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THE HISTORICAL JOURNEY OF PATNA BARRACKS AND THE FINAL ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DINAPORE CANTONMENT

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“During 1757-68 phases, the armed forces of East India Company (EIC) generally utilized the existing pattern of Mughal imperial communication highway i.e. via ‘Southern-Ganges-Route’ but at times they also ventured other roads in the region”¹ of the then provinces of Bengal and Oudh. Hence, all the leading military barracks and subsequent cantonments, of the time, lay along the Southern-Ganges-Route and they were Berhampore (Barhampur), Mongheer (Munger or Monghyr), Bankipore (Bankypore or Bankipur), Dinapore (Dinapoor or Danapur), Chunar and Allahabad respectively. **(Fig. 1)**

The ‘Southern-Ganges-Route’ via Patna had been the most important Communication route² and the only way, connecting Bengal Delta with North India, before the construction of the New Military Road (1785-1830) from Calcutta to Sherghati to Chunargarh; through Jharkhand.³ Later, a third Road by the name, Grand Trunk Road (1832 onwards) was added through Jharkhand.⁴ **(Fig. 2)**

After the Battle of Plassey (June 23, 1757); EIC forces used ‘Fort William’ and their fortified trading centres, called ‘Factory’, as initial military barracks like Cossimbazar⁵ (south of Murshidabad), Chandernagore⁶ (captured by EIC forces from French) and ‘English Factory at Gulzarbagh (Patna)’⁷ among others. By 1757-68; more barracks and camping grounds came up in the ‘Bengal and Oudh regions’. Some of them were of great strategic importance and they were: - (i) Ghyretti,⁸ which replaced Chandernagore, (ii) Berhampore,⁹ which replaced

Cossimbazar, (iv) Munger Fort,¹⁰ (v) Bankipore Cantonment¹¹ (erstwhile Company Bagh), which replaced Gulzarbagh Factory followed by its re-location at Dinapore,¹² (vi) Chunar Fort¹³ and (vii) Allahabad Fort¹⁴ among others.

HISTORICAL JOURNEY OF ENGLISH BARRACKS AT PATNA

Historically, the Patna Barrack of English forces had moved from east to west; starting with the (i) Patna Factory at Gulzarbagh, followed by (ii) the Company Bagh Barrack at Bankipore and (iii) finally at Dinapore . The early colonial record revealed them as three separate towns, connected by the river-side (Digha-Danapur) road.¹⁵ -

- i. Patna Factory Campus in the old Patna City; was made the first Army barrack in 1757, after the Battle of Plassey. Here Coote was able to quarter his whole force. Robert Clive also rested with his army in February 1759, during his second visit. Captain Randfurlie Knox, on his famous march to the relief of Patna, reached English Factory in the morning of 28th April of 1760.¹⁶
- ii. “The Company Bag acquired long back; i.e. early in the 18th Century was the nucleus of the British possessions in Bankipur. ¹⁷ Presently, Rajendra Surgical Block, Mother Teresa Girl’s Hostel and Indira Gandhi Emergency Ward of Patna Medical College & Hospital (PMCH) Campus have been established in the erstwhile Company Bagh.

The land to the west of the ‘Company Bagh’ was made the camping ground since July 29, 1757 by the English army. From inception, it was known as ‘Company Bagh Barrack’.¹⁸ Gradually, more areas in the west were acquired. The Company Bagh Barrack at Bankipur was the starting point of the ‘Bankipur Cantonment’ in 1765 as it was assigned to the Third Brigade under (Sir) Robert Barker.¹⁹ After 1765; the New Barracks were built, in north-south direction, on the immediate west of Bakarganj Nala (east of the present day Gandhi Maidan).²⁰ **(Fig 3)**

- iii. Dinapore Cantonment: - The Bankipore Cantonment was relocated at Dinapore during 1767-68. It had its initial barracks in the GRAND SQUARE (Arrah Barrack) and the SMALL SQUARE (further west) respectively. ²¹ The Parade Ground was laid, south of the ‘Grand Square’. **(Fig 4)**

INITIAL CANTONMENTS AND ITS BARRACKS

- i. Previously, orders were issued in the month of May 1765, for dividing the Europeans into three regiments but it was not implemented.²²
- ii. The budget for the future cantonments was also reflected in the 'plan and estimate of barracks' of July-1765 for 6,200 Soldiers and their Officers, totalling Arcot Rs 8,04,238; and a Hospital, capable of containing 144 Men, besides Apartments for Surgeons.²³
- iii. On the 5th of August, 1765; Clive issued the order from Benaras, forming the whole force into three separate Brigade of similar strength, with the Brigade cantonments based at Munger (First Brigade), Allahabad (Second Brigade) and Bankipore (Third Brigade) respectively.²⁴

On November, 1765; the EIC Board clinched on the specific estimate of Rs 2.5 to 3 Lakhs for erecting barracks of each cantonment; which was, in all probability, keeping in mind about Bankipore and Berhampore respectively.²⁵

In Munger Fort, the First Brigade had utilized the existing Mughal buildings, erected by Shah Shuja (and others); and later by Mir Qasim respectively.²⁶

The Second Brigade was stationed at Allahabad Fort for the protection of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II. The provinces of Kara and Allahabad were ceded from Shuja-ud-Daulah's Oudh to the Mughal Emperor, as per the Treaty of Allahabad in 1765. In reality, the revenue of these two provinces were collected for the upkeep of the British garrison based at Allahabad.²⁷ The Second Brigade fully utilised the mansions and sleeping quarters of the Mughal Fort of Allahabad, for the stay of soldiers.²⁸ Hence, the construction of barracks in the Allahabad Fort was not kept in the development agenda of Fort William (the headquarter of EIC).

'BHATTA (BATTA) MUTINY' AND ITS IMPACT

After the conclusion of the Allahabad Treaty on August 1765; Robert Clive gave notice to the army officers that the allowance (Double Bhatta) would be discontinued w.e.f. January 1, 1766; which resulted in Bhatta (Batta) Mutiny of Bengal Army officers with serious fall-out in Munger.²⁹ The mutiny had effectively been quelled but it had severely damaged the image of EIC forces. As a result, the decision was taken to shift the First Brigade from Munger to the 'upcoming Berhampore Cantonment'. Instead of dismantling, the stature of Munger was degraded to 'lesser Military station'.³⁰

“Sir Robert Barker, who commanded the Third Brigade (Bankipore), found on his return from Bettiah in April of 1766 that half the cantonment bungalows had been destroyed by fire; and it was discovered in the subsequent enquiry that the fire was the result of the overturning of a lamp in a scuffle with an officer who was unwilling to hand over his commission to be returned with those of the rest who proposed to resign.....They submitted when Clive came to Bankipore on the 20th of May (1766)”.³¹ Unlike Munger, the Bankipore Cantonment was restored for the time being; but the image of the EIC forces, faced serious drubbing in Bankipore also.

NEW BARRACKS AT BERHAMPORE AND BANKIPORE

Initially, permanent barracks for the Third Brigade for both Europeans and natives, were ordered to be erected at Bankipore and similar buildings at Berhampore, which was then made station of importance, and shortly afterwards became the Head Quarters of the 1st Brigade; a respectable force still remaining at Mongheer.³²

The initiation of the work of the Berhampore Cantonment on March 1, 1766; was revealed from the records of the ‘Committee of Enquiry’ (July 1768).³³ Hence, the construction work of the ‘New Barrack’ of the Bankipore Cantonment was also commenced simultaneously.

The ‘slow and bumpy’ progress of the construction work of Bankipore barracks during ‘November 1765 - March 1766’ phase could be revealed from the proceedings of the New Select Committee; who took several measures in regards to slow work-progress, overcharging among others.³⁴ However, the barracks for the sepoy were subsequently countermanded, owing to the heavy expense incurred, in raising these two cantonments.³⁵

TWO INCIDENTS OF FIRE IN 1767

1. In March 1767, the Cantonment at Bankypore was almost entirely consumed by fire. ³⁶ It was decided to rebuild them with Brick, in order to prevent future accidents of that Nature. The incident of the ‘Great Fire’ further proved that the ‘burnt barracks’ at Bankipore, were made of temporary and perishable items like straw and bamboos.³⁷

2. Within two months of the Bankipore fire, there was report of another devastating fire that engulfed the city of Patna (May, 1767), which almost destroyed it.³⁸

The Board was convinced to erect all their “public buildings entirely of Brick, and their Cantonments with Brick Pitched Roofs.”³⁹ The Board also decided to build “new Cantonments at Dinapoor and Mongheer covered in with Brick-pitched Roofs,”⁴⁰ for which purpose the Patna Council was to send an estimate of the additional expense.

Significantly, the name of ‘Dinapore’ figured in the EIC documents, for the first time, in the context of ‘May-1767-fire’. The erection of new Officers Bungalows in the Munger Fort campus; was the obvious reference to the (new Barracks) Cantonments, mentioned in the J. Rennell’s Map drawn on 7th of July-1780. The decision about the re-location to Dinapore was taken, sometime in March-April 1767; after the ‘Great Fire at Bankipore’.⁴¹ After May 1767 fire, the factory Chief Rumbold, shifted the English Factory from Gulzarbagh to Bankipore by taking possession of the Company Bagh Barrack (Meer Absets) and the Company Bagh (Company's Gardens at Bankypore).⁴² The Bankipore Barrack structures became part of the civil administration and went outside the purview of the EIC forces.

‘KACCHA’ TO ‘PAKKA’

In 1767; the EIC authorities shifted from ‘KACCHA’ towards ‘PAKKA’ structures i.e. from temporary buildings (composed of perishable items like ‘straw and bamboos’); towards durable buildings (constructed entirely of Brick); and as a result the budget had increased manifold.⁴³ Hence the subsequent buildings of (i) ‘the existing military station of Mongheer (Munger)’ and (ii) the upcoming cantonments at Berhampore and Dinapore were first group of PAKKA CANTONMENT BUILDINGS in the Indian subcontinent in general and the first group of government buildings of Bihar in particular.

THE DELAYED COMPLETION OF DINAPORE BARRACKS

The slow pace of work and the hike in the prices of raw materials in the completion of the barracks of Dinapore and Berhampore forced the Board in March 1768; to order the ‘Chief and Council’ of Patna and Cossimbazar respectively, to finish the subsequent work ‘by contract and without any ornamental work’.⁴⁴

But, it appeared that the Patna factory Chief, Rumbold ignored the order of higher authorities and continued with the old way as he kept the (i) supply of raw materials and (ii) construction work in his own jurisdiction.⁴⁵ However, Rumbold assured that the whole expense would not exceed beyond Rs 7,17,648.

In February 1769; after the exposure of the great scam at Berhampore (July – November 1768), Rumbold lost no time and recommended for the pending work at Dinapore to be finished 'by contract'.⁴⁶ This time, Captain Watson was ordered to present an estimate⁴⁷ of the pending work and accordingly, he gave the total estimate of 'Sonaut' Rs 2,46,016.

Even then, construction work of Dinapore had far exceeded the first estimate and the works remained unfinished but Watson cited technical reasons for the delay.⁴⁸ However, he assured that the work of Dinapore Cantonment would be finished in next three weeks, according to reports of 4th of January, 1770.

Seeing the increase in the strength of Military Establishment, there was further demand for building two new barracks for English Army officers.⁴⁹

Though, Dinapore Cantonment was re-located during 1767-68 but all the four barracks of the GRAND SQUARE became fully functional by the first quarter of 1770. Later, two new barracks, were erected in the immediate west, and was named; 'SMALL SQUARE', but it took further time. **(Fig. 5)**

INFERENCE

In all probability, the EIC relocated the Cantonment from 'Bankipore to Danapur' with three reasons in mind: - (i) The then Patna urban area was expanding towards the west; (ii) There was definite impact of 'White Mutiny' and due to which, the Third Brigade of Bankipore was send to Allahabad and instead, the Second Brigade was stationed at Bankipore and (iii) Lastly, the strength of the Bengal Army was increasing 'day by day' and the accommodation for the reserved brigade at Bankipore Cantonment was getting squeezed.⁵⁰

The 'Great fires' of 1767 had acted as the immediate cause for the simultaneous (i) re-location of the Bankipore Military Cantonment' to Dinapore and (ii) the transfer of English Factory from Gulzarbagh to Bankipore respectively. In the mean time, the Third Brigade was recalled from Allahabad in 1767-68 but was stationed in the new barracks of Danapur whereas the Second Brigade returned from Bankipore to Allahabad.⁵¹

NOTES

1. Biswas; -“English maintained the ‘Southern-Ganges-Route’ and the Gangetic riverine route as the lifeline for carrying the provisions and logistics and used to term the ‘Calcutta-Berhampore-Murshidabad-Munger-Patna-Benaras route as the ‘Military Road’[P. 41]”
2. Biswas; - “Strategic Position of Patna in the Southern Ganges Route.....[P. 37]”
3. Biswas; - P. 45
4. See Note 3.
5. O'Malley (Murshidabad); - “Orme, in his *Military History of Hindustan*, treating of the months immediately following the Battle of Plassey in 1757, states that of the English troops quartered at Calcutta and Chandernagore, two-thirds were in hospital owing to the intemperance produced by the distribution of prize-money; while 250 men at Cossimbazar, 240 had been preserved, by the excellence of its climate, from the effects of at least equal intemperance.....[P. 186]”
6. (i) See note 6. (ii) O'Malley (Hooghly) [P. 259]”. (iii) ‘Ives. E; [P. 128-132]’.
7. James (Patna); - “The Company’s Factory (Gulzarbagh) lies immediately outside the western wall of the city of Patna; but the main western gate of the city (*pachhim darwaza*) is nearly half a mile to the south-east down the main road [P. 33]”
8. (i) Biswas; - “Geographically, Ghiretti is south of Chandernagore, in-between Mankundu (north) and Bhadreswar (south) Railway stations but east of Grand Trunk Road on the right (west) bank of River Hooghly (Bhagirathi) [P. 176] (ii) O'Malley (Hooghly) – “From the Proceedings of the Calcutta Council, dated 21st March 1763, we find that it was resolved to place half of the Bengal army at Ghiretti and the other half at Patna; while Stavorinus (1770 A.D.) noticed that at ‘Garetty’ the English had a military fort, often containing a thousand or more men [P. 258].”
9. O'Malley (Murshidabad): – “Berhampore – Headquarters of the (Murshidabad) district, situated on the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi, six miles south of Murshidabad and 117 miles (by rail) north of

Calcutta.....Berhampore was proposed as the site of the cantonment a few months after the battle of Plassey-doubtless in view of the fact that the factory at Cossimbazar had been demolished, and its fortifications dismantled, by Siraj-ud-daula in the previous year; but the proposal was not given effect to for some years.....after the war with Mir Kasim in 1763, when it was realized that it was necessary to have a force near Murshidabad to keep the Nawab to check. Its proximity to the capital determined the choice of Berhampore, but, in addition to this, it was regarded as a healthy locality [P. 174-176].”

10. (i) O'Malley (Monghyr); – “Munger Fort – Headquarters of the district, situated in 25^o 23' N. and 86^o 28'E.,.....Mir Kasim Ali, selected Monghyr as his capital and established an arsenal [P. 232 & 233].” (ii) James (Patna); – “.....in 1765 Monghyr was made the headquarters station of the Commander-in-Chief.... [P. 177].”
11. James; – “From here (Bankipore Gola) to Udho Das's Lane, the silted-up nala (Bakarganj Nala) on the east of Bankipore Club, we pass the river-front of the old cantonments of the Third Brigade, built under Clive's direction in 1765.....An old and ruinous revetment marks the beginning of the Company Bagh of the later eighteenth century. The historic Company Bagh, acquired by the East Indian Company long before 1757,but the land on the west was used as a camping ground from 1757 by the Company's troops.....In 1763 this camping ground (that is to say the land on the west of the temple of Jagannath) was appropriated for the Headquarters Staff....[P. 175-177].”
12. James; – “The Cantonments at Bankipore, where the whole army had lately been quartered, were assigned to the third Brigade under Sir Robert Barkar (1765) until three years later the Brigade was moved to the new quarters built at Dinapore [P. 36]”
13. (i) Broome; – On Chunar Fortress [P. 487 & 506] (ii) Clause 10 (Treaty of Allahabad with Shuja-ud-Daulah, August 16, 1765)
14. (i) Gour; - [P. 45-52] (ii) Broome [P. 505]
15. (i) James; – (i) “Travellers who have visited Patna have commonly described it as consisting of one long street..... [P. 186].” (ii) The old Ganges Road from Patna runs through the town and (Dinapore)

cantonments, and an excellent road connects it with the New Capital, and thus with Bankipore and Patna [P. 208].”

16. (i) See Note 7. (ii) James; - [P. 177 & 183]
17. See Note 11
18. (i) See Note 11. (ii) Presently, ‘Patna Civil Court Campus’.
19. See Note 12
20. Kazimi & M. Kumar, “In a hand sketched map of 1843,the cantonment of the army under his (Barker) command is shown as ‘*Lain* (read Line) *Sipahiyan*’ which extended from the present day Ashok Rajpath in the north to the IMA Hall in the south. All the hutments/barracks of the cantonment stood west of the Bakerganj drain which, till the end of the 19th century, was called Nulla Uddhu Singh.....With the opening of the regular army barracks at Dinapore, this area came to be used as the police line of the Bihar Station Guards and remained so almost till the end of the 19th century [P. 9].” The present-day Gandhi Maidan was a low lying area.
21. James; – [P. 207 & 208]
22. Broome – [P. 533]
23. *Ninth Report* – 1765 Consultations, 22nd July”
24. Broome; – “On the 5th of August (1765), an order was issued, forming the whole force into three separate Brigades, of similar strength and composition.....The first Brigade was stationed at Mongheer (Munger),....the second Brigade was stationed at Allahabad; and the third Brigade at Patna, or rather Bankypore, in the immediate vicinity, which was made the head-quarters [P. 533 & 534].
25. *Ninth* – 1765, 11th November
26. J. Rennell’s Map of Monghyr Fort drawn on 7th of July-1780; (i) Barracks in the site of the present day Goenka’s Anand Bhawan and the Jail Compound (formerly Shah Shuja’s / Mir Qasim’s Palace), (ii) Later, Officers’ Bungalows were erected in E-W alignment from Eastern (Bazar) Gate to Water (west) Gate facing the ‘Sepoys Parade (Ground)’ in the south.

27. (i) See Note 14. (ii) Clause 4 of the Treaty of Allahabad, August 16, 1765
28. See Note 14
29. Strachey, [P. 5-14]
30. Broome; - [See P. 618].”
31. (i) James; – [P. 175]; (ii) Strachey, [P. 11]
32. See Note 30
33. *Ninth*; – 1768, 18th July.
34. *Ninth*; – 1766, 7th April, ‘11 & 29 Sept.’ and 20th December; 1767, 2nd February and 12th March respectively.
35. See Notes 30 & 34.
36. *Ninth*; - 1767, 14th April
37. See Note 36.
38. Long – “Fire at Patna; public buildings to be of brick [Records No. 910; Proceedings of May 18, 1767]”.
39. *Ninth*; - 1767, 18th May
40. See Note 38.
41. See Note 38.
42. See Note 38
43. Cowell – “The Kacchā-Pakkā Divide:”
44. *Ninth*; - 1768, 14th March
45. *Ninth*; - 1768, 30th May
46. *Ninth*; - 1769, 20th February
47. *Ninth*; - 1769, 28th February
48. *Ninth*; - 1769, 7 September

- 49. Ninth; - 1770, 4th January
- 50. Biswas; [P. 29, 300 & 305].
- 51. See Note 50.

FIGURES & ILLUSTRATIONS

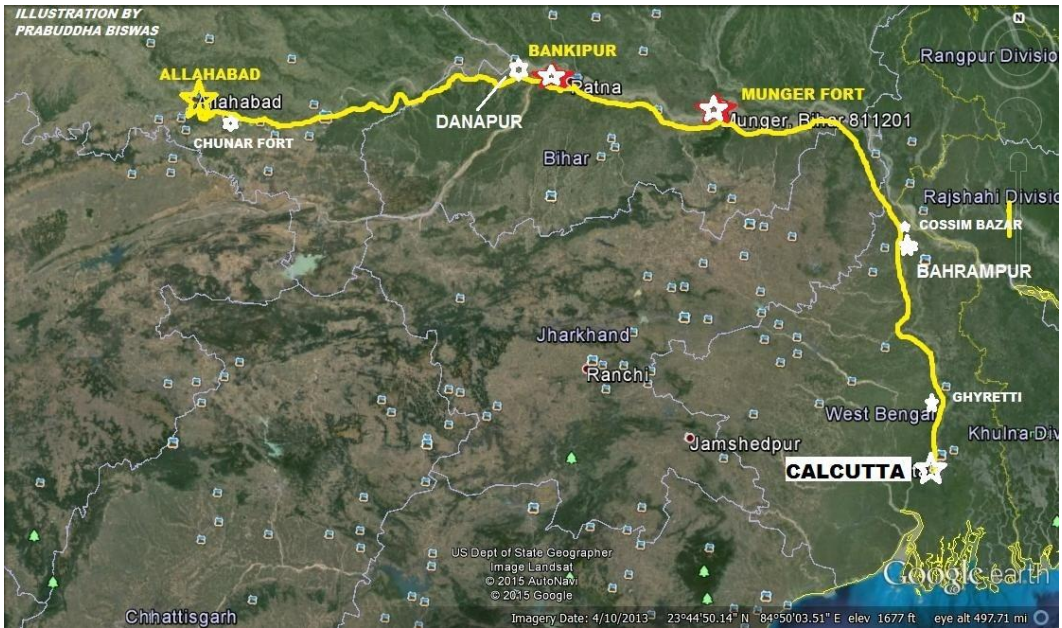


Fig. 1: - Leading Barracks & Cantonments



Fig 2 - Colonial Highways of Eastern India

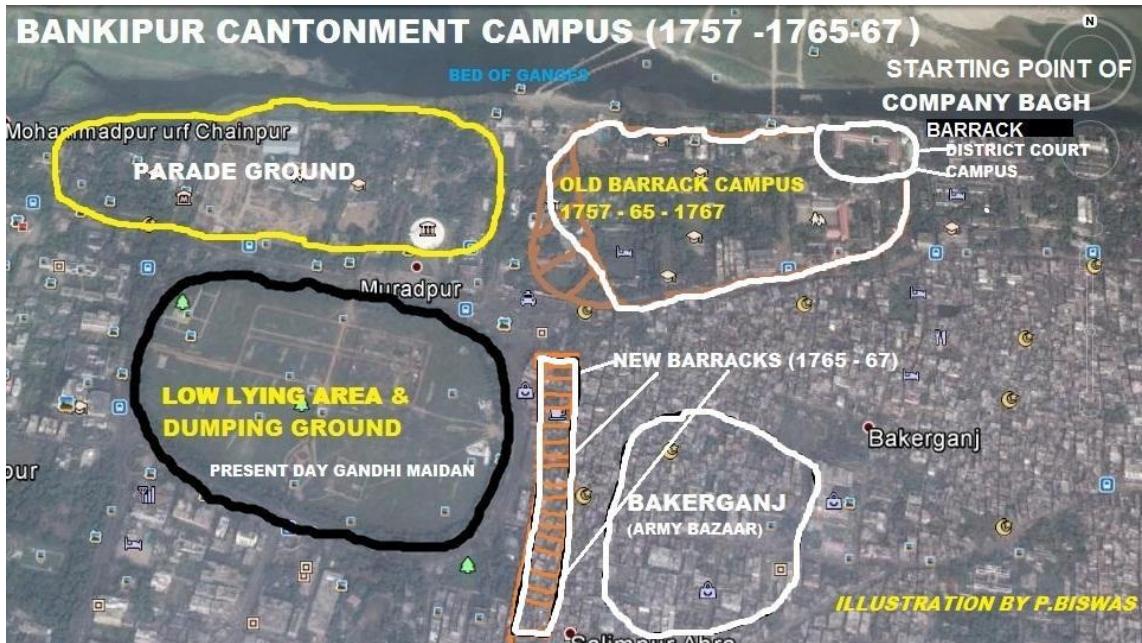


Fig 3 - Bankipur Cantonment Campus

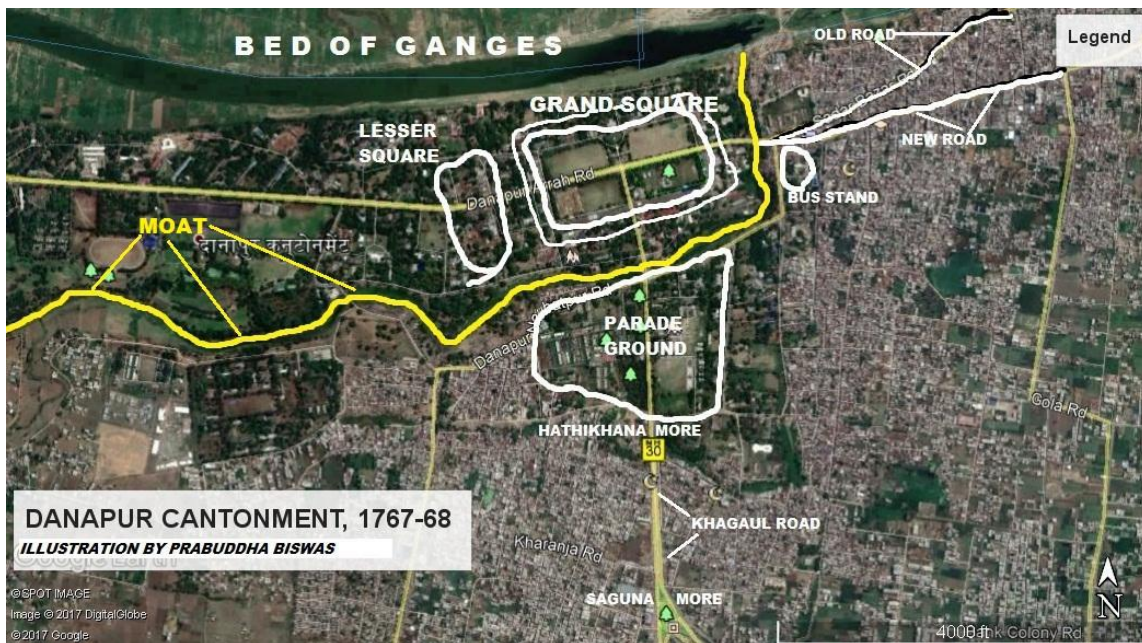


Fig 4 - Danapur Cantonment Campus, 1767-68



Fig 5 - View of the Grand Square (Arrah Barrack)

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