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Charting Ethnic Violence through the Lens of Heritage: Engaging with the Indo-Chinese Population of Kolkata

Abstract

The dominant imagination regarding heritage conservation conventionally validates a state produced idealisation of the past which often obscures the question of whose past is being represented (or not) through the state sanctioned discourse. To find the answer of why this erasure of a certain section of the past takes place, this paper has looked into the question of violence and different forms in which it reshapes the discourse of representation.

Engaging with the population of the Indo-Chinese community in Kolkata, this paper will see how violence has been produced and constituted, spatially and socially by the state which has forced them to leave the country. The focus of this study is the oldest Chinese neighbourhood in Kolkata, popularly known as Chinepada near Tirettia Bazar of central Kolkata. Chinese population who have migrated to India more than 200 years back have considered the city as home and contributed immensely to the cultural landscape of the city. At present, the once vibrant China Town, with its schools, temples, clubs and restaurants has degraded into a dilapidated shanty town with residents fighting hard to claim the right to the city. By connecting violence and injustice with the notion of politics of heritage conservation, this paper seeks to ask two questions. It questions how uneven geographies of power dictate the fates of communities and how state-produced violence reshapes public imagination regarding the constituents of heritage.

Keywords: violence, state, heritage, politics, citizenship, criminalisation, community.

Introduction

They picked up all the Indian Chinese early one morning in November 1962 and packed us in a cowshed. The police said they'd jail us for 'safety'. No one was allowed to carry any money, food, clothes or ornaments. It took seven days to reach

Deoli in a heavily guarded train that didn't stop at any station, lest the 'enemies' should escape. Half-cooked khichdi was served on the way, but some of the elderly Chinese couldn't take the trauma and died before they reached their destination (Chaudhury 2010).

This is the dark and gory story of the Indo-Chinese community whose narratives were silenced and forgotten from the nation's larger historiography. Heritage which is generally perceived as an instrument to mirror the past, the inter link between past and present and between present and future, therefore engages with nations past and tries to suggest and recreate a version of past in the present. In this process, the past is not simply preserved but a "version of the past" remains with us. A series of objects, places and practices are authenticated to preserve the unknown domain of past. Now what often elides our mind, is that this chosen past which is espoused as heritage is not "natural" or "organic" in nature. Heritage doesn't have an ontology of being and there is no inherent pathology of objects to be designated as heritage. The State, the conservation authority and some educated professionals decides what can and cannot be designated as heritage.

They decide whose past will be embraced and valorised as Nation's past and whose would be left to fade away. Therefore, the dominant imagination of the Nation's past which is constructed in our mind is engendered, constituted and validated by the State and its agencies. To find out why the erasure of certain sections of the past takes place, this paper looks into the question of violence in its different forms and locates how that manifests over space which in turn informs and governs the "politics of heritage conservation." These two processes, the process of recognising (or not) something as heritage and thereby glorifying (or annihilating) a community's stature are two interlinked processes. This paper will trace these interconnections and linkages which deemed to be unrelated but influence each other in an intricate way.

Engaging with the population of Indo-Chinese community in Kolkata, this paper will see how violence has been produced and averred, spatially and socially by the State and how this in turn reshaped the constituted the heritage discourse in the city of Kolkata. The focus of the study is the oldest Chinese neighbourhood in Kolkata, popularly known as *Chinepara* near Tirettia Bazar of central Kolkata. But it will move back and forth between the Chinese residing in New Chinatown or Tangra and address the larger Chinese diaspora because narratives of community cannot be confined within the spatial borders. During the course of extensive field work in 2014, in-depth interviews were taken. Participant Observation during various Chinese festivals, informal conversation with people from traditional occupational groups and club members have also shaped the argument of the paper. Chinese population who have migrated to India more than 200 years back have considered the city home and contributed immensely to the cultural landscape of the city. At present, once vibrant China Town with schools, temples, clubs, and restaurants has degraded into a dilapidated shanty town with residents

fighting hard to claim the right to the city and most of them leaving the country. By connecting violence and injustice with the notion of politics of heritage conservation, this paper will see how uneven geographies of power dictate the fate of communities and how it stifles the present as well as the past of a community.

The first section of the paper will trace the background of the Chinese population in the city very briefly and will focus on the location of their settlement. Consequently, it will see how, from the very beginning, the state has put them under surveillance and produced a criminalised narrative of the community. The next section will see the post-Independence violence, a new kind of violence, which does not harm the community physically but throttles it from inside. A state project of modernisation of the city, in turn, segregates and disrupts the essence of the Chinese neighbourhood. Indo-China war came as the next violent strike of the State on the community after which most of Indo-Chinese emigrated from India. But the process of marginalisation continues whereby hundreds of old Chinese are still "stateless" (Bagchi 2015). The last and concluding section will draw the connections between the constituents of heritage and the state produced violence which triggers a fabricated image of the community.

Violence and its human face

The narrative mentioned above is a reminiscence by Wang Shing Tung, former Makum schoolmaster Wang Shu Shin's son, who was then seven years old. Makum, a picturesque small town in the tea country of Assam was one of the many hill stations (other were Darjeeling, Shillong) where many Chinese families had settled down. Though these hill stations were the main targets because of their geographical location which was closer to the China border, Kalcutta, which had a strong presence of 50,000 Chinese, was also affected. Among the 2165 people who were interned in Deoli, Rajasthan 500 were from Kolkata (Banerjee 2007: 447; Chaudhury 2010). Children with Chinese names were picked up from the boarding schools; Chinese language schools and press were shut down (GOI, MEA 1966: 113, 129–130, cited in Banerjee 2007: 447). Chinese property was ransacked, vandalised and in turn termed as enemy property. In the later part of the paper, I will discuss more instances of institutional violence inflicted on the Indo-Chinese community after the Indo-China war. The nature of violence was not only perpetrated by the law enforcement apparatus of State like the Apartheid State, but moreover it deliberately inculcated a culture of racism and separatism much like the case of South Africa. The harsh discriminatory laws deep-rooted into pathologies of power intensified and perpetuated the violence (Farmer 2009; Abrahams 2010).

The State acted much like how Bourdieu defines the State; in terms of "the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence over a definite

territory" (Bourdieu 1994: 3). This means, above all, that the State, alone, retains the legitimate right to impose classificatory principles which enjoy compulsory validity. But in the paper the focus would be on more discursive forms of violence. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (2004: 1) says "Violence is a slippery concept on linear, productive, destructive and reproductive. Violence gives birth to itself. So we can rightly speak of chains, spirals and mirrors of violence-or as we prefer-a continuum of violence." In case of the Indo-Chinese also, the violence which started building up soon when they started living in this foreign land, started gathering momentum after the nation became independent, in different forms and dimensions. Such acts against them at last enunciated itself through the Indo-China war but again as it was a "continuum of violence", it did not terminate there. The process went on in the present century as well. Though there is a proposal of making Chinatown a tourist destination, there are still hundreds of "stateless" citizens waiting for the government to accept them as citizens (Bagchi 2015). They are still afraid to talk about the incident which tore their lives apart, separated many families and destroyed their economic independence. These continued assaults have become a "normative violence of everyday life" which is also termed as "terror as usual" (Taussig 1989). Incidents of internment camps are not unusual when two nations are at war and people who have even a tenuous connection with the "enemy" nation are treated in the same way as the Chinese were; but what is particularly specific about the Chinese story in India is the erasure of this "history" from public memory. Or it can be said that the government did not even let the incident register in people's memory. After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour in 1941, some 1, 10,000 Japanese Americans were placed in camps in the United States. This incident is well documented. Several books and films tried to tell the Japanese story and in 1988 US government has passed a law apologising for the internment (Chaudhury 2010). In case of India though, the Chinese population who went through the trauma are too scared to discuss the matter because most of them are still unsure about their existence, their identity in India. "Torture resides, of course, not only in explicit acts of bodily violence and violation but also in the reversals and interruptions of the expected and the predictable, striking terror in the ontological security one's lifeworld" (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004: 23). They also mention in the same section, "torture produces a profound sort of existential nausea and silence cemented by terror." In case of the Indo-Chinese, a similar sort of story has unfolded. Therefore the paper goes back to the initial days of the Chinese settlement in Kolkata and sees how the particular location where this "foreign" community settled down was segregated, surveilled and ghettoised and how they have been victimised and oppressed from the beginning which intensified after the war. The paper tries to understand violence beyond physicality – force, assault or infliction of pain – alone. It sees violence as an entity which assaults the very nature of personhood, which affects peoples' dignity, sense of worth or value, which disparage their social strata, hinders their mobil-

ity and questions their citizenry. The social and cultural dimension of violence is what gives violence its meaning and power. It is the very human face of violence that will be unravelled in the paper.

Looking back at history

Highly entrepreneurial in nature, the Chinese population came to India more than 200 years ago to find their fortune. Kolkata has the only china town in the country which is largely neglected by the larger domain of Chinese Diaspora studies in the realm of academia until the 1960s (Bonnerjee 2010: 59). The first settler *Yang Daijang* popularly known as *Atchew* from Guandong came to the then Kolkata searching for fortune, the second city of British Empire after London in the year of 1778. Colonial archives say that Governor General Warren Hastings granted 650 *bighas* of land just 30 km south form Kolkata at an annual rent of 45 *rupees* to Achi to start a sugar plantation and a sugar-mill (Liang 2007: 398). The well-known story says that Achi being a prognostic personality gifted the Governor General a ship full of tea from China and the generous Governor gifted him 650 bighas of land (Ellias 2007).

Ho Yuan That known to his friends as *Zhtat* from Nam Soon club thus asked me, "Why do you think you Bengalis refer to sugar as *'chini'*; because we were the pioneers in sugar plantation in Bengal."

Paul, another resident of *Chinepada* seems to be much acquainted with the history of the first Chinese in Kolkata. He narrated, "Achi went back to China and brought back 110 Chinese to work with him. This all happened in the year 1782.[1] Only after two years he died."

After his untimely death, his factory started showing conspicuous decline in productivity and was auctioned in the year of 1803. This area, where Achi said to have landed is currently known as Achipur which is a must visit to any Chinese in Kolkata; especially during the Chinese New Year.

Stages of migration: from China to India

Literatures tell us that there were three stages of migration through which a large number of Chinese made India their home (Berjeaut 1999; Liang 2007). Concomitant turmoil and conflict[2] in China made them seek refuge elsewhere (Roy 2012).

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[1] Some written literature claims that Achi died in the year of 1783.

[2] Opium Wars (1840, 1856), the Taiping Tianguo Uprising (1850–1860), the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), the Boxer Rebellion (1900–1901), and the series of movements and uprisings that overthrew the Qing (Chhing) dynasty.

Apparently British rule in India gave them a sense of stability and the first stage of migration started with skilled labourers. They used to go back to China to be with their family periodically. Most of them came from Guangdong province in Southern China: the Cantonese from the pearl Delta areas, Toi-san from Sai-yup Country, and Hakka from Moi-Yan Country. A small number came from Hupei and Shanghai as well (Li 2011: 2).

Each of these communities took up specific occupations for themselves. These "niche specializations" were maintained within the community until very recently (Das 2007: 535). The second wave of migration was triggered by the First World War, Japanese invasion and moreover a transitory phase in political scenario of China. This time the nature of migration was slightly different as the skilled labourers started to bring their families with them who were mainly women and children. From this time the women of the society got involved in economic activities to sustain livelihood of a large family and they joined beauty parlours and set up dry cleaning shops as well. The landscape of Boubazar, Tiretta bazaar area started to look more like a neighbourhood this time as the workers started to move out of the dormitory settings appropriated for single men to more rented house arrangements. In these settings, the front portion of the house was designated for shoe shops or workshops for the carpenters and the back side of the house was used for dwelling purposes. Till this time the Chinese were waiting for the political turmoil to simmer down in their homeland and most of them were planning to go back. They preferred that their children should learn Chinese, so that when they return back to China, it would be easy for them to cope. The last strike on this plan came as the violent civil war between Communist and Guomindang broke off and the communists came into power. As a consequence, their private properties were being confiscated and these migrants who worked arduously for generations to earn a decent living, decided not to go back and they began to think of India as their permanent place to stay.

Process of "othering": geographies of "spacing", "distancing" and "surveilling"

The locations of both Chinese settlements are indeed meaningful. The old Chinatown, somewhere in the intersection between "Native Town" and administrative area of "White Town", was the hub of many "outsider" communities who once settled down in Kolkata. Among them Chinese, Armenian, Jews, Anglo-Indians and Muslims from northern states of India found a suitable place to make a living. Though the Muslims cannot be termed as an "outsider" community, their involvement in businesses which dealt with raw hide, skin and their food habit compelled them to stay with other communities of foreign origin. These outsider communities whose lifestyle, food habits, culture etc. differed from those of the native

Bengalis of Kolkata, were not allowed to settle down near the native town where the majority of Bengalis used to live. Right after the Bengali locality, non-Bengali Hindu communities, the Marwaris from Rajasthan and the Gujratis were settled. They were the trading class and mainly vegetarians. After this buffer zone, which "protected" the Bengalis from the "pollutant others", between the native town and white town, there emerged the zone of "others" – for all the foreign migrant communities from other countries. They were strangled together without any scope to expand apart from the eastern marshy land of the city where eventually some Chinese moved. This area acted as an intermediate zone between the indigenous and the foreign rules. Primarily immigrants like Portuguese, Greeks, Armenians, Chinese and Eurasians were settled in here. But this is the very area known for its "interpenetration" where people from varied dissent gave Kolkata its cosmopolitan look (Dasgupta 2009). As David Sibley pointed out in his influential work on Jews and Gypsies in Geographies of exclusion and residential segregation, the outsider communities are often criminalized as their difference is considered as deviance (Sibley 1995). They are perceived to be the threatening "others" who were "pollutant", "different" and "unusual" for the upper caste Hindu gaze. They were seen as deviant and non-conforming to social norms and customs. Their food habit was largely repellent to the mainstream Hindus. Their lifestyles were perceived as intimidating, strange to the social norms and moreover "immoral". So the State made sure that these communities are put under surveillance and policing. Naturally, another important aspect of this location was its proximity to Lal Bazar – headquarter of Kolkata police. For the Chinese, their gambling habits, the opium dens gave rise to another stereotype of Chinatown where people were involved in criminal, illegal activities, where Chinese women were involved in prostitution. These images were repeatedly shown in media and films. These images penetrated and were imprinted on people's mind and as a result these communities' "otherness" and "criminalised" narratives were reaffirmed. Their identity as outsiders and as minorities thus gets confined into the exclusionary space and the boundary between the dominant and the minority gets reinforced.

Violence at its many forms: war and a spatially degraded neighbourhood

After independence the whole fabric of the neighbourhood changed in a rapid way. In 1950s previous KIT (Kolkata Improvement Trust)[3] built a huge thoroughfare to give the city its much awaited modern look and in the process it targeted the Tiretta bazaar area particularly. The road shredded the community into frag-

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[3] Now Kolkata Improvement Trust (KIT) has been merged with KMDA (Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority) on 9th March 2017.

ments. Chattawala Gully, Phears Lane and Blackburn Lane which used to be connected and winded through the neighbourhood got fragmented. It is hard to imagine how *chine para* was in the 1950s by its present look, but some elders sitting in the Si-yup temple can still recall *Jhula maidan* where they used to play during their childhood. A road has replaced the space where the community used to breathe.

Construction of several multi storied commercial buildings like Poddar Court building and Telephone Exchange of Tiretta bazaar along with many more high-rise government buildings which are hovering over the lone standing Si-Yup Church and Toong-On Church (erstwhile Nanking) is another attempt made to formally change the essence of the landscape. The residential neighbourhood of *chine para* has started becoming a disrupted, fragmented and scarred space since then. The Hakka community slowly moved out and established a new settlement in Tangra.

These instances of violence on the fabric of the neighbourhood were always an indication of the repressive manner in which these communities were seen. Indo-china war in 1962 came as the final blow which tore the community apart in both discursive and literal sense.

Following the Sino-Indian war, the Chinese community in India experienced state-sanctioned violence, harassment and marginalisation in the form of physical violence, economic displacement and ostracism from mainstream Indian society. There was large scale internment, unwarranted arrests, deportation and violation of civil liberties. More tangible forms of violence were expressed through the interment of about 2,165 Chinese residents in a permanent internment camp at Deoli, Rajasthan, beginning November 1962. About 900 of these internees were Indian citizens at the time of their internment. Many were asked to leave India within a month, otherwise they would be imprisoned. Forceful deportation continued till 1967, after five years of the outbreak of the war.

> The government of India repatriated about 1,665 Chinese internees along with their 730 dependants to China by September of 1963 (GOI, MEA 1962–68). Between 1962 and 1967, about 7,500 people of Chinese origin, who were not forcibly deported or repatriated, left India for China, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Taiwan, Japan, Australia, UK, US and Canada among other places… As a result of these arrests, detention, internment, repatriation and forced deportations, the families of thousands of Chinese were violently broken apart and their lives irreparably disrupted (Banerjee 2007: 447–448).

Series of laws and ordinances were passed and the laws barred the Chinese living in India from Indian government jobs, corralled Chinese in the cities they lived in, and persons of Chinese descent were required to report to Indian authorities for "registration and classification" (Li 2011: 9). They had to apply for renewal of residency permits in order to stay in India.

Thereafter, residency requirements for non-citizen Chinese were made more stringent and the definition of foreigners in Indian laws were modifies so that

Indian citizens of Chinese origin could be victimised (Cohen & Leng 1972: 272 as cited in Banerjee 2007: 446). All these required the Chinese to report and apply for permission to travel from their home cities. They also required the Chinese to apply and renew residency permits with the Indian government in order to stay in India. Till today hundreds of Chinese-dissent women and men in Kolkata who are in the age group between 60–70, who were born in India and have lived in India for more than six decades are "stateless". They are denied of any citizenship status. They need to go to FRRO (Foreigner's Regional Registration Office) every year and pay close to Rs 10,000 to renew their long-term visa (Chaudhury 2010). Payal Banerjee calls this "systematic disenfranchisement" (Banerjee 2007: 447). Many ethnic Chinese were Indian citizens when the war broke off but their racial features were considered more significant than their citizenship status.

The post-colonial nationalist state created and promulgated an anti-Chinese rhetoric which made the Indo-Chinese subordinate in every economic, social and political institution.

The harassment, violence and marginalisation continued after the war as well. When the detained Chinese came from the Deoli camp in Rajasthan, where the last batch of Chinese were realised as late as in 1967, they found their business been taken by the Indians. They were homeless and penniless after being stripped of their dignity and self-esteem. They started facing demeaning comments and glances from their Indian neighbours and school friends. The exclusion was active in both discursive and real forms. They became one such community who were externally as well as internally India's other. They constantly had to show their loyalty and dedication towards the state. The Indian authorities closed down Chinese schools and newspapers that were in favour of Mao-Tse-tung. "Schools, clubs and newspapers that favored Chang Kai-shek (Taiwan) were allowed to stay open. These schools and clubs added portraits of Mahatma Gandhi and Indian flags beside Sun Yet-sen and twelve-pointed star Chinese Nationalist flags" (Li 2011: 9). Then again when the communist government took the regime of West Bengal they had to show their adherence to the state government and again the portrait of Mao-Tse-tung came up in their wall.

Heritage: standing on the ruins of Chinatown

The horror of xenophobic[4] violence which the Chinese endured was expurgated from public domain. Few Indians had any knowledge about the incidence of the detention camp, citizenship rights and other hostilities which were operating

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[4] Apart from being structural and institutional in nature the violence was pertinent to Xenophobic nature of violence as well which emerges out of deep hatred and dislike for people from other country (Abrahams 2010).

under the name of nationalism (Oxfeld 1993). Chinese interviewees were often scared to talk or reveal their identity while talking about the detention camp or citizenship issues for the fear of being watched by the Indian intelligence (Sen 2007; Chaudhury 2010; Li 2011). This amnesia of the severe exploitation of the Chinese in the name of nationalism made it a memory of distant past. As Ashis Nandy has said, when the past is no longer talked about it becomes a figment of one's imagination, as if it has never happened (Nandy 2001).

The incident of the 1962 Indo-China war and its repercussion on the Chinese community living in India remains a scarred and truncated story of the community hidden from the rest of the world. The history of marginalisation and systematic disenfranchisement continued even after the war, which avers the fact that Chinese were historically in a subaltern position. Few members of the community who stayed back were yet to face more retaliation.

Traditional Chinese occupations which were part of the communities' social and cultural identity were curtailed slowly. Firstly, the tanneries which were one of the main economic sources for Hakka Chinese of Tangra were shut down because of a relocation order by the Supreme Court. On December 19, 1996 a court order suggested all inner city tanneries had to be relocated outside the city limit; in Bantala leather Complex 15 km away from Kolkata. Out of the city's 531 tanneries, Tangra, the new Chinatown had 230 (Mitra 2002). The Chinese have been and still being an entrepreneurial race managed to survive this turmoil, shutdown of the tanneries, by divulging their talent into another traditional occupation. Tangra has become the official food district for the Chinese cuisine with big restaurants like Big Boss, Beijing, Kafulok etc. since then. On the other hand, old china town which already had a mixed ethnic composition, where apart from Chinese, many Muslims resided side by side for a long time became an unwarranted destination for homeless migrants from neighbouring state. The reason though seemingly unknown can be largely directed to the proximity of central business district of Kolkata and the neighborhood's slow transformation to a commercial space. Several roadway transportation companies and small factories have opened up their establishments here.

> In the 1950s, Calcutta had five Chinese language schools, four large Chinese temples and the main street in Chinatown was named after the founder of the Republic of China: Sun Yat-sen. Chinese clubs flourished in the Chinatown of Calcutta, packed with Chinese, many of whom did not speak English or any Indian languages (Li 2011: 3).[5]

This vibrant Chinatown has demised; it rests on the memory of the community member. It has slowly crumbled under the wrath of the State. As the fragile caretaker of the once famous Nanking restaurant, present day "Toong-On Church" said in despair:

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[5] The old name Calcutta is used here as this is part of the original quote.

> What do I tell you about those days! The restaurant started in circa 1924. I have heard that the whole area was very different at that time. There were no tall buildings and no signs of all this traffic and pollution. The air used to be filled with the aroma of Chinese food. Violins used to play in the entrance to welcome the guests. That era is long gone. Now only three restaurants serve Chinese food here in Tiretta bazar – all of them are on the verge of closing down and you can see for yourself how we are surviving.[6]

He pointed his hand in front showing the dingy road, the incessant noise of automobiles zooming through the huge thoroughfare, parked lorry, trucks and the jungle of private cars, the filth, dirt, garbage vats, open public toilet and the unusual sight of disquiet – the lined up *jhupri* (slum).

This distressing sight evokes some crucial questions. How does a "nation" imagine its past? How does it recognise those communities which have made the unknown domain called the past (if at all we can define something as distinct as the past)? Here we must remember, heritage which actively accesses, remembers, celebrates the past "is fundamentally a means to produce state ideologies" (Ashworth et al. 2007: 40). Indeed, heritage and the celebration of a specific "past" have served for political interests (BEMIS 2011). Far from being representative of the history of a country, of a place or of a people, heritage is "an instrument of cultural power in whatever period of time one chooses to examine" (Harvey 2007: 31). In the process of "categorising" what is heritage and what is not, the sanctioned objects, place and practices gain an "official position". Others are left to fade away. Since the concept of heritage is culturally (and ideologically) constructed, there are many possible heritages. This implies that promoting one object, practice or site as heritage always implies neglecting another. This hegemonic discourse operates to build up a common narrative for "national heritage" which promotes the idea of a single past. This has significant repercussions on civic society, identity and the ways these engage with dominant ideologies: "the power to control heritage is the power to remake the past in a way that facilitates certain actions or viewpoints in the present" (Rodney 2010: 154). The power to erase the existence of a community from the history of the nation is imbibed in the discourse. If one thinks about the genealogy of the establishment of this (Chinese) "foreign", "migrant", "alien" community from beginning, whose history is marred with residential segregation, marginalisation, exclusionary, criminalisation and xenophobic violence, it would be extremely glaring why Chinatown has decayed to death and why no state agency came forward to revive it. Deep hatred regarding their racial identity is quite explicit from this quote made by a parliamentarian regarding the communities' pro-India stance during the war time. "The whole question, however is, even if he becomes a citizen of India, if his parents or grandparents belong to a country which is at war with me, I have no faith in such a person."[7]

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[6] Interview with the caretaker in 2014.

[7] Quote in Cohen and Leng (1972: 276). Comment made by Trivedi, on 14 November 1962, as cited by Cohen and Leng from the Lok Sabha debates, 3rd Ser./3rd Session 9: 2266 (1962) cited in Banerjee 2007: 447.

The comment is not a singular, isolated and personal one. It is how the community has been seen with suspicion and mistrust; no matter how much they have contributed in the cultural landscape of Kolkata and in making it a cosmopolitan city. The anti-Chinese rhetoric was there from the beginning when they first settled down; across the border, far from the proximity of the dominant Hindu Bengali neighbourhood. The city's constant effort to uphold its identity as a city made and inhabited by "Bengali intelligentsia" suppresses any other cultural traces and marginal voices. Therefore, in the realm of heritage conservation either it holds on to its long gone colonial artefacts or it showcases and projects those few Bengali *bhadrolok* who have been the face of Bengal's renaissance. The city's "other", the "foreign" communities and their histories thus get effaced from the city's cultural landscape.

Acknowledgment

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