



MAZAGAON AND ITS BUNDERS

An analysis of the history, practices, and narratives associated with the space and its cultural significance to the broader city of Mumbai.

ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the cultural and historical significance of Mazagaon and its "bundars" within Mumbai's port area, specifically focusing on the informal economy, communities, and colonial heritage.

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I-Background

Mumbai has been the primary 'gateway' to India for the maritime world, trading gold, peacocks, and sandalwood with the Babylonians as far back as the 8th century BC. The city was initially a grouping of seven islands, which was transformed into one landmass through successive reclamations by 1845. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 revolutionized maritime trade and further accelerated the growth of the port and the city around it. The Port along the Eastern coast was the nucleus around which the city grew (Kamath, 2000). Mumbai had a population of roughly 3 million in 1950, which increased to over 21 million in 2023. The port of Mumbai occupies almost 966 hectares of land along the Eastern coast of the city (Over 6% of the total landmass of the city) (MbPT, Special Planning Authority- Mumbai, December 2018)

The island of Mazagaon is one of the original seven islands. With its history dating back to the 6th century, the island was a fishing village inhabited by the 'Kolis' and 'Agaris' that changed hands from the Portuguese to the British and finally the Government of India. The island played host to several maritime activities during the time of the 'Kolis' and was expanded further East by the British who operated the port and its various 'bundars'. Mazagaon became the most important island of the seven generating the most revenue for the Crown (Edwardes, 1902). The economic status and maritime nature of the island led to flourishing culture and made it a melting pot of various cultures over the years from Kolis, Jews, Bhandaris, Chinese, and many more. A large majority of these places of worship have been retained till today.

After successive reclamations under the British, Mazagaon was united with the other islands of Mumbai. The port influenced the area heavily and was the primary economic driver pushing the island's industries. One portion of land being repurposed are the 'bundars' or open basins, in the Sewree-Mazgaon reclamation. Built around 1918, the area known as Darukhana includes the Lakri, Coal, and Tank Bunder, where they handled sea-borne coal, bricks, tiles, and firewood between the sea and land (Kamath, 2000). The Eastern Port was pivotal in supplying cheap raw materials for the British Empire primarily shipping grains, salt, and cotton. After independence, the area continued to be used by the port. It became the ship-breaking backyard, until a recent court order, which finally ended such activities on the island city. The bundars have hosted a vibrant informal economy including settlements, workshops, small industries, and hundreds of workers along with the indelible mark of colonial rule (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay)

With the opening of the larger JNPT (Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust) to its East, container traffic has been gradually declining. The government is aiming to repurpose a portion of the land under its jurisdiction with a focus on sea tourism and revitalization of the docks that will be closed. This plan has been termed the 'Port Redevelopment Master Plan' and is the largest land redistribution project in the history of the city. The Port Trust is currently evicting tenants from their land, which has received criticism for negatively affecting the lives of thousands who rely on the informal economy. The 'bundars' face a transforming environment, torn between a city's desire to expand its formal economy and the informal economy historically sustaining the area.

Keywords- Mumbai, Mazagaon, Port redevelopment, Redistribution.

2.1-Research Objective

This research aims to investigate the cultural and historical significance of Mazagaon and its "bundlers" within Mumbai's port area, specifically focusing on the informal economy, communities, and colonial heritage. By analyzing the history, practices, and narratives associated with the space, the aim is to highlight its cultural significance to the broader city of Mumbai and thereby advocate for its preservation

2.2-Research Question

1. What are the cultural and historical values associated with Mazagaon and its "bundlers"?
2. What are the inter-relations between the changing activities/occupations in Mazagaon and the growth of the urban form/housing and culture?

2.3-Research Methodology

The research is divided into three eras. Mumbai before the British, Colonial Mumbai, and finally the post-independence era to the present. Similar elements between the three eras will be compared such as housing, culture, industry heritage of the area, etc. A mixed method of quantitative and qualitative data will be used. This will include oral histories from stakeholders, archival research of images, maps, and drawings, and well as spatial analysis to map and understand the development of Mazagaon and its 'bundlers' This will be followed by an analysis of the master plan for the area while highlighting its challenges and opportunities.

2.4-Relevance of the work

The investigation of the cultural and historical significance of Mazagaon and its "bundlers" provides valuable perspectives for successfully addressing the obstacles of the port redevelopment proposal. The research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of the maritime culture of Mumbai, the informal economies within it, and equitable urban development in the Indian context

3- Images for Context

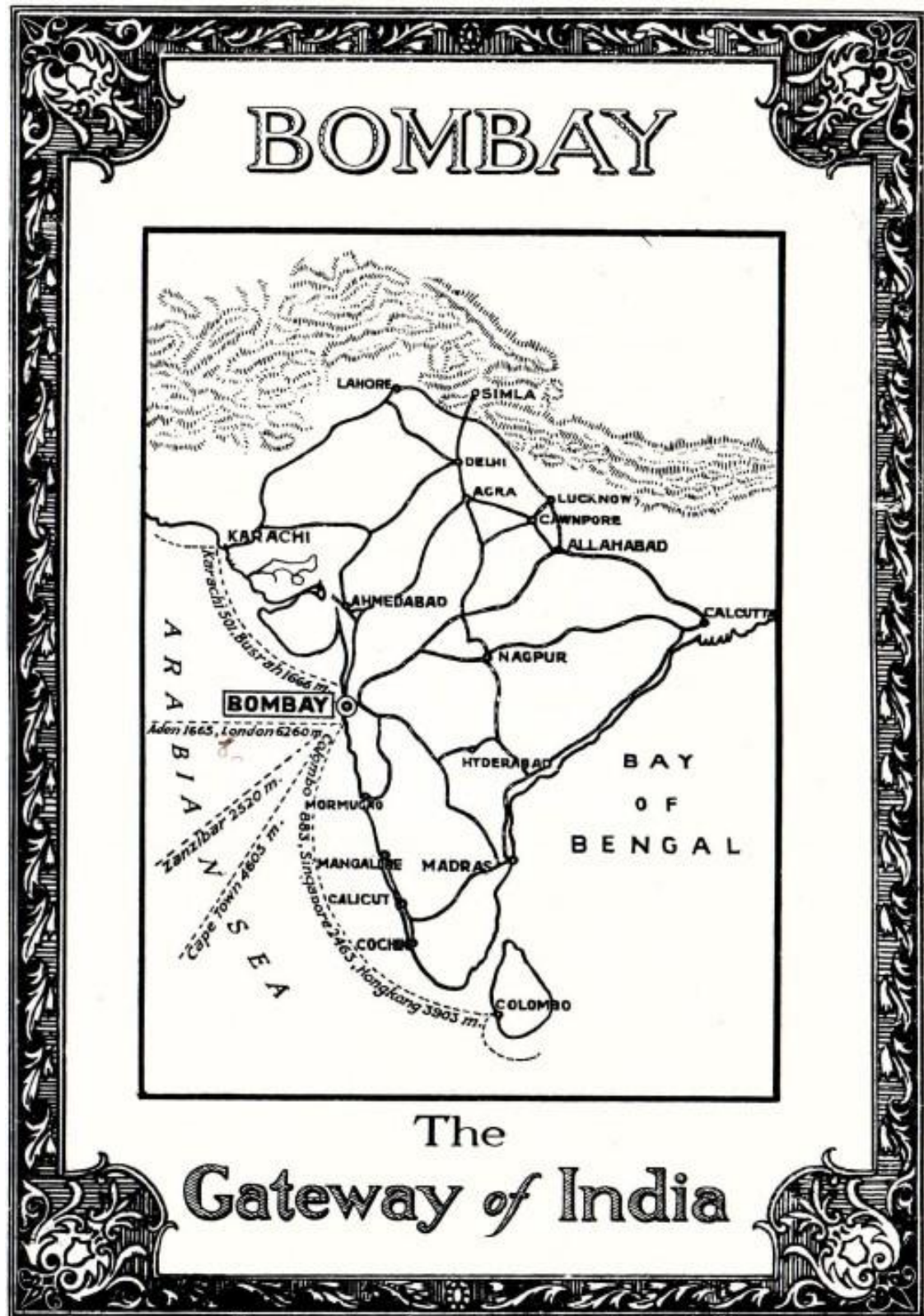


Some of the Port Trust bunders which accommodate the country boat traffic.

Source- A Brief History. Mumbai. Bombay Port Trust.

Image I-

This image depicts the various 'bunders' along the coast which acted as the primary transition area for goods. These were active port areas where trade for coal, bricks, tiles, and firewood flourished. These coves played a crucial part in enhancing commerce thereby fuelling Mumbai's growth.



Source- (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay)

Image 2- This is an image from the archives of the Mumbai Port Trust depicting the importance of then Bombay to the British Crown and the role it played as the 'Gateway' into the subcontinent.



Source- Manan Sheth (Photographer) Project- The Shipyard

Image 3-

This is an image from photographer Manan Sheth's series on the ship-breaking yards of the Eastern Port. He pictorially documented the plight of the shipbreakers and the tough living conditions they faced in the heart of the city. Although a court order has directed the closing of these shipyards, smaller ships continued to be repaired or salvaged in the area.

4- A brief history of Mumbai

Off the Western coast of India, the city called 'Mumbai' today was a small grouping of seven islands, separated from the Indian landmass by the Arabian Sea. Originally inhabited by the Kolis- fishermen community, the islands were conducting trade as far back as the eighth century BCE (Kamath, June 2000). The Portuguese voyaged to the islands in 1500 and gifted them to the British as part of a marriage treaty in 1661. The British had mistaken the space in the centre as land and named the landmass 'Bombay Island' (Riding, 2017). The British transferred the islands to the EIC (East India Company) in 1668 and the land between the islands was filled with successive reclamations. Mumbai had a population of roughly 3 million in 1950, which increased to over 21 million in 2023. Further, large domestic migration and growth have led to an increase in land prices and a lack of low-income housing. As per the last census (2011), 48.4% of the population live in informal settlements 'slums' which cover 24% of the area in the city. This massive population growth has led to an affordable housing crisis and the erosion of its public spaces such as parks, gardens as well as its coastline. The city offers only 1.1-meter square of public space per person. (Tokyo is 3.96, London is 31.68 while New York is 26.4) (P.K. Das, 2016)

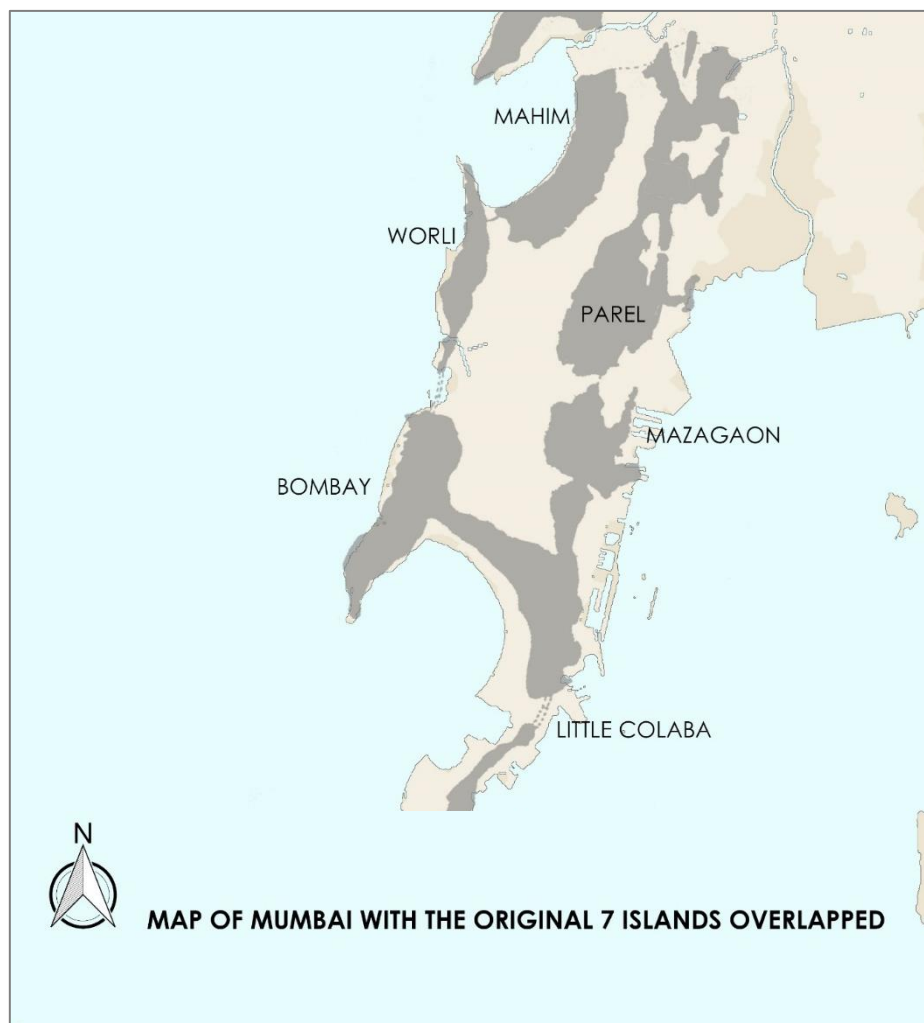


Figure 1-Map of Mumbai with 7 islands overlapped (Source- Author)

5-Mumbai Port

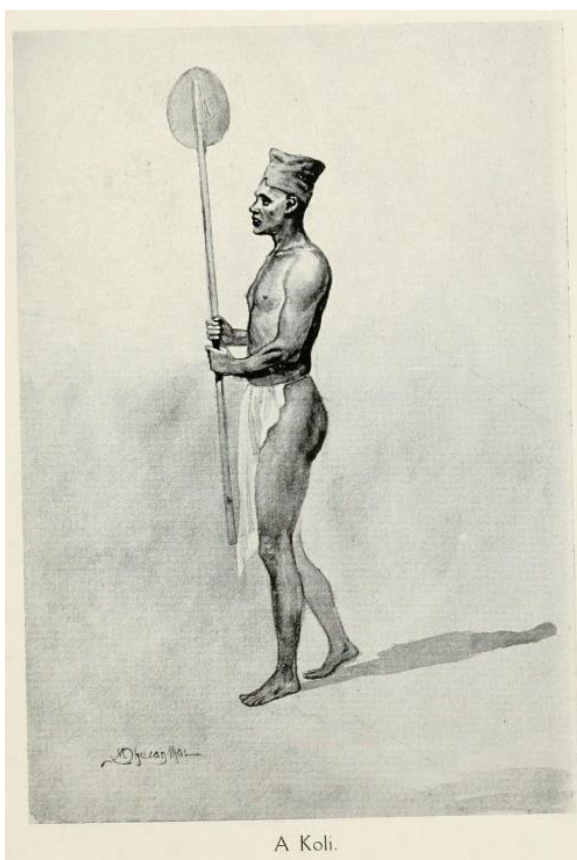
Works from Edwardes S. (1902), Ranade S. Y. (1973), Babu R. (2021) and Kamath (2000) provide the historical narrative of the Mumbai port and its integral connection with the city. The island was aptly called 'buon bhai' (good bay) by the Portuguese and the eastern portion was ideal for shipping due to its calm waters and natural deep harbour. The harbour then 70 square miles in extent was a haven for merchant ships that could dock year-round. The southwest entrance is where the Colaba peninsula provides a natural breakwater that protects the harbour from the fury of the southwest monsoons. These factors and the consequent growth of British imperialism and maritime trade across the globe led to Mumbai growing in importance to the Crown (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay). By 1687 it was the headquarters of the EIC and by 1858 control was passed back to the crown. After the Suez Canal opened in 1869, import and export trade shifted to the east coast and Mumbai Port became the principal Gateway of India. The opening of the canal revolutionized maritime trade and its proximity to the city was an accelerant in its growth that led it to being the busiest port in the country at one point. In 1873, the Bombay Port Trust was set up as a corporate body to manage the affairs of the port and its daily functioning. (Kamath, June 2000). The British invested heavily in infrastructure and the city had the leading port, financial sector, railway network, and textile industry in the country. The sole purpose however was 'maximizing economic benefits' for the Empire. With economic diversification and domestic migration, Mumbai grew to a population of 4.6 million by 1951 in line with the era of port expansion between 1947 (Year of independence) and 1999 (Hemalata Dandekar, 2013). The Victoria, Sassoon, and various other docks were constructed between 1873 and 1914. During the era of expansion, The British built new docks, enlarged the older docks, constructed warehouses, roads, etc., and commissioned its railway system. The Port Trust passed into the control of the central government post-independence and by 1973, the port had to adapt to the era of containerisation. The influence of oil on the landmass began in the early 1970s with the discovery of the offshore oil field Mumbai-High and subsequent oil and gas fields off the Western coast. The port continued upgradation between 1984 and 97, adding a new jetty, and warehouses and setting up the Bulk Oil Depot. (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay). The most important commodity of all moving through the port was cotton. The American Civil War created an acute shortage in the world cotton supply and Mumbai emerged as the frontrunner. Surplus cotton coming to Mumbai from other parts of the country catalyzed the opening of indigenous spinning and weaving mills in the city (Jain, 2017). Mazagaon played an important part in this trade and was home to the Cotton Depot as well as the Cotton Exchange Building.



Figure 2- An aerial view of the port under British control (Source-Pastindia.com)

6-The original inhabitants

The Kolis of Mazagaon was the largest group of inhabitants on the island followed by the Bhandaris. Farmers called the Agris were named based on the produce they grew. They grew batty (Bhat Agris), and seasonal vegetables (Bhaji-pala Agris) and collected salt (Mitha Agris) from the surrounding mudflats (Babu, 2021). The Kolis usually followed the traditional Dol method of catching fish. Using nets made of cotton twill two boats would place the nets 18 feet below the water using wooden poles. These nets were pulled an hour before the high tide and the fish caught were harvested and later sold by the women. They would produce all their fishing equipment within their village or Koliwada, this included the small boats, fishing nets, and ancillary equipment. The Kolis had a set of beliefs about the water and these practices have been followed till today. They believed the moon and tides were i.e. both high or low together and when the moon was not visible the low tide was at its peak. The men began as early as 16 and were responsible for weaving the nets going out to sea and bringing the fish back. The women would then sort the collected fish by grade and species and dry some before hauling them to the market for sale. Apart from the Kolis, the Bhandaris would produce a wine called 'tadi' from the ample coconuts on the island. (Babu, 2021) (Ulman, 2021). By 1812 the island had parcels of coconut/palm trees, fruit orchards, and batty(rice) fields (Joshi, 1995).



A Koli.



A Koli woman.

Figure 3 -Images of the original inhabitants- Kolis (Source- Illustrations by M. V. Dhurandhar from the book *By-Ways of Bombay* – 1912)

7-Mazagaon in Three Phases

Phase I - Before the British (1665 and before)

Mazagaon is one of the original seven islands of Mumbai that formed the 'Bombay Archipelago'. This Archipelago was 'discovered' by the Greeks between the first and second century CE and was named Heptanesia by the scholar Ptolemy. Originally inhabited by the Koli fishermen, its Sanskrit name was Matsya Grama which translates to a village rich in fish. (Matsya- Fish and Grama- Village). The islands were part of the Bassein district, which was ruled by several dynasties until it was signed to the Portuguese by Bahadur Shah. (Babu, 2021). Edwardes S. (1902), Ranade S. Y. (1973), Riding T. (2017), Babu R. (2021) and S. S. W. (1900) provide detailed accounts of the historical development of the port and city.

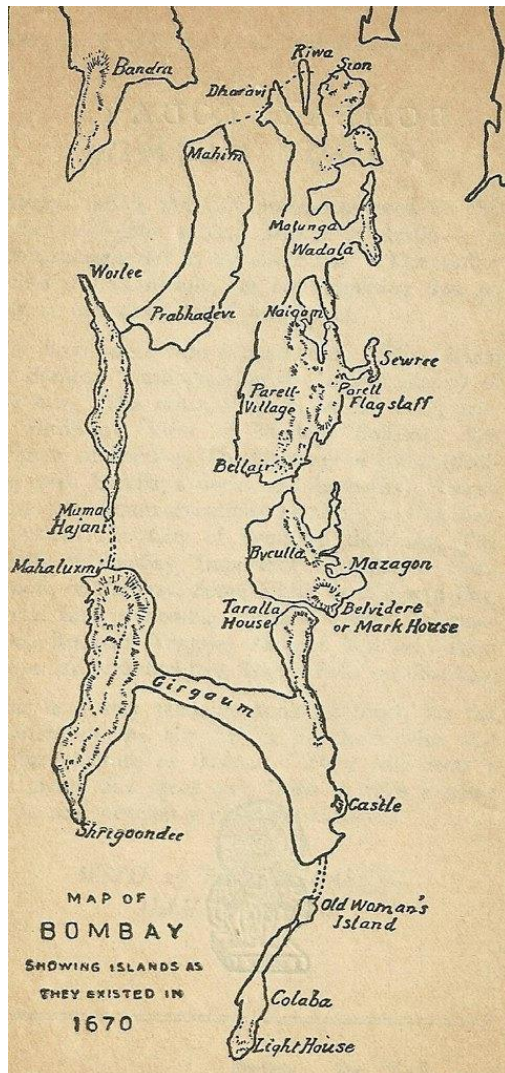


Figure 5-Map of Mumbai 1670 From "Bombay Today", published around 1950 by Taraporevala & Sons, Hornby Road, Bombay. (Nathan Hughes Hamilton)

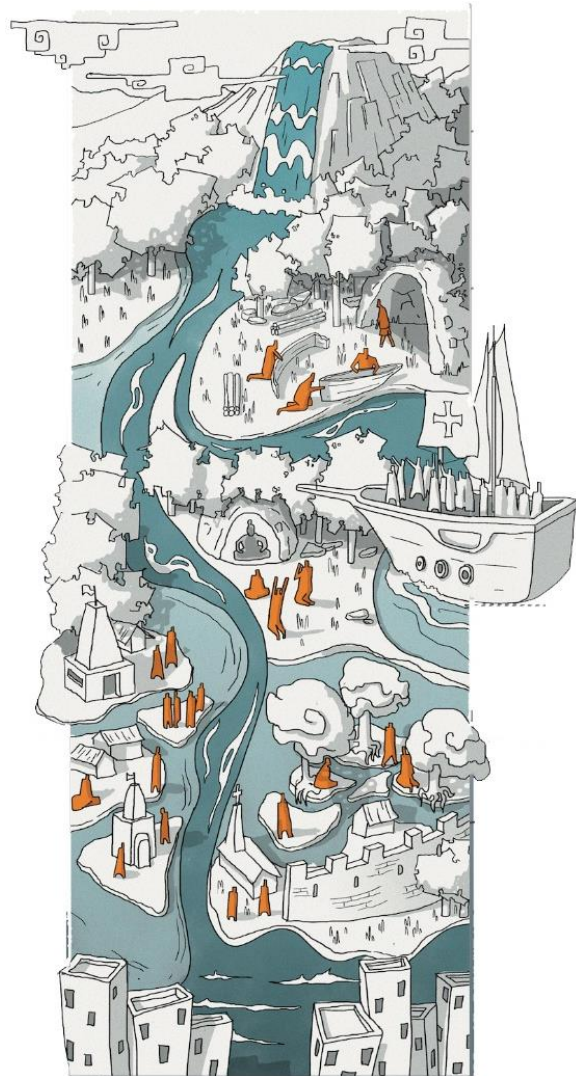


Figure 4 -Image mapping the history of the Koli community. (Bombay61 Studio, 2024)

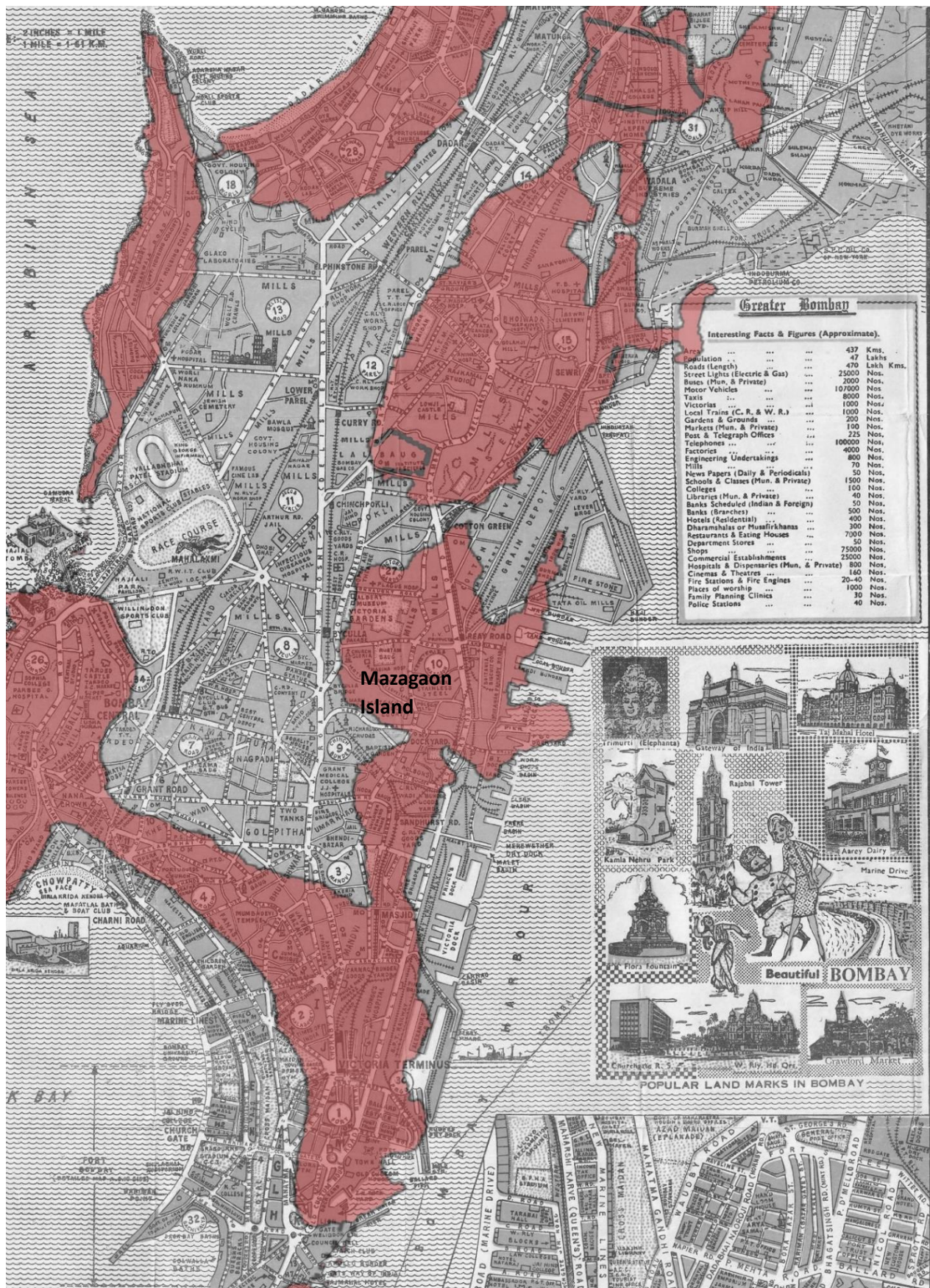


Figure 6- A zoomed in image of the island of Mazagaon overlaid on a tourist map of Mumbai. (Map source- Joshi and Co)

The Koli's and the Portuguese

Settlements were thriving on the islands before the Portuguese arrived. The northern portion of the island was home to the Ghorupdevi shrine and a small strip of land today known as Tank Bunder. There were rice fields to the West, three small hills, and sparse settlements. These small settlements were called Koliwadas and they would trade with other settlements across the seven islands. These houses were distinct because of their long verandas where nets were weaved. The house typically consisted of an entrance through the verandah which opens into the rooms. These are multipurpose and are used for sleeping, cooking, or storing. The verandahs would act as a privacy buffer and would be where the Kolis spent the majority of their time. The outdoor verandah would typically span the length of the house and would be used to access the street. The pitched roofs would typically be made of thatch (Joshi, 1995). These fishing settlements were distributed along the edges of the islands. Under the directive of the Roman Catholic Church, the Portuguese set out on several expeditions between the 15th and 16th centuries. By 1534, the islands were under their control and they divided and distributed the land parcels. Their focus on religious expansion in their 130-year reign primarily resulted in the development of churches. Between 1507-09, the first symbol of a cross was set up. The famous Gloria Church built by the Franciscans, began as a private chapel in 1548, and by 1596 it was elevated to the status of a church. (Babu, 2021)

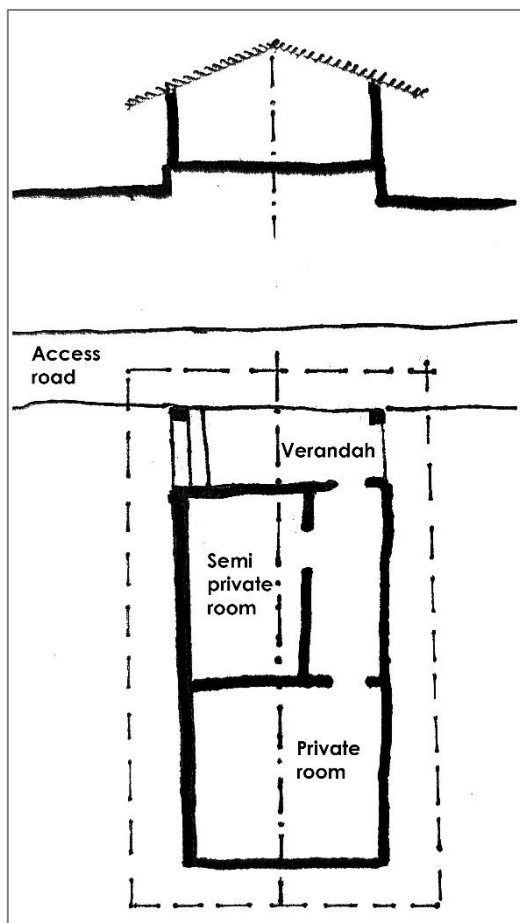


Figure 7- A plan and section of a typical Koli house with its long verandah.(Author)



Figure 8- A plan from the UDRI report on Matharpacady which is inspired from traditional Koli 'wadas' (Joshi, 1995).

Celebrations and belief

While little is documented of the Koli community before the Portuguese arrival, the religious shrines and practices have been written about by several colonial-era authors. The Koli's worshipped nature because of their constant interaction with the sea. Each household would have a deity protecting the house called a grihadevta (A God protecting the house), while the Wada (hamlet) they lived in would be protected by the kuldevta (A God protecting the family lineage). The wadas (hamlets) would form a gav (village) which was protected by a grihadevta (A God protecting the village). On the northern portion of Mazagaon Island, lay the 'original' shrine called 'Ghorupdeo'. The main deity of the people was called 'Khadaka-dev' or 'Rock God'. The shrine takes the form of a huge linga or rock 'painted in red with oil and vermilion'. The ancient temple was demolished by the British and the history of the shrine after has been contested although a relatively newer temple continues to host a volcanic rock believed to be from the 'Koli' era. (Babu, 2021). Several ancient traditions became a part of the 'Koli' way of life the most important being 'Narali Purnima' (Mohanty, 2020) (Sharma, 2023). Celebrated at the beginning of the fishing season, it falls on the 11th day after 'Nag Purnami'. They offer decorated coconuts to the water, in a procession led by the 'Songas' (Musicians) and 'Vajantri' (Kolis dressed in the finest garbs). A 'puja' or ritual is carried out before the procession where milk, flowers, turmeric, and camphor are used as well as an oil lamp. The 'Patil' or head then enters the water until it is about chest height before immersing the coconuts. The belief is that the Gods calm down the water making it safe for the fishermen. (Ulman, 2021) While a majority of the fishermen were Hindu, a few did convert to Islam and Christianity over the centuries. 'Holi' is the next festival celebrated by the community. Celebrated on the 13th day of 'Phalgun' or March. No fishing activities take place during these five days of celebration. The fishing boats are decorated with garlands. The 'tandels' (Chief of the fishing crew) and the 'nakhavas' (fishermen) take place in the traditional dances at this time. 'Holi Purnima' is another festival celebrated with great pomp (Ulman, 2021). The Kolis have a deep cultural connection with the water. Most of the Koliwadas still present today are still distributed along the coast. Praying, celebrating, and even funeral rituals all have an aspect of the sea that is integrated.



Figure 9- An image of the Narali Purnima celebration in the 1870s. (Bourne and Shepherd- Gift of the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection)

Phase 2- The advent of the British (1665-1947)

The British influence on the island came in waves. The island was a bone of contention between the British and Portuguese colonial powers. It Passed from the Portuguese crown through several families (Joshi, 1995) and became a battleground for colonial and native powers alike. The likes of Tipu Sultan and Shivaji contested the colonial occupation fiercely (Kamath, June 2000). After stiff resistance, the British took control and in 1668 the Crown transferred the 'Port and Island of Bombay' to the East India Company (EIC) (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay). The next decades of colonial rule brought with it tremendous activity on the islands. The Portuguese had used the island of Mazagaon for some shipbuilding activities but by 1672 The British began docking there as well. The small facility grew to a full-fledged dockyard within a year (Babu, 2021). The opening of the Suez Canal propelled the economic and physical growth of the city and the port (Kamath, June 2000). The island of Mazagaon was completely transformed under occupation, its edges were merged through successive reclamations under the British, and its waterfront was transformed. The island experienced a complete shift in residents, settlements, and industry (Babu, 2021). Mazagaon becomes a crucial portion of the Mumbai port and grows with the 'Mazagon-Sewree Reclamation' of 1912 when a large portion of land is reclaimed. The port catalyzes industrialization, with the addition of rail lines, tramlines, and port facilities under the British (Babu, 2021) (Kamath, June 2000).

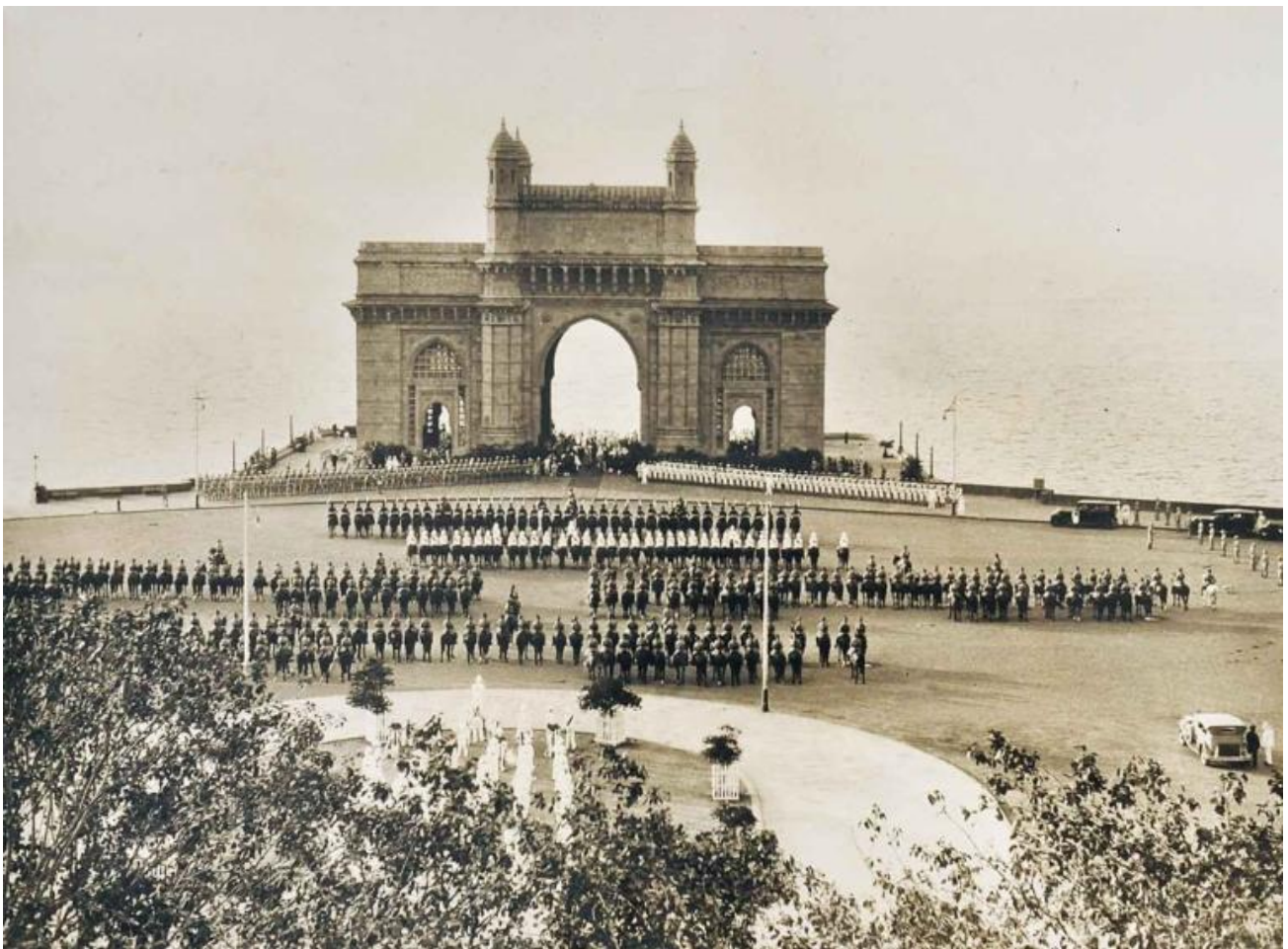


Figure 10- A 1931 image of a farewell parade at the Gateway of India (Associated Press news photo).

Reclamation and two railways

Successive reclamations left the island of Mazagaon indistinguishable from the rest of the city. The EIC had begun reclaiming swamp land in 1860, and the island of Mazagaon too was expanded by the British. While it merged with the rest of the islands, its Eastern waterfront was completely transformed in 1912 by the 'Mazagon-Sewree Reclamation' which added 583 acres to the city (Kamath, June 2000). The hills that once dotted the islands were razed by the British instead of expanding the port facilities (Babu, 2021). Earlier, goods from the two disconnected railway lines were transported by bullock cart (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay). This inefficient system was optimized when the British established a railway network to move opium, cotton, silk, sugar, and spices from the hinterland to the ports (Babu, 2021). Mazagaon was home to two major lines, the Harbour Line and the Port Trust Railway. While the former was a passenger line, the Port Trust railway was instrumental in connecting the docks, pier, storage depots, and oil installations later (Kamath, June 2000). The Harbour line connected the Island of Mumbai to the suburbs and Navi Mumbai in the East (Babu, 2021).

The Map of the reclamation from 1930 (Kamath, June 2000) highlights the scale of the undertaking. The small alcove was transformed into an industrial landscape. The largest portion included the hay bunder and storage depots. The railway line acted as the firm threshold that divided the port from the rest of the city. The cotton depot which was bustling with activity acted as the buffer between the city and the railway line. The three main bunders namely the tank, coal, and lakri bunder took clear shape.

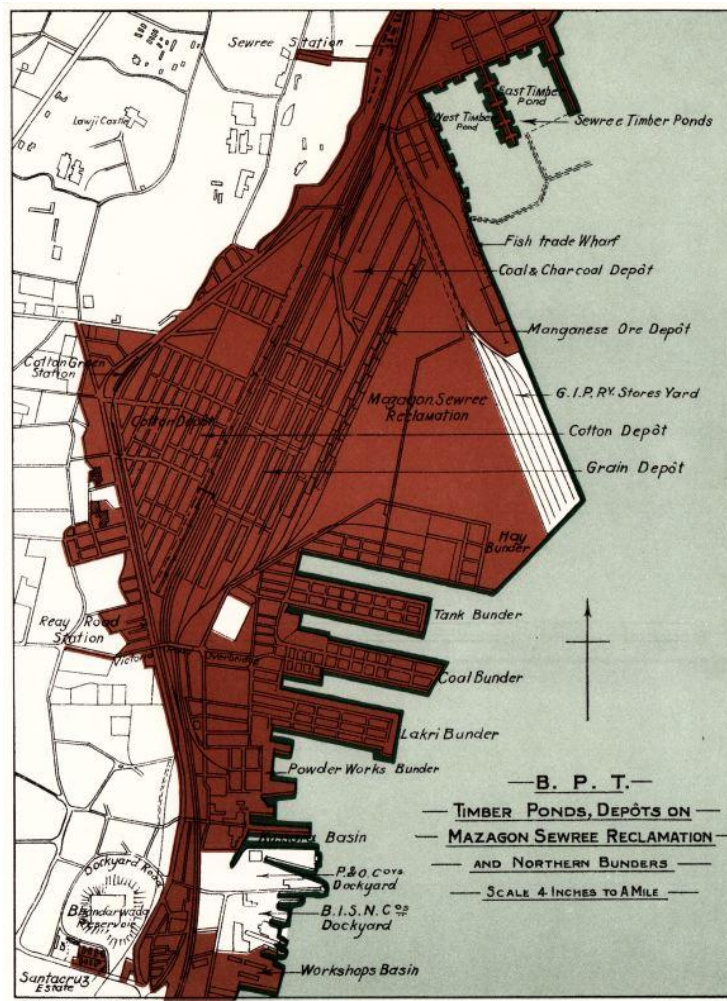
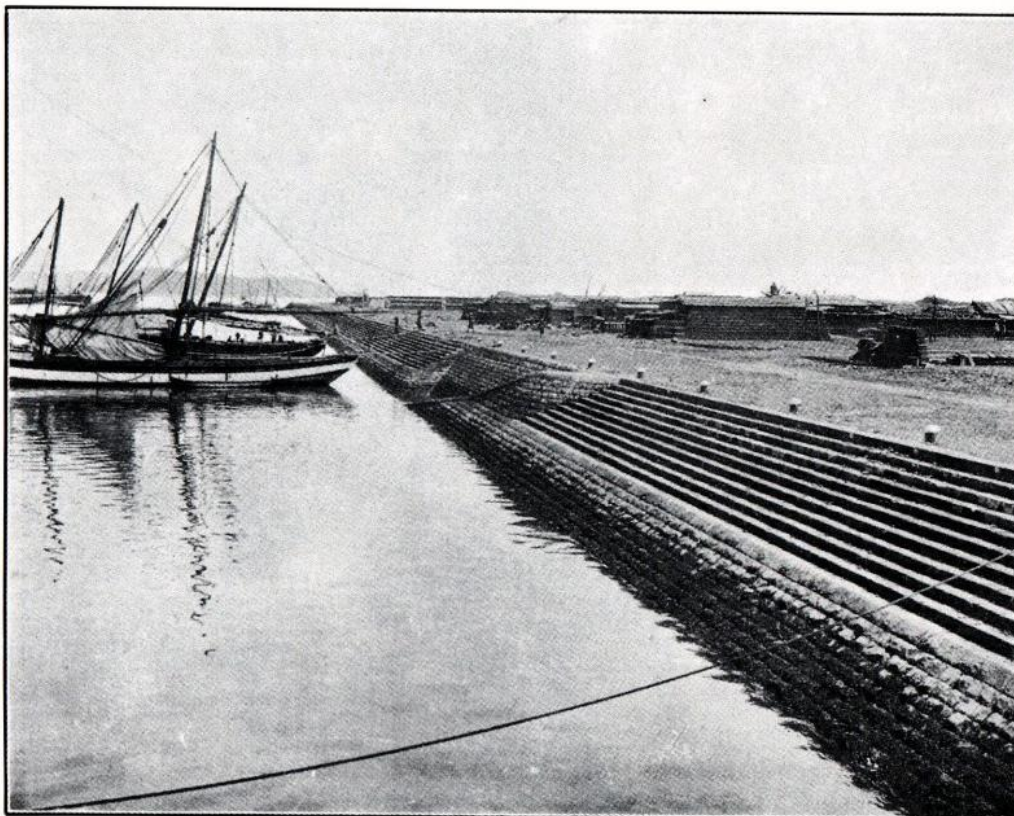


Figure 11- A map of the 'Mazgon Sewree reclamation' (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay)

The Harbour, Darukhana, and its bunders

The eastern waterfront had calm waters and a deep spacious harbour (Sharpe, 1900) These natural advantages had attracted the British to Mazagaon. By 1673, the mole set up by the British grew into a dockyard able to accommodate 200-ton ships. With the ships advancing in size, the dock was expanded around 1770 with elaborate ship-building facilities. A gunpowder factory was set up in 1769, which saw a series of explosions from 1826 to 1871 after which it was finally moved to Pune (Babu, 2021). In 1858, the EIC returned the island to the British Crown after two and a half centuries of rule. The Suez Canal opening in 1869 catalyzed the growth of the city and the Port along with it. Their investments in reclamations and port activities continued to grow and drove the industrial growth of the area. They secured the land under the 'Bombay Port Trust Act of 1873' which established the corporation (Kamath, June 2000). The area of Darukhana under the port area was crucial to trade handling one-fifth of the cargo in the port (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay). The city was one of the largest cotton markets in the world (Jain, 2017) and this prompted the British to set up the cotton depot at Darukhana. Considered the 'most important' depot, it was constructed in 1923 and covered almost 127 acres. The 173 depots were standardized and built with ferro-cement. This massive investment also included its fire brigade, dispensaries, and restaurants. The newer bunders namely the lakri, coal, and tank bunder were added under the reclamation. Portions of the land were dedicated to coal, bricks, ship repairing and even drying fish. These bunders had quay walls with alternating steps leading down to the water. The smaller vessels docking here would move the goods using manual labour. On the East of the cotton depot was the grain depot and Ryan grain market built in 1914. Additionally, the area also had depots for manganese ore, coal, and oil installations further up north. This area was crucial in servicing the growing demand from the city (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay)



Mazagon Tank Bunder, showing type of quay walls with landing steps and slopes alternating.

Figure 12- An image depicting the sloped steps of the Tank Bunder and the small vessels it would serve (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay)

The legacy of the master builders

The Dockyard today known as Mazagaon Dock was initially just used to anchor ships by the British. The dry dock built in 1774 brought industrial shipbuilding to the Island (Wadia, 1955). The facility built small warships for the EIC; these were primarily sailships. Although he allied with the British, the first master builder on record was Lowjee Wadia born in 1710 in Surat. He migrated from the Surat dockyard to Bombay but it was not until 1740 that he grew popular with the British (Kamath, June 2000). Having completed the ship 'Restoration' he was elevated to the position of master builder. The Wadia family (boatbuilder in Gujarati) of master builders spanned 9 generations and built over 450 ships over two centuries (Wadia, 1955). Rustomjee Maneckjee was the first in the family to come to Mazagaon dock and contributed to its reputation of swift and skilful ship-breaking/repairing. The dock was incorporated in 1933 and played a role in the World Wars when passenger lines were converted to warships. European companies like P&O and BISN took advantage of colonial oppression and conducted their business in the area.



Figure 13- A family tree of the original 'Master Builders' the Wadias (Kamath, June 2000).

Mahatar Pakhadi

The industrial activities in Mazagaon along with the growth of the textile industry were a major reason for the influx of working-class natives. The British initially taxed the Koli's for conducting their fishing activities but setting up the port forced the original inhabitants of the coast into the interiors. The name is believed to have evolved from the mango orchards or mathars around the settlement (Babu, 2021). The map of 1812 (Joshi, 1995) depicts settlement patterns emerging in the area and by 1872 a dense settlement pattern is observed. The British had developed the dock and railway network, leading to the migration of converted (by the Portuguese) East Indians from the surrounding areas of Vasai, Goran, and Uttan among others (Babu, 2021). By 1906, the dense settlement was proposed to be cut by the Harbour railway line. A small triangular portion of the original settlement was retained while the rest of the land was appropriated by the city and the port (Joshi, 1995). The small portion of the settlement existing today gives us an insight into the lives of its residents.

The British had developed the dock and railway network, leading to the migration of converted (by the Portuguese) East Indians from the surrounding areas of Vasai, Goran, and Uttan among others. Descendants of converted Kolis, Bhandaris, Kunbis, and East Indians decided to settle down in the area and their religious sentiments were favoured by their colonial oppressors (Babu, 2021). The settlement has an organic growth pattern with low-rise units arranged along narrow streets with their shorter side. The units have a narrow alleyway dividing each other and tilt at street junctions to form open spaces. The built form to open space ratio is nearly equal despite the informal and flexible nature of growth. These open spaces inculcate collective ownership of the street and serve as places to congregate for social and religious gatherings. The narrow streets and staggered buildings discourage vehicular traffic and function as effective pedestrian paths. The main road network forms a peripheral loop around the district which comprises low-rise (Majority between 1 and 3 storeys) units. Mirroring the Koli settlements, the structures had raised verandahs surrounded by delicate cast iron railings acting as buffers providing privacy to the interior rooms. The verandahs act as the first threshold between the pedestrian street and the interior while encouraging social interaction with the environment through their form. The structures consist of thick load-bearing walls built with burnt bricks or random rubble stone. These were covered in mud or lime mortar and had primarily pitched roofs with timber frames covered in Mangalore tiles. These were effective against the torrential rain Mumbai witnessed during the monsoons and allowed the structure to 'breathe' (Joshi, 1995).

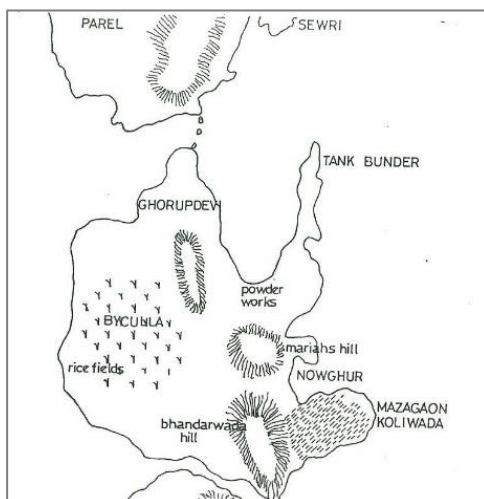


Figure 15- Map of Mazagaon in 1670 (Joshi, 1995)

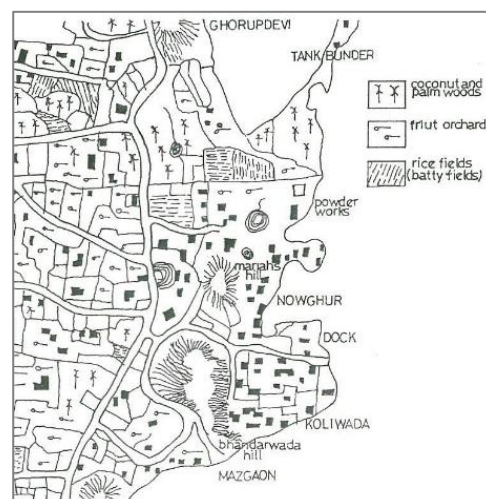


Figure 14- Map of Mazagaon in 1812 (Joshi, 1995)



Figure 16-Plan of Matharpacady from the report depicting its narrow streets and dense settlement. (Joshi, 1995)

Melting pot

The establishment of the port and allied facilities in Mazagaon divided the island, separating the residents from the sea (Joshi, 1995). The port area with its many depots and bunders grew on its own disconnected from the rapid development the city was experiencing. Articles (Bhuyan, 2015) (Bose, 2016) (Dabhade, 2024) (Pal, 2018) highlight the rich cultural fabric of Mazagaon over the centuries. The employment generated by the industries meant that several communities resided in Mazagaon over the years. Each of these groups built their places of worship and celebrated religious festivals as well. Apart from the Ghorupdeo shrine, the island also had several old temples like the Gavdevi and Mankeshwar among others. Gavdevi temple is believed to have the footprints of the Gavdevta of the island and has been worshipped by the Kolis from ancient times. The idol was taken around the island during the Navratri celebration. The Mankeshwar temple was dedicated to the god Shiva and Hindu festivals like Shrawan and Manik Poornima were celebrated here. Several Jains also moved here over the years, and have several temples in the area. The oldest built by a Jain philanthropist who would trade with China, Ceylon, and Java is almost two hundred years old. The island is also home to the only Chinese temple (Kwan Kung) in the city. Unique due to its location within Port Trust territory, it was built by the See Yup Koon community from Southern China. They had set up a Chinatown in the 1900s and built the temple in 1919. They settled in Mazagaon near the port since they were mainly merchants or sailors who worked for the EIC (Babu, 2021) . The island also had a sizeable Parsi and Muslim population, with multiple places of worship.

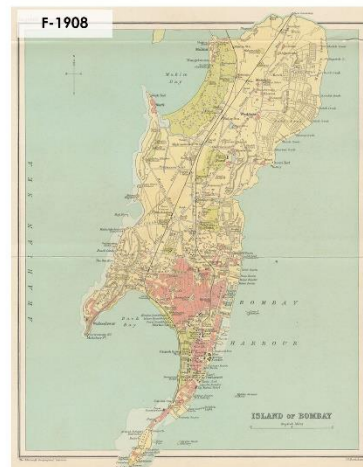
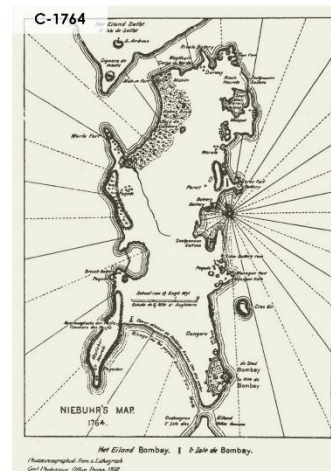
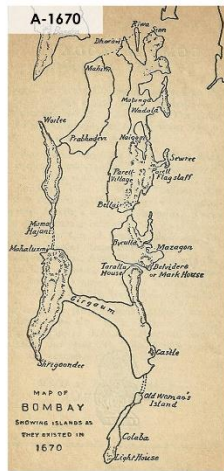


Figure 18-Interior of Gloria Church (Gloria Church Wordpress)



Figure 17-Kwan-Kung Chinese temple (Free Press Journal)

Colonial era- 1665 to 1947



Post-independence- 1947 to present

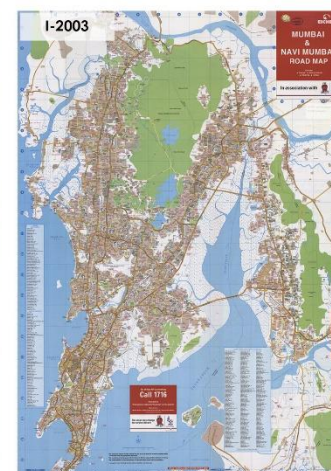
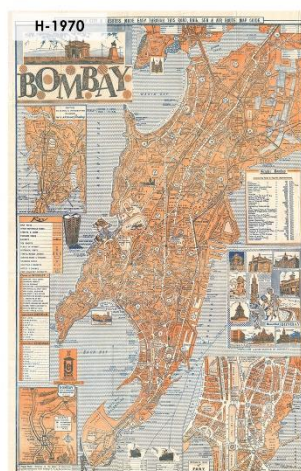


Figure 19-A timeline of various historical maps of Mumbai. (A- Taraporevala & Sons, B- John Thornton, C- Niebuhr, D- East India Company, E- Thomas Cook and Sons, F- Imperial Gazetteer of India, G- Baedeker, H-Joshi and Co and I-Hindustan Petroleum)

Phase 3- Post independence to now (1947- Present)

The era of port expansion began in 1915 under the British and continued till the 1990s (Bombay Port, 1982). Marked by the commissioning of the port railway system, facilities like docks, roads, warehouses, and other supporting infrastructure continued to be built (Mumbai Port Trust- The Port of Bombay). India finally attained freedom from colonial rule in 1947 and this period of transition did not slow down the growth of the port. The last British troops finally left in 1948 through the Port of Bombay (National Army Museum, 2024). The port went through a massive transformation during the era of containerization in the 70s. The discovery of the offshore oil field 'Bombay High' and the era of containerization that began in 1973 aided the expansion of the port. The JNPT (Jawaharlal Nehru Port Terminal) was established in the satellite city of New Bombay to the East to reduce the load on Mumbai port although, Mumbai Port Trust continued to add oil/chemical terminals and warehouses till 1997. Between 1997 and 2008 the port invested in the modernization of facilities, however, post-2008 it saw a gradual decline in cargo traffic (Kamath, June 2000). The better-equipped JNPT began handling a majority of the cargo coming into the region thereby reducing the load on Mumbai Port and has led to 'sub-optimal' (Anirudh Paul, 2004) use of its massive land parcel. The port authority also took steps to disband shipbreaking and the transportation of coal. The maritime character of Mazagaon has been strongly established. The proximity to the port and its overarching influence have shaped the socio-economic fabric of the island. Different works (Bhuyan, 2015) (Bose, 2016) (Dabhade, 2024) (Warrier, 2018) have highlighted the historical, social, and political layers underpinning the importance of Mazagaon and its area of the port. The port itself has a perceived boundary separated by the north-south periphery road across its length (Anirudh Paul, 2004).



Figure 20-The last troops to leave India in 1948 through Bombay, now Mumbai (National Army Museum, 2024)

Industrialization and Informal Growth

The Mazagaon dockyard which was first incorporated in 1934 under British rule (MDSL Website), continued to grow post-independence. It became a public defence shipyard (Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders Limited) in 1960, to fulfill the domestic need and replace the outdated Royal Navy ships the British left behind. It was instrumental in supplying frigates, destroyers, and submarines for the Indian Navy. The dockyard later supplied equipment for the offshore oil field 'Mumbai High' and continues to supply for the Navy as well as commercial clients, still preserving the oldest organized industry in the city (Babu, 2021). The UDRI report (Anirudh Paul, 2004) on the eastern waterfront also highlights the numerous informal industries that grew symbiotically with the port. While the list of stakeholders is large a majority of the settlements are occupied by servicemen truckers, fishermen, and cleaners that occupy the slums in the area of Darukhana. They service the large number of warehouses that primarily trade in steel as highlighted in an interview with a commercial tenant (Shah, 2024) of a warehouse in the area. He mentions that they are primarily 'migrants from other states' that usually come in 'groups from their villages' and earn wages through manual labour. The UDRI report (Anirudh Paul, 2004) which is two decades old accounted that between Darukhana and the bunders almost 12150 people lived in informal settlements. The port has witnessed a decline in industrial activities and the disbanding of shipbreaking since then however, there is no recent calculation available that highlights this number. An interview with a photojournalist (Sheth, 2024) who has extensively documented the area reveals the scale of the disbanded ship-breaking industry. This is reinforced by the findings of the UDRI (Anirudh Paul, 2004) which describe a similar edge condition in 2004. The shipbreaking industry and a vibrant scrap market (Naik, 2015) are the major informal industries in the area.



Figure 21-Image from the project 'The Shipyard' depicting the industries thriving in the area (Sheth, 2024).

Decay

The island of Mazagaon and its settlements eventually merged with the rest of the city leaving back only a few relics such as Matharpacady and the bunders. Pankaj Joshi's report on Matharpacady highlights the haphazard development of the area surrounding it (Joshi, 1995). The port area which was cut off from the island by the British was transferred from the Crown to the Central government which only focused on the operational capabilities of the port. The photo-documentation conducted on the site reveals the dilapidated state of the buildings and the sub-optimal usage of the waterfront corroborating the UDRI report. A majority of the structures in the Darukhana area are warehouses. Typically, RCC-framed pitched roof structures and ferrocement warehouses dominate the depot area (Anirudh Paul, 2004). The parcels near the bunders have similar pitched roof warehouses, while further up north several dilapidated buildings and empty lots covered the Mazagaon-Sewri reclamation area. The informal settlements documented in the area lack basic facilities like toilets and electricity (Hanwate, 2024). Oil silos of companies like Hindustan Petroleum are protected by large compound walls and dot the northern portion of the area. A number of these warehouses are in terrible condition and use the land sub-optimally. The Cotton, Charcoal, and Grain depots are either dysfunctional or irregularly used and primarily serve parking and vehicle repair (Anirudh Paul, 2004).



Figure 22-Image of a decaying warehouse (Author)



Figure 23-Nature thriving among the dilapidated buildings (Author).



Figure 24-The edge condition of the bunders (Author).

8-The Next Phase

The port occupies most of the Eastern coast of the city, a city with ever-increasing land rates and a massive shortage of land and public spaces, both open and enclosed. The port area itself went through a massive transformation in recent years with its 'workforce declining by 50% from 1990 to 2005' (Hemalata Dandekar, 2013). As seen in Figures 4 and 5, in recent years the Mumbai Port has seen a gradual decline in the amount of cargo it is handling. In 2019, the port was fifth in terms of the amount of cargo moved. This is due to the Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT) which was established in 1989 to reduce the load on the Mumbai Port. JNPT now handles 70 percent of the oil from Jawahar Dweep and Pir Pau while MbPT only handles 30 percent. Furthermore, MbPT has also stopped shipbreaking and the transportation of coal.

As cargo traffic towards the Mumbai Port has reduced, the Trust is aiming to repurpose a portion of the massive amount of land under its jurisdiction. They are focusing on sea tourism and revitalization of the docks that will now be closed. To optimize the use of this valuable real estate, the Port Trust looked at several exams of other cities that have adapted their port areas for alternative uses. This plan has been termed the 'Port Redevelopment Master Plan' and is the largest land redistribution in the history of the city. The port aims to become a hub for sea tourism along with the creation of new financial centres (MbPT, 2018). The Mumbai Port Master Plan redistributes the land that the Port Trust is opening up with the clear intention of pivoting to the international cruise market. MbPT found the optimal use of this land would be met by the revenue generated by sea tourism and its allied activities. The tender for this plan was won by Ahmedabad-based HCP which claims- 'The draft master plan proposes to develop a new financial centre, a Government office, hotels, commercial as well as residential properties near the proposed metro line and the existing suburban railway stations.' (HCP- Mumbai Port Complex Masterplan, 2020)

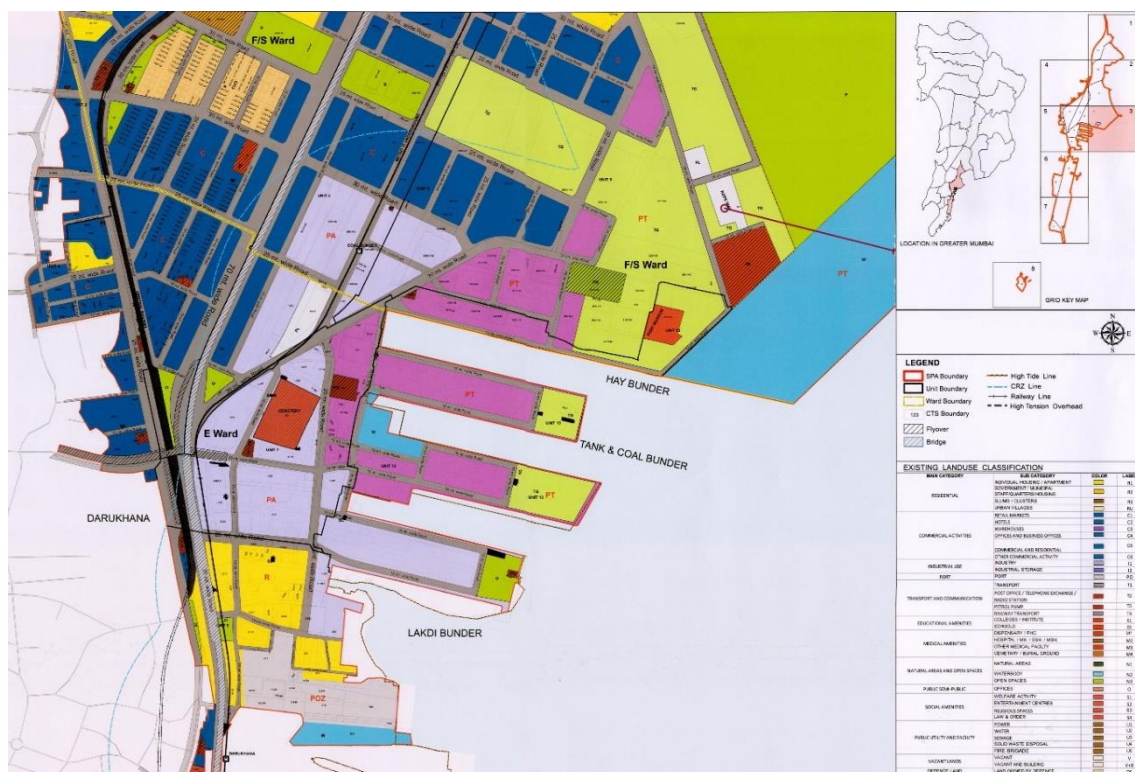


Figure 25-Proposed land use of the area (MbPT, Special Planning Authority- Mumbai, December 2018)

Critical perspectives on the redevelopment plan are presented by Indorewala (2020) and the articles from Live Mint (Bhuyan, 2015) and Deccan Herald (Bose, 2016), focus on public land use and the potential environmental hazards. The draft plan for the proposal has not been without controversy, receiving almost 950 objections (Adimulam, 2022). Several critics (Bhatia, 2016) (Shaikh, 2023) (Indorewala, 2020) have pointed out flaws in the government plan to redevelop the area claiming the lack of socially equitable development. In 2015, the Union government set up the Mumbai Port Land Development Committee to sketch out a vision for the future development of the eastern waterfront. This Committee had recommended opening up 432 hectares. The 2018 Draft Development Plan had recommended opening up 479 hectares but the 2020 Revised Plan ended up only opening up 253 hectares. The plan also claims that 75% will be under the public realm however this includes 35% of roads which leave only 82 hectares of open space. Therefore, the land that might be used as Public Space will only be a small percentage of the total area being opened up. (Indorewala, 2020) . On paper, commercial land use in the 2020 Revised Plan seems to have been reduced as compared to the 2018 Draft Plan, but the commercial area has increased. The 2018 Draft Plan's 126-hectare commercial area for this site included roads and reservations within the zone. The Floor Space Index (the ratio of plot size to the size of the building) for this zone ranged from 2.0 to 4.0 gross. In the 2020 revised plan, roads and reservations have been moved to the category of public realm thereby leaving 51 hectares as "saleable" commercial plots. However, the entire redevelopment site will now be considered for gross FSI calculations. With an FSI of 2.0, this works out to two times 253 hectares = 506 hectares of built-up commercial space. Several environmental concerns have also been raised as the plan proposes to reclaim large patches of land to build the proposed green spaces and marina (Indorewala, 2020). The accusations of over-emphasis on commercial development and reclamation have been defended by the government who claim that implementing the plan would provide free housing to the residents of the informal settlements (Adimulam, 2022).



Figure 26-A visualization of the proposed redevelopment (MbPT, Special Planning Authority- Mumbai, December 2018)

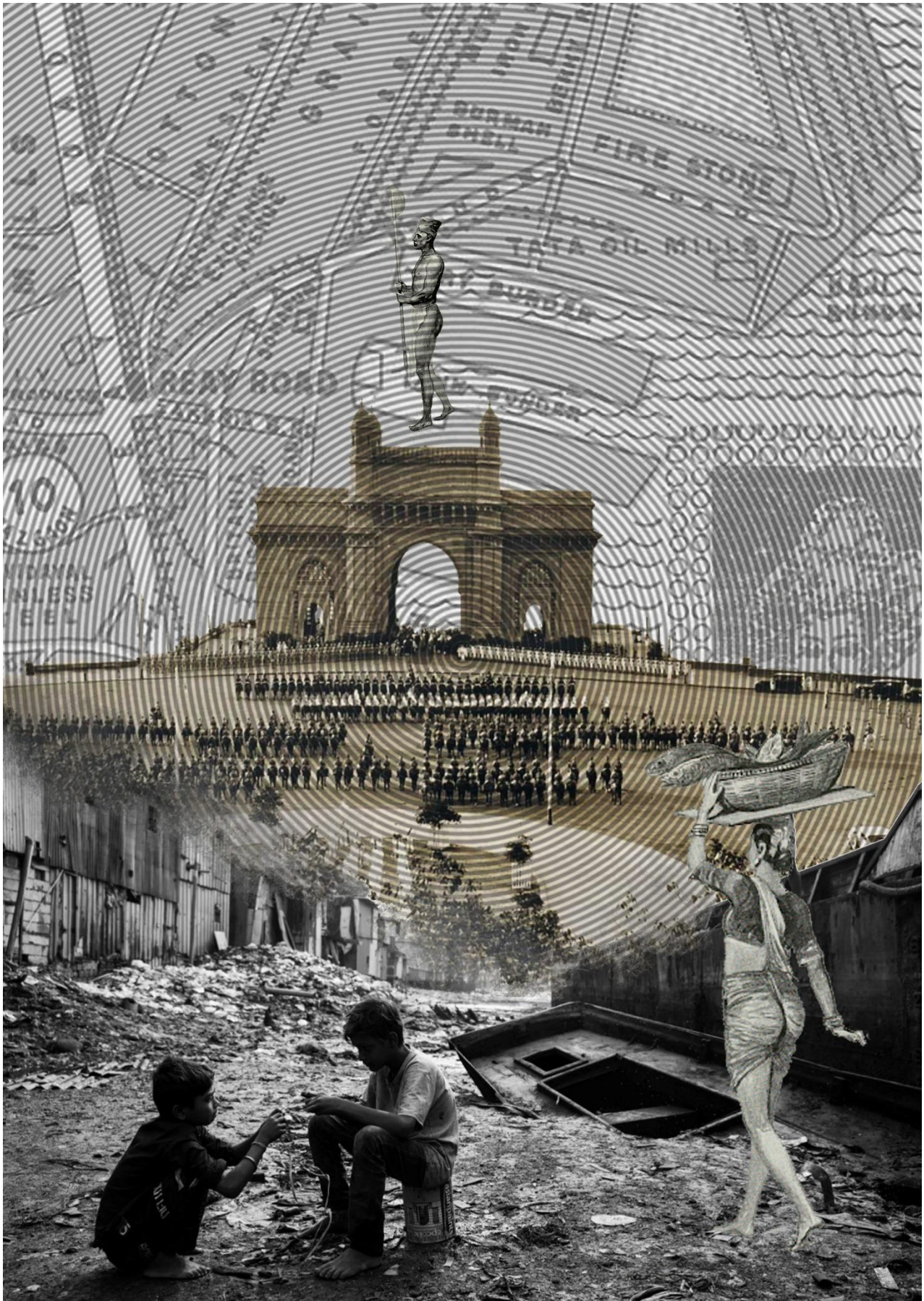


Figure 27- Collage of images collected across the three phases Mazagaon witnessed (Image sources- (Sheth, 2024), Associated Press news photo, Illustrations by M. V. Dhurandhar from the book By-Ways of Bombay – 1912)

9-Conclusion

The island of Mazagaon and its deep-rooted history in the development of Mumbai and the port have been documented by several authors and journalists. Structures like warehouses, mansions, and even the Matharpacady settlement (Joshi, 1995) have either been degraded or demolished. As illustrated by the UDRI report on the port (Anirudh Paul, 2004), the major road network and historic industrial zoning in the area has effectively cut off access to the waterfront for the residents of Mazagaon. The transfer of the port from British hands to the Indian Government has meant that the port has always been governed with a top-down approach with the Central Government focused on achieving economic targets disconnected from the needs of the metropolitan city. The residents of Mumbai have witnessed a similar opening up of land in the past. The debacle while re-allocating the Cotton Mill land and 86% of the land ending up in the hands of the mill owners (Original allocation was 37%) is still fresh in the minds of the residents (Neera Adarkar, -)

The criticism (Adimulam, 2022) (Bhatia, 2016) (Shaikh, 2023) (Indorewala, 2020) it has received has not seemed to slow down the agenda. The recent clearing of the plan for the marina (India Shipping News- MoPSW clears plan to restructure Marina project at Mumbai Port, 2023) and the state government attempts to reclaim portions of the salt pans (Hindustan Times Website- Salt pan land, MBPT land development on state government agenda, 2023) indicate their position on the redevelopment. While many of these concerns have valid grounds the plan also proposes a Form-based code, which could be instrumental in shaping the city for the future. The redevelopment plan has earmarked the Darukhana area and its bunders as the 'cultural district' of the master plan with themed piers, Port eco-tourism facilities, and a Port Museum dedicated to its history. With this complicated web of spatial, socio-economic, and political influences, the redevelopment of the Port of Mumbai is a crucial cog in determining the future development of the city. Its massive potential provides a massive land parcel with waterfront access to the island is unprecedented. While the plan seems to be back on the drafting table at the moment (Adimulam, 2022), several questions relating to the future of the existing tenants continue to arise. The 'Slum Act' only protects tenements on State Government land. Additionally, the 2034 Development Plan (IIA Mumbai website- DCR 2034, 2016) has not made any provision for the slum dwellers with the state government claiming it is for the Centre to decide. These factors have caused uncertainty among the tenants and slum dwellers residing in the area, several of whom have begun to get evicted (The Indian Express- Left out once again: Slums on Port Trust land not in DP 2034, 2015).

Although the masterplan as a whole will continue to evolve, the area of Darukhana and the bunders will be vital in providing cultural facilities for residents and tourists, the lack and need of which (Sanjeev Sanyal, 2015) has been documented. Whichever form the cultural district may take, preserving and promoting the rich history of Mazagaon and its bunders is essential. Alternative plans from UDRI or even APLI (A citizen's initiative) suggest unrestricted access to the waterfront through public promenades, vocational training centres, and even workshops. These plans are diametrically opposite to the ones MbPt has proposed suggesting a large disconnect between public sentiment and government vision. While the top-down approach has been somewhat revised with the government planning to open up 966 hectares (almost half) of the land under its control, an intermediary method that involves the 'simultaneous top and bottom approach through the middle' might be the only solution for the Mumbai port Redevelopment Plan to be implemented successfully.

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