense they marked an intersection of the informal, everyday leisure role of the European club, and the more formal, organised, entertainment and civic role of the town hall. Such an intersection was in some ways a continuation of the fluidity of functions seen in native domestic spaces. The town hall in Burdwan (1894, Fig. 6.100), Grant Hall in Berhampur (1903, Fig. 6.101), Lees Club (1912, Fig. 6.102) and Ramranjan Town Hall and Public Library (1900, Fig. 6.103) in Suri, Edward Hall in Bankura (1911, Fig. 6.104), Siddiki Hall in Jessore (1909, Fig. 6.105), Aswinikumar Hall in Bairsal (1921-30), were all examples of this generic category. Sometimes (like in the case of Lees club in Suri or Grant Hall) they arose specifically to cater to the Bengali middle- and upper-middle class, as counter-sites to the European club in those towns and their exclusion of Indians. In terms of design, most of the Bengali town hall-clubs were again variants of the basic 3x3 matrix pavilion format. Given the ends of the spectrum they had to span, the core of the design was a large flexible hall, usually with provision for a stage or formal performance area on one side, surrounded by ancillary spaces like reading rooms, green rooms, storage and mezzanine viewing galleries. Although built on essentially the same principal as the European club, these buildings placed a higher premium on this clearly substantial main space, located at the centre or the termination of the main axis. This space also had a larger room height (20 ft - 30ft) and often contained a mezzanine level which housed viewing galleries. Such location and dimensions of the main hall were critical to its instrumentality as a space to form a collective Bengali public sphere, and towards mobilising collective emotion,

124 *Ibid.*

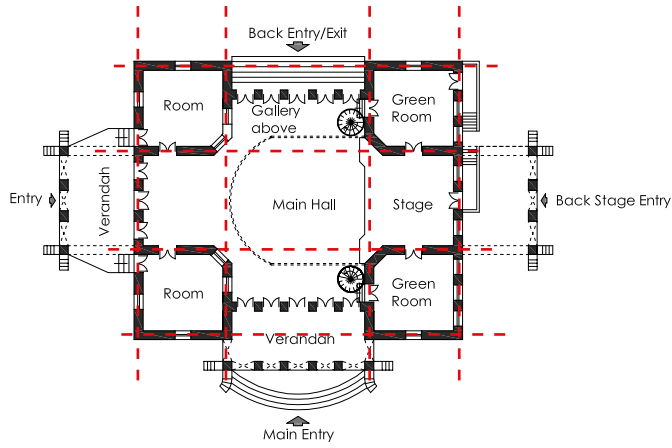


Fig. 6.101 Grant Hall, Berhampur, 1903.

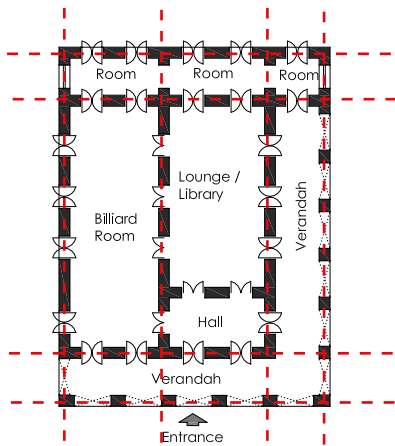


Fig. 6.102 Lees Club, Suri, 1912.

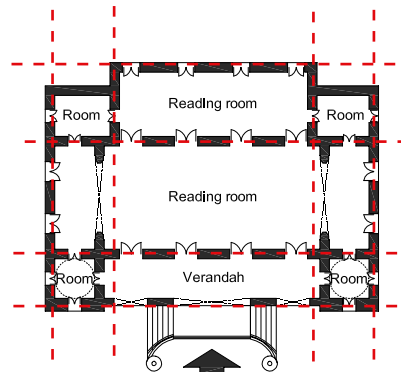
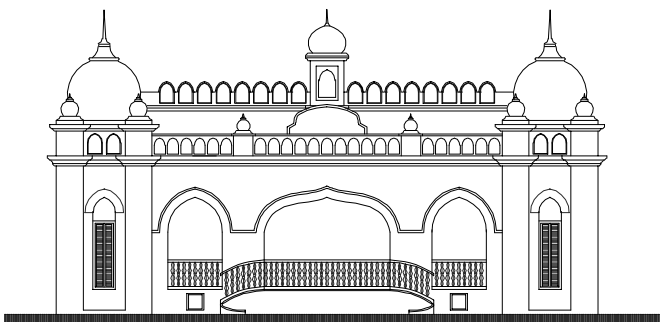


Fig. 6.103 Ramranjan Town Hall and Public Library, Suri, 1900.

View. Source: Bibekananda Granthagar O Ramranjan Paurabhaban.



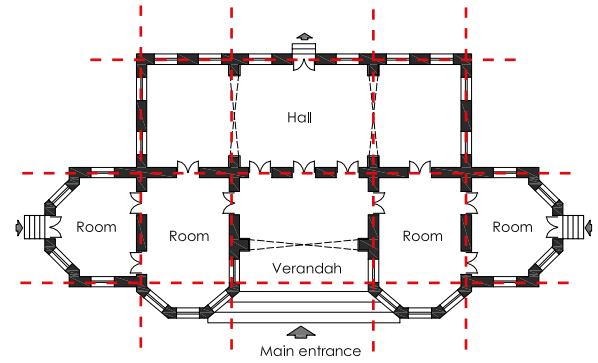


Fig. 6.104 Edward Hall, Bankura, 1911.

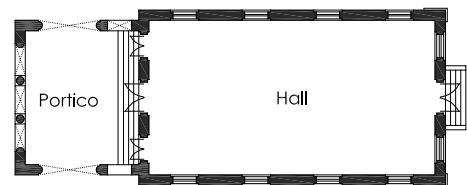


Fig. 6.105 Siddiki Club, Jessore, 1909.



Fig. 6.106 Ashwinikumar Hall, Barisal, 1921-30.
Photo: Pradeep Sen.



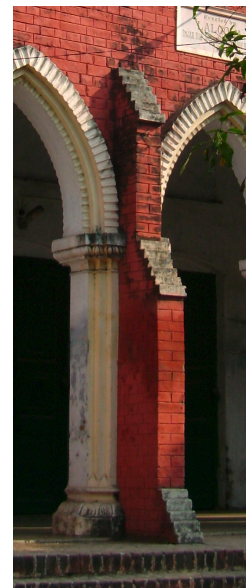
Fig. 6.107 One of the *takhtaposhhs* in Grant Hall, Berhampur, still in use since the inception of the institution in 1903.



1



2



3

Fig. 6.108 Stylistic features - 1. Edward Hall, Bankura,
2. Ramranjan Paurabhaban, Suri, 3. Grant Hall,
Berhampur

opinion and action around varied cultural, civic and political issues. Interestingly, while echoing European traditions of town halls or clubs, these buildings were inhabited in ways modulated by local cultural practices. Fixed furniture was rare; often, the *takhtaposh* (Fig. 6.107) was again harnessed for use in a totally public, urban milieu in *sadar* towns.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of these town hall-club institutions was the energetic attempt they generally made at forging a distinctively eclectic, decorative and experimental vocabulary in stylistic terms. As noted, they owed their basic plan forms to early-nineteenth century prototypes, but like the late-nineteenth century officers' bungalows, these were also free-spirited in mixing typologies, and even more ambitious in their visual renditions (Figs. 6.100-6.106, and 6.108). The Grant Hall in Berhampur made an enthusiastic attempt to invoke Victorian architecture; it used pointed arches, and literally *fused* neo-Gothic buttresses with columns more characteristic of Indo-Islamic architecture. In Edward Hall in Bankura, polygonal spaces reminiscent of British imperial and provincial Islamic architecture were crafted onto the basic matrix format. The design also made bold use of a flattened and exaggerated Islamic arch at the entrance, yet equally, it also introduced a rather unconventional triangular form of the Greek pediment and semi-circular neo-Classical windows. In Ramranjan Paurasabhaban in Suri, onto a basic bungalow-type plan (which in this case also had a strong neo-Classical character) were grafted Islamic arches and two domes topped with Hindu *kalasa* finials on either side, and parapet crenulations echoing those of Islamic forts.¹²⁵ What renders these buildings significant is not the issue of purity of form, or indeed quality of the final product, but the apparent sense of artistic freedom with which different stylistic traditions were collated in them. Although very likely linked to the larger, pan-Indian phenomenon of an eclectic style, the Indo-Saracenic, as pursued by the British Imperial state and Indian princely families in the late-nineteenth early-twentieth centuries – the range of architectonics across these buildings in different *zilla sadar* were truly varied. In that sense the more rigid pan-Indian pantheons or catalogues like the Jeypore Portfolio – often considered one of the most potent vehicles of the Indo-Saracenic style – seem to have found little favour in *sadar* towns. Instead, the architecture here seems to have stemmed from very local imaginations and interpretations in each case. The designers of these buildings appear to have been local Bengali engineers and architects¹²⁶ who were themselves curious negotiators between western rationalist engineering traditions and local architectural traditions. The impetus too, seems to have been to forge eclectic paradigms for novel institutions which were regarded as key agents heralding the *sadar's* turn-of-the-century modernity, especially in the light of the

¹²⁵ It is important to note here that a tradition of eclectic and assimilative building practices and styles very much pre-existed in Bengal. It had as its reference both the highly sophisticated Indo-Islamic or Hindu-Islamic imperial Mughal style, as well as provincial variants of it, seen in the architecture of Gaur, Pandua or Bishnupur, under the patronage of local Hindu and Muslim rulers in the region.

¹²⁶ It has not been possible for the author to establish the names of architects of these buildings. It is unlikely that these were designed by government architects since they were largely built with local patronage. By the late-nineteenth century a number of Bengali engineers had been trained in the Roorkee Thomason College or the Bengal Engineering College. They were educated in western engineering traditions but also used many aspects of traditional planning in their architectural designs. There were even some architectural hand-books produced by some of these Bengali engineers fusing new engineering techniques with local building knowledge, both in overall layouts as well as construction techniques. The architects for local public buildings built with native patronage are highly likely to have been drawn from such a corpus of local Bengali engineers.

central roles of the town hall-club hybrid in forming a collective consciousness amongst the provincial Bengali population.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to map out the contours of the development of colonial provincial governance and its spatial cultures in late-eighteenth to early-twentieth century Bengal. On the one hand, it looked at the larger urban form created around colonial governance in the *zilla sadar*, and at the micro-level architectural development of the provincial *cutcherry* and its associated governmental establishment, on the other. It also extended the architectural study to other related sites of work, and at the level of domestic and public spaces, with which the *cutcherry* had to work in tandem for the conduct of provincial administration and which, in effect, constituted a complex network of spaces acted upon by a range of actors.

One of the first issues that the study reveals is the location of *sadar* towns within a highly inter-dependent network of colonial administrative geography, embracing urban and rural locations, whereby the *sadar* came to represent and act as a key intermediate space. It played a precarious role between extremities of governmental hierarchies and urban-rural polarities. This was a major driver behind the spatial formation of the *sadar's* split-identity – which in turn manifested itself at different scalar levels (e.g. urban form to building typology) as well as in various domains of functioning (e.g. work, home and public life). The core of this curiously schizophrenic space was occupied by the provincial *cutcherry* – the nerve centre of *sadar* towns – which provided the locus around which such a pluralistic spatial culture developed.

One of the fundamental aspects that come into question through this thesis is the notion that colonial administrative centres invariably represented clear-cut territories of dominance, where hegemonic and authoritarian frameworks were unambiguously built and made legible in physical form. A typical channel through which such arguments are postulated is, for example, the latent idea of these towns being a virgin site – allowing the unhindered inscribing of authoritarian frameworks – in the vicinity of, but clearly distinct from, any native settlement. Instances like the building of New Delhi on freshly identified tract starkly segregated from the ‘old city’, have typically served as ready material for such arguments. In reality, however, cases like New Delhi, though immensely significant in symbolic and operational terms, were a minority within the overall administrative landscape of colonialism in India.¹ This dissertation has revealed instead a far more unstable idea of the larger process of territorialisation of colonial administrative sites. As seen in the study, *zilla sadar* towns came into existence in the context of the decline of certain types of existing urban centres or settlements – both pre-colonial and early-colonial, formed under indigenous as well as European patronage. However, even then the *sadar* towns were rarely founded on a blank slate in terms of their actual physical or territorial base. The dominant pattern was rather the utilisation of existing physical networks and sites such as centres of military, administrative or commercial control. Colonial administrative towns in provincial Bengal therefore drew upon pre-existing centres, and hence pre-colonial and early-colonial spatial patterns. The towns also invariably contained existing settlements within the vicinity, which more often than not came to be absorbed within the urban area, and which ranged from ports or market settlements, business towns or *zamindari* towns, through to early-colonial commercial establishments. These ranged in size from tiny hamlets to large consolidated urban centres. This extremely varied under-layer was in fact a major source of the *sadar*’s heterogeneity, and stood in the way of any attempt at a singular authoritarian encoding of space.

Readings of such heterogeneity, however, should not under-estimate the intentionality and deliberations involved in the colonial process of stabilising provincial administrative bases in Bengal. Choice of sites for *sadar* towns seem to have been very considered decisions on part of the colonial authorities and provincial officers – strategic in political and administrative terms, as well as in terms of land and climate. The sites were clearly referenced with respect to residences of existing local rulers, logistics of revenue governance, administration of justice, and geo-climatic conditions of the region. There also appears to have been correspondence between this site-selection process and other colonial projects such as territorial land surveys. The former thus seems to have benefited from a growing corpus of colonial knowledge about climate, topography and infrastructural networks. However, both in terms of understanding of geo-climatic systems and strategic manoeuvrings, there were evidently substantial slippages and gaps in getting a full grip on the situation. Mistakes in the selection of sites or continuous

1 There have also been studies in recent times which have shown that even in instances like New Delhi, there were various complex and local forces, other than the colonial state’s intended spatial schemes, shaping its spatial patterns. See e.g. Stephen Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi’s Urban Governmentalities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); Jyoti Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities: Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism* (London: Routledge, 2005)

struggles with their land systems were common, sometimes resulting in the subsequent relocation of *sadar* towns altogether. Claiming the best pieces of land within the town for colonial governmental establishments was also subject to negotiation with local rulers and elites – and it not infrequently entailed settling for compromise alternatives. With the gradual understanding that the physical stability of provincial administration was a fundamental scaffold for the larger apparatus of colonial governance, efforts towards effective land-systems management and land engineering was thus a continuous and problematic aspect of the development of *sadar* towns. These aspects were also fundamentally fuelled by the political ideological philosophies of colonial governance in India, increasingly pre-occupied with the ‘improvement’ of an ‘uncivilised’ people from 1830s onwards. Health and hygiene of towns were thus increasingly seen as vehicles for ‘improvement’. This attitude gained maximum momentum during the municipal planning era that started in the 1860s and peaked in the 1880s with the formation of local self-governments. Such activities were also accompanied by the transformation of the late-eighteenth / early-nineteenth century conceptions of a merely salubrious location to the late-nineteenth century, typically Victorian, idea of the functional and aesthetic ordering of urban landscape. However, the use of municipal sanitation schemes to ensure the healthiness of towns found only partial acceptance within local lifestyles, and the creation of decorative public parks to create aesthetic order in towns were appropriated instead by Bengalis to mobilise resistance movements. So it seems clear that, at the least, colonial town planning saw extremely varying degrees of success and acceptance by local inhabitants. There were thus large gaps between the conception of the *sadar* town and its management, and the way it was then actually used and appropriated such that its semantic content was altered or subverted by the indigenous population. All this also destabilises assumptions of colonial inhabitation and its spatial practices as being sure, confident and authoritative. Instead the pattern in Bengal seems to suggest vulnerabilities, struggles and ad-hoc decisions being acted upon by a range of local forces in a trial-and-error approach. But it was precisely this that also lent the spatial culture of *sadar* towns its agility and dynamism.

An extremely significant dimension of the *zilla sadar* that this thesis reveals is its split perceptions and inconsistencies. This is arguably the single most fundamental aspect in understanding the *sadar*’s spatial cultures. It appears to have operated at many levels – between the imagined and experienced, between European and Bengali readings, or between the reference calibrations for such readings (such as rural-urban scale). The towns were clearly seen as urban, rural or ‘rurban’ by different groups of people. Despite this plurality, however, one of the dominant perceptions of the image of *sadar* towns was that of a ‘green’ garden-city-like environment with tree-lined avenues, landscaped parks, low-density bungalow districts, and houses surrounded by ornamental gardens. This was a perception that appears to have been shared both by European officers as well as the Bengali middle- and upper-middle-class population, albeit from rather different premises. Such an image was also pursued at varying scales from urban-level landscape schemes to the model of individual dwellings. For the European population, it was a result of a vision of the *sadar* as representing a place in the ‘country’, away from Calcutta, and the association of provincial life in India with abundant land and resources, usually available only to elites back

in Britain in their stately homes and country estates. For the Bengali middle and upper-middle class population, on the other hand, the *sadar* represented a move to the 'town'; it stood for an advantageous trade-off between a number of factors. On the one hand such a move offered the economic and utilitarian capital derived from newer forms of employment in government *cutcheries* and the cultural and intellectual capital derived from formal institutions of education and urban leisure. On the other hand, it still offered, albeit in a modified form, the social capital derived from the familial and kinship networks that were invariably drawn into the town from the ancestral village.² But more importantly, the middle-class Bengali imagination of a tree-filled town and their own 'houses with gardens' was deeply rooted in a search for autonomy of space – one that could be tailored to individual needs for health, space standards, self-expression and a sensory aesthetic including but exceeding the realm of the visual. Previous village-living – centred on productive agriculture and intensively shared familial dwellings – did not quite allow for these aspects. This perception of the urban dwelling was evidently also related to emerging philosophical notions that one's inner beauty shared a contiguous space with the outer physical materiality of one's immediate environment. Both these desires – the search for autonomy and the spiritual search for (inner) beauty by modulation of the built environment – seem to have been products of a colonial modernity that the intermediate location of the *sadar* town mobilised within the flow of eclectic nineteenth-century ideas in provincial Bengal. However, despite their different basis, there was a certain similarity in the imagination of the town pursued by Bengali elites and Europeans, which attempted to construct the *sadar* as a unified and picturesque entity.

This study subsequently demonstrates that these unified ideas of the *zilla sadar* were in reality complicated by its very nature as an incremental, ad-hoc and organically growing place. The *sadar* was a plural, heterogeneous and multivalent space. Hence the *sadar's* heterogeneity came not just from its pre-existing under-layers, but was also the result of the incremental development of its components at different points of time, as inhabited and acted upon by different social groups. The *sadar's* spatial culture was also affected by the relative distribution and inter-relationship between the European and native areas, and the links between governmental, domestic and other public spaces – as well as by the *internal* fragments within each of these categories. A classic example of this was the relationship between the District Judge's and Collector's *cutcheries*, which were either forced to share the same site or develop as two distinct nodes of colonial administration within a town. Added to this were other networks of provincial governance, such as policing, which created their own subsidiary centres and networks. The same was true for spaces built with predominantly native patronage; indeed there were many different types of native institutions, sometimes following radically different ideological and spatial paradigms, and often creating territorially distinct areas.

Perhaps one of the most significant issues that such heterogeneity helps to question

² I am making a partial reference here to Pierre Bordieu's construction of capital beyond economic, physical or human, to the larger domains of social, cultural and symbolic capital.

is the 'black' town/white town, dominant/dependent, native/sahib binary paradigms that have commonly been associated with readings of colonial spatiality. Typically, these assume that there were given, finite and consistent forms of the 'black' town (dense irregular streets, built-to edge courtyard dwellings, occupied entirely by a native population), against which a 'white' spatial paradigm (regular grid-layout, low-density bungalows, occupied exclusively by the European population) was juxtaposed. From this thesis, however, it is evident that such a starkly polarised framework is inadequate to understand the spatial cultures of *zilla sadar* towns. First of all, there doesn't seem to have been any consistent and singular 'black' or 'white' spatial paradigms and inhabitation patterns. Although European officers clearly tried to settle in areas separate from the native quarters, such clear distinctions could rarely be preserved. In effect, these towns not only developed in-between zones – typically a mix of public functions and cosmopolitan residential areas – which acted as connectors between the 'black' and 'white' areas, but, more importantly, the dominant characteristics of one category were found a-plenty in the other. For example, European bungalow areas housed a high proportion of native servants and support establishments, with their corresponding buildings and lifestyles. The bungalow itself was the customised answer to the demands of an extremely mixed lifestyle, in that it combined notions of European domesticity with the exigencies and comforts offered (spaces, devices, staff) by local conditions. On the other hand, the native areas of town, though they rarely had Europeans living in them, were places where hybrid lifestyles and spaces – poised between rural and urban life, and European and Bengali paradigms – were being forged. The *baithak-khana* was a classic example of such mediation, in the way it connected the inner interior realm of the house, fashioned largely on rural dwellings, to the urban public realm and world beyond.

As seen in Chapter 6, residential and institutional buildings in native areas or in mixed public zones were also commonly characterised by a combination of Palladian, Neo-Classical, Mughal or provincial Islamic and Hindu architecture on their exterior, while their plans tended to be based on the basic core-and-envelope matrix or else a courtyard format. The courtyard form in this context clearly had a pre-colonial and rural lineage in Bengal. The core-and-envelope matrix form however was very much a product of the colonial era. In terms of lineage it was rooted in the bungalow, which in turn drew mostly from rural huts in Bengal but also bore marked similarity to smaller Palladian houses or villas in Britain. But irrespective of its origins,³ what is critical is the fact by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the core-and-envelope matrix was a paradigm that served virtually as a 'universal' typology – shared across functional domains, and between European and native ownership – in colonial Bengal. Such versatile, pluralistic and hybrid paradigms found particularly profuse use in institutional architecture. Most of the governmental institutions such as district schools or colleges in *sadar* towns, were modelled on extroverted forms (usually derived from the 'barrack', with a *verandah* envelope) with vast open spaces attached. Mental development was seen as being intricately linked to the development of the body, achieved through physical fitness and sport, nurtured in the vast open grounds. On the

3 In this context it is important to remember that the development of the basic bungalow form in Bengal any case pre-dated the time period of this study. It was a type in use at least since the late seventeenth century.

other hand, again destabilising any singular notions, European missionary institutions had often, by necessity, to be located in the midst of dense native towns and to use typological hybrids of introverted courtyard and extroverted forms to play their role. Institutions built predominantly under native patronage in Bengal – such as schools or ‘town hall-clubs’ – also often became very eclectic in terms of their ideological basis as well as their typological and aesthetic character, and as such actively contributed in co-producing the modern colonial public sphere. In short, as is evident from this study, a range of paradigms thrived in provincial colonial Bengal, and pure categories could only rarely be sustained within the *sadar’s* spatial milieu.

Despite the *zilla sadar’s* heterogeneous social and economic base, the colonial *cutcherry* complex did come to act as its nerve centre and core of its life right through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. It was around this node that the larger sphere of governmental, domestic and public spaces of the *sadar* formed. In that sense, the *cutcherry* provided the strong functional and symbolic centre for these multi-layered towns. However, this thesis also brings to light how the *cutcherry* was equally intensively dependent for governance on other urban domains – formal and informal, governmental and private, official and social – and on spatial networks extending right into rural areas. It thus operated as the heart of a larger, dispersed, even sometimes diffuse, system of spaces. These ranged from subsidiary institutions of provincial governance like police stations, post offices, jails or municipal offices; educational, leisure, entertainment and civic institutions – bazaars, temples, *baroaris* and mosques; extended domains of work such as the ‘home-office’ in residential spaces like the bungalow; and other extended sites of governance and work such as the *zamindar’s*, lawyer’s or businessman’s *cutcherry* – all of which effectively propped up the infrastructure of colonial provincial governance. This, in turn, brings us to key questions on the larger issue of our spatial imagination of the modern state and governance per se. Modern states have typically been understood in terms of consolidated and consistent spatial patterns and practices (such readings being particularly heightened in the analysis of colonial spatiality), which, the findings of this thesis actively de-stabilises. It is suggestive instead of a far more dispersed and diffused spatial culture of the modern colonial state in provincial India, both within the *cutcherry’s* porous built-form as well as the wider network of spaces on which it was vitally dependent.

As traced in Chapter 3, much of the *provincial cutcherry’s* organisational structure and the segmentation of its functions and spaces (e.g. office, treasury, records, etc.) were rooted in the early commercial ‘factories’ built by the East India Company and other European powers in the region. However, the study argues that the *cutcherry* also represented a fundamental shift from the ‘factory’ in the way it needed to gear up operationally and spatially for revenue collection in Bengal, whereby far greater public contact – compared with the defensive, introverted trading post – was required. This, along with the realities of the hot-humid climate of Bengal, was translated into the *cutcherry’s* more open and porous spatial format as well as its site layout. The built form was typically dispersed over large sites in a particularly loose formation, and the buildings were punctured by a profusion of openings. This in turn created a system of elastic, amorphous and

nebulous spaces within and between buildings, where fluid social networks spilled over beyond the confines of finite spaces. Such fluid spatiality naturally lent itself to being appropriated in a number of ways by visitors, informal service providers, clerks and lower-level office staff – many of whom did not otherwise have organised spatial provision within the *cutcherry*. It also bred a precarious combination of exposure and anonymity which fostered a wide band of activities. These ranged from non-official support services that backed up the *cutcherry*'s official functions, informal interactions and social clustering, to under-hand deals that often subverted the formal frameworks of provincial governance.

This thesis reveals significant shifts in the conception of *cutcherry* designs during the nineteenth century, also an indicator of movement in the overall governmental design culture in the period. One of the central findings of the study is that, on the whole, the production of *cutcheries* – in terms of their design and the process by which they were built – moved from rather flexible formats to increasingly deterministic ones over the course of the nineteenth century. The study also establishes that there were gaps between such conceptions by governmental agencies (such as the central PWD or provincial officers) on the one hand and their actual reception, use and appropriation by *cutcherry* employees, visitors and service providers. As noted, the basic building-infrastructure of provincial governance in Bengal was set up in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Initially, there seems to have been very little distinction between a residential bungalow and an official *cutcherry*, with the bungalow-type providing for a shared space between the two. Between 1820 and 1840s, the typology developed into the more elaborate barrack-type of *cutcherry*, in response to the expanding need for space and the increased separation of 'work' from 'home'. However, both the paradigms coexisted and on the whole, *cutcherry* designs of this period were centred on a modular conception of their functional and formal parts, with these combined in various ways depending on the requirements and local conditions in each instance. The modular parts corresponded fairly directly to the cornerstones of early-colonial revenue collection – viz. revenue offices, courts of justice, record areas and treasuries. At this stage, it seems fairly clear that the revenue records constituted by far the most treasured and guarded aspect of governance, and were given the central location in the spatial scheme, buffeted on either side by courtrooms which had the highest public exposure. The designs at this stage seem to have followed a system where the parts were largely determined by practices that became common denominators across a larger region. Sometimes such similarity of parts was aided by the circulation of government construction manuals like the *Barrack-Masters Compendium* (1823), which enumerated a set of suitable construction techniques for Bengal. However, the entire design was never determined by the central building agency of that era (the Military Board), and so the major proportion of design decisions were left to be decided at local level. District Officers doubled up as technocrats and designers, but were clearly in turn dependent on knowledge and expertise gained from local contractors and artisans.

Cutcherry designs went through a transitional period from 1830–60, when very little actual new building took place. This period was however extremely significant because of the

way that incremental development and modification of spaces underscored the emerging thrust of governance, thereby evolving constellations of governmental departments such as record rooms or clerical *munshikhana* within the *cutcherry*. This study also identifies this as a critical period in developing key networks of people like the office *amla*, the orderly, or the *chuprassee*, and in the way space evolved around such networks based on how different actors negotiated their roles in terms of relative fixity or mobility within the spatial scheme. Hence the *cutcherry*'s spatial format encoded specific relationships between relatively sedentary nodes (e.g. Collector's office), more fluid spaces (e.g. open-plan *amla* office or the *munshikhana*) and mobile networks (e.g. of the orderlies and *chuprasees*). This was also a period when a system of subsidiary spaces emerged for increased public contact. Features like the *verandah* were thus often added to the basic forms of buildings to accommodate waiting areas or ancillary staff offices.

The period after the *Sepoy* Mutiny, with the assumption of governance by the British Crown in 1858, brought about a sea-change in the conception of *cutcherry* designs, most importantly in the process of design itself. The key bearer of this change was the colossal and immensely powerful Public Works Department (PWD), part of the larger imperial governmental apparatus to build a 'progressive' India. The Mutiny was followed by a period of lull in civil construction and then by a period where sporadic, knee-jerk attempts were made to re-conceive the *cutcherry* as a defensive and secure space. This was also forged through proposals for a more tightly ordered and controlled arrangement of buildings, with spaces like the guards' booth now becoming a pivotal structuring element. The idea at this stage seems to have been to use abstract geometric order in plans to harness logistical and symbolic control in the provision and defence of provincial administrative establishments. However, such abstract ideas could rarely be instituted in most cases due to limiting site parameters and the fractured nature of governmental building activity, which increasingly faced economic constraints in the imperial era and thus made comprehensive development a difficult proposition.

The period starting from the 1860s and extending up to the first quarter of the twentieth century witnessed the PWD's ambitious project to standardise governmental buildings across Bengal's provincial landscape. Economy, simplification, and logistical ease of construction were the key driving principles within the new engineering-led rationale. These came with a heavily centralised decision-making process that became an elaborate bureaucratic apparatus in itself – where, in many ways, the means became more important than the ends. In terms of the actual designs of *cutcherries*, what was now propagated as standard was drawn from precedence. However, this involved selectively choosing one option out of many and eliminating a whole range of other options that had existed earlier to respond to different local contexts and needs. This resulted in a huge dilution of the varied and malleable formats of early nineteenth-century *cutcherries*. The new designs favoured an absence of hierarchy, as materialised most effectively in the 'barrack type', and the use of similarity, reducing the distinction between spaces and weakening the connections between them. This appears to have been a result not of an attempt to ease out hierarchical structures in governmental functioning, but as a way of simplifying

construction. In the process, the record room lost its central place and became just one of the many spaces in the set-up, giving way to an increasingly higher proportion of offices, or clerks' and pleaders' spaces, indicative of the expanding role of these groups within the *cutcherry*. This thesis thus identifies this late nineteenth-century period as heralding a clear shift of priorities in spatial allocation away from spaces for guarding and storage of material to the giant human-resource 'machines' needed to keep the establishment going. However, there was still abysmally low formal provision of space for lower-level office staff or visitors. Spaces like the *verandah* or exterior spaces within the *cutcherry* were thus continuously modified and appropriated by these groups, and came to acquire particularly varied and versatile uses and meanings. The dispersed and porous built-form or the *verandah* in particular – originally conceived largely as climatic devices – hence developed multiple functions and meanings. In many ways, it was through these more marginal spaces that the relationship between the rulers and the ruled were mediated, and a more nebulous and negotiated realm was forged. On the other hand, compared to the flexible spaces of the early *cutcheries*, even courtroom designs were standardised in the PWD era and cast into more deterministic, hierarchical frameworks.

The PWD's standardisation of design from the 1860s appears to have had little to do with symbolic representation of imperial governance and more to do with economy, simplification and rationalisation as a pervasive value base for modernisation in itself. At the same time, the inherent system of ordering and homogenisation that this demanded did bear symbolic value as well. But it was only after the 1880s that the provincial colonial architecture really took a blatantly symbolic and representational turn in Bengal, attempting to articulate it as part of a larger, authoritative, imperial structure, as enacted out through a decorative stylistic shift. This was possibly related also to the wider development of the Indo-Saracenic as a pan-Indian imperial style from the 1870s onwards, and was accompanied by attempts to unify provincial governmental buildings into single, comprehensive compositions. Such a decorative turn was also the precursor of an eclectic genre of buildings for municipal and local self-government bodies at the turn of the twentieth century in *sadar* towns which culled together a varied range of stylistic elements. However, in this later case, they seem to have been processed through the idiosyncratic imaginations and interpretations of local district engineers, not through the pan-Indian ideology of the Indo-Saracenic. On the whole, the architecture of *cutcheries* thus moved from being centred on the notion of guarding records and treasures, to an architecture of rational ordering in the PWD era from the 1860s, to one of heightened symbolic representation in the 1880s.

However, the frameworks that the PWD espoused to spread homogeneity and later to convey imperial symbolism were again continuously subjected to local realities. One of the biggest factors that stood in the way of any singular authoritarian framework in spaces of provincial governance was the incremental and ad-hoc nature of governmental building in Bengal. This was built up to suit changing needs over a period of time, in bits and pieces, in each town. Thus it was virtually impossible to graft a consistent pattern onto this building stock

since most of them were robust structures that simply did not need re-building either in the 1860s or even well into the twentieth century.⁴ Ironically, therefore, the PWD's ambition in *sadar* towns was limited by the incremental and fragmented history of development of governmental building-infrastructure in each town, creating a very mixed landscape of governmental spaces. In the few instances (e.g. some towns in Bihar province) where a new building infrastructure was set up from the 1860s, and the standard designs could be used, they were still but one of many other governmental buildings built earlier. On top of this, as discussed before, even the standard designs were continuously modified, manipulated and acted upon by different actors and even by the changing demands of governmental space. Even within the different segments of the PWD's own operations, building practices were heterogeneous. Despite the long project of standardisation, official residential architecture largely remained outside the ambit of centralised norms because of the localised nature of its production, till as late as the first quarter of the twentieth century. There was also contestation between the governments' own personnel – e.g. between district officers and PWD engineers – on issues of building agency and custodianship. Also, the PWD was still heavily dependent on the skills and know-how of local labour (especially in carpentry, bricklaying or lime-making) or on qualities such as temperance amongst Bengali labourers, which became essential capital for it to function. The PWD even used labour categories that it had to abstract from existing caste-based occupational structures, and it had to contend with the fuzzy boundaries between official and non-official work and issues such as its own overseers and subordinates taking up governmental construction contracts on the sly. All of this, in effect, were deterrents to the simple and unambiguous translation of the PWD's building mandate. And again, the incremental and ad-hoc nature of the building infrastructure of colonial provincial governance also stood in the way of the visions of a coherent, consistent or consolidated spatial practice of the modern colonial state.

As mentioned earlier, the *cutcherry* formed the core of a larger network of extended sites of governance, and domestic and public spaces, all intricately tied to provincial administration. This study identifies one of the key factors affecting the spatial culture of the *sadar* to be the fluid connections between these different spheres and spaces. This appears to have been a product of the *sadar's* provincial location, which allowed generous overlaps between the domains, and which operated at many different levels. The first of these was the culture of shared work and home spaces. As revealed, the provincial officer's *cutcherry* and his bungalow shared generous overlap of functions – they served in effect as 'office-home' and 'home-office' respectively. The second aspect of the overlap was the fluid relationship between space, time and function. The notion of work-time within the *sadar* was clearly distinct from conceptions of industrial time and office hours in major centres like Calcutta. The third aspect of the overlap was the large degree of typological non-fixity and inter-changeability. Due to the fact that provincial towns had had a history of combined residential and office spaces (typified by the circuit house), even its later official architecture was rooted in residential forms. In terms of formal type, most provincial

⁴ In fact, most of the buildings are in use, though in varying degrees of degeneration, till today.

cutcheries were essentially derivatives of the bungalow, and later the barrack – both of which were originally meant for some form of residential use. In addition, within the provincial landscape, the formal type of the bungalow could equally act as a house or an office, just as the formal type of the barrack could equally be a collective residential unit or an office unit. All these paradigms operated simultaneously within the fluid and ambiguous space of provincial functions. Such functional and temporal overlap, and typological inter-changeability, was all the more evident in native houses and work spaces – where work, home and leisure were intricately juxtaposed. In addition, the same unit (e.g. the core-and-envelope matrix) often doubled or trebled up for different functions such as the *cutcherry*, living quarters and the *baithak-khana*. This was largely possible because the different functions shared common typological formats whereby interchange was easy.

This thesis also identifies rural-urban relationships to be the other principal driver of the spatial culture of the *zilla sadar* towns. Colonial urbanisation in provincial areas fundamentally involved a rural/urban split along with a differential development of privilege/provision. But equally, these varied locations – city, town or village – continued to remain intrinsically connected, since most inhabitants of the *sadar* retained strong links with their ancestral places while enjoying the exposure of urban living, even of metropolitan cities like Calcutta. One of the most visible spheres where an urban/rural dialectic was shaped was in native domestic spaces, which reflected multiple characteristics. This played out in two ways: first, in the incremental nature of the urban dwelling, (growing from minimal work-cum-home units to elaborate set-ups); and second, in its exterior-interior delineations, pursuing the cohesive clustering of rural lifestyles in the inner domain and the extroverted public-ness of urban life in the outer domain. Urban dwellings also took a variety of hybrid forms – e.g. loose aggregate, tight courtyard, courtyard-cum-villa, ranging from small bazaar houses to elaborate mansions – depending on the plot size or their relative location within the town. As such, they could offer different fits with the needs of the various indigenous social groups inhabiting the *sadar*.

As revealed by this thesis, eclectic and hybrid paradigms became particularly apparent in the spaces of leisure, entertainment and civic life. Even the European club, with its internalised womb-like environment, invoking ‘English’ nostalgia, or its various devices to exclude native membership, could hardly be kept as a purely European space – whether in its native staff, its bungalow form, or the design of its exterior grounds. But it was native institutions like the ‘town hall/club’ which possibly made the most enthusiastic and imaginative attempts to forge hybrid spaces with a variety of stylistic and spatial renditions, both Indian and European. Spanning informal everyday interaction and organised civic functioning, these buildings provided an elastic space within the early-twentieth century provincial public domain. They operated in conjunction with a variety of exposed or obscure spaces within the *sadar* town, such as open public gathering areas or native fitness *akhadas*, to mobilise public opinion and action. It was out of these newer types of spaces – which were neither ‘traditional Indian’ nor ‘European modern’ – that newer forms of Indian consciousness and resistance movements arose. They were pivotal anchors of

public life especially in the build up to the *banga-bhanga andolan* (a rebellion after the partition of Bengal in 1905) and the Indian nationalist movement anchored by significant Indian political figures like Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi from 1930s onwards.

In other words, this thesis argues that provincial urbanisation of administrative towns in colonial Bengal represented a vital channel of modernity from the late-eighteenth to the early-twentieth century, and that the spatial culture of these towns was a central bearer of this modernity. This modernity, however, did not mean a simple move to western spatial paradigms, nor did it mean the 'pure' preservation of pre-colonial spatial practices. Rather, it involved the *sadar's* dynamic ability to negotiate and respond to a situation of flux, where a range of diverse and sometimes opposing paradigms encountered each other. This was pivoted on the *sadar's* ability to create newer, pluralistic and eclectic spatial patterns. This, in turn, provided the basis for the formation of a composite spatial sphere which straddled domains like work, home and leisure, and which bridged native and European custodianship and agency. Yet, interestingly, most of this was achieved through the use of a fairly limited range of basic architectural forms – the core-and-envelope bungalow matrix, the core-and-envelope barrack, or courtyard types – by modulating them to create variants and hybrids which fitted a variety of situations. These typologies thus showed substantial robustness and proved to be enduring patterns over the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. The *sadar's* provincial location allowed a remarkable flexibility of design culture in governmental designs in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although this was then subjected to heavily normative frameworks in the imperial era from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, it was still negotiated in numerous ways by users and various groups within provincial administration. Comprehensive normative frameworks were actively de-stabilised by the incremental nature of development of the material infrastructure of provincial governance, creating an endlessly heterogeneous landscape. The fundamental apparatus, the foundation of the *sadar's* modernity and its eclectic spatial paradigms, was the fluidity and non-fixity of its spatial cultures. This in turn was a direct result of the *sadar's* intermediate status between the rural/urban, European/Indian, big city/small town dynamic. Such fluidity and heterogeneity in turn played out through the following dimensions:

- The overall nature of urbanism, which defied clear cut territorial patterns correspondent with homogeneous ownership and cultural practices.
- Typological versatility, universality and inter-changeability.
- Typological hybridity – e.g. the bungalow as an overlap of the Bengal hut and the English villa, or the villa-courtyard form as a combination of extroverted and introverted models.
- Simultaneous co-existence of different paradigms – e.g. bungalow, barrack, courtyard
- Time-space-function fluidity (e.g. between work, home and leisure spaces)

- Flow of practices between varied agencies and domains – e.g. military, civilian official, governmental and private institutional, civilian residential or private residential architecture.
- Internal heterogeneity and unevenness within categories like European and Indian or governmental, domestic and public.
- Active co-production of the landscape by both European and native actors, not just by colonial governmental frameworks.
- ‘Loosening’, appropriation, modification and sometimes subversion of normative frameworks through actions of various social, governmental and political groups, as well as their creative engagement in developing new, eclectic spatial practices.

Spread over a larger provincial landscape in Bengal, the spaces of *sadar* towns thus constituted an extended network of ‘little modernities’ which strongly buttressed the nineteenth-century social, political, cultural and intellectual life of centres like Calcutta, including even Indian nationalist and resistance movements. *Sadar* towns were locations where newer ways of living, working and collective functioning were continuously experimented with. This pivotal role of provincial spatial cultures within the overall landscape of colonial architecture and urbanism in India has not as yet been adequately recognised in scholarship. Provincial or *mufassal* towns have been regularly seen and cast as marginal or frozen spaces, which were apparently inert and resistant to change. The reasons behind this misconception, the thesis would like to argue, is the hitherto lack of in-depth investigation and the fact that provincial towns have been marginalised within a historiography of colonial spatial discourse dominated by excessive focus on the more obvious sites of colonial power. Even in terms of the process of urbanisation *per se*, one of the key peculiarities of the *sadar* was that standard industrial relationships of work, home and leisure or space-time segmentation did not find a firm footing in it. However, it would be simplistic to assume that the *sadar* just remained pre-industrial in character, frozen in time. Instead, these provincial towns were precisely about forging connections through flexible, nebulous instruments, creating alternative paradigms beyond industrial or pre-industrial categories. In that sense, they were spaces where newer and alternative types of societies and spatial frameworks could be formed, or where new types of spaces of governance were negotiated, new relationships of work-home-leisure forged, new kinds of institutions created.

On another plane, this thesis does not disregard or deny the fact that colonial rule in India and its accompanying built environment possessed numerous hegemonic or authoritarian practices. Nor does it try to obliterate spatial distinctions like ‘black’ town / ‘white’ town in colonial settlements; even in the *sadar* towns studied here, a basic distinction between European and native inhabitation areas did exist. However, the thesis emphatically wishes to complicate these categories in favour of far more complex readings, due both to multi-layered interactions of the rulers with the local population, as well as due to the complex connections between each of these categories’ internal fragments and heterogeneity. It therefore suggests that we look at these towns instead as a general overlay of a ‘black’ town / ‘white’ town along with a complex,

active over-layer of multiple centres, domains and inter-dependent networks.

In addition to its actual findings, this thesis makes a case for rethinking the methodological and conceptual apparatus through which we recover the roles of such sites within architectural historiography. Due to its simultaneous engagement with larger normative processes of design as well as with local micro-practices – there was a large ground to be covered in recovering, for example, individual family histories, biographical narratives, accounts by colonial officers or ordinary clerical *cutcherry*-staff – most of which could not have been done justice to by working within the framework of formal, governmental archives. This is where the intensive empirical field-work (mapping urban and architectural history through personal observation, local accounts, oral histories, life histories) and a bespoke methodology (using tools from disciplines such as spatial studies, historical studies, cultural studies, or cultural anthropology) provided the vital foundation for the research in this thesis. In fact, such an approach did not serve as a mere tool, but as the very ideological basis for the study. While this study (as discussed in the ‘Introduction’) developed clear conceptual concerns to look at how space was imagined, produced, modified and semantically received or re-created within the culture of provincial governance in Bengal, it attempted to do so through its own specific methodological apparatus.

At the conceptual level too, one of the significant issues that becomes apparent through the study is that just as casting colonial spaces as solely hegemonic practices would be a myopic view, even analytical structures that posit strong normative frameworks set up by colonial authorities in binary opposition to their subsequent subversion by local Indian agency, are also inadequate for discussing the scenarios in question. While the study does reveal that aspects of provincial spatial culture were clearly subject to dominance-dependence or dominance-subversion relationships, it equally reveals their limitations in qualifying the spatial cultures in question. It actively re-affirms the role of numerous agile and creative spatial practices beyond these categories, arising not merely out of dependence, authoritarian impositions, or resistance – but arising equally out of active engagements of people to form new spatial paradigms of work and living and through complex interplays between different forces and actors. The study thus argues that the spatiality of the *zilla sadar* have to be necessarily seen as part of a network of multiple actors, domains, centres and flows – more along the lines of ‘power as embedded social practice’, and ‘power as net’, that Foucault enumerated (rather than the ‘power as authoritarian hegemonic practices’ that Foucault’s work has largely been interpreted as).⁵ But clearly there is much to be gained in post-colonial architectural studies by shifting focus onto how central frameworks of power intersected with local practices, and how local practices shaped each other, and how spaces were acted upon by different actors at various levels.

In terms of possible further research topics, this study would hopefully be one of the

5 Michel Foucault, *Power*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 2001), 98. See also Colin Gordon (ed.), *Michel Foucault – Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–77* (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

first, but not the last, to establish that provincial spaces, such as those in provincial Bengal, constitute and present potential for crucial sites of enquiry which contemporary analysis of colonial and post-colonial architecture needs to open up. In this connection, it emphasises the importance of engagement with peripheral and marginal sites and spaces (generously defined) in studies of architectural and urban history as such. In more specific terms, typological studies of spaces like colonial prisons, police stations or railways offer one channel of study. While Chapter 6 presented an overview of provincial domestic spaces and other urban institutions in connection with governance, these buildings also offer merit and material for full-fledged research work. There could also be thematic studies, such as the development and use of the 'picturesque' within the spatial cultures of provincial areas of Bengal and India, and how this connects to its development in Europe at that time. Similarly, links between the spatial cultures of provincial domesticity in colonial India and England during the nineteenth century could be studied in a comparative and inter-connected format. Thus one very significant area of work to be developed from local architectural histories such as this of Bengal is in the domain of global history of architecture, whereby the local can be used as a key instrument to understand broader movements. This would involve identifying the channels, vectors, actors and sites of trans-national and trans-cultural flows. There is also much more to be done in mapping the sequential spatial histories of places such as *sadar* towns – developing, for instance, a more closely comparative picture of a number of towns in each region. Of particular use in this context would be the development of an archive of maps of incremental development of each of the towns under investigation, along with comparative analytical discussions. This would have the potential to constitute a large and comprehensive urban-history project in itself. Furthermore, this thesis also opens up the possibility of carrying out comparative studies of colonial provincial urbanism and architecture in different parts of India under British rule.

One of the central convictions of this thesis is that, other than tracing the history of specific buildings or settlements, architectural history and the broader field of spatial studies has a huge amount to contribute to disciplines such as social history, political history, cultural studies, cultural anthropology, social theory and historical geography. The reading of built environment is a tool which can reveal significantly newer dimensions in such fields. While the recognition of 'space' as a central category has actively been identified by social theorists like Edward Soja, Henri Lefebvre or Doreen Massey,⁶ architects and urbanists themselves need to articulate further and test the boundaries of the ways in which these inter-disciplinary connections can be formed. This thesis has tried to address some of these possible connections, while equally benefiting from an inter-disciplinary corpus of knowledge and tools, to generate a more nuanced and complex history of the architectural and spatial cultures of colonial provincial governance in Eastern India during British rule.

⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (London: Blackwell, 1991); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso Press, 1989); Doreen B. Massey, *For Space*, (London: Sage 2005).

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Prabal Chakrabarty (Dangalpara *zamindar* family), Suri.

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Enclosure No. 1

Report upon the state of the Public Civil Buildings at the district or station of Jungle Mehals

Discription of buildings	When built & by whom	Cost to Government	When last repaired and by whom	What kind of roof	Floor slung or otherwise	Remarks
Dawanny & Fouzdarry Court houses with 2 Varandahs. A upper roomed building for the accommodation of the Judge of the Court of Circuit	In 1810, By Wm. Blunt Esqr., late Judge of this district	13,795-8 as.	In 1814 by Thos. Leake Esqr., Assistant Surgeon by the authority of Government	Terrace roof	Not	The present of each buildings to be mentioned. What repairs or improvement are necessary. Whether site is elevated & healthy or otherwise under what arrangement common repairs have been hitherto made At such station where buildings are rented the monthly rent to be stated
Fouzdarry Jail including hospital, guard rooms & upstairs building for the Jailor also a house for prisoners under examination by the Magistrate	Pucka & Caucha Jails erected by Wm. Blunt Esqr., late Magr. of this district in 1810. The hospital & ca. remaining buildings were built under the superintendancy of Thos. Leake Esqr., Asst. Surgeon in 1812	23,936-4 as.	No repairs ever made since the erection of the buildings, there are some mud building attached to the jail with thatched roofs which are annually repaired by the Magistrate	Terrace & thatched roof	Not	The buildings are in good repair & the situation elevated & healthy
Dewanny Jail	In 1807 by Wm. Blunt Esqr., late Judge	1,200-0	In 1816 by C. H. Hoppner Esqr., Judge	Mud walls & thatched roof	..	
Bunglow at Chass	Do.	749-8	Do.	Do.	..	

(Sd.) C. H. Hoppner,
Magr.

Jungle Mehals,
the 7th May 1817.

APPENDIX 1 - List of buildings in Bankura in 1817.

Source: Bankura District Records

Civil Department

Annual return of buildings at the station of Bancoorah in the 17th Division of Public Works

Names of buildings	Date of erection	By whom constructed	Walls	Roofs	External dimension		Value			Remarks on the present condition of buildings
					Length. Ft.	Breadth. Ft.	Rs.	An.	Pie	
1 Circuit House	1807	No record	Pucka	Flat	80	62				By Commissioner and his Court
1 Range of out offices	1807		Do.	Do.	55	16				
1 Do. of stables &c.	1825	Capt. Kemm	Do.	Do.	60	16				
1 Judges Chutery	1807	No Record	Do.	Do.	50	50				Zillah Judge
1 Registers Do.	1807		Do.	Do.	50	50				Register
1 Sudder Amceer's Chutery	1818	Capt. Kemm	Do.	Arched	65	60				Sudder-Amceers
1 Criminal Jail	1829	Capt. Bell	Do.	Do.	251	45				
2 Ranges of Cookrooms Ea.	1830	Do. Do.	Do.	Flat	150	22	25,237	4	7	Criminal Prisoners In serviceable order
1 Do. of Privies Ea.	1830	Do. Do.	Do.	Do.	74	11				
2 Guard Rooms Ea.	1830	Do. Do.	Do.	Do.	29	19				
2 Do. & Storerooms Ea.	1808	No record	Do.	Do.	66	22				Attached to Criminal Jail
1 Derogah's House	1808		Do.	Do.	46	22				
1 Civil Jail	1809		Do.	Do.	100	23				
1 Range Cook Room	1809	No record	Do.	Do.	75	11	142	6	3	
1 Privy	1809		Do.	Do.	25	11	480	12	2	Debtors
1 Cookroom (added)	1827	Capt. Bell	Do.	Do.	35	11	454	7	2	
2 Guard Rooms Ea.	1827	Do. Do.	Do.	Do.	18	15				
1 Jail Hospital	1827	Capt. Bell	Do.	Do.	127	39				
2 Cookrooms	1827	Do. Do.	Do.	Do.	70	11	9,886	4	8	Sick Prisoners
2 Privies	1827	Do. Do.	Do.	Do.	48	11				
2 Guard Rooms Ea.	1827	Do. Do.	Do.	Do.	24	16				
1 Sepoy Barrack & Hospital	1809	No record	Do.	Do.	130	46				
1 Magazine	1808		Do.	Arched	12	12				

APPENDIX 1 contd. - List of buildings in Bankura in 1832.

Source: Bankura District Records