

Architectural Knowledge Systems Related to Use of Terracotta in Bengal

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Abstract : The prominence of terracotta as a building material in Bengal is well justified by its geographical location. The architectural knowledge system associated with terracotta can be comprehended in the typology of the built structures as they act as texts to interpret the knowledge. The history of Bengal has witnessed the influence of several rulers in developing the architectural vocabulary of the region. This metamorphosis of the architectural knowledge systems in the region includes the Bhakti movement, the Islamic influence, and the British rule, which led to the evolution of the use of terracotta from decorative elements to structural elements in the present-day context. This paper intends to develop an understanding of terracotta as a building material, its use in a built structure, the common problems associated with terracotta construction, and the techniques of maintenance, repair, and conservation. This paper also explores the size, shape, and geometry of the material and its varied use in temples, mosques in the region. It also takes into note that the use of terracotta was concentrated majorly to religious structures and not in the settlements of the common people. And the architectural style of temples and mosques of Bengal is hugely influenced by the houses of the common.

Keywords : terracotta, material, knowledge system, conservation

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