
The Witness of Ages: Archaeology of the Madh Island and Versova, Mumbai Suburban District

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Abstract: *The mere mention of the Madh Island and Versova spells today of the luxurious villas owned by Mumbai's and Nation's Urban rich, a place for exotic shoots and a weekend travel spot of tired Mumabaijars or Tourists from other part of the Nation and very few from abroad. School, College bunkers, young/old couples, families, Travel enthusiasts - you can spot everyone on the sandy Beaches and rocky Sea fronts of the Madh Island. At present, one has to go from Malad (West) in Mumbai Suburban District to reach the Madh Island by a good conditioned motorable road or one can simply cross the Versova Creek by a boat to reach the Madh Island. The Island has the Arabian Sea on the West and South, Manori/Gorai on the North and Malad on the East. It is at present divided from the mainland of Mumbai Suburban District or former Salsette (Sashti) Island by a narrow Creek surrounded by the Mangroves. The Madh Island from North to South has the villages Marve, Aksa, Erangal, Madh and Wadis such as Shankarwadi, Patelwadi, Pascalwadi etc. A good portion of Island is under the control of Defense establishments of the Government of India such as the Indian Navy, Indian Air Force. But apart from the Modern tags of luxury and fashion attached to it, the Madh Island has also got a share of rich Cultural Heritage, though relatively unknown to public. From the Historical/Archaeological/Heritage Remains point of view, many people think that it is the only Madh Fort, located on Basaltic rocky formation of the Madh Island that has got something to do with History besides some temples, which function as the place for presiding Deities of the respective places and villages. From the Systematic and Problem Oriented Explorations conducted in the Madh Island and Versova by the Author as a part of the broader Exploration work in North Konkan from the past few years, a systemic picture of Archaeological/Historical/Cultural antecedents and tradition of this picturesque Island and the surrounding area has emerged and which has pushed back the antiquity of the area at least for 1400 years. The present Article, mainly basing itself on the theme of the Workshop organized by the Centre of Extra Mural Studies, University of Mumbai will feature before the Researchers/Enthusiasts the broad Methodology of how to conduct problem oriented, well defined and planned Exploration works in the Area/Region under the reference. A Case Study of the smaller area such as the Madh Island and Versova is presented here to show the inherent Dynamics of the Multicultural Sites and how the approaches to search the traces/remains of the particular period changes as per the period under consideration.*

Keywords: Archaeology, Madh Island, Versova, Geography, Pre-History, Portuguese, British

Introduction

A strip of Sandy Beach (Fig. 1) welcomes you when you enter the Sea facing street leading to the old and quite Fishing Village of Versova (Taluka - Andheri, District - Mumbai Sub-Urban). It is the robust Madh Fort (Fig. 2) situated on the Southern tip of the Madh Island (Taluka - Andheri, District - Mumbai Sub-Urban) that dominates the broad Versova Creek and captures the attention of a visitor making his entry into Versova Village. In a complete contrast to upscale modern Versova, narrow lanes packed with houses and stores in the Versova village makes you feel to detach yourself from the urban hangover. Here, one can smell the fish everywhere. After crossing the Versova Creek, one comes to Madh, a separate Island on the North-West of Versova and where the large Fort visible from Versova is located. The place is a famous tourist spot and many people come each day to visit the Madh Island via Versova, Malad and Manori. The visitor coming to the Madh Island gets impressed by the mesmerizing Natural beauty of the area but also gets curious about the strange old structures such as the Madh Fort situated in the Island. Who built the Fort and for what purpose? Is this the only old structure in the area or are there more remains in the Island? What is the History of the place? These are the normal questions that generally confront a curious visitor upon visiting this place. Owing to the lack of credible answers to these queries, the mystery deepens more. The present article, deals with the very questions in a detailed manner within a Chronological framework and seeks to uncover the Historical secrets of Madh Island and Versova.



Figure 1: The Versova Beach



Figure 2: The Madh Fort as seen from the Versova Beach

Madh Island and Versova - The Geography

Madh, a picturesque Island (Fig. 3) surrounded on the three sides by the Arabian Sea contains in-itself the colorful episodes of the Greater Mumbai's eventful past and vibrant culture. That time was not distant when Madh was an Island in true sense (Fig. 4) as its former brethrens Juhu and Versova in the Salsette (*Sashti*) Island but the subsequent reclamations over the century has now transformed a former true Island into a mass of land, which harbors on the three sides the Arabian Sea whereas on the North-East side it opens via a road to Mumbai's thriving Suburb - Malad. The Island at present is marked by the long Sandy Beaches (from North to South) at Marve, Aksa, Erangal and Madh. The current Geography post-urbanization and reclamation presents the Madh Island and Versova in a rather different appearance than its original Geographical form. At present, the Madh Island has the creek of Manori-Gorai on the North, Arabian Sea on the West and South and Malad on the East, separated by a narrow Creek and Mangroves and connected by a motorable road on its North-East. The little village of Versova is now transformed into a plush locality but has retained its settlement of the fishermen community on the North-West corner that separates the Madh Island by a shallow but wide Creek, now almost converted into a sewage Nallah (Fig. 5). The Island of Madh now from the North to South has the villages of Marve, Aksa, Erangal, Madh and *Wadis* such as Shankarwadi, Patelwadi, Pascawadi etc. A

good portion of Island comes under the control of Indian Defense establishment such as the Indian Navy and Indian Air Force.

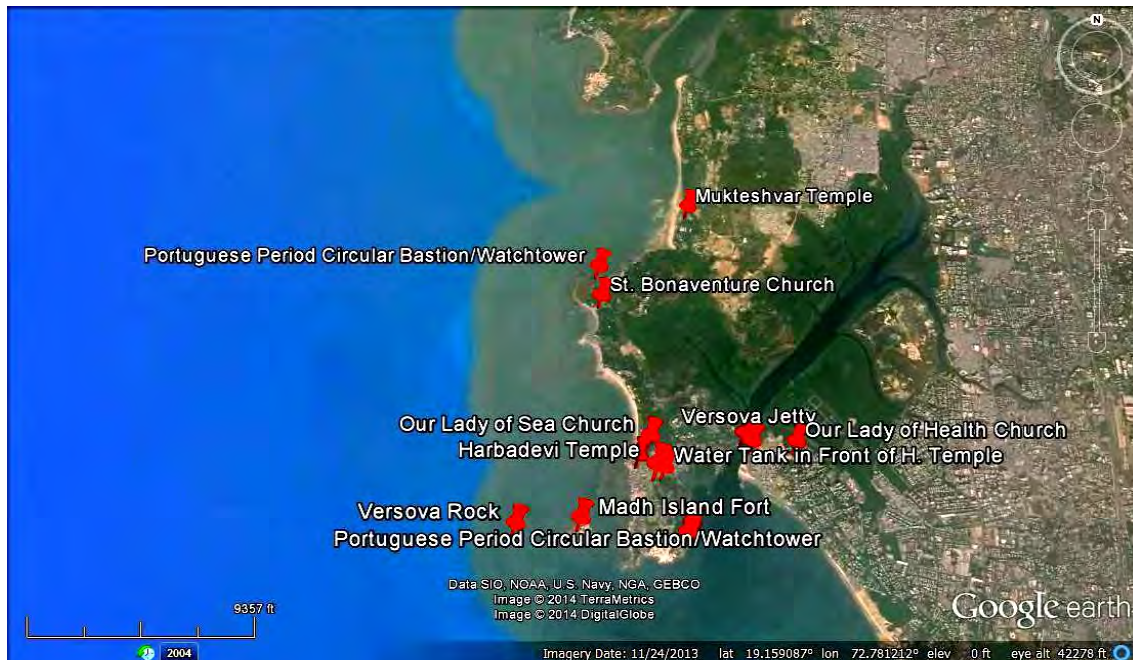


Figure 3: Google Earth Image of the Madh Island and Versova with the marked Sites and Monuments

Pre-History and Early History

It would not be out of place to imagine about the human colonization of the Island in the Pre-Historic or Early Historical period, when such evidence have been satisfactorily traced in the neighboring areas of Kandivali and Malad. It is equally proved how the Early Historical and later Historical phase of Mumbai and former Sashti Island was rich in the representation of the Architectural and Cultural remains. The region had the famed ports of National and International importance at Surparaka (modern Nalasopara, Taluka - Vasai, District - Palghar) and Kalian (modern Kalyan, Taluka - Kalyan, District - Thane) and had thriving trade. How much role the strategic localities of Madh and Verosova could have played in the Early Historic Economic Hub is hard to assume at the present. More evidence could have been traced or located in the region had not the unplanned Urbanism in the Greater Mumbai accentuated the process of willful destruction and disappearance of the ancient Sites and Remains. Region's complex Geomorphology also adds extra strain on the Site Formation Process in Konkan and makes the Pre-Historic or Early Historical layer more elusive to trace out. But fortunately, few remains from the Early Medieval and Medieval period are holding the ground and they can appraise us in broader way about the contemporary society of the region. They are also supplemented with a good amount of literary and Epigraphical sources. Literary sources on the more precise basis can be placed in the category of the Legends and Annals though its actual association with the Archaeological and Historical record of the region lacks the satisfactory authentication.



Figure 4: The British Period Map of Bombay and Environs



Figure 5: The Creek at Versova leading to Madh Island

Early Medieval and Medieval Period - Historical References

When the phase of Early Medieval as per our present spatial and temporal nomenclature of the Indian History had dawned on the region in North Konkan, more particularly in the Madh and Versova Islands, the rule of Shilahara Dynasty of North Konkan (800 - 1265 A.D.) founded by Kapardi I (800 - 825 A.D.), a Political and Military Strongman appointed as the Governor of the North Konkan by his Rashtrakuta Masters had started. The Shilaharas traced their origin through mythic legends to the divinities like *Jimutavahana*, a cursed *Vidyadhara* Prince who for saving the life of a serpent (*Naga*) called *Sankhachuda* offered his own body to a preying divine Eagle and from a brave Warrior called "Silara" who saved the land of Konkan from the piercing arrows of Parashuram (Mirashi 1977). The Dynasty that produced an approximate 25 Rulers during its rule over the region had offered relatively tolerant governance and was also instrumental in forming and establishing new urban entities such as Shreesthanak (Modern Thane) on the map of North Konkan. Shilahara Rulers by adopting the then advanced Feudal mode of Economy could bring a large portion of the land in North Konkan under irrigation and cultivation. It helped them to build a solid foundation for its complex Political and Bureaucratic structure. Elaborate taxation system followed over the well off social life founded on the cultivation monopolized by the Landed Elite and trading activities. The Shilahara Ruling Class and its Landed Feudal Subsidiaries earned better Revenue and Surplus and were able to finance grand

Religious Architectural Projects in the area under their control and they could patronize the newly emerging school of Art and Architecture. It is not surprising to find the Shiv Temple of Ambarnath modeled after the *Bhumija* style of Architecture (which by then had emerged as the new Architectural style) was built in the period of Shilahara Ruler Munmini in 1060 A.D. Shilahara Rulers pompously displayed their status in the Geo-politics of *Aparanta* by their flamboyant adoption of the Regal Titles such as *Mahasamanta*, *Mahamandaleshvardhipati*, *Raja*, *Konkanvallabha*, *Konkanchakravarti*, *Paschimsamudradhipati* etc. and had performed numerous Religious Rituals to enforce their rule over the masses in the region and to project their reign as the divinely sanctioned. As a logical consequence to legitimize their divinely approved rule and also to fulfill their own spiritual aspiration, as said before, the Shilahara Rulers and their Subsidiaries from the foundation of the Shilahara State to its end, had commissioned numerous Religious Architectural Complexes throughout the North Konkan. Madh Island and Versova was a part of the Shilahara Kingdom in North Konkan and it is unlikely that such building projects were not commissioned in the area though at present their representation is minimal to come across.

Apart from the Archaeological, Historical and Culturally proved existence of Shilahara, Yadava and later Indo-Islamic Sultanate period in North Konkan, we come across a Chronicle titled as "*Mahikavatichi Bakhar*" (The Annals of Mahikavati) dealing with the events claimed to have occurred in the region during the Medieval period. Even though being projected as the parallel narration of the Medieval society in North Konkan, its authenticity is debated and it is subjected to comprehensive examination. Still, being hailed as the "Grand Chronicle" encapsulating the Historical and Cultural narrative of North Konkan, one should give it a try to make acquaint oneself with the Historical tradition of the region. The Grand Chronicle of *Mahikavakitchi Bakhar*, written initially somewhere in the 15th century by Keshavacharya and later superimposed and edited by several Authors up to the 17th century; narrates the episodes of urbanization in the Mumbai/Sashti Islands (in the general level, the North Konkan) and it features prominently villages in the Madh Island and the nearby area. The narration moves in the three Segments and is full of the events of Military quest, intrigues, power struggles, lust and liaison. The discussion below is chiefly based on the critical Edition produced by V.K. Rajawade (Rajwade 1991).

The chief character of the first Segment of the Chronicle is Pratab Bimb, who is described as the Brother of Champaner's King Govardhan Bimb. He is initially portrayed as the Prince on the mission of carving out his own Kingdom from the hostile foes. He goes on marching with his Army and Generals from Paithan (presently in Taluka - Paithan, District - Aurangabad, Maharashtra) to Daman (at present a Union Territory) and first wrests the control of a region stretching from Daman to Chikhli-Tarapur (at present in Palghar District, Maharashtra) from a local Ruler. Once he acquires the territory, no one dares to stop him. One after one, he goes on to capture the area of Tarapur-Mahim and establishes his first capital at Mahikavati (modern Mahim village near Kelve, Taluka - Palghar, District - Palghar). Thereafter, he

commands his General Balkrishnrao Somvanshi to capture the land farther South of Mahikavati and according to the text, Balkrishnrao obeying the order of his Master seizes Thane from a Shilahara Ruler named as Yashwantrao. After Thane, the region of Kalva, Madh, Versova, Juhu and finally Walkeshvar falls to the Army of Balkrishnrao and makes Pratab Bimb an absolute Master of the area from Daman to Walkeshvar. As an ideal Ruler, Pratab Bimb implements every possible project to make the region populous, cultivable and irrigated. In a course of time, Pratab Bimb is not able to secure his conquered territories and loses a majority portion of his Kingdom to the enemies. His rule at last confines to the Islands of Mumbai and Sashti and it is here that he establishes his second Capital bearing the same name of his former Capital - Mahikavati (modern Mahim, District - Mumbai). It is no wonder that Pratab Bimb is celebrated as the person who urbanized the former barren Islands of Mumbai and offered it a new lease of prosperity. His successors rule the region for around next fifty years but they do not match the illustrious qualities of Pratab Bimb. With no one to succeed in the Royal lineage to the last King of Bimb Dynasty- Keshavdev, the Council of Ministers and Regional Landed Elites choose Janardan, the Chief Minister of Keshavdev as the successor to inherit the legacy of the Bimb dynasty. According to the Chronicle, entire events of the first Segment takes place from 1138 A.D. to 1237 A.D. It is here that second Segment of the narrations starts.

While Janardan takes on the reign of Bimb Dynasty, neighboring Rulers are on the Kingdom expansion mission. One such Vaishya Ruler from Ghandivi (modern Gandevi in Navasari District of Gujarat State) - Nagarshah attacks the last remnants of the Bimb Kingdom commanded by Janardan and takes it control. Three close relatives of Nagarshah perform well in the war campaign. They nurture the expectation to get a share from the war spoils and future benefits from the newly conquered region. Nagarshah offers the post of Chief Minister to defeated Janardan. Nagarshah also is a heirless Monarch but he lately becomes the father of a baby boy. This unwanted situation makes his three close ambitious relatives more apprehensive for their stake in the Kingdom. Meanwhile, the baby boy grows up and is called Tripurkumur and is expected to succeed his ruling father. Worried for their future, three relatives approach Nagarshah and demand three villages - Malad, Marol and Thane for each. Nagarshah refuses their demand, which prompt them to approach the rival Yadava State of Devgiri (Modern Devgiri, District - Aurangabad) ruled by Ramdevrao for help. Ramdevrao assisted by Nagarshah's three relatives in return attacks Nagarshah's territory but has to face crushing defeat. When such events are taking place, Alauddin Khilji, the rising star from the North India attacks the Kingdom of Ramdevrao.

Alauddin defeats Ramdevrao at Paithan but Ramdevrao's son Keshavdev succeeds in securing Devgiri, the Capital of Yadavas and continues the rule of Yadava Dynasty. Ramdevrao's other son - Bimbdev who is ruling from Udgir (Udgir in present Latur District of Maharashtra) attacks Alauddin and on his military campaign, he eventually reaches Konkan. His old foes - Nagarshah and his son Tripurkumur are still holding on their possession in North Konkan and it is this territory, which Bimbdev targets this

time and emerge victorious. Nagarshah and Tripurkumur run away to escape from the prosecution and Tripurkumur takes refuge in Chaul (presently in Taluka - Alibag, District - Raigad). Bimbdev has already defeated numerous petty chiefs ruling in the different regions of Konkan and after defeating Nagarshah, he becomes the master of the region. As the first King of the original Bimb Dynasty - Pratap Bimb, he too makes Mahikavati (modern Mahim) of the Mumbai Islands as the Capital of his Kingdom and starts his rule with the assistance of local Landed Elites. His son Pratapshah succeeds him but he has to face this time a considerable challenge for the Kingdom from the ousted Ruling family of Nagarshah lead by Tripurkumur. In spite of being assisted by the formidable military power of his family relatives, Pratapshah is routed by Tripurkumur. The defeat of Pratapshah ends the chapter of brief Yadava rule in the Islands of Mumbai and North Konkan. Soon, Alauddin Khilji wipes out the rule of the main Yadava Dynasty headquartered at Deogiri. After the end of the Yadava rule, now it is only Nagarshah who is ruling in the Mumbai Islands and North Konkan. These tumultuous events as per the text occurs from the middle of 13th century to 1332 A.D. and it is from here that the third and final Segment of the narration starts to conclude with the beginning of Tughlaq era in the region.

Nagarshah, who re-acquires his lost Kingdom from Yadavas, has a foster son called as Jaitchuri. Jaitchuri is a brave person and for his bravery is awarded with Versova region by the State. Jaitchuri has a son called Bhagadchuri who too is a courageous like his father. He is given the charge of the Sashti region by the King. But over the years, Bhagadchuri becomes egoistic, adamant, corrupt and pervert womanizer. He openly brags that the Kingdom can't exist without his muscles. On seeing such outrageous behavior of Bhagadchuri, even the King thinks to cut him short but is incapable to take any action due Bhagadchuri's power and influence. Meanwhile, the downfall of Bhagadchuri comes near. Due to his philandering character, this time he forcefully tries to get the hold of a woman from a big Landlord family of Somaladesala (Desai) from Malad (present Malad, Taluka - Borivali, District - Mumbai Sub-Urban). When the lady resists the overtures of Bhagadchuri, out of rage, he puts her entire family in a prison and kills her husband. Fortunately, the lady dares to escape to Bhiwandi and there she gives birth to a baby boy. The boy grows up with the feeling of revenge for Bhagadchuri. Bhagadchuri being unaware of these developments is happy in living power blinded way of life. When the boy grows up and attains maturity, he with his few relatives make a plan to eliminate Bhagadchuri in the Harbadevi (Harba Goddess) Fair at Madh Island and even manages to get the permission from the King for his daredevil act. Luckily, Bhagadchuri escapes from the daring assault that the boy and his party makes on him and goes into hiding. In the interim period, petty disputes in the Royal Court brings a small time Minister cum Landed Elite closer to Bhagadchuri and both approaches a high ranking Official of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq at Vadnagar (presently in Gujarat) to get the help for possible military offensive against the Nagarshah Dynasty. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq lends his support to the Rebels and on his orders, his General attacks the Kingdom ruled by the Nagarshah Dynasty and succeeds in capturing it. The King and his associates are killed in the battle and

Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, the new Emperor of the Kingdom gives authority of the regional state affairs to the Rebel Faction headed by Bhagadchuri. Bhagadchuri by taking the benefit of newly acquired power starts to take on his opponents, including the descendants of Somaladesa. He spares none and executes them. Such despotic acts of Bhagadchuri make him more unpopular and ultimately it results in his and his brother's execution in the hands of the dissidents at Harbadevi Fair at Madh Island. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq after taking the due notice of the events decides to go by the regional tradition of administration and social hierarchical set-up and appoints the son of the deceased king - Lahurshah as the new Administrator cum Ruler of the region. It is here that the last Section of Early Medieval and Medieval period covering the duration of 1332 A.D. to 1379 A.D. concludes in the narration. The region according to the text is said to have been ruled for a brief period thereafter by a few regional ruling factions such as Nayate and Bhongale. Later it was passed to the Muzaffarid Dynasty of Gujarat in 1429 A.D. It remained in their control till they handed over the coastal strip of North Konkan from Dahanu (at present in District - Palghar) to Uran (District - Raigad) to Portuguese in 1534 A.D.

The Chronicle mentions the area of Madh (Mhad), Versova (Vesave) and Malad and villages of Akse, Yergal/Yergan (modern Erangal) in Madh Island and Vesave (modern Versova). Despite the colorful portrayal of the events, the text no doubt comes with the problem of its own. Excluding the major ruling dynasties such as Chalukya, Shilahar, Yadava, Kadamb, Indo-Islamic Sultanates represented by Khiljis, Tughlaq and local Nayate rulers, there is no proven existence supplemented by the Archaeological, Epigraphical and Numismatic evidence for the line of the local Kings or Ruling families mentioned in the Early Medieval and Medieval Segment. No doubt, the text provides certain insight into the contemporary social life, hierarchy and customs with corresponding works assigned to each community but it remains selective in the description.

Its narration is mainly focused on the upper social levels represented by the Priestly, Ruling and Landed Elite cum Bureaucratic Class. It is not unexpected to find the composers largely belonging to the elite Brahmin Priestly or Landlord families cursing on the Indo-Islamic Sultanate States and its later offshoots and the rule of Europeans and describing them as unholy, ignoble and unrighteous. In reality, it is the greater strain, which the newly formed Indo-Islamic Sultanate states, its later offshoots and European powers that had put on the Social-Economical interests of the Priestly and large Landholding Class that the intense and sharp reaction mediated through such text of popular history and imagination emerged; though these new powers tried at its best to preserve the old tradition of social and power structure to sustain its rule. As the sphere of the present paper is not to delve critically into the social functions and mechanism as represented in this Chronicle and which will need a separate deliberation altogether, let us have a look on the nature of Material Remains associated to this period in the area before we pass on to the next period.

The Material Remains

As mentioned in the earlier Section, in comparison to the volume of Textual references, sadly very few Material Remains of the era have survived in the Madh Island and Versova. During the fieldwork in the region, the Author could come across following explicit remains of Early Medieval and Medieval period at the following locations in the Madh Island apart from a few with a customary link to the period.

Mukteshvar Temple, Akse

The renovated Temple of Mukteshvar (Fig. 6) is situated in Akse Village. It appears that in the Early Medieval and Medieval period, the Village was either a part of separate Marve Islet on the North of Historical Madh Island or of the Madh Island itself. A pre-Reclamation map of the British period clearly shows the separate Islands of Madh and Versova and an Islet of Malvan (now called Malwani, a part of the Western region of Malad) on the North of Madh Island. At present, a congested lane on the right side of the main road leads one to Mukteshvar Temple located in a private property. Though the Temple is renovated, it has not yet renounced its original identity and a small Sculpture of *Gajalaxmi* or *Abhisheklaxmi* (Fig. 7) originally adorning a part of the older Shilahara period Temple is survived in the renovation drive. The Sculpture is highly abraded and is covered with vermilion. It is placed in a small Shrine constructed under a Rectangular shaped concrete foundation built around the tree. As its usual Iconographical representation, an image of Laxmi in seating posture (*Padmasana*) is flanked by water pouring elephants on the both sides. The Temple is situated near the Seashore.



Figure 6: The Renovated Mukteshvar Temple, Akse



Figure 7: Gajalaxmi



Figure 8: The Goddess Hiradevi

Hiradevi and Omkareshvar Temple, Erangal

Though there are no visible remains of the Early Medieval and Medieval period in renovated Hiradevi Temple at Erangal, it is the community association and the continued Cultural traditions which makes this Temple to claim for the Historical Identity. The temple belonging to *Shri Sheshvanshiya Kshatriya Bhandari Samaj* is a village temple of Erangal where the Goddess Hiradevi (Fig. 8) is worshipped by the locals. *Sheshvanshiya Kshatriya Bhandari* Community is mentioned prominently in *Mahikavatichi Bakhar* and according to the Chronicle; Bhandari community was one of the earliest settlers of the Bombay Islands. It is due to the incorporation of a section of the community into Defense and Security establishments in the subsequent periods apart from their traditional profession of tapping the Todi tree and liquor distillation that the community could have strove to identify them as a part of the *Kshatriya* community.

Another Temple belonging to the same community in the village has one interesting feature to notice. Though Omkareshvar Temple is a modern period structure with Tin shed construction situated in front of St. Bonaventure Church, the Temple has one Stone Slab depicting a cow (Fig. 9) which at present is covered in vermillion and is being worshipped by the devotees. Its similarity with the Shilahara period inscribed Stone Slabs with depiction of a Cow and Calf can be seen but due to its current ritualistic association, it could not be examined properly. Nevertheless, it offers a potential clue to probe further the region's association with the Shilahara and Yadava dynasty in the Early Medieval and Medieval period.



Figure 9: The Stone Slab

Shree Harbadevi Temple (Fig. 10) is located at a little height in Madh Village and is too have undergone through renovation. Nothing has survived in Art and Architectural terms to know about its Historical ancestry. At present, the Temple Complex has the shrines of Shree Harbadevi, Shree Harbadevi and Shree Shitladevi (Fig. 11) and is a place deeply revered by the local community. There is a large Water Tank called "Harbadevi *Talav* (Lake)" (Fig. 12) in front of the Temple across the road. Near the Water Tank, there is a Memorial (136 CM × 120 CM) (Fig. 13) built in dressed stones that according to the locals belongs to a priest of the Temple. It is of square shape with Nandi, *Shivling*, foot prints, Sun and Moon carved on the top. No inscription or date is present on the Memorial and it appears to have belonged to the later Maratha period, most probably to 18th or 19th century.



Figure 10: The Harbadevi Temple, Madh



Figure 11: The Harbadevi Temple, Madh



Figure 12: The Harbadevi Lake, Madh



Figure 13: The Memorial, Madh

The temple of Harbadevi and the Fair of the Goddess is mentioned in *Mahikavatichi Bakhar* and is a central place for Bhagadchuri incident described in the earlier Section. Apart from its references in the Chronicle, there are no material remains at present in the Temple Complex to equate its association with the Early Medieval or Medieval period.

Killeshvar Temple, Madh Village

Killeshvar Temple (Fig. 14) is situated in a scenic location on the North-East of Madh Fort. One can have a spelling view of Versova Creek and a long continuous line of Sea line extending as long as Juhu and Bandra from this Temple. Robust Fortification of Madh Fort stands behind the Temple. This temple is also a renovated one but it has few remains around, which can inform us about its past. Behind the temple, at the roots of the Banyan tree, a part of Herostone and two structural remains (Fig. 15) of an older Temple are worshipped at present by the devotees and they are covered in vermillion. Shilahara period workmanship can be easily noticed on them and one can wonder about the possibility of the existence of a Temple of the older date, perhaps of the Early Medieval or Medieval period, specifically of the Shilahara period at the site of the present Killeshvar Temple.



Figure 14: The Killeshvar Temple, Madh



Figure 15: The Herostone and Sculptures at Killeshvar Temple, Madh

The name of the Temple "Killeshvar" (the Lord of the Fort) by which it is known at the present appears to be of much later period. It is certain that during the period Muzaffarid Dynasty of Gujarat, no Defense structure of prominence existed at Madh Island and it is only in the Portuguese period that the first Defense structure was constructed. It is very unlikely that the Portuguese could have allowed having a Temple in their territory of Versova and Madh Island and that too near a Defense structure. The nomenclature of the temple "Killeshvar" is either originated in the Maratha period or in the later British period when the importance of Madh Fort was relatively diminished and an inflow of persons was allowed near such strategic Defense structure.

The Portuguese Period – Brief History

When Bahadur Shah of Gujarat's Muzaffarid Dynasty was busy in fighting the Mughal Emperor Humayun, the Portuguese *Estado da India* had intensified its offensive against Diu in particular and the Western coastal region under the control of Muzaffarid dynasty in general. The coastal strip of North Konkan ruled by the Muzaffarid Dynasty was the choicest destination of the Portuguese armada to vent out its anger on its every new mission to conquer Diu. Defense settlements of the Muzaffarid Dynasty guarding the coast of North Konkan were bombed, villages were raided, burnt and pillaged on

the regular basis by the Portuguese forces. Despite repeated disturbances caused by its former benefactor - the Nizamshahi Sultanate of Ahemadnagar and its then arch enemy – the Muzaffarid Dynasty of Gujarat, Portuguese had already established its base in North Konkan by 1524 A.D. when they completed the construction of the first Defense Structure at Revdanda in Chaul. From 1510 A.D. to 1534 A.D. the Sea, Bays, Creeks, Rivers and Islands of the North Konkan were the places of bloody battles between the Portuguese and the forces of the Muzaffarid Dynasty. But when the power struggle between Bahadur Shah and Mughals was ongoing, Portuguese played a clever card of diplomacy. Both fighting sides were keen to have the Portuguese on their side but Portuguese after greatly restraining themselves opted to back Bahadur Shah. Bahadur Shah was too tired of fighting on the two parallel fronts and was eager to reduce rapid disturbances that Portuguese caused repeatedly to his territory in North Konkan. The outcome was worth of a reward for the Portuguese. They officially got control of the coastal strip from Dahanu (presently in Palghar District) to Uran (in Raigad District) from Bahadur Shah in 1534 A.D. and it included the settlements of Vasai and Thane. Vasai (Bacaim) went on to become the Capital of the Province of the North (*Provincia de Norte*). The territory in North Konkan was cherished most by the Portuguese in India and it was in their control for nearly two centuries. The very next year i.e. in 1535 A.D. they were even able to secure from Bahadur Shah the possession of Diu, the place long yearned by the Portuguese. In addition, they also got the legal sanction for the territory that they acquired in the previous year. In Portuguese rule, the region of Madh Islad and Versova jurisdictionally came under *Ilha de Salcette* (Salsette/Sashti Island), the third Division of the Province of the North (Cunha 1993).

To honor the illustrious and courageous services rendered by its Nobles and Military Officials, the Portuguese Crown granted and leased to them on the nominal rent a considerable portion of the Province of the North. Also, according to the Portuguese State policy of patronizing the evangelical activities, large land holdings were granted to major Catholic Christian orders from time to time. According to the Church sources at St. Bonaventure Church at Erangal in Madh Island, about which we will discuss more in the next section, Erangal village was granted to the Franciscan Order by the Portuguese Crown to meet the expenditure for running the Convent and Orphanage at Mandapeshvar (in Dahisar, Taluka - Borivali, District - Mumbai Sub-Urban). In 1575 A.D. the Franciscans built the Church in the honor of St. Bonaventure at Erangal. Portuguese used to spell Erangal *Arengal* and called it sometimes *Altomar* (Ibid: 195). Not much is known about the tenants of the other villages in the Madh Island and Versova. A detailed examination of the Portuguese archives is needed to know the tenant history of the area. We do not have any regional documents at present talking about the Madh Island and Versova in the early years of the Portuguese rule. The strategic location of the place can undoubtedly be proved by the East India Company's correspondence in 1659 A.D. wherein it was exploring all possibilities to urge the Portuguese Crown to deliver any place between Versova, Bombay and Danda-Rajapuri (presently in Taluka - Mulud, District - Raigad) to them for establishing its own base on the Western coast of India. When the British got the possession of Bombay Islands from

the Portuguese as a part of nuptial agreement, it is well known that the British Crown leased Bombay Islands to East India Company in 1661 A.D. The old rivalry between the Portuguese and the Arabs did not cool down and in the year 1694 A.D. the Arabs from Muscat raided Versova and massacred the local population in large numbers.

Though the famous work by Antonio Bocarro and Pedro Berreto Resende titled "*Livro das Plantas de Todas as Fortalezas, Cidades e Povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental*" (1635 A.D.) on the Forts and Cities in the Portuguese controlled region of India does not mention any Defense Structure at Versova or Madh Island, in the year of 1695 A.D. we get the first reference of a Defense Structure as a "Fort" from the writing of Italian Traveler Dr. Gemeli Careri. Whether the previous year's massacre and destruction had any role to play here is hard to assume at present in the absence of any credible textual reference. An entry of the year 1720 A.D. describes the place as having small trade in dry fishes and a "Small Fort" on the North (Campbell 1882). For which a particular Fort the entry is directed at is not yet clear.

As Marathas under Peshwas of Pune were regaining their power and surrounded by the hostile states, the Portuguese became conscious of the safety of the Province of the North and as its consequence, a Factor of Vasai Fort, Andre Ribeiro Coutinho was directed in the year 1728 A.D. by the Portuguese Viceroy to inspect and prepare a detailed Report of the condition of the Portuguese Defense Structures in the Province and to suggest safety measures to the Portuguese administration. In fact, except the Island of Salsette (*Sashti*) which was divided into numerous Islands into-itself, the Portuguese controlled coastal strip from Daman to Vasai (Daman, Tarapur, Asheri, Manor, Saivan and Vasai) was the open land bordered by the Maratha territory and no satisfactory measures were adopted by the Portuguese Authorities to defend the region of such importance.

Andre Ribeiro Coutinho promptly submitted his observations and recommendations to the administration which for the larger part was highly critical of the poor level of Defense arrangement in the Province of the North. He talks about only one Fort at Madh Island/Versova that he calls very old and dilapidated. He informs that it is garrisoned by fifty soldiers and had ten pieces of cannons out of which in reality only two were serviceable (Rivara 1866: 32). The nature of the Report for Versova raises few questions such as whether other Defense Structures existed on Madh Island and Versova when Andre Ribeiro Coutinho visited the place ? If they did exist, then were they in operational condition or not? If they existed even though in the ruined condition then why Coutinho's Report does not talk about them? Did the Portuguese construct other pure Defense Structures as the Watch Tower cum Bastions standing at present in Madh Island in addition to the Madh Fort during the emergency period of growing Maratha threat to the Province of the North post-Coutinho's Report? We will discuss more about the remains of the Defense Structures in Madh Island and Versova in the Section of "Material Remains".

Few years before Andre Ribeiro Coutunho was asked to submit his report, Marathas under the leadership of Peshwa Bajirao I of Pune had started to target the Province of the North systematically on the plea of demanding the tribute (One tenth of the revenue income or production) from the Portuguese on citing the Royal Mughal Order of the year 1719 A.D. The Royal Order had granted the *Sardeshmukhi* rights of Konkan region to Chhatrapati Shahu of Satara; which is needless to say was successfully mediated by the first Peshwa of Shahu - Balaji Vishwanath. Besides this tribute, Marathas through Peshwa Bajirao I were also pressing hard the Portuguese for their old demand of *Chauth* payment (One fourth of the Revenue income or production) for the Portuguese territory of Daman and the area bordering the region of the Koli King of Rampur. Portuguese opposed the both demands as their possession in the North Konkan was never a part of the Mughal territory, so the question of paying one tenth of revenue or production to Marathas was nowhere in their policy framework. For the *Chauth* issue, they had maintained their old position that it was paid in various proportions to the Ramnagar King from the Daman territory.

If Chhatrapati Shahu conquers the land of Ramnagar King, they would consider the payment of tribute to the Marathas (Pissurlekar 1975). Besides these issues, when Marathas captured Kalyan and Bhiwandi in the year 1719 A.D. the threat to the Portuguese Province of the North increased manifold. Kalyan became the *de facto* Administrative and Military Capital of Maratha maneuvers in North Konkan. The person who had captured these strategic ports - Ramchandra Mahadev Chaskar (Joshi) was a close relative of Peshwas. He was loyal to the camp of Balaji Vishwanath and later to Bajirao I. Inner factions and conflicts in the Maratha Court at Satara were well known, not to mention the factionalism within the Sub-ordinate ranks. To name a few, Khanderao Dabhade of Talegaon and Pilaji Jadhavrao were the strong contenders for Bajirao I in the Satara Court politics. The rivaling factions did not miss any chance to downplay each other. Shahu and Bajirao I were at odds with Angre family of Alibag too.

Bajirao I was eagerly exploring all possible options to get at least one prominent coastal port in Konkan under his control (Pissurlekar 1967). Though Kalyan and Bhiwandi were now a part of the Maratha dominion but they did not control the outer maritime activities and trade of the Western coast. Therefore, Peshwas hunt for a coastal port was on. The Maratha success in North Konkan had sent a wave of relief to the disgruntled regional players who had lost their traditional family entitlements and rights in a course of time in the Portuguese controlled Province of the North. Besides the major prevalent resentment related to estate and entitlements, the Portuguese prosecution of Hindu Religion and intolerance in the Province of the North was also adding fuel to the conflict. The entire Regional Landed Elites were largely Upper Class Hindus who found their religious beliefs and practices being offended on the regular basis by the Conservative Portuguese establishment. Few of them such as Naik/Anjurkar family of the Village Anjur (Taluka - Bhiwandi, District - Thane) had approached earlier Aangre family of Alibag (District - Raigad) and Dabhade family of

Talegaon (District - Pune) for the military assistance and intervention in the Province of the North (Kelkar 2008). But when the immediate Eastern region of the Province of the North - Kalyan and Bhiwandi was captured by the faction loyal to the Peshwas of Pune, they lost no chance in estimating the rising power of Bhat family (holders of the Peshwa post in the Court of Chhatrapati Shahu at Satara) and groups loyal to Peshwas and thus decided to side with them. In such process, one more affected prominent landed elite family from Salsette (*Sashti*) Island - Kavale from Malad (at present in Mumbai Sub-Urban District) also threw their weight behind the Rebel Faction.

The Rebel Faction was lobbying hard in the high office of Peshwas at Kalyan and Pune for launching the anti-Portuguese mission in the Province in the North. Their proposed strategy was all clear and simple - the Rebels will provide all required information related to Geography, Topography, Approaches, location of the Portuguese Strongholds and Posts etc. to Marathas and will supply them necessary manpower, infrastructure and logistics for invasion wherever necessary and possible. In return, the Peshwas has to acknowledge their contribution in the Mission and will have to reinstate their entitlements, Estate holdings etc. in the newly conquered region. Bajirao I upon verifying the authenticity of the claims and strengths of the Rebel Faction in the Province of the North through his trusted representatives approved their plan and assured recognizing the Estates, Titles of the local landed elites and offering rewards to those who would assist Peshwas in their expedition against the Portuguese in the Province of the North. He also agreed to honor the entitlement granted in the period of Muzaffarid Dynasty of Gujarat to the local landed elites and families (Ibid). This acted as the most driving impetus for the local landlord families and defectors for joining the Peshwa side in the Offensive against the Portuguese in North Konkan. Though the Rebel Camp was energetic in expecting the prompt Maratha Offensive headed by Peshwa Bajirao I in the Province of the North, the Maratha response was much slow owing to their parallel offensives at various fronts across the country and region.

Still, working on the line of action, Maratha's first direct attack on the Province of the North took place in 1724 A.D and the second in 1730 A.D. In the second attack, there was all possibility of losing the Salsette Island to Marathas if the timely intervention of the British from Bombay Islands had not come across to meditate between the warring parties. But it did not end there. Pursued constantly by the Rebel Faction headed by Naik/Anjurkar and Kavle family for planning the larger and decisive offensive in the Province of the North, Bajirao I had planned for greater third offensive in the Province of the North in the year 1733 A.D. But as Marathas got heavily engaged in the expedition against the Siddis of Janjira in 1733 A.D. that lasted up to 1736 A.D. the planned offensive in the Province of the North was put on hold. The delay made Rebel Faction from the Province of the North further restless. But once freed from the Janjira expedition, Marathas though overtly represented by Chhatrapati Shahu of Satara but in the reality controlled by Peshwa Bajirao I of Pune had turned their full attention on the Portuguese front. As Bajirao I was keen in getting possession of an Island or sea abutting land in Konkan for trading activities in addition to Maratha controlled Kalyan

and Bhiwandi, Marathas demanded a portion of land at Vasai from the Portuguese. Portuguese authorities not only communicated a stern rebuff but also said to have made a derogatory personal remarks against none other than Bajirao I.

Coupled with already existing indignation from the Portuguese Authorities for not complying with the demand of Chhatrapati Shahu of Satara to present him a lavish gift, the present event accelerated the chain events, which later culminated into the full scale Maratha offensive under the command of Chimaji Appa, the younger brother of Peshwa Bajirao I in the Province of the North in 1737 A.D (Pissurlekar 1967). The Offensive came rolling much faster as the Portuguese, on the recommendations of the Report submitted by Vasai's Factor Andre Ribeiro Coutinho had started constructing a new Fort at Thane in 1734 A.D. Had the Fort been constructed then the possibility of entering or attacking Salsette (Sashti) would have become more difficult and thus could have endangered the proposed Maratha offensive. Therefore, the Rebel Faction frantically called upon the Peshwas to act timely. Besides the issues related to Geopolitics and Military Offensive, the new additional taxes and compulsory labor without food and wages imposed over the local population by the Portuguese establishment had taken the resentment up to the exploding level and it acted as an additional advantage for the Maratha Offensive (Pissurlekar 1975).

Though the initial war started in North Konkan in 1737 A.D. Marathas opened a second front directed at Goa in the beginning months of 1739 A.D. to corner further the beleaguered Portuguese (Pissurlekar 1967). The famous Maratha-Portuguese war was lasted for two years and in the year 1739 A.D. it resulted in the defeat of Portuguese. Madh Island and Versova were on the hit list of Marathas from the beginning itself due to its strategic locations and was subjected to intense military offensive from 1737 A.D. onwards. But in the face of fierce Portuguese resistance, it was not until the first months of the year 1739 A.D. that the Marathas were able to capture the Madh Island and Versova from the Portuguese. How the famous Maratha-Portuguese war took place in the Madh Island and Versova is the topic of discussion of the next Section.

Portuguese Period and the Maratha Offensive (1737 - 1739 A.D.) - The Historical References

In the month of April, 1737 AD, a Maratha contingent was successful in wresting the control of Thane from the Portuguese. It is important to note here that the General of the Province of the North Dom Luis Bottelho was present in Thane when Maratha forces attacked it and he along with the few prominent Portuguese officials and families had to move to Karanja (Taluka - Uran, District - Raigad) to escape from the Maratha onslaught (Pissurlekar 1975). Marathas knew it very well that though they have won Thane; it would be of no value if they fail to get other important Portuguese strongholds located at the strategic places of Versova, Bandra and Turbhe (Trombay) in Salsette (Sashti) Island. From Madh Island and Versova, Portuguese could have landed their enforcement more easily. Had Portuguese acted quickly, pending the capture of these places would have resulted in encirclement of the Maratha forces in Salsette.

Therefore, one group of the Maratha forces advanced rapidly towards Vasai and the surrounding region, whereas the other group moved ahead to tighten the grip on the Salsette (Sashti) Island. The Island by then had around 157 villages and had major Portuguese Fortifications at Versova, Bandra and Trombay to defend them. A Maratha contingent led by Honaji Balkawade was entrusted to capture the Madh Island/Versova from the Portuguese (Kelkar 2008). The Portuguese had a Pentagonal shaped Fortification cum Bastion at Madh Island to which the people, then and now have termed as the "Versova Fort". The Fort was commanded by a seventy years old man - Jose Roiz with his twelve soldiers. It is evident that the Portuguese forces were much in smaller number in comparison to the attacking Maratha forces.

8th April, 1737 A.D. - The First Attack

The First attack was led by Honaji Balkawade. A letter of Muraraji Anjurkar dated probably to 11th April, 1737 A.D. to Chimaji Appa informs that the contingent of Honaji Balkawade was supplied with 2 Pouches of Gunpowder and 500 Bullets for the Mission (Sardesai 1933: 17 - 18). Honaji Balkawade attacked with full force the Portuguese Fortification but had to retreat due to the valiant resistance of a small group of Portuguese soldiers under the command of Jose Roiz, a Portuguese veteran. The Maratha loss was much. Among them around 40 to 50 soldiers were injured in the action (Kelkar 2008). According to the letter of Khandoji Mankar to Chimaji Appa dated 15th April, 1737 A.D.

Honaji Balkawade with his wounded men and remaining soldiers retreated from Versova and joined the forces of Khandoji Mankar at Bandra on 15th April, 1737 A.D. Khandoji Mankar was that time captaining the Maratha offensive in Bandra. Honaji Balkawade was assigned to hold the post near the Bandra Creek during the offensive (Sardesai 1933: 21). Honaji Balkawade was much disappointed on the failure of Maratha's much charged first attack over the relatively weaker Portuguese forces at Versova. Such was his distress that the prominent Maratha Commander in Salsette (Sashti) - Khandoji Mankar by his letter dated 16th April, 1737 A.D. wrote and urged to Chimaji Appa - the Chief General in Command of the Maratha Offensive in the Province of the North to write a consolation letter to Honaji Balkawade (Vasai Mohim 1931: 43). In a letter dated to 17th April, 1737 A.D. by one unknown person to Chimaji Appa, we come to know that Marathas had opened fronts at Vandre (Bandra), Belapur and Vesave (Versova). The letter further goes on to state that necessary provision of reinforcements would lead to success of Chimaji Appa (Vasai Mohim 1931: 42-43). Meanwhile on the order of General of the Province of the North - General Luis Botelho, additional reinforcement of 30 soldiers under the command of Lt. Col. Caetano de Souza Pereira reached Versova.

7th May, 1737 A.D. (?) - The Second Attack

Marathas attacked the Fort for the second time with 500 men. This time the attack started at 7 A.M in the morning. Maratha forces attempted to scale up the Fort with ladders but were greatly resisted by the Portuguese forces who showered them with

gun and cannon fire. Again, the Maratha forces had to retreat. The casualty in the Maratha force was large and many soldiers were wounded. From the Portuguese side, though Lt. Col. Caetano de Souza Pereira was wounded and was moved to Bombay for treatment, the overall loss was minimal in comparison to the Marathas. Only one Portuguese Soldier died in the Maratha attack. When Lt. Col. Pereira was wounded by a bullet during the action, he was replaced by Captain Antonio da Cunha who is said to have continued the Portuguese defense with equal force and energy. Captain of Infantry - Luis Henrique da Motta e Mello was appointed to defend the Fort in the absence of injured Lt. Col. Pereira (Pissurlekar 1975). From the letter of Narayan Joshi to his younger brother Vasudev Joshi, the Maratha Governor of Kalyan dated 15th May 1737 A.D. we come to know that reinforcement of 100 personnel and five *Galivats* (Galbat) were sent to Madh and Versova (Vasai Mohim 1931: 52).

June/July, 1737 A.D. - The Third Attack

The 2000 strong Maratha force attacked the Fort for the third time but this time too, the minimal Portuguese garrison under the command of Luis Henrique da Motta e Mello defended the Fortification. Despite the fierce attack that lasted till the midnight, the Marathas could not get the Fort. They instead laid tight siege around it (Kelkar 2008). The Portuguese Fort had no water source within and the Maratha siege of the Fort made the matter worse. Majority of the smaller Portuguese Defense structures had no water storage facility within the premises and such type of arrangement was further squeezing the defense of the Fortifications in the Portuguese controlled area in North Konkan. The Captain of the Fort requested the General of the Province of the North - Antonio Cardim Froes for constructing a water Reservoir. The General deputed Lt. Col. Engineer Jose Lopes de Sa to construct a Reservoir. Jose without wasting time took up the assignment and constructed a reservoir in a short time. For his meritorious service, the Portuguese Viceroy conferred the title of "Captain of the Sea and War" on the Commandant of the Fort. Maratha forces meanwhile continued their attacks in the vicinity of the Fort and area.

The Maratha encirclement of the Versova Fort according to the Portuguese sources lasted for 28 days (Pissurlekar 1975). From the letter dated to 13th June 1737 A.D. by Krishnaji Naik Anjurkar to Chimaji Appa, we come to know that the troops led by Krishnaji Naik Anjurkar and Ramaji Mahadev were camping at Malad and Portuguese in three *Galivats* had attempted to get off at Erangal village in the morning of 13th June, 1737 A.D. Vigilant Maratha forces however attacked the enemy who was about to reach in the range of Maratha gunshot. The Portuguese force somehow retreated to Madh in the face of fierce Maratha attack. In the ensuing action, Marathas not only burnt the vessels of Portuguese but also set on fire the entire Erangal Village. The major direct confrontation between the Portuguese and Maratha forces as desired by the Marathas did not materialize as the Portuguese forces retreated to Madh. A portion of the above mentioned letter describing the confrontation between the Portuguese and Maratha forces at Erangal village is given below (Sardesai 1933: 16 - 17).

छ १४ सफर

श्री
श्रीमंत राजश्री आपा
स्वामीचे सेवेसी

च्यरणरज कृष्णाजी नाईक आणजूरकर व रामाजी माहादेव वगैरे सरदार मो ठाणे मालाड सा नमस्कार अनुक्रमे दंडवत विनंती उपरी. येथील वर्तमान जाणून ता छ १२ सफर पावेतो या प्रांतीचे वर्तमान येथास्तित असे विशेष. आज पाहाटीस च्यार घटका रात्रीस गलबते तीन घेऊन गनिमाची स्वारी येरगलचे तारीयावर येउन लागले. त्यास तेथून आम्ही अगोदरच पालथी पाठविले होते. त्यास गनीम अलीकडे उतरला, हे वर्तमान आइकोन वरचेवर स्वारी झाडेयानसी निघोन गेले. त्यास गनीम गोलीचे टप्प्यावर आला होता. त्यास आम्ही चालोन मुकाबला करावयासी गनिमावर जाताच गनीमाने माघार घेतली आणि पलोन खुसकीचे मार्गी मढास गेला. गलबते बंदरात धरून जाळली. तेथे गलबते जलत तवर च्यार घटका बसलो होतो. गलबते चांगली जळलेयावर निघोन ठाणे मजकुरी स्वारी सुधा पावलो. युद्ध हवे हा हेतू सर्वांचा होता. परंतु मुकाबला होऊन आला नाही. मौजे येरगल गाव तमाम जाळून आलो. सेवेशी श्रुत होय....

The Interim Period

We do not come across sufficient textual evidence at present suggesting any renewed Maratha attack on Madh and Versova after the third failure. But Vasudev Joshi, the Maratha Governor of Kalyan by his letter dated 14th January, 1738 A.D. had suggested Chimaji Appa to depute a contingent from the strong army comprising Eight thousand five hundred personnel commanded by Khandoji Mankar at Thane to Versova, so the place can be captured from the Portuguese (Vasai Mohim 1931: 92). In the absence of the records at present, we do not know whether any action was taken as per the suggestion of Vasudev Joshi. Nevertheless, Jiwaji Hari, a Maratha Commander by his letter dated probably to 13th May 1738 A.D. informs Chimaji Appa that the Fort in "Madh" is supplied with material by three boats. This is perhaps the first explicit reference to the Madh Fort in the published correspondence of Peshwas during the Maratha-Portuguese War (1737 - 1739 A.D.). A portion of the letter is reproduced below (Vasai Mohim 1931: 124).

श्रीशंकर
श्रीमंत राजश्री आपा स्वामीचे शेवेसी

सेवक जिवाजी हरी सास्टांग नमस्कार विनंती. ता छ २३ मोहरमपावेतो स्वामीचे कृपेकरून वर्तमान येथास्तित असे विशेष. स्वामीने लोक पाठविले प्रमाणे आले. परंतु याज लोकांनी निर्वह होतो यैसे नाही. मढचे कोटास पाल येक व मचवे दोन येउन बैसले आहे. लाकूड फाटे नेऊन भरितात. पुढे गाव वसाहत आहेत. येथवर स्वारी करावयाचे त्याचे मनामध्ये आहे...

Despite the love and hate relationship between the Portuguese in the Province of the North and the East India Company in Bombay, for the Geo-political ends, the British authorities in Bombay did not obstruct any possible help reaching out to the besieged Portuguese neighbors. It is testified by John Pereira Pinto, the Commandant of Bassein and the Provisional Governor of the Province of the North in his letter of December, 1738 A.D. addressed to the Governor of Bombay and his Council that the vessels from the Bombay Island continually supplied provisions and ammunition to the Island of Versova. British in Bombay did not help only the Portuguese but aided Marathas also in different ways. Pinto cautions the Company Authorities in the Bombay at the end of the letter that they should take necessary measures to stop the Marathas efforts to construct *Grabs* (Galbat) in the Island of Versova. Portuguese strongly suspected the backing of British in Bombay to this Maratha project of building the ships in Versova Island (Forrest 1885: 28). One more letter of Jiwaji Hari to Chimaji Appa dated 16th May, 1738 A.D. apprises us that the Maratha forces were in the process to burn Vesave (Versova) (Ibid 126).

It is not until the beginning of the year 1739 A.D. that the Marathas turned their full attention to Versova and Madh. The morale of the Maratha troop boosted up when in the beginning of the year 1739 A.D. the General in Command of the Maratha Offensive in the Province of the North - Chimaji Appa himself joined the army and the Commanders in North Konkan and took the command of the war which was prolonged for the last two years (De'silva 2004). He must have made his Commanders realize the urgent need to capture all remaining Portuguese strongholds in the Salsette (Sashti) Island if they wanted to tighten the encirclement of Vasai. Meanwhile, by the month of February, 1739 A.D. upon consulting the Council, the Portuguese Viceroy Pedro de Mascarenhas Conde de Sandomil ordered the General of the Province of the North - Martin da Silveira to abandon all Forts in the Portuguese controlled region except the principal Fortifications at Chaul, Vasai, Daman, Diu and Karanja (Pissurlekar 1975).

February, 1739 A.D. - The Fourth Attack

The Fourth Maratha attack on the Fort was commanded by Khandoji Mankar, Naroji Kadu and Khando Pant. According to a letter dated 31st January, 1739 A.D. of Ramaji Mahadev to Chimaji Appa, we come to know that Khandoji Mankar, Naroji Kadu and Khando Pant were present at Ghobandar (Taluka - Thane, District - Thane) where Marathas were constructing a Defense Structure. It appears that by 28th January, 1739 A.D. they made a plan to attack the Versova Fort. Marathas after capturing Thane in 1737 A.D. had taken over the task of finishing the remaining construction of the original Portuguese Fort. In 1739 A.D. Maratha Commander Ramaji Mahadev was supervising the task of construction and its defense when on 28th January 1739 A.D. he was asked by the Commanders of the marching army to provide four cannons and manpower at Ghobandar for their proposed attack on the Versova Fort. According to the plan, Ramaji Mahadev after making elaborate arrangement for the defense of Thane left for Ghobandar with required artillery and personnel on 29th January, 1739

A.D. The main Commander of the operation, Khandoji Makar had already reached Versova on 30th January, 1739 A.D. (Vasai Mohim 1931: 23).

By 10th February, 1739 A.D. Marathas had erected batteries around the Fort and according to the letter by Shivaji Babaji to Chimaji Appa dated 10th February, 1739 A.D. we come across the exact details of the Maratha offensive on the Versova Fort. Shivaji Babaji visited Versova on 8th February, 1739 A.D. and he describes that the Maratha had established posts on the three sides of the Fort within the range of a Gun's shot. Ramaji Mahadev had taken over the post in the North while on the South; the Marathas had planted two cannons. The post on the Eastern direction near the well was captained by Harsavant and soldiers (Arabs and Karol) belonging to Thane whereas Khandoji Mankar was overseeing the operation in the area between the Northern and Western side. A Defense Outpost in Versova at some distance from the Fort was destroyed to a great extent by the shots of Maratha Cannons. (Sardesai 1933: 122). According to the Maratha documents, the Maratha forces had taken out two Cannons from the offensive and aimed them on a Defense Outpost at Versova. The heavy shelling had destroyed the Outpost considerably (Kelkar 2008: 209). According to the Portuguese records, Marathas with the help of eight Cannons of large caliber had destroyed the Parapet Wall of the Fort (Pissurlekar 1975: 243). Portuguese troops were still defending the Fort with equal bravery and persistence.

Despite the orders from the General of the Province of the North Martin da Silveira, the troop defending the Versova Fort went ahead in resisting the advancing Maratha forces. The Fort's defense was captained till then by Francisco de Mello Castro, the son of former Portuguese Viceroy Caetano de Mello (1702 - 1705 A.D.). He was wounded in the action and after receiving the order of abandonment from the General of the Province of the North, Francisco de Mello Castro withdrew from the post and Captain Alexnadre Martins dos Santos took over the Fort's defense (Pissurlekar 1973). He too went on defending the Fort till the second order from the General of the Province of the North arrived. He had no other choice than to comply with the order of the General. The General had dispatched boats to rescue the garrison back to Vasai. Francisco de Mello Castro on finding himself helpless before the order, destroyed all the surviving artillery in the Fort, loaded ammunition in the boats and left the Fort with his surviving soldiers on 18th February, 1739 A.D. Around six soldiers from the Portuguese side were killed and many were wounded in the Fourth Maratha attack on the Fort and the locality. On 18th February, 1739 A.D. the Fort of Versova and locality came under the control of Maratha forces. Tumbaji Anant, a Maratha Commander who with his troop had come to Malad (at present in Mumbai Sub-Urban District) on the orders of Chimaji Appa in February, 1739 A.D. through his letter dated 23rd February, 1739 A.D. writes to Chimaji Appa from Bhayandar (presently in Thane District) that Khandoji Mankar has captured the Fortress at Versova (Vasai Mohim 1931: 108). The Minutes of the Consultation of the Governor of Bombay and his Council dated 21st February, 1739 A.D. testify the fact the Portuguese abandoned the Fort of Versova according to the news received by the Governor in the previous night.

A portion of the original Minutes of the Consultation as found by the Author in the Government Archives, Mumbai is reproduced here (Fig. 16).

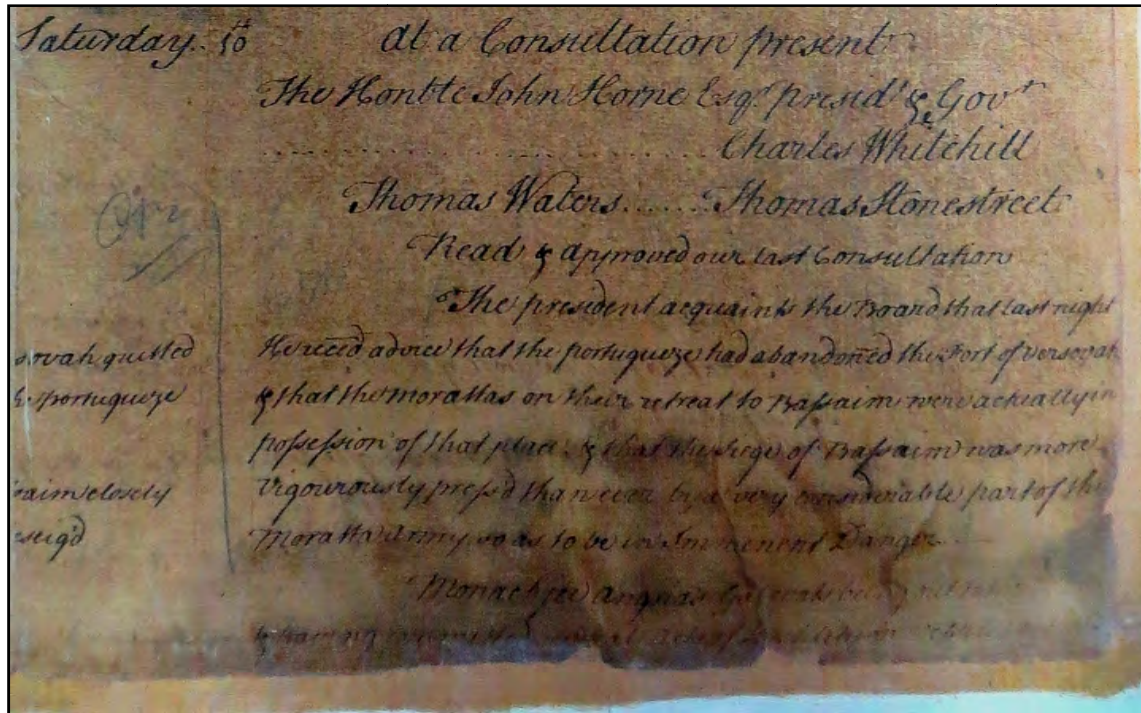


Figure 16: Minutes of the Consultation of the Governor and Council of Bombay, 1739 A.D.

The Attack on "Madh Fort" 1739 A.D. (?)

When the majority of the Maratha and Portuguese documents during the Maratha offensive on Versova have referred the principal Fort in the region as "Versova Fort", we do have few documents where the Maratha attack and subsequent capture of "Madh Fort" is talked of. Already we have seen the reference of Madh Fort occurring in the correspondence of the Maratha Commanders absorbed in the war in Salsette (Sashti) Island in the previous Section. Though the Maratha conquest of Madh Island is not described adequately in the Portuguese records, there are few letters addressed to Chimaji Appa by one Maratha Commander involved directly in the final Maratha assault on "Versova Fort" or "Versova" (Vesave) in February, 1739 A.D. The Commander in question is Naroji Kadu to whom we have already met in the previous Section.

It appears that Chimaji Appa was not satisfied with the performance of Naroji Kadu during the final Maratha attack on Versova and thus Naroji Kadu earnestly protested before Chimaji Appa in his letter dated 16th February, 1739 A.D. He informs Chimaji Appa that he is employing all required efforts in the Mission and Chimaji Appa can verify it through the information furnished by "Khandoba". He also acknowledges the receipt of Rs. 3,000 received from Sakhroji Kadu. A portion of the letter is reproduced as following paragraph (Kelkar 2008: 210).

"...तुम्ही लिहिले कि मढचे कोटास मोर्चे लाविले आहेत आणि तुम्ही लोकांकडून व जातीनसी कुच बंदी मोर्चे चालवून कस्ट मेहनत करीत नाही. पण ही गोष्ट खोटी आहे. आम्ही मेहनत करीत आहो. येथील खंडोबांनी लि ॥ आहे त्यावरून कळेल. साखरोजी कडूबरोबर ३००० रु. ॥ पा ते पावले..."

The person "Khandoba" referred in the letter could be either Khandoji Mankar or Khando Pant, who were engaged directly in the final Maratha assault on Versova in February, 1739 A.D. One more letter of Naroji Kadu dated 21st February, 1739 A.D. to Chimaji Appa informs us about a deadly incident occurred during the Maratha attack on "Madh Fort", in which the flag of a contingent led by Aanandrao Landge was destroyed by the shell fired from the Portuguese side. Naroji Kadu, thus requests Chimaji Appa to send a piece of Red and Green Silk for the flag belonging to the troops of Aanandrao Landge (Sardesai 1933: 12). Interestingly, the letter mentions the Fort of "Madh" as the target of Maratha attack in the place of "Versova" which generally dominates the Maratha correspondence. The same letter is reproduced below.

श्री
श्रीमंत राजश्री आपा स्वामीचे सेवसी

आज्ञाधारक नारोजी कडू दंडवत कृतानेक विज्ञापित विनंती. येथील क्षेम ता छ १२ जिल्काद पावेतो मोकाम मढ स्वामीचे कृपेकरून वर्तमान येथास्तित आसे. रा आनंदराव लांडगे यांचे निशान, मोर्चे किलेसनिध गेले, ते समई मारनिलेनी निशान मोर्चेयात नेल्हे होत. त्यास किलेवरून गोला लागून निशान उडून गेले; तरी स्वामीनी आनंदराव लांडगे यांचे निशानाबद्दल ताफता येक कद निमे लाल व निम हिरवा रजू पाठवावयासी आज्ञा केली पाहिजे. सेवसी विदित होये हे विज्ञापित.

Apart from the letters of Naroji Kadu, the "Chronicle of Shashti" written by Gangaji Naik, a prominent regional leader involved most actively from the beginning in the Maratha-Portuguese Campaign talks of the conquest of "Madh Fort" by the Marathas without mentioning the date or year. The chronicle mentions the Maratha Commanders such as Govind Hari, Tumbajipant, Khandoji Mankar and Krishnaji Naik leading the forces that comprised the troop leaders and soldiers such as Anjurkar (the family members of the Chronicler), Nanoji Desai, Harji Thakur, Bapuji Thakur Borgaonkar, Hiraji Thakur, Posaji Thakur, Padmanji Desai, Malaji Bapbhuikar, Bhikaji Haibatrao etc. It mentions that Murharaji Naik was deputed from Vasai to Madh for the Mission. It states that the petty Maratha officials from the Sashti (Salsette) Island mentioned above captured first the port of Madh and thereafter the leaders of the Mission, Khandoji Mankar, Govind Hari and Tumbajipant fought on to capture the Madh Fort. To get the Fort, they shelled it and destroyed the Parapet Wall. At last, according to the Chronicle, the Portuguese garrison in the Fort ran away via a Sea route with the help of boats and the Marathas won the Fort. A part of the Chronicle referring the conquest of Madh Fort is reproduced below (Naik 2011: 28 - 29).

...तीकडे साष्टीत गोविंद हरि व तुंबाजिपंत व खंडोजि मानकर व कृष्णाजि नाईक जाउन मढचे कोटास मोरचे लाविले व वसईहून मढास मुन्हारजी नाईक पाठविले. तेथे साष्टीचे लोक अणजुरकरसंगे नानोजि देसाई व हरजि ठाकूर व बापुजी ठाकूर बोरगावकर व हिराजी ठाकूर व पोसजि ठाकूर व पदमणजि देसाई व मालाजि बापभुईकर व भिकाजी हैबतराव याही मोरच्याचें साहित्य करून आपला मोरचा पुढे बंदराकडे चालउन मढचें बंदर घेतले व खंडोजि मानकर व गोविंद हरि व तुंबाजिपंत याहि मोरचे चालउन तोफा लाउन कोटाचि सफेल फोडोन लेस (?) केलि. रात्रिचा फिरंगी चोरवाटेने उतरून गलबतावर चढोन पळोन गेला व मढचा कोट सर झाला...

On examining the above evidence, it becomes clear that the Authors of the letters and literature were engaged directly in the Maratha Offensive on Versova and it was the Fort situated in the Madh Island that was the chief target of the Maratha attack. Besides the main Fort on the Madh Island, there existed minor Fortifications cum Defense Structures in Madh Island and Versova. They too became the targets of the systematic and continuous Maratha offensive from 1737 - 1739 A.D. Khandoji Mankar, Naroji Kadu and Khando Pant were the leaders of the final Maratha assault in Versova in general and on Madh Fort in particular whereas numerous petty officials assisted them in the Mission. Members of the Anjurkar family also rendered their assistance from time to time in the task. Maratha forces heavily bombarded the Madh Fort in the final attack and in which the Parapet Wall of the Fort was destroyed. In a course of time, Portuguese abandoned the Fort and retreated to Vasai. Both Maratha and Portuguese records attest this chain of events.

The Portuguese Period - Material Remains and Historical Association

Before we start associating the extant remains at the Madh Island and Versova in reference to the Portuguese and Maratha period documents, it is important to discuss here the nomenclature, which we generally find for the area in the old documents. A Chart giving details of the relative use of place names - Vesave (Versova) and Mhar/Madh (Madh Island) as they appear in the few Maratha letters during the two year long Maratha attack on the place is given below (Table 1). It can help us in equating the place with the respective Defense Structures in the most precise manner. The list of letters is however not complete and many more may come to light in the near future.

Even though the area is for the most of the time referred as Vesave (Versova) with a minor exception for Madh (Madh Island), we have to consider the actual landscape of the area as it existed in the period under question. As described in the Section of "Geography", we know that the Madh Island and Versova were two different geographical entities in the Portuguese period and were continued to be up to the British period in the 19th century. Both were the Islands separated by a creek. If we consult the British period maps of the region, we observe that the village of Erangal was the Northernmost boundary of the Madh Island and it can be seen that the Marve

was a separate Island. According to the Historical References, Versova Fort is mentioned to have been situated on the Basaltic Rocky Outcrop at the mouth of the Creek. Such Rock formation at the mouth of the Creek exists only in Madh Island and nowhere in Versova.

Table 1: Details of the relative use of place names

Sr. No.	Date (Probable)	Addresser	Addressee	Place Mentioned As
1.	17th April, 1737 A.D.	Unknown	Chimaji Appa	Vesave
2.	11th April, 1737 A.D. (?)	Muraraji Anjurkar	Chimaji Appa	Vesave
3.	15th April, 1737 A.D.	Khandoji Mankar	Chimaji Appa	Vesave
4.	4th May/15th May (?) 1737 A.D .	Narayan Joshi	Vasudev Joshi	Vesave
5.	13th June 1737 A.D.	Krishnaji Naik Anjurkar	Chimaji Appa	Madh
6.	14th January 1738 A.D.	Vasudev Joshi	Chimaji Appa	Vesave
7.	13th May, 1738 A.D.	Jiwaji Hari	Chimaji Appa	Madh
8.	16th May, 1738 A.D.	Jiwaji Hari	Chimaji Appa	Vesave
9.	31st January, February, 1739 A.D.	Ramaji Mahadev	Chimaji Appa	Vesave
10.	10th February, 1739 A.D.	Shivaji Babaji	Chimaji Appa	Vesave
11.	16th February, 1739 A.D.	Naroji Kadu	Chimaji Appa	Madh
12.	21st February, 1739 A.D.	Naroji Kadu	Chimaji Appa	Madh
13.	23rd February, 1739 A.D.	Tumbaji Anant	Chimaji Appa	Vesave

The Madh Island in actuality at its Southern point has the largest Fort in the entire Island overlooking the Versova creek. The Versova Island as such does not have the surviving remains of a Defense Structure except of a Portuguese period Church of the

Our Lady of the Health. It is only at Madh Island and on the small Islet on its West that we get the maximum number of the Defense Structures. But in the contemporary Portuguese and Maratha documents, we generally get the references for Versova and not of the Madh Island. Even the principle Defense structure in the region is called as the Versova Fort though neither Fort of such dimension at present exists at Versova nor local people have any information about it. Why the entire region was mostly referred as Versova in most of the contemporary documents we are not sure at present in the absence of satisfactory evidence. It could be possible that though Madh Island had all major Defense Structures, Versova could have served as the seat of Portuguese Regional Administration and thus, it could have become the area after which, the entire locality was famously called. Still, the issue is open to discussion and we have to examine the contemporary Portuguese and Maratha documents critically before arriving at any conclusion. But with the available material evidence, it can be stated without a doubt that it was the Fort in the Southern tip of the Madh Island that was the principle Portuguese Defense Structure in the area and which remained the focal point of Maratha Offensive in the region throughout the Maratha-Portuguese War (1737 - 1739 A.D.) together with the minor Fortifications nearby.

The cultural continuity more prominently in the form of Material Remains can be seen in the Madh Island and Versova in the Portuguese period (1534 - 1739 A.D.) when the Portuguese were the virtual masters of the coastline of the present North Konkan. Due to its strategic location, it was imperative for the Portuguese to devise an elaborate defense arrangement in the Madh Island and Versova but it need further investigation to know with how much intensity it was carried on. Though in the 15th and 16th century they were the only modern formidable Marine power in India but by the 17th century they started to get overshadowed in their own game by other European entrants - the Dutch and British. Raids by the Arabs were a regular affair. As far as Regional Rulers were concerned, it was not until the rule of Shivaji that they had any formidable opposition. After the end of Shivaji era, it was the Aangre family from Alibag who dared to engage the Portuguese for a considerable period. The Mughals were not much concerned to look after the Naval affairs when they already had the larger sphere of Indian inland Geo-politics to deal with. And yes, piracy was too there. The Madh Island and Versova were too distant from the troublesome regions of the Regional Koli Kings who bordered the Province of the North mainly from the Eastern side.

Once the area came under their rule, the Portuguese inducted the Classical Feudal landed relations in its State policies while keeping the traditional Administrative and Bureaucratic structure relatively intact at the local level. Apart from the large areas, which were assigned to various Catholic Evangelical Orders, top Portuguese Nobles, Landlords, Merchants, Army Officers, Soldiers etc. too became the holders of the large estates granted to them by the Portuguese Crown on Quint-rent. Besides collecting Revenue, they were also responsible for the defense of the respective area under their tenancy (Edwardes 1909). To whom Madh Island or villages therein and Versova were rented need further consultation of the Portuguese Archives. Due to the relative

absence of information for the tenants of Madh Island and Versova in the Portuguese period, we are not in a position at present to accurately refer the specific Structure to the Agency responsible for its construction and upkeep, to probe the angle of stages in its construction such as whether they were built in a single period or were constructed phase-wise or in different time brackets but basing ourselves on the parameters of Architectural Formation and Stratigraphy, Stylistic Affinity, Methods of Construction, Location Analysis etc. many issues of workmanship, purpose and association can be addressed. The Madh Island and Versova have a good number of material remains associated with the Portuguese period and they offer us a broader scope to look into the various aspects of Indo-Portuguese Art and Architecture.

The region was extensively and periodically explored by the Author to identify, locate and document the Indo-Portuguese Structures and Remains. It was desired from the Fieldwork to understand the evolution and development of the structures individually as well as in the association of other contemporary structures. It was observed that it is the only area in the present Mumbai Sub-Urban District where in a single place one can find such a cluster of Defense Structures. Except this place, it is only at Kelve-Mahim area in Palghar District that the Author has come across such a variety of Defense Structures situated in a single place ! Compared to the Regional Defense Entity constructed according to the traditional Indian Defense Architecture, one must note that the Defense Structures, which the Portuguese built in the Madh Island, defy the very traditional concept of "Fort" or "Defense Structures". In its place, we generally find Towers cum Bastions in Pentagonal and Circular shape guarding the crucial entries and positions. There are the remains of the Fortified Outpost cum Mansion and Fortified Church overlooking the sea. The larger Fort present in the Southern tip of Madh Island is a product architectural activities carried out in the Portuguese, Maratha and British period and should not be looked upon entirely of the Portuguese origin. The present grand Madh Fort got its present shape in a much later period and is described at the end of this article. Below is given a description of the Defense Structures, Monuments and Sites belonging to the Portuguese period in Madh and Island and Versova.

Pentagonal Bastion - The Original Portuguese Defense Structure

When Gemelli Careri from Italy visited Salsette (Sashti) Island in 1695 A.D. he talked of "Versava Fort with its village" in his Travel Memoir (Churchill 1704: 210). After two centuries, when Alexander Nairne wrote that "No Fort is mentioned in Salsette in 1634 A.D. except the small one at Vesava (Madh)" (Nairne 1894 : 54), he implicitly cited Antonio Bocarro and Pedro Berreto de Resende's famous work "*O Livro das Plantas de todas as fortalezas, cidades e povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental*" (1635). As mentioned earlier, the work as such does not specifically mentions the Fort at Madh or Versova but instead shows settlements and Fortifications specifically of Thane and Bandra (presently in Taluka - Bandra, District - Mumbai Sub-Urban) in Salsette (Sashti) Island (Fig. 17). So it would be not correct to stand with the statement of Alexander Nairne that the Salsette Island did not have any Defense Structure in 1634 A.D. except the

small Fort at Versova (Madh). In addition to Fortifications in Thane and Bandra, the work shows few unnamed Watch Towers cum Bastions but does not specify their locations. So, whether Madh Island had any Defense Structure when this work was composed is not yet satisfactorily clear but in 1695 A.D. Gemelli Careri does mention of a "Fort in Versova".



Figure 17: Fortifications and Settlements in Salsette (Sashti) Island according to Antonio Bocarro in 1635 A.D.



Figure 18: The Portuguese Period Fort at Madh Island

After the detailed examination of the present Madh Fort according to the Historical References and its Architecture, the large Pentagonal Bastion (Fig. 18) standing in the middle of the Fort complex is marked by the Author as the original Portuguese period Defense structure. The Fort probably belongs to the second half of the 17th Century. The Fort kept watch over the strategic Versova Creek and the Arabian Sea. The structure is constructed in Random Rubble Masonry with lime plaster. It has high Parapet Wall interspersed with Gun windows and gun slits. The structure is neither provided with any source of water nor with residential quarters. Due to the later period architectural activities, we do not know for surety that how it could be entered originally and whether this Pentagonal Bastion had any structural extension. Marathas did not destroy or pull down the original Portuguese period Fortification after its capture in 1739 A.D. Rather, the structure was incorporated in the subsequent Maratha and British period enlargement of the Fort.

Circular Bastion on the Islet near Madh Island

On the small Island on the West to Madh Island is present a Circular Bastion (Fig. 19). As usual, it is a lonely Defense structure with a Parapet Wall and is provided with Gun Slits.



Figure 19: The Circular Bastion on the Islet near Madh Island

Fortified Outpost, Madh Village

As one goes Northward from the Madh Fort, one can see the remains of a large ruined Rectangular shaped Fortified Outpost cum Mansion on the top of a small hillock in Madh village (Fig. 20). This dominating structure has Versova village and Versova Creek on its Eastern side and one can observe the movements in the Sea on the West. The main axis of the ruined structure lies from the West to East and at present it can be seen as divided in two parts. The structure built in Stone and Rubble masonry has thick walls of approximately 50 CM. The structure at present is partly covered with vegetation and is unprotected.



Figure 20: The Fortified Outpost cum Mansion, Madh Village

According to the Maratha Records of the last phase of attack on Versova (February, 1739 A.D.), it seems that apart from the Madh Fort, this place was also targeted by the Maratha forces. It looks that this Fortified Outpost cum Mansion was destroyed due to heavy bombardment of Maratha Artillery.

Fortified Church of St. Bonaventure and Circular Bastion, Erangal

Further Northward, in the village of Erangal, stands the spacious Fortified Franciscan Church of St. Bonaventure (Fig. 21). Now, the Church is largely renovated but has somehow retained its original plan. The impressive structure is divided into Nave and Altar and is provided with the main entry from the West side. Preserving the Defensive nature of the Structure of the Portuguese period, on the Southern side, the structure has four high windows with narrowing front.



Figure 21: The St. Bonaventure Church, Erangal Village

There is an open space bordered by the high wall in the adjoining Northern portion and it is furnished with a small Entrance facing the Southern direction. The Church has a Bell Tower. The Church displays at the top the date of 1575 A.D. as the period of its construction. According to the Church sources, the village of Erangal was granted to the Franciscan Missionaries to meet the expenditure of the Convent and Orphanage at Mandapeshvar. The Church in the honor of St. Bonaventure was constructed in the year 1575 A.D. The year of 1599 A.D. is also suggested as the construction year of the Church.

Circular Bastion, Erangal

In the same village is present a Circular Bastion (Fig. 22). The structure at present is situated in the boundary wall of the Indian Navy's Establishment and comes in the Defense Area. Accompanied with the already mentioned St. Bonaventure Church, it oversees the Sea front of Erangal village and monitors the strategic Creek of Manori and Gorai (Fig. 23). It appears that the Bastion could be entered with the help of a ladder as no separate entry could be noticed on the Seaside. The Bastion is provided with Parapet Wall and Embrasures. Gun slits are also present. The Bastion is surrounded by a natural Rocky Patch and at high tide, it surrounds by Sea water (Fig. 24). Again to mention, the areas of present unified Rai-Murdhe, Utan, Dongari, Gorai and Manori were the Islands before the Reclamation. It is only in the very later period

(20th Century) that the reclaimed Islands were connected to the main area by motorable roads and train network. A long sandy beach currently called "Danapani" nearby the Circular Bastion is a major tourist attraction in the area. The presence of such cluster of Defense Structures (5) in a single Island underlies the importance of Madh Island during the Portuguese period.



Figure 22: The Circular Bastion, Erangal



Figure 23: The Rocky Patch nearby the Circular Bastion at Erangal and the Creek of Manori and Gorai



Figure 24: The Circular Bastion at Erangal in High Tide

Church of the Our Lady of Health, Versova Village

At present in Versova village, no Portuguese structure except the renovated Church of the Our Lady of Health is present (Fig. 25). In 1881 A.D. the roof of the Church was ruined and it was approximately 36. 57 Meters long and 7.92 Meters broad. It stood 8.53 Meters high then. The Church had the house of Priest (Vicarage) attached to it and it received the monthly grant of Rs. 15/- from the British Government (Campbell 1882). At present, the front of Church is largely renovated but it the imposing Middle portion that retains the Portuguese period identity. The same portion has the Bell tower on the right side. Evidence are awaited to confirm whether this Church too was fortified and had played any role in Maratha-Portuguese war (1737 - 1739 A.D.).



Figure 25: The Our Lady of Health Church, Versova Village

The Maratha Period

The Marathas had invested a considerable energy and resources in a long term to achieve victory in Madh Island and Versova. Considering its strategic location, it was obvious on their part to take necessary steps for the protection and efficient administration of the area. Records from the Peshwa Archives inform us that on 27th August, 1739 (or 6th September, 1739 A.D.) (?) one person called Babaji Sundar was appointed as the "Karkhannis of Yashwantgad alias Vesave" (Kelkar 2008: 284). It is well known to the reader of Maratha Bureaucracy of the Shivaji era that the *Karkhannis* was one of the three Officers engaged in the administration of Forts and was tasked with the Commissariat works. According to the State Policy of the Shivaji era, the incumbent of the post was desired to be from *Kayastha* caste (Waghmode and Gaikwad 2013). It is interesting to note here that the name "Yashwantgad" is equated with "Vesave". Vesave is undoubtedly the present Versova and the same place where Marathas battled against the Portuguese for long two years, whereas "Yashwantgad" is the name of a Fort in Vesave. It is a documented fact that the Marathas changed the name of the Settlements, Forts and their Architectural Components like bastions in a large scale after their takeover of the Province of the North. Going by the similar practice, it appears that they renamed the original Portuguese Fort at Madh Island as Yashwantgad. This is perhaps the earliest entry of Versova Fort/Versova mentioned as "Yashwantgad" in the published Maratha documents of the Peshwa period. One more letter of the earlier date (13th April, 1739 A.D.) written by an unknown person to Peshwa Bajirao I tells us that Maratha Commander Pilaji Jadhavrao had come to Yashwantgad probably on 11th April, 1739 A.D. He stayed there for one day and inspected the Fort and went to Vasai on 13th April, 1739 A.D. On the same day, another important Maratha Commander and Official - Shankarajipant (Shankaraji Keshav Phadke) visited Yashwantgad and he also inspected the Fort. Shankarajipant then was planned to travel in Sashti (Salsette) Island. The same letter is reproduced below (Sardesai 1933: 142 - 143).

श्री
पुरवणी श्रीमंत राजश्री पंतप्रधान
स्वामीचे शेवेसी

विज्ञापना ता छ ४ मोहरम राजश्री पिलाजी जाधवराव सुभेदार यशवंतगड पहावयासी आले होते. यक दिवस किले मारी राहून आजच छ मजकुरी वसईस गेले. समागमे राजश्री शंकराजीपंतही आले होते. स्वामीस कलावे यास्तव लि आहे. किला इमारत सारी पहिली. साष्टीस पुढे येणार असत. सेवेसी श्रुत होय हे विज्ञापना.

The content and the timing of the letter is quite interesting. When the letter was written, the fight in the Province of the North was still continuing and the Maratha forces under the command of Chimaji Appa were inching further towards Vasai Fort

and the surrounding area. In the Sashti (Salsette Island), it was only in Versova and Bandra where Maratha forces experienced a strong Portuguese resistance and they were able to capture the places only by February and April of 1739 A.D. respectively. What had happened to other Fortifications in the Sashti (Salsette) and the one at Trombay is the issue of separate discussion. But by and large, the entire Salsette Island was in the control of Marathas. Fortification at Bandra was pulled down by the Portuguese when they deserted it and it was only in the Madh Island that the major Portuguese Fortification existed. We have already seen that how Madh Fort was destroyed considerably in the fierce Maratha attack with other Defense Structures in the nearby area. Wherever Marathas had taken a control in the Province of the North, they were both enlarging and repairing the older Portuguese Fortifications or were constructing new Fortifications at the favorable locations to tighten the noose around the Portuguese. It is in this situation that visit by two high ranking Maratha Commanders - Pilaji Jadhavrao and Shankrajipant, who guided the Maratha War Command from the very beginning of the Maratha Offensive in the Province of the North to Yashwantgad gains the importance. Both Commanders visited and inspected the Fort. Pilaji Jadhavrao was quite active in raiding the Province of the North from the much earlier date and about which we have already referred in the previous Section.

Shankarajipant was the Chief Maratha Commander who was personally overseeing the Maratha Offensive in the Province of the North (1737 - 1739 A.D.) on the orders of Chimaji Appa, the General-in-Command. He later became the *Sarsubhedar* (Governor) of the newly carved Bajipur *Subha*. It is clear that eventually they had become much more familiar with the local terrain of the Province of the North and its Defense arrangement. Reports of the routine affairs and strategy during the Maratha attack on Versova from its beginning to the end (1737 - 1739 A.D.) were continually shared by the local Commanders to Shankarajipant and Chimaji Appa. Coupled with the information already supplied by the Rebel Faction of Anjurkar and Kawle, the reports of the Maratha troops engaged in the attack of Versova must have acquainted the top leadership of the Maratha War Command about the appearance and form of the principal Fort in the Madh Island and other minor existing Defense structures. It is very unlikely that the top Maratha Commanders such as Shankaraji Keshav Phadke and Pilaji Jadhavrao were ignorant of the form and appearance of the Madh Fort and other Fortifications in the area. Considering these factors, a few questions come in mind. Whether it was the routine visit paid by the top level Commanders of the victorious camp on winning the Fort and area after the long period of two years? Or the Marathas were engaged in repairing and enlargement activities of the Fort? What was the actual purpose of the visit and what was the next course of action that Marathas initiated in Madh Fort and the area after its capture needs a separate critical investigation altogether. But it is clear that in the view of the treaty that the Marathas and Portuguese entered in May, 1739 A.D. and the subsequent capture of the Province of the North (except Daman, Revdanda and Korlai Forts), Marathas were able to start the projects for the future administration and protection of the area and it is in this background that the Karkhanishi of the "Yashwantgad - Vesave" was granted to Babaji

Sundar. From the careful observation of the present Madh Fort, it is evident that the Marathas carried out repairing and enlarging activities in the older Portuguese Fortification at Madh Island. Whether they attempted to re-use the other minor Portuguese Defense Structures on Madh Island and Versova we do not know at the present.

After the prolonged war campaign and the hectic diplomatic negotiations, the Marathas were able to stamp their authority over the formerly Portuguese held territory in the coastal strip of North Konkan by 1740 A.D (Cunha 1993). After the victory, Vasai was renamed as Bajipur and was made the headquarters of the *Sarsubha* extending from Daman to Bankot (at present in Raigad District) and was put the under command of *Sarsubhedar* (Governor) who was responsible for handling the revenue collection, enforcing administration and overseeing the judicial affairs (Campbell 1882). To better ensure the defense of the territory, especially of the Salsette Island and the area in the immediate North of it, as mentioned earlier, the Marathas had started to repair and enlarge the earlier existing Portuguese Fortifications at Thane, Ghodbandar etc. and had even constructed a new Fortification at Dharavi (Dist. Mumbai Suburban), Arnala Island (at present in Palghar District) etc. right from the days of the war. The Sashti (Salsette) Island was the land most cherished in the Portuguese rule due to its fertility and steady revenue and no doubt that the Marathas attempted at the beginning to secure it properly. The Portuguese, however, were not happy to easily cope up with devastating situation of losing their prized territory in the North Konkan to the Marathas. To execute the project of re-conquest of the Province of the North, we come to know from the Portuguese records dated to the Governorship of the Interim Governor Dom Luis Caetano de Almeida in 1743 A.D. that the Portuguese even had corrupted the Maratha Commandants of the Forts in Vasai, Thane, Belapur, Karanja etc. and the respective Commandants had agreed to cede the Forts to Portuguese on the payment of a hefty bribe (Pissurlekar 1975). As there were repeated indications from the Portuguese authorities headquartered in Goa for recapturing the Province of the North right from the year when the diplomatic negotiations between the both parties were sealed (1740 A.D.), the newly appointed Peshwa - Balaji Bajirao (1720 - 1761 A.D.) took precautionary measures in the beginning by strengthening the older Fortifications and keeping on alert the Maratha forces after ordering the Maratha strongman Pilaji Jadhavrao to move to the former Province of the North in 1746 A.D. (Pissurlekar 1975). The Portuguese kept on planning for the recapture of the Province of the North both in terms of diplomatic negotiations with powerful Maratha individual officials and with the Kolhapur Royal Camp and strategic preparations on the ground but it never brought the plans made on the papers to the reality. The rising power of the Marathas and the lack of resources available with the Portuguese State in India were the principle causes behind it. Nevertheless, Portuguese opted to wait for the favorable situation to go ahead with the recapturing plan. According to the Portuguese Records dated to 1772 A.D. we come to know that Maratha had set up their naval stations at Vasai and Arnala Island in North Konkan and the Islands contributed the revenue of Rs. 6 lakhs per annum to the Maratha Treasury (Pissurlekar 1967).

The Marathas and the East India Company

The Marathas grand victory in the former Province of the North had also made them neighbors to another European power, infantile as then and with whom they had maintained relations right from the era of Shivaji. Unlike the Portuguese, the British in the beginning had entered the Geo-politics of India only to pursue trade activities and had stationed themselves in Surat, a rich business City then in the control of the Mughals. Once the Marathas under Shivaji started to make inroads into the territory of their former masters, the charm of Surat started to diminish in the eyes of traders who had come a long way from Europe to India. As mentioned above, the British were very keen to acquire a permanent foothold on the Western coast of India and were even contemplating to approach the Portuguese Crown who by that time was controlling the strategic coastal strip in North Konkan. Being the rival competitors in the Indian Market, the relations between the Monarchies of England and Portugal was never smooth and the entry of other European mercantile powers like the Dutch in the Marine trade of the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean had turned the situation more complicated. Among them, it was only the Portuguese who had made their aims bright and clear well in the beginning and had become successful in carving a firm territory for them in North and South Konkan of the Western Coast of India by the early decades of the 16th century. Up to 1661 A.D. the Portuguese were the sole masters of the complete coastal strip in North Konkan (at present in Valsad District of Gujarat to Raigad District in Maharashtra) and had in their control important ports and settlements such as Diu, Daman (both at present Union Territories), Revdanda and Korlai (at present in Raigad District).

Being the world traders, they were responsible for many new imports mainly such as the latest Scientific innovations and techniques, Agricultural and Horticultural products in the region under their control (De'silva 2004) and were overzealous in imposing a specific type of Religious-Cultural norms over the local heterogeneous population (Da'Cunha 1993). With the latest introduced techniques in Agriculture and Horticulture, Scientific experimentation and Feudal mode of Social-Economic relationship, the Portuguese were successful in bringing a large portion of the land under cultivation. They had partly continued with the older taxation system and even had introduced a new structural Economic Reforms. No doubt, the territory held by them in North Konkan, "Province of the North" was theirs largest and richest possession in India and which even rivaled theirs headquarters in Goa in terms of fertility, prosperity and revenue. In the long term, it was the overreach of their Ecclesiastical Institutions in the everyday affairs of the State and Administration coupled with their own systemic failures, which not only alienated the local population but also costed them with the significant cut in their territorial possession in the country. The British were the witnesses of the foundation of the Portuguese rule in the Western coast of India. When the marriage of the Portuguese Princess Catherine of Braganza and the English Prince Charles II was solemnized, as a part of the marriage contract, the British acquired the Bombay group of Islands from the Portuguese in 1661

A.D. It is well known that the British Crown leased the seven Islands to the East India Company in 1668 A.D. for annual rent of 10 pounds of gold. The First few years went on with the increasing tensions between the British and Portuguese authorities who were locked in hostile debates over the validity of the Treaty and even on the contents of the Treaty (Edwardes 1909).

It is not until the last two decades of the 17th century that East India Company could gain the possession of the Bombay group of Islands but the wedge between the Portuguese and the British Authorities in North Konkan was already hammered and it was widening further. Both had faced the Maratha's offensive to some degrees or other in the reign of Shivaji and more strongly in the rule of Sambhaji. The British nevertheless were in much inferior position by that time as far as their resources and strength was concerned and were operating from Surat. The first British administrators of the Bombay group of Islands such as Gerald Aungier assured to make the place better in terms of the residence, trade and security. The most incentive they could offer was the safety to entrepreneurship, free from any religious constraints as the most of the communities engaged in the maritime and land trade belonged to relatively affluent sections of the Indian society who were deeply religious as far as the period in question is concerned. With traders, they also promised the same degrees of protection and tolerance to artisans, workers and agriculturalists (Forrest 1885). Still, the residents in Bombay had to rely on the outer supply of food, grains and vegetables from the Portuguese and Maratha territory and it forced them numerous times against the wall. Nevertheless, in the first years of the British rule in the Bombay Islands, the population grew and the resources were expanded than in the previous Portuguese period. This was the time when the Marathas first under Shivaji and later under Sambhaji was locked in deadly hostilities against the Mughals, Siddi and Portuguese in one time or another in North Konkan. Threat from the Dutch was also looming. The British in Bombay Islands acutely measured the tide of the regional Geo-politics. First to secure their existence and later to protect their own interests, they adopted the policies in which they helped and assisted rivaling parties concerned either covertly or overtly from time to time. Many times they analyzed the situation brilliantly while on the few fronts, it was a complete disaster. Besides these regional developments, the emergence of the rival trading Company in England made affairs more complicated.

It is in this situation that first ever attempt by the British to claim for the direct supremacy on the Western coast of India was made. When the North Konkan was in the thick of wars fought on many fronts - Marathas Vs. Mughals, Portuguese, Siddis etc. Bombay was made as the Headquarters or Head English Station of the East India Company in the East Indies in 1687 A.D. The British in Bombay were by the time sandwiched between the warring parties numerous times and also previously attempted to revolt under the leadership of Captain Richard Keigwin against the ineffective administration and management of the East India Company. The revolt was somehow contained only after the arrival of Sir Thomas Grantham from England in 1684 A.D. who was bestowed with the title "A King's Officer and Vice-Admiral of the

Indian Fleet" (Ray, 1916). The systemic crisis was not limited only up to the Bombay group of Islands but was developing slowly in the British factories situated in different corners of the Mughal India. As said before, the trade disputes between the rival trading companies in England was the principle cause behind the rout suffered by the East India Company stations in India and coupled with the increasing pressure of the Mughal bureaucracy in Bengal and Surat, the Court of Directors of the East India Company decided to pursue the policy of "the Dutch Model of Independent and Self-Supporting Centers of Trade" and Sir Josiah Child was the main proponent behind this stand adopted by the East India Company.

According to the adopted policy, the East India Company decided to challenge the supremacy of the Mughals. The Company wanted to make their trading factories infallible to the native attacks. In accordance to this policy, it was decided that the trading factories at Bombay, Madras and Chittagong to be made as self-governed and independent. Being the headquarters of the East Indies situated in Bombay, the Company authorities wanted the Salsette Island to be seized and garrisoned for Bombay (Campbell, 1882). One should understand that this was being planned when the Portuguese were still the masters of the Salsette Island and it was theirs the most fertile and revenue yielding territory in the Province of the North! By that time, the Portuguese and Siddi were playing an active role against Sambhaji's offensive against the Mughals. The Mughals were gaining upper hand day by day against the Marathas and other regional powers in the Deccan such as the Bijapur and Golconda Sultanates. In such situation, the East India Company appointed Sir John Child, the brother of Sir Josiah Child as the "Captain General and Admiral of the Company's Force's by Sea and Land" and was ordered to leave Surat to establish his headquarters in Bombay. He was asked to make an alliance with the Marathas and to capture as many Mughal ships as he could until the independence of the East India Company's trading stations in India was acknowledged and authorized by the Mughals. The British offensive in different corners of the Mughal India was poorly planned and coordinated. Before it could achieve anything in Bengal and Bombay, the entire British offensive was crushed easily by the Mughals and the threat of extinction from India started to haunt the East India Company. The Siddi of Janjira, who was appointed as the Chief operating force of the Mughal Navy by the time, had not only stormed Bombay but even threatened the Company's very existence in the Island. The ill timed misadventure of the East India Company not only backfired upon it completely but the Company had to kneel down before Aurangzeb, the Mughal Emperor for pardon with a promise that they will never raise their head again and would return to their original trading profession! The Company had to pay a heavy fine to the Mughals. Before this treaty with the Mughals sealed on 27th February, 1690 A.D. the Military Commander of the East India Company responsible for this operation, Sir John Child breathed his last in Bombay on 4th February, 1690 A.D. while the Siddi forces were still camped in the Bombay Islands. With this episode started the depressing phase of East India Company's existence in Bombay and which continued up to the Maratha's victory over the Portuguese in 1739 A.D (Edwardes 1909).

In the meantime, due to the rough climate, natural calamities, epidemics, ill administration and the hostilities with the Portuguese, Mughals, Marathas, Siddis, Arabs etc. the population of the Bombay group of Islands dwindled to mere 16,000 souls in comparison to 60,000 in 1675 A.D. ! The sign of relief started to come in when the conflict between the rival companies ended in 1708 A.D. and the United East India Company began to consolidate its presence in India. By that time, the collapse of the grand Mughal empire started and new geo-political equations began to emerge in Konkan and Deccan post-Aurangzeb's death. The Maratha polity was openly divided and the both camps in Satara and Kolhapur never missed any chance to outsmart each other. The absence of the strong Central Authority in the Maratha Polity both in Kolhapur and Satara paved the way for the rise of powerful individual families within the fold of Maratha polity. Aangrey family from Alibag gave a tough challenge both to Maratha as well European camps on the Western coast of India. The founding father of Aangrey family, Kanhoji Aangrey was not only a seasoned Military Strategian but was also an acute Politician. He founded a mini-state within the fold of Maratha Confederacy and challenged the marine power of the Portuguese and British in the first quarter of the 18th century. Till his death in 1729 A.D. he engaged the Portuguese, British, Dutch, the Satara and Kolhapur Camps of the Marathas and was one of the nightmares for the British in Bombay (Elliott 2009). Post his death, his successors could not revive and replicate the legacy of Kanhoji Aangrey and were successively utilized by every power on the Konkan coast and Deccan such as the Portuguese, British and Marathas for their own ends till their virtual ouster in 1757 A.D.

When the friction with Aangrey relatively weakened after the death of Kanhoji Aangrey, the Satara Camp of Marathas headed by Chhatrapati Shahu zeroed on the Portuguese Province of the North. Factional disputes in Siddi family of Janjira by 1735 A.D. had also made itself infirm to any outer resistance. Though in the initial campaigns against the Portuguese in North Konkan prominent Maratha noble families such as Jadhav etc. from the Satara Court took the leading role, soon it came onto Bajirao I from Bhat family of whose father was appointed as the Peshwa in the Maratha Court at Satara. The British were aware of the military exploits of Bajirao I and thus in the actual Maratha-Portuguese war that lasted from 1737 - 1739 A.D. did everything to appease both the warring parties to secure their safe existence in Bombay. Equally it was true that though they were not on friendly terms with the Portuguese in North Konkan, they never even wanted the relatively aggressive Marathas to be their neighbors. From the records, it appears that many European deserters joined the Maratha forces and guided them on the issues related to Artillery, Mining and the Siege warfare in the water compartmented territory and played the important role in the victory of the Marathas (Campbell 1882). On the defeat of the Portuguese, the political equilibrium in North Konkan changed substantially and the British had to make a pact with the Satara Camp of Marathas to protect their trade privileges and particularly their safe existence in Bombay. They also played a prominent role as the mediators in the Maratha-Portuguese Treaty sealed in 1740 A.D. (Forrest 1885). Still, the Marathas bayed for the blood of British in Bombay and desired to take the control

of the Islands. The Marathas in actuality never took any open role against the British in Bombay and were busy with either subduing their inner camps in the Confederacy or attempting to expand in the Mughal heartland of India. The comparative regional stability, protection for trade and merchandise, efficient administration, measures to make Islands safe and healthy habitat resulted in the steady increase of the population in the Bombay Islands and financial resources of the Company. As a consequence, Maratha and British even made a joint expedition against powerful Aangrey in 1755 A.D. and as said before, by 1757 A.D. Aangrey's suzerainty over the sea became the non-existent. Once the main threat on the marine front became extinct, the British in Bombay became bold enough for contemplating about the territorial expansion in its immediate neighborhood, similar to their counterparts in Bengal and Bihar. Though the Marathas had conquered the former Province of the North from the Portuguese with great efforts, it appears that they did not take strong measures afterwards to retain and maintain the newly acquired territory in the best possible ways. Attempts of the Maratha Confederacy to expand its area of influence in other parts of the Indian Sub-Continent was thoroughly checked in the battle of Panipat (1761 A.D.) and soon it sulked into the period marred by the factional disputes within the Confederacy and succession conflict within the Peshwa Bhat family.

Due to the security and stable administration that the Company offered to the entrepreneurs and the working class, the British settlement in Bombay continued to expand in population and the financial resources. With the growing needs of the population came the expansion of the settlement in terms of the architectural activities, mainly in the categories of the Defense, Administrative, Civil and Ecclesiastical. The Company felt keenly the need of bringing together more area resourceful in the Revenue, Land Fertility and the raw materials which were needed for the expansion of trade (Campbell 1882). They did not have to go far in its search as such land was available in the immediate North of the British Settlement of Bombay. But the only problem was that the land selected for this enterprise - Salsette and Vasai was then owned by the powerful Marathas! The Portuguese to whom it belonged once, were also in the race for its capture! Unlike the Portuguese, the British in Bombay, however, were persistent enough to put their plans into action for getting the control of Sashti (Salsette), Vasai and Karanja from the Marathas. The then global affairs such as the French-English Wars in Europe starting from 1744 A.D. and the regional issues such as competition among the regional powers to claim for the vacant position of the previous dominant Mughal hegemony shaped the projects of the Company in Bombay to plan for its future strategy. How much determined was the Company in Bombay for controlling Salsette, Vasai and Karanja can be seen from the fact that the issue of the cessation of the said territories was principally marked in the three representations made to the Peshwas in Pune in the leadership of English Envoy Sir Thomas Mostyn in 1759 A.D. 1767 A.D. and 1772 A.D. respectively (Gense and Banaji 1934). Peshwa authority in Pune, first in the concluding phase of Peshwa Balaji Bajirao and later in the period of Peshwa Madhavarao I did not accept the demand of the Company. Instead, Peshwa Madhavarao I raised the security of Thane by adding 500 soldiers (Campbell

1882). It was clear to the Company that Peshwas in Pune were not happy to part with Salsette and Vasai for their territorial expansion ambitions in the other parts of India. But the death of Peshwa Madhavrao I in 1772 A.D. and subsequent open civil war for the post of Peshwa in the Bhat family offered an open field to the Company.

The Maratha possession in the North Konkan was reduced virtually defenseless in the subsequent Civil War between the camp of Raghunathrao and the Group of Ministers led by Nana Phadnavis post-Peshwa Narayan Rao's brutal murder in 1773 A.D. In the ensuing conflict of succession, the Company observed carefully the fallibility of Raghunath Rao. The Company's action to conquer Salsette and Vasai was fuelled further by the Portuguese maneuvers to re-conquer their lost "Province of the North". By December, 1774 A.D. the British in Bombay were ready to conquer Salsette, Vasai and Karanja and Sir Thomas Mostyn returned hurriedly to Bombay on 9th December, 1774 A.D. to not invite any conflict of interests in the Court of Peshwas in Pune. The Bombay Council under the Presidentship of Governor William Hornby ordered the Company's forces led by Brigadier General William Gordon and John Watson, Superintendent of the Bombay Marines to advance towards Thane on 12th December, 1774 A.D. As the Company's action in Salsette and Vasai was imminent, the Portuguese protested against the Company's intention and Jose Sandios de Britto, Commander-in-Chief of the Portuguese Ships then anchoring in the Bombay Harbor protested in strong words before the Bombay Council and Governor by his letter dated 16th December, 1774 A.D. The Bombay Council was quick to reply and through its letter dated 17th February, 1774 A.D. to Jose Sandios de Britto, it made clear that it is not violating any diplomatic principles by capturing a region which once belonged to the Portuguese and now controlled by the Marathas and to which Portuguese never attempted to recover in the intermediate period. To press its demand further, it specifically asked the Portuguese State to repay the unpaid dues to the Company which it had spent for the cause of the Portuguese affairs in the Maratha-Portuguese War (1737-39 A.D.) (Forrest 1885: 180 - 181). The Portuguese did not reply immediately to the demand raised by the Company. By 12th December, 1774 A.D. the Company forces under the command of Brigadier General Robert Gordon and John Watson, the Superintendent of Bombay Marines advanced towards Thane. It was clear that the Maratha defense of Thane was not adequate and no proper measures to defend the settlement were taken in the preceding period. Some Maratha officials from Thane such as the Custodian of the Fort in the initial phase and particularly one Bhagvanrao Kadam had even sided with the Company in the overall mission (Pissurlekar, 1975). Once the East India Company's Offensive in the Salsette Island began, the prime Fortification and settlement at Versova ultimately became the potential target of the Company's forces.

The British Attack on Versova

The Company authorities in Bombay deputed Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Keating with a troop consisting of Infantry, Artillery, Navy and Auxiliary personals to capture Versova Fort (Madh Fort) from the Maratha control. A detailed and time to time

correspondence of Lt. Col. Thomas Keating with the Bombay Council from 23rd December to 25th December, 1774 A.D. offers us a vivid picture of the Company's Military Operation in Versova (Forrest 1885: 181 - 184). The Company's forces under the command of Lt. Col. Keating left Bombay on 20th December, 1774 A.D. with the clear aim to "reduce Versova". A transcript of entry from the Government Archives, Mumbai dated 20th December, 1774 A.D. for this event is provided below (Fig. 26).

As a large detachment as could possibly be spared from this Garrison marched off this evening under the command of Lieu. Col. Keating to reduce Versova, a strong Fort and outpost on the Island of Salsette on the opposite side of the Island from Tannah.

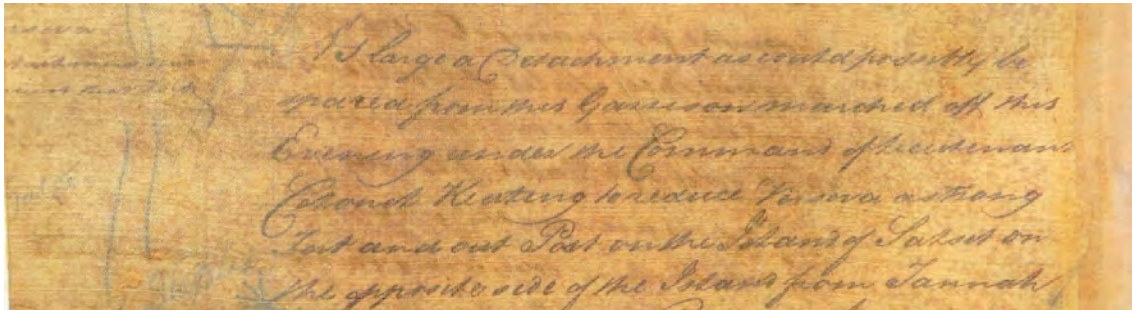


Figure 26: The Entry from the Government Archives, Mumbai

The Marathas had strengthened and enlarged the larger Fort at Versova (Madh Island) after its capture from the Portuguese in the bloody Maratha-Portuguese War (1737 - 1739 A.D.). It appears that owing to rising succession disputes and ensuing Civil War in Bhat Peshwa family, similar to other principal Fortifications and settlements in the former Province of the North, defense of the strategic locations like the Madh Island and Versova was too compromised. Lt. Col. Keating (Image - 31) was instructed to reduce the Fort as early as possible and thus his offensive was planned in that way. While doing so, he effectively cut off the supplies to the Fort and initiated his attack.



Figure 27: Lt. Col. Thomas Keating, the Commander of the East India Company's forces in the Mission to Capture Versova Fort

The First Attack

From the three letters of Lt. Col. Thomas Keating dated 23rd December, 1774 A.D. we come to know that the Company troops made assault on Versova Fort at around 8 P.M. on 22nd December, 1774 A.D. According to the strategy, to attract the attention of the Maratha garrison inside the Fort, the Company troops constantly fired at the Fort with

Howitzer Field Guns while a body of 46 men under the command of Lieutenant Carpenter advanced towards the Fort from the left. Meanwhile, when such was ploy was being enacted, three distinct bodies of soldiers under the separate commands of Ensigns Prosser, Anderson and Gore went on quietly to escalate the Fort with the help of ladders. Unfortunately, the Company troops did not have the ladders matching the height of Fort's walls and more particularly, the troop was not obedient to the command. The result was obvious. They were noticed by the guarding Maratha soldiers and to break the assault, they showered the attacking Company troops with large stones. The first British attack on Versova Fort was successfully repelled by the Marathas. In the action two Europeans were killed and six were injured. Expecting the next assault, the Maratha troops regularly fired upon the British troops. After knowing about the retreat of the Company's forces, the immediate response that came from Lt. Col. Keating was to request Fourteen Bamboo Ladders (Eight of 32 feet height and Six of 40 feet height) and Two 18 or even 12 Pounder Guns with the required ammunitions from the Bombay Council. The entry for the stores requested by him (Fig. 28, Table 2) is traced from the documents of the Government Archives, Mumbai and the same is reproduced below.

Table 2: Entry for the Stores

<i>Grapes for 5 1/2 Howitzers</i>	50
<i>Shells for Howitzer</i>	154
<i>Fuses for Howitzer</i>	170
<i>6 Pounder Grape</i>	150
<i>6 Pounder Wads</i>	300
<i>6 Pounder Empty Cartridges</i>	150
<i>6 Pounder Tubes</i>	150

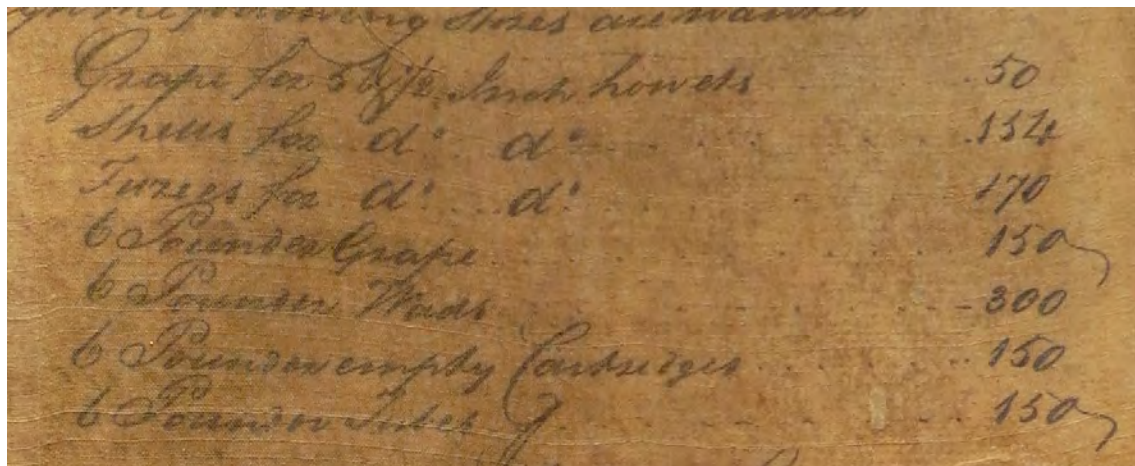


Figure 28: Provisions Requested by Lt. Col. Thomas Keating on 23rd December, 1774 A.D.

Keating felt that the Guns would take less time in capturing the Fort than by advancing the Company's troops inside the Fort by scaling it with the ladders. He also requested

the Bombay Council to send him two Petards to blow off the Entrance to the Fort and hoped that two Petards would be sufficient in seizing the Fort.

The Second Attack

The Company's forces attacked the Fort for the second time in the evening of 23rd December, 1774 A.D. The provisions requested by Lt. Col. Keating did not reach Versova by the time of Second Attack. Nevertheless, the Company's troops had become more enthusiastic and regularized by the time of the Second Attack and even a party of soldiers led by Lieutenant Brickell became successful in scaling the Fort wall. Already alerted by the First Attack, the Maratha troops inside the Fort were also ready and offered tough fight to the attackers. Such was the fierce Maratha resistance that Ensign Anderson sustained deadly injuries and Keating feared that around thirty people from the Company's troops might have died in the attack. Again, by his third letter dated 23rd December, 1774 A.D. Keating requested the Bombay Council to ship him the required provisions.

Erection of Battery by the Company's Troops and the Maratha's Surrender

The casualties expected by Keating did not become the reality. In the Second Attack, four people belonging to Infantry, Navy and Auxiliary Sections died while twenty one were wounded. To make the attack more persistent and lethal, by 24th December, the Company's forces started to raise a battery at a distance of 220 Yards from the Fort. Keating expected to complete it by the next day if assistance from the party of Captain Liell was received or anyhow by Monday morning. Meanwhile, the provisions requested by Keating from the Bombay Council reached the Army Camp. Keating had become more familiar with the ground situation and the actual defensive condition of the Fort. He found that Petards were not required to barge inside the Fort and he was successful in raising the height of the ladders to 42 feet. He sent a group of wounded soldiers to the Sepoy Hospital. Looking at ditched effort of the British and with a no sign of reinforcement and help, the besieged Maratha troop became restless and sent a delegation to negotiate with Keating. On the night of 24th December, Marathas asked Keating for five days to consult and form an agreeable opinion on the terms of surrender. Keating flatly refused the Marathas request and told them that he will not grant them more than an hour to decide upon the terms of the surrender. Helpless Marathas pleaded for three days and on the next count for one day but Keating did not budge from his stand. He told them flatly that it was his aim to capture the Fort as soon as possible and he would not grant them any more time. Faced with such stubborn response of Keating, by 25th December, 1774 A.D. Maratha troop inside the Fort agreed to surrender the Fort to East India Company. Lt. Col. Thomas Keating in the terms of the Surrender Treaty promised that the Officers and the inhabitants of the Fort will continue to enjoy the rights of their respective private property in the Fort and Town and they will be permitted to stay in the villages nearby the Fort or to shift elsewhere with a condition to not harm the settlement or the area under the possession of the

Company while passing by. Keating permitted Marathas in Versova to use fishing boats to shift themselves away with their real property and demanded an honest account from the *Killedar* (Custodian of the Fort) and others for the properties belonging to the Maratha Government in Versova. On 25th December, 1774 A.D. Lt. Col. Thomas Keating deputed Lt. McNiel to inform the Bombay Council about the victory of Company's troops in Versova and the surrender of the Fort by the Marathas. An entry dated 25th December, 1774 A.D. from the Government Archives, Mumbai for the surrender of Versova Fort is reproduced below (Fig. 29).

Bombay Castle, Sunday, 25th December 1774

At 2 PM arrived Lieu. MacNiel from the detachment commanded by Lieu. Col. Keating with news of the surrender of Versova Fort. The particulars of his proceedings and of the capture the place are comprised in following six letters from Lieu. Col. Keating to the President.

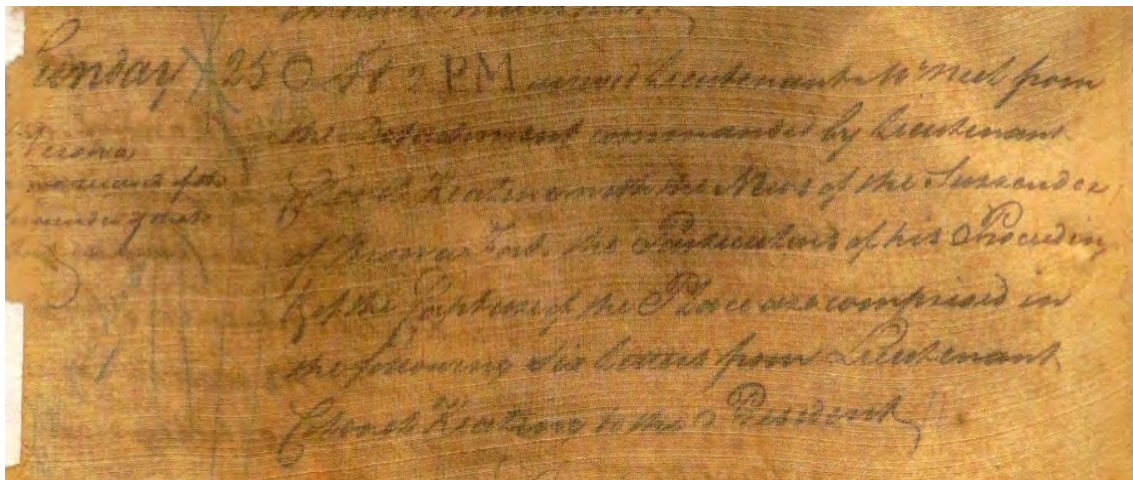


Figure 29: The Surrender of Versova Fort

Soon after the victory in Versova, Company's forces captured Thana Fort from the Marathas on 28th December, 1774 A.D. simultaneously, by 30th December, 1774 A.D. Lt. Col. Thomas Keating seized the Fort and Island of Karanja and the nearby area. By the beginning of 1774 A.D. the Company had taken over the Salsette and Vasai and it sent a shockwave in the both Maratha and Portuguese Camps.

Civil War in Bhat Family and the fate of Salsette Island and nearby Area

The Bhat family in Pune was embroiled in a series of conflicts over the birth of slain Peshwa Narayanrao's son to whom a powerful group of Ministers headed by Nana Fadnavis declared as the legal successor to the post of the Peshwa and cornered further the beleaguered Raghunathrao. To escape from the imminent political prosecution, Raghunathrao had to flee from Pune and there was no one in the immediate neighborhood who was capable to help him in such a dire situation than the East India Company Officials in Bombay. The British already knew the desperateness of helpless Raghunathrao and considering the future political gains, they agreed to help him and

thus was sealed the Treaty of Surat on 6th March, 1775 A.D. by which Salsette and Vasai were ceded to the Company along with the revenue rights in Surat and Bharuch Districts (at present in Gujarat). For Raghunathrao, it was the post of Peshwa that mattered most than the territories which he supposed to administer if he emerged victorious in the power struggle. As mentioned before, the birth of Savai Madhavrao in April, 1775 A.D. changed the entire situation and the group of Ministers led by Nana Phadnavis emerged more powerful. Their next action was to depute a body of troops to recover the Sashti Island from the British in May, 1775 A.D. but the attack was severely beaten back by the British. Meanwhile, in the same month (18th May, 1775 A.D.), Maratha troops led by Haripant Phadke defeated the Company's troop under the command of Lt. Col. Thomas Keating at Adas (at present in Anand District, Gujarat).

Like the conflicts of interests in the Maratha camp, the Company was too divided on the Bombay's adopted policy for Peshwas in Pune. The Calcutta Centre of the East India Company had become successful in carving good revenue yielding fertile territory in the Eastern part of India and was marching unchecked to challenge the might of influential fiefdoms in North India, including the crippling Mughals in Delhi. With such gains, it was crowned as the chief centre of the Company's policy formulations and implementations in India with the Governor General and the Council at its helm. Bombay Presidency, despite its potentials had fallen behind in the race. Complexity of the situation can be judged from a letter of the President William Hornby and his Council dated 31st December, 1774 A.D. to the Governor General and Council at Calcutta wherein he acquaints the authorities in Calcutta about the ground realities, which forced the Bombay Presidency to take military action against the Marathas in the Salsette (Sashti Island) and the surrounding region. It is from time to time impressed upon the Company's authorities in Calcutta that such military action was in accordance to the policies of the Directors of East India Company and it was beneficial for the Company affairs in India. It goes on to explain the hectic process of negotiations that it had entered into with Raghunathrao in Surat and how initially he refused to cede Vasai and Salsette to British along with expressing his inability to deposit the huge sum of money (Rs. 20 Lakh) at the given point of time for getting military assistance from the Company which initially comprised of around 2,500 personals belonging to Artillery, Infantry and Sepoys. It is impressed upon the authorities in Calcutta that apart from the provisions for Western India, the negotiations also contained the articles to secure Company's interests in Bengal and Karnatak. It informed them further that how the Presidency is taking adequate measures to ensure efficient administration and revenue collection in the newly conquered territories and how it had requested the Madras Presidency and the Commander-in-Chief of the English Crown in India for additional troops and naval assistance to ensure protection of the newly added territories to the Company's dominion in the Bombay Presidency (Foster 1885: 204 - 208). In spite of such forceful persuasion, the Company's authorities in Calcutta did not approve the Bombay Presidency's stand on the succession issue in the Peshwa Court of Pune and on seeing

the defeat of Company's troop on its mission to install Raghunathrao in Pune, it became more alert on the such delicate succession issue. The rise of Shinde (Scindia) of Gwalior and Holkar of Indore in the Maratha Confederacy post-1761 A.D. had more to add in the worries of the Company's authorities in Calcutta. As a result, they decided to do away with the Bombay Presidency's line to help Raghunathrao and instead deputed Lt. Col. Upton to negotiate with the group of Ministers led by Nana Fadnavis. The negotiations resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Purandar between the East India Company and Nana Fadnavis group on 1st March, 1776 which resulted in nullifying the earlier Treaty of Surat (1775 A.D.). The mission to install Raghunathrao on the post of Peshwa was called off and he was turned to a mere pensioner. In return, the Company was authorized to retain its possession of Salsette (the Sashti Island and surrounding area - Karanja, Elephanta and Hog Island) and Bharuch. The earlier military conquest and subsequent negotiations made the Company the owner of Salsette (Sashti Island) and the surrounding area yielding a total estimated revenue of Rs. 3, 70, 000/- (Campbell 1882).

The British Period

The Salsette and surrounding region continued to be with the Bombay Presidency even after the Treaty of Salbai (at present in Gwalior District, Uttar Pradesh) signed on 17th May, 1782 A.D. and thereafter its presence in the Company's dominion was cemented. Considering the strategic location of Versova Fort, the British took adequate measures in strengthening the Fortification. The Fort was under the command of Company's troop from 1774 to 1818 A.D. (Campbell 1882). On 13th August, 1787 A.D. Polish Doctor Anton Hove visited Versova when he was mistakenly taken to the Island by his native interpreter instead of his actual destination Thane. The season was of monsoons and Dr. Hove spent one night in Versova wherein he writes about a very old Fort situated "on a Hill at the entrance of Wersewe (Vesave/Versova) river" with "a good command" of the river. He describes the old Fort as unconquerable with the able protection of rocks and the village being populated mainly by the stout Fisherman community (Hove 1855: 12). In 1830 A.D. Rev. Joao Damaceno Almeida collected donations from the people and built the Church of Our Lady of Health in Madh village (Campbell 1882).

We get valuable information of Versova in the Company's Rule from the writings of Dr. George Buist (Buist 1858: 11- 19), a prominent Scottish Journalist and Scientist, who visited the place in February, 1850 A.D. When Dr. Buist was suffering from severe illness, he was advised to travel Northwards from Bombay and was provided with a Government vessel for his journey. As his destination was not specified, so he often got down at the places during his voyage especially when there were no strong currents of the wind. Upon his entry in Versova Creek, he saw a Fort situated "on a fine bold promontory of Basaltic columns of much beauty though of moderate height". He found the Versova Fort much similar in appearance like the Forts at Mahim, Sewree and Sion but its size was larger than those three. He describes the Fort as built in stone and mud with lime pointing and large plantation of Mango trees belonging to a Parsee person

around the Fort. No date was inscribed on the Fort. The Fort had a Church built by the British and had quarters for the garrison. The Commanding Officer according to Dr. Buist resided in a House in the Fort with a beautiful view of the surroundings. Only a sidewall with a flight of steps of the said House was visible by then. Dr. George Buist says that forty years before his visit, Versova was a training place for Cadets after similar Training Centers at Old Woman's Island and Mahim College were abandoned by the authorities. From 1800 - 1804 A.D. first a party of Artillery and later of Sappers and Miners was stationed at Versova. On the small rocky Islet near to the main Versova Island (Madh Island), he saw a small Fortalice which he identifies with the Maratha workmanship. Dr. Buist noticed three "modest" tombs located "on a little grass promontory close by" with only the Middle tomb being inscribed with an inscription. The tomb belonged to a woman called "Mrs. Caroline Rebennack", who was the wife of Captain John Fredrick Rebennack of the Bombay Engineers. According to the epitaph, she died in Versova in 1807 A.D. He has reproduced the epitaph in his travelogue which reads –

Within this tomb The Earthly Remains of MRS. CAROLINE REBENNACK, Wife of Captain REBENNACK of the Engineers, are deposited. She was born at Stuttgart in Wurtemberg, 7th November 1779, and died at Versova 12th May 1807.

Mildness of manner, sweetness of temper, and amiability of disposition procured her a circle of friends as sincere as they were general, their friendship being in esteem for her many virtues, both moral and domestic: The affection she evinced for her family endeared her to a husband who is, by her removal rendered miserable, and would be inconsolable, were it not for the pious and placid resignation with which she bore her sickness and sufferings, and which leaves no doubt but she will enjoy the reward promised those to who live and (Words broken off) truly Christians.

There was no living settlement on the immediate neighborhood of the Fort except the fishing village at a little distance on the North of the Fort. He talks of "a long belt of Coconuts" and a "a large Portuguese Church" in a dilapidated condition in the midst of the Coconut trees in "a couple of miles further North" of the Versova fishing village. Dr. Buist informs that a wooden image of a Saint looking like a doll stood on the highest of a flight of steps and was surrounded by little lamps of coconut shells. It is the St. Bonaventure Church in Erangal Village that Dr. Buist refers and he has provided the earliest sketch of the Church in his Travelogue (Fig. 30). Dr. Buist informs in a detail about the Geology and Geography of Versova and explains in a length about "Shell Sandstone or Littoral Concrete" quarries at Versova and the prevalent methods of quarrying the stone. When Dr. Buist visited the area in and around Versova, he found the place bestowed with pleasant climate and fertile land and the region abound with the ruins of Forts, Churches, Temples and Gardens. He laments on the state of affairs where "a dreamy helplessness, spiritless apathy" brooded everywhere over a "poverty stricken people" and which existed within just two hours of sail from the Bombay Island.

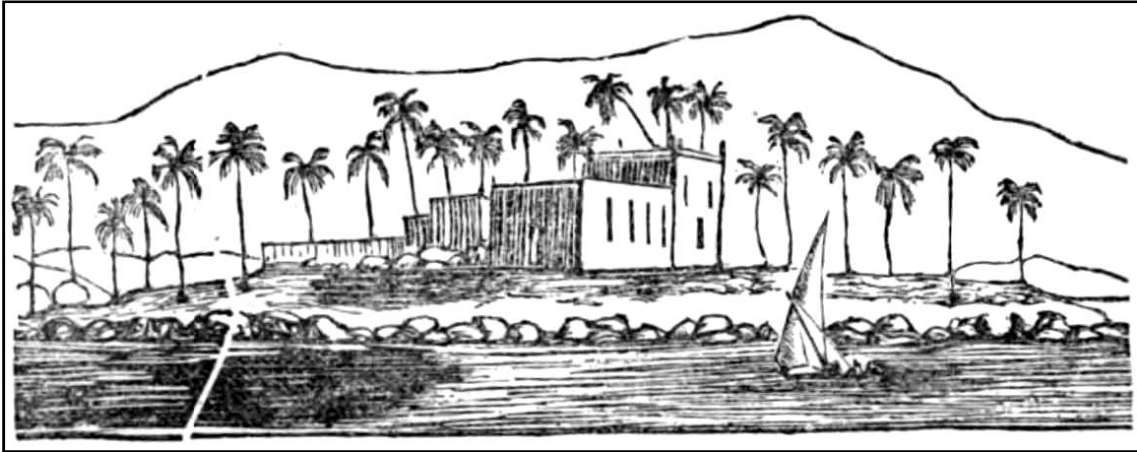


Figure 30: The St. Bonaventure Church, Erangal

It appears that in the initial period, the Company took adequate measures to ensure safety of the Fort in both Architectural and Military terms but once the Company started to emerge as the leading Geo-Political player in Western India and especially after the absorption of Peshwa's territory into the Company's dominion post-1818 Maratha defeat, the Fort fell into the relative disuse and neglect. Versova continued to be the place of maritime trade and by 1882 A.D. it registered an average exports amounting to Rs. 30, 139/- and imports worth of Rs. 13,326/- (Campbell 1882).

At present, we do not have any conclusive evidence showing activity or events of any particular importance happening in Madh Island Fort or in Versova in the 20th Century. After Independence, the Fort and the surrounding area came in the control of the Indian Armed Forces and at present Indian Air Force is the custodian of the Fort.

The Material Remains

Dr. George Buist had empathetically talked about the inscribed Tomb of Mrs. Caroline J. Rebennack and two more on her both sides in his travelogue. The British Records inform us that an unknown disease had claimed many lives from the Company of Artillery and Engineer Cadets posted at Versova in 1804 A.D. and the survivors were moved to Bombay. Nevertheless, Versova continued to be the Military Establishment of the Company's forces in the Bombay Presidency up to 1818 A.D. By 1882 A.D. we find the reference of 6 European Tombs in the area between the West side of the Madh Fort and Sea. Among those 6 Tombs, only of Caroline's was inscribed (Campbell, 1882). Based on the description provided in the writings of Dr. Buist, the Author attempted to locate them. The area described in the British documents containing six European Tombs i.e. the area between the West side of the Madh Fort and Sea, at present does not have any traces of the European Tombs. On one particular Field visit with necessary permissions from Indian Air Force, he was informed by one Official of Indian Air Force Station at Madh Island about the presence of a broken Epitaph of European lady in the premise of the Officers Canteen. The concerned Official was a keen enthusiast of History and more particularly of the History of the Fort. The Author

immediately requested the concerned Official to show the site where the Tomb Slab of Mrs. Caroline Rebennack was kept and to which, he consented. After visiting the place, it was found that the broken Tomb Slab (Fig. 31) of Mrs. Caroline Rebennack was given a spacious space facing the Sea with due honor (Fig. 32). Curious on finding such situation where IAF had taken the due care of the Tomb Slab of Caroline, the Author inquired to IAF Officials for the actual location of the Tomb and the reasons for preserving the Tomb Slab with such care. The reply was heart touching and it consisted of a mystery twirled in the local legends. According to the Officials, after Madh Fort and the surrounding area came under the control of Indian Armed Forces, for quite some time, a legend of one White Gown wearing European Lady walking on the shore of Madh Island was widely prevalent among the locals and the staff of IAF. The legend said that the soul of Caroline is moving around the Fort and the area. The Officials also narrated certain incidents to the Author that were passed to them by the earlier staff and the locals.



Figure 31: The Tomb Stone of Caroline Rebenack

According to the few incidents, if a young Officer slept while reading a book on a chair or on the bed with an open book left upon his chest, after waking up, he could find the book carefully kept nearby. If someone slept without covering oneself with a blanket then on waking up, he could find himself draped in a blanket. After such strange but kind motioned incidents, it was assumed that the wandering soul of Caroline could be



Figure 32: The Tomb Stone of Caroline Rebenack

the paranormal agency behind them. The soul or Ghost of Caroline was quick to find respect among the IAF staff and the locals as they considered her "Kind Hearted" and it was in this way that the IAF shifted her broken Epitaph from its original location near the Madh Fort to the present place with proper care. For Caroline and her family, it was said among the IAF Staff and the locals that she and her family (Husband and Children) met with a tragic death off the Madh Island Coast when on a leisure trip, their boat drowned in the sea. The Officials also informed that though no incidents of sighting the ghost of Caroline are reported in the present days, they were widely popular in the old days. Curious enough to know the Historicity of Caroline and her family, the Official requested the Author to investigate the issue to uncover the truth of Caroline and her family. The Author assured the concerned Official for conducting a Historical investigation and to come up with a detailed Report substantiated by necessary proofs. When the Author inquired more about the topic in the area, it was found that the legends of Caroline's Ghost (or European Lady wearing a White Gown) hold a place in the local public memory and besides Caroline; there were many more famous Ghost stories in the area! A long and lengthy search to find clues about Caroline Rebennack and her family led Author to several places, including the dusty Records of Bombay Archives and later to the British Library, London. The Historical Narrative which could be constructed for Mrs. Caroline Rebennack and her family based on the Archival records obtained from the British Library, London and other places in Mumbai is described below.

According to the Epitaph, Caroline was married to "Captain Rebenack of the Engineers" (Fig. 33). From the records obtained from the British Library, London, it became evident that John Frederick Rebenack joined the East India Company's Army as a Cadet in 1795 A.D. and on 20th January 1797 A.D. he was commissioned in the Engineer Corps maintained by the East India Company for the Bombay Presidency as a Lieutenant. He rose to become the Captain on 1st January 1810 A.D. (Dodwell and Miles 1838: 68 -69). According to the Document - 3, he married Caroline Heinemain on 11th June 1799 A.D. in Cannanore (present Kannur, State - Kerala) and the couple had three children, namely, Charles, Mary and John. Later, Caroline Rebenack died of sickness at Versova on 12th May 1807 and was buried in the same place. Whereas, Captain John Rebenack died on 30th June 1817 and was buried in the Parish of St. Thomas Cathedral, Mumbai, leaving behind his three children to the Guardian appointed by him through his will drafted in 1811 A.D. Captain John Rebennack entrusted his children to the care of Captain Samuel Goodfellow of Bombay Engineers.

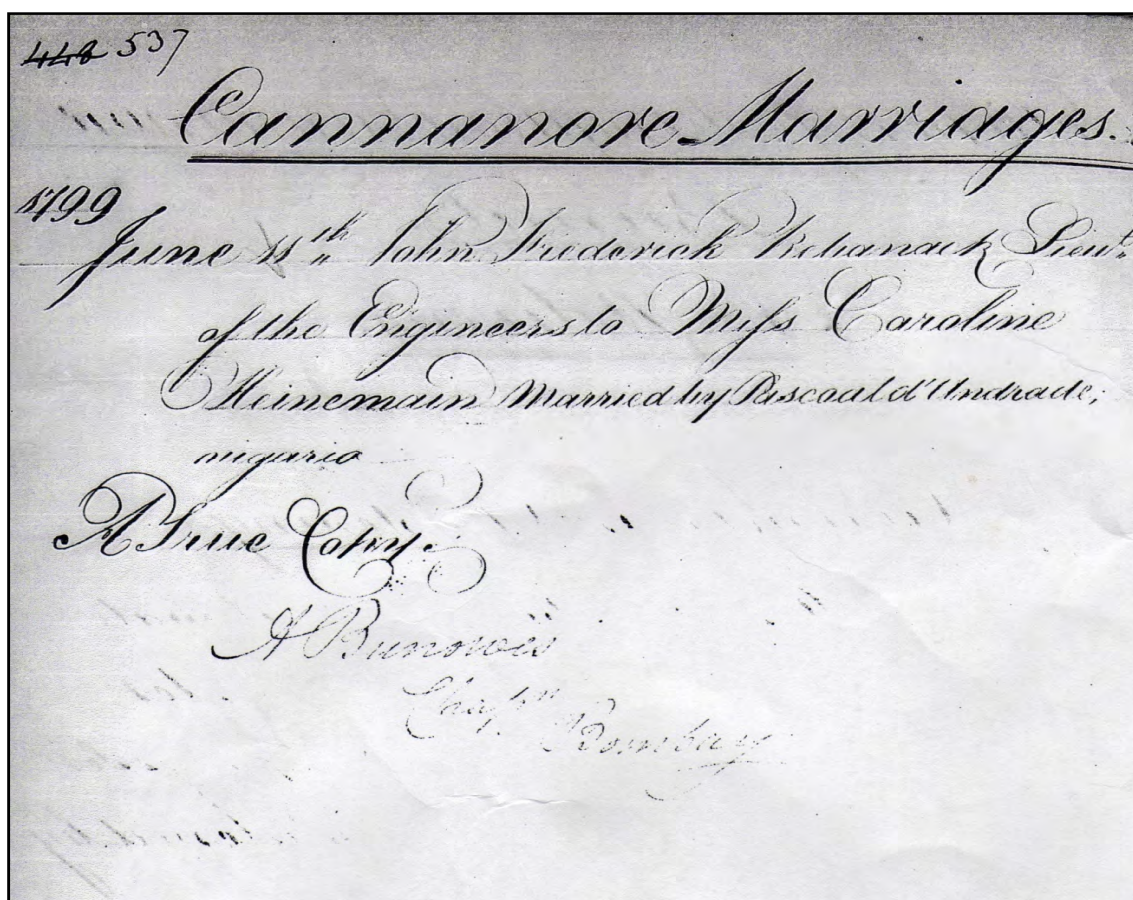


Figure 33: The Marriage Document of John Rebenack and Caroline Heinemain

It appears that Captain John Rebennack was posted at Versova with his Company when Caroline died in 1807 A.D. The station of the Company's forces in Versova was undoubtedly Madh Fort. Though John Rebenack is mentioned as "Captain" on the Epitaph of Caroline, the before mentioned entry from the exhaustive work produced

on the Officers of the East India Company by Messrs. Dodwell and Miles, the Agents of the Company, lists 1810 A.D. as the year of John Rebennack's promotion to the post of "Captain". Why then the Epitaph mentions him "Captain" instead of his original designation "Lieutenant" at the point of time (1807 A.D.) is a matter of question. As the document (5) related to his death mentions "Parish of St. Thomas" as the place of his burial and Rev. N. Wade as the person who performed the final ceremony, the present Cathedral of St. Thomas was visited to find the grave of Captain Thomas Rebennack in case if he was buried in the Cathedral itself. As inscriptions on many graves in the outer premises of the St. Thomas Cathedral have become illegible, his grave could not be traced but that of Rev. Nicholas Wade was found (Fig. 34) who appeared to have died in the year 1822 A.D. What is the cause of Captain John Rebennack's death is not known at present.

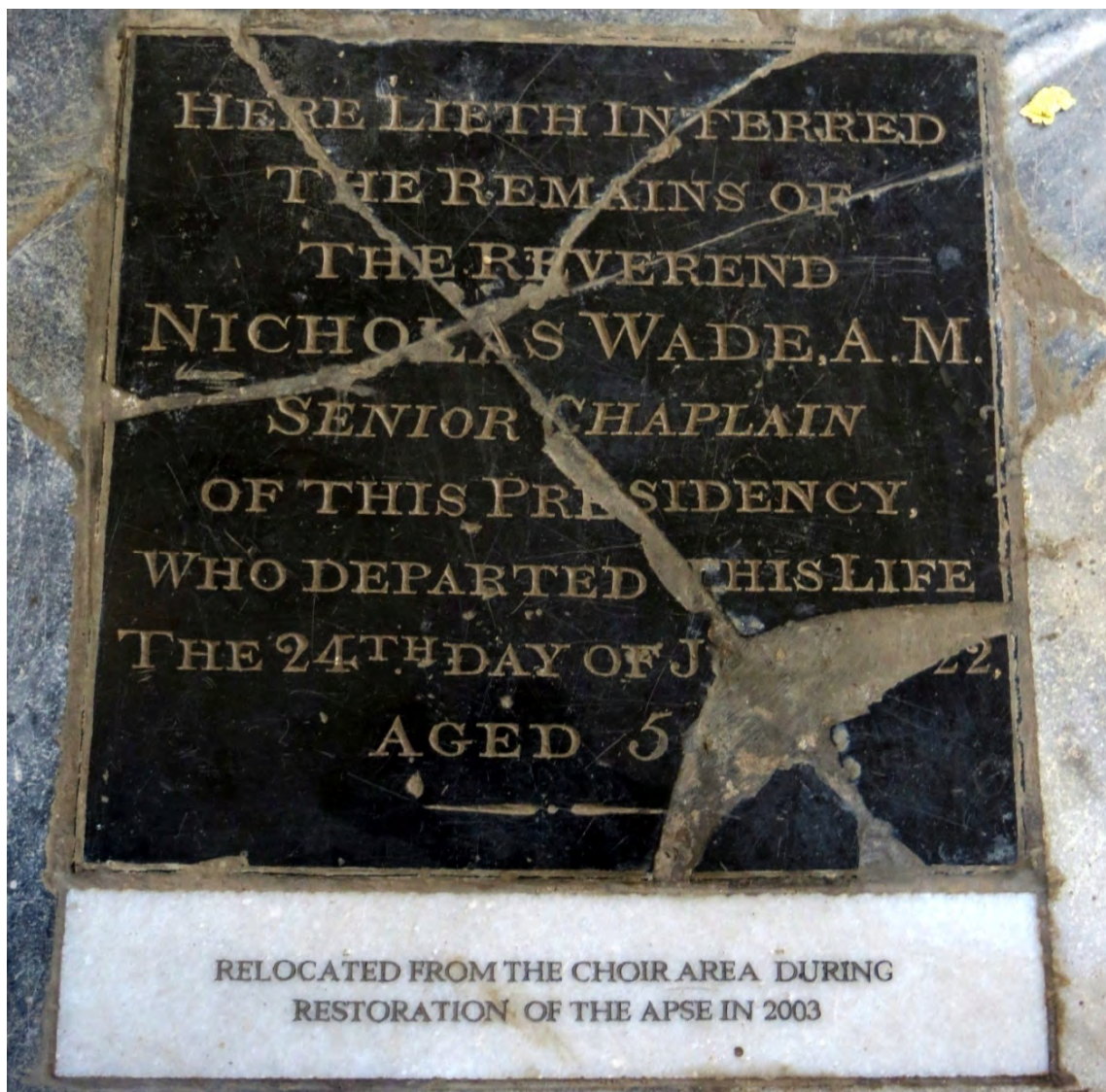


Figure 34: The Epitaph of Rev. Nicholas Wade in St. Thomas Cathedral, Mumbai

The records show the important life events of Rebennack family and finally blow the lid off the Ghost mystery prevalent in the Madh Island. It proves that the wife and husband died separate death, leaving behind their three children alive in the care of a Guardian - Captain Samuel Good fellow.

The Madh Fort, Madh Island

We have in the previous sections discussed about the evolution of the Madh Fort from being the mere Pentagonal shaped Bastion to a huge size Fortification equipped with the water storage facility, quarters for the Garrison and the Commanding Officer and other utilities. The present Madh Fort (Fig. 35) contains in itself the structural phases of the Portuguese, Maratha and the British period and it is these successive workmanships that have rendered the Madh Fort its present look. The signatures of these respective periods are somewhere openly visible whereas in some places they are merged with each other and thus, the Fort is described below as per its present situation. The sheer magnificence of the Fort (Fig. 36) impresses any visitor and it dauntingly guards the Versova Creek as well as the Sea front of the Madh Island.



Figure 35: Google Earth Image of the Madh Fort at Madh Island

The Madh Fort has the six Bastions of Round and Semi-Circular shape and is equipped with sturdy Fortification. The main axis of the Fort lies North to South and it is bound to the Versova Creek on the East and Arabian Sea on the South, whereas on the Northern and Western direction, it is surrounded by a piece of land of Madh Island. The Fort is nowhere provided with a grand Entrance typical of any contemporary large size Fortified structure but has a small Postern in the Western Wall of the Fort. This postern probably belongs to the phase of later structural enlargement done by the Maratha or British. At present, one more entry to the Fort is provided in the South-

Western Bastion of the Fort and it can be accessed by steps. This entry appears to be of the Modern period.



Figure 36: The Madh Fort as seen from the side of Versova Creek



Figure 37: The British period Quarters on the Northern side of Madh Fort

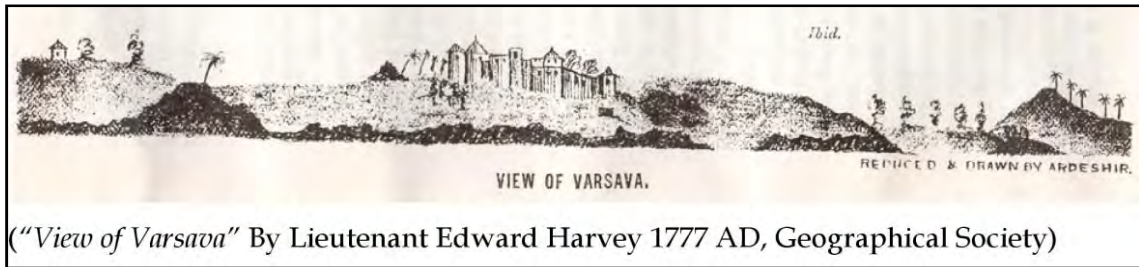


Figure 38: View of Varsava by Lt. Harvey showing the Madh Fort in Madh Island

There is wide Rampart all along the Fortification and the Bastions were once roofed. The Bastions are provided with Embrasures and Gun Slits at the regular intervals. The Fort, according to its general layout can be divided in two parts, first of the Northern side and second of the Southern side. The Northern half has the quarters for the troops and the water storage facility. It appears that it was the same Water storage facility which Portuguese Engineer Lt. Col. Jose Lopes de Sa arranged to construct in a thick of the Maratha attack on the Fort in 1737 A.D. This portion also has a structure on the North-East Side corner and which was constructed and utilized by the British as a Church. The Structure has an Arched Altar under the Northern Rampart. The Southern portion has the original Portuguese period Pentagonal Bastion adjacent to the Western Fortification and has the Residential Quarter of the Commanding Officer of the British period on its West. In the North, there are Quarters on the outer side of the Fort (Fig. 37). They appeared to have belonged to the British period and are built in Dressed Stone Masonry with a coat of plaster. The one quarter on the extreme North of the Fortification is provided with arched entrances and appears to have had a Hip Roof whereas the one on its opposite direction adjacent to the Fortification is a Gable Roof structure.

A beautiful sketch of Versova Fort (Madh Fort) drawn by Lt. Edward Harvey in 1777 A.D. (Fig. 38) testifies the fact that the Versova Fort described profusely in the Portuguese, Maratha and British period is none other than the present Madh Fort itself!

Conclusion

The Madh Island and Versova have turned to the modernity of Mumbai and its suburbs in its own way. It is the solitude and rusticity which dominates the old fishing villages of Madh Island and Versova in contrast to the wilderness and sophistication of the mainland suburbs. The Real Estate boom is quickly changing the topography and demography of the region and what is in the box for Madh Island and Versova after few decades is hard to imagine, in the same way like it was for its older residents. Madh Island and Versova have remained dynamic witnesses to the thousand years old process of human settlement and urbanization in the region and have seen the varying episodes of human nature, be it of rage, ambition, devotion, compassion and love and have retained with them the material remains associated with the moods of the human nature and endeavor in different proportions. Few of them are standing tall till today while majority of them have been succumbed to the ravages of the time and human

actions. Apart from the state of material remains, in this era of Modernity, the Public Memory of the region is also struggling to contain the stories and legends of the places and to pass it on to the future generations. The impression of stories and legends of the days of Raja Bimb remains still strong in the public memory in comparison to the condition of the surviving Material remains associated with them in the area. Temples are renovated long back but the legends surrounding them are still in the place with the few humble remains of the original self scattered around. Defense Structures are no more guarding the boundaries of the region but have become the places where the local people sit, chat and drink. In comparison to the legends of the Medieval period, it appears that the Public Memory is very thin in retaining the impressions of the structures from the Portuguese period onwards. Apart from the little hearsay, it seems that the memories of the visible past are comparatively erased from the public consciousness. Each Fortified Structure, even the Church is a "*Killa* (Fort)" in the eyes of the locals and according to them they are the remains of the bygone eras.

While concluding this article, it is hoped that besides generating awareness for the place of such Natural beauty and Antiquity, it will prompt more studies and researches on the area. It is the formulation of the efficient Protection and Preservation Strategy for the surviving remains of Archaeological, Historical and Cultural importance and Natural Features which should take the centre stage of Public Discussion now. Much is unknown about the Madh Island and Versova and there is no doubt that one day we will be able to answer a large set of questions that have still remained unanswered.

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