Research papers 1

Protection of the cultural heritage

The Islamic heritage of Bengal

Edited by George Michell,
Art and Archaeology Research Papers (AARP)

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for Architecture

Unesco

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Preface

The present work is the first in a new series launched by Unesco in the field of cultural heritage preservation. Entitled 'Protection of the Cultural Heritage: Research Papers', the series takes its place alongside two existing series: 'Museums and Monuments' (methodological manuals published since 1953) and 'Protection of the Cultural Heritage: Technical Handbooks for Museums and Monuments' (launched in 1977). It also complements numerous promotional brochures and monographs on particular monuments or historic ensembles published by Unesco.

The two existing series are devoted exclusively to the methods and techniques of preserving and presenting cultural property. Thus they consist of guidelines, comparative data and factual information useful to professionals in fields such as conservation, museology and restoration. On the other hand, the promotional literature, by its very nature, has consisted mainly of succinct—but abundantly illustrated—descriptive material concerning monuments and sites and the projects designed to ensure their preservation.

There has been little deeper analysis of the cultural heritage, both movable and immovable, from the viewpoints of art or architectural history, in its wider historical context, including social and economic conditions, and in the perspective of intercultural relations and shared traditions.

The 'Research Papers' are intended to fill this gap, by exploring in some depth the value and significance of various aspects of the cultural heritage. The volumes in the series could deal therefore with particular monuments or groups of monuments, selected traditions or styles of fine

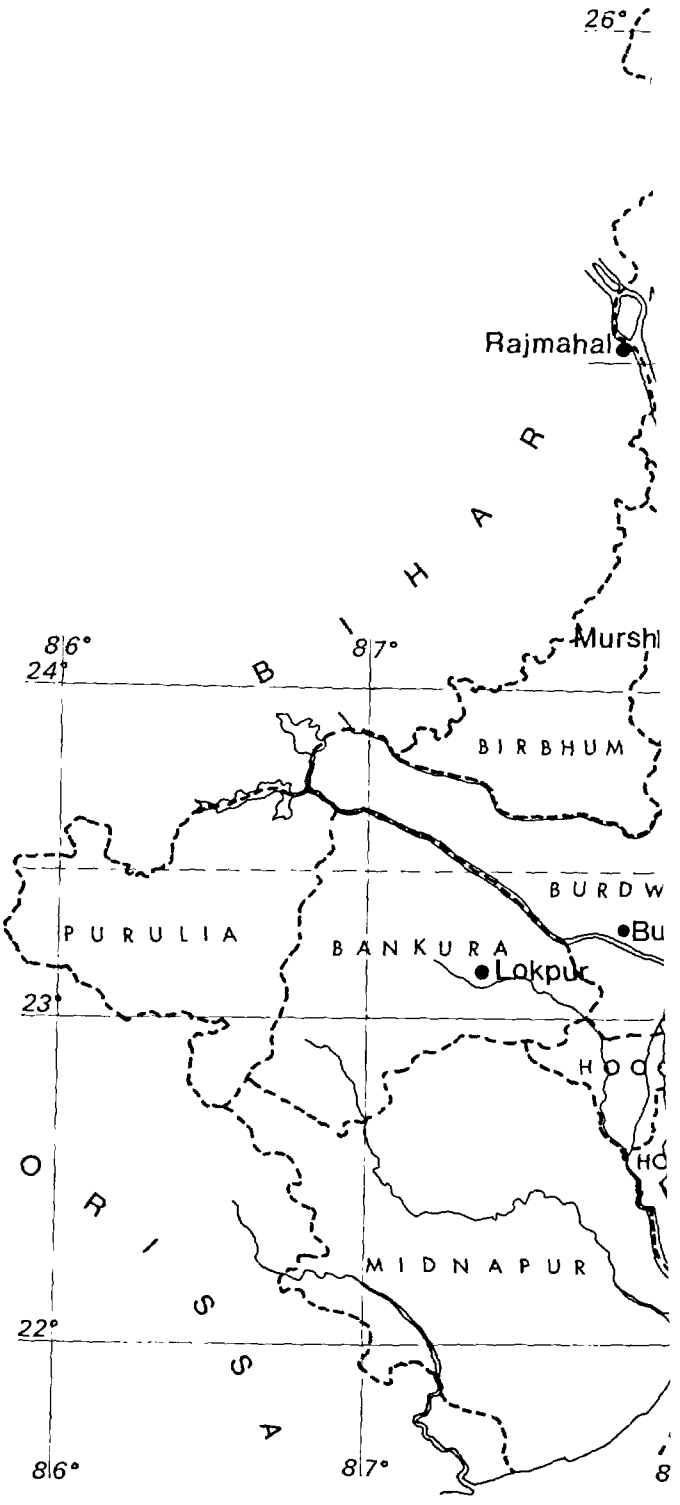
art or craftsmanship or, as in the present case, the monumental heritage of a given geo-cultural area.

The subject-matter of this first title, Islamic architecture in Bengal, usually receives little notice in overall surveys of Islamic architecture. Bengali mosques and tombs form a coherent group as a result of the regional character of architectural forms, materials, techniques and decoration. This unity of tradition is now somewhat difficult to perceive because of the division of monuments between Bangladesh and West Bengal (India). In addition, the fragile nature of Bengal's buildings, mostly constructed of brick, means that this tradition is constantly threatened by destruction. Indeed, it is to avert this threat to some of the most prominent edifices of the common historical legacy of humanity that, at the request of the Government of Bangladesh, the General Conference of Unesco, at its twenty-first session (1980), authorized the Director-General to prepare an international campaign for the preservation of the historic mosque-city of Bagerhat, in particular the Saithgumbad Mosque. (The international campaign will also cover the important Buddhist site at Paharpur.) Hence, apart from its considerable intrinsic interest, the monumental heritage covered in the present volume will also benefit in part from a major effort to mobilize international solidarity for its protection.

Unesco entrusted the preparation of this work to the London-based research team widely known by its acronym, 'AARP'. Established in London in 1972, the Art and Archaeology Research Papers have focused on scholarly work in progress, giving younger as well as more established scholars an opportunity to air their views and ideas. The various issues of AARP have concentrated on particular themes stressing the continuity of cultural traditions and ideas, and their transmission between countries and civilizations. They have covered areas from the Mediterranean through the Middle East to the Far East in all fields of art and archaeology, with an emphasis on subjects of transcultural interest. Recent issues of AARP have been devoted to the Indian Ocean and East Africa (No. 9), European influences in Oriental architecture (No. 11), vernacular architecture of the Middle East and South Asia (No. 12), Islamic cities (No. 14), mobile architecture (No. 16), ritual definitions of urban space (No. 17), and the conservation of Cairo (No. 18). AARP also produces a series of monographs, mostly on aspects of Islamic architecture and art, as well as hardback books on traditional architecture (Kuwait and Yemen). This record speaks for itself and, we trust, for Unesco's choice of AARP to launch the new series.

The Organization has also benefited from the partnership of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which provided a grant enabling AARP to prepare this volume. Research is a significant complement to the awards themselves, now well known to the international community, for the long-term goal of the foundation created by His Highness the Aga Khan is 'to be a catalyst for the evolution of a new cultural sensibility, one which combines a heightened awareness of the continuing vitality of Muslim cultures with a renewed determination to respond to the challenge of modern societies and technology'. The contribution of the Award to the present effort is gratefully acknowledged, and it is our hope that it will continue to collaborate with Unesco on such research and publication projects.

Map of Bangladesh and West Bengal (India) showing sites of principal Islamic monuments.

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Chittagong
BAY OF BENGAL

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Foreword

George Michell

In any overall survey of the diverse architectural traditions of the Islamic world, that of Bengal usually receives little notice, if any. The mosques and tombs at Gaur and Pandua, for example, attract few visitors; as a result, the distinctive features of these buildings are hardly known beyond the subcontinent. The aim of this volume is to introduce the principal monuments of Islamic Bengal; these form a coherent group owing to the essentially regional character of architectural forms, materials, techniques and decoration. There are two principal reasons why the Islamic monuments of Bengal deserve special attention. To begin with, the Islamic sites in this region are now divided between West Bengal in India and Bangladesh, with many important mosques and tombs of the earlier period found in India. In fact, the international frontier passes right through the middle of Gaur, the largest of all the ancient Muslim sites. Unity of architectural tradition in Bengal, therefore, is sometimes difficult to perceive. Furthermore, Bengali Islamic buildings are mostly constructed of brick and adorned with an elaborate terracotta ornamentation. As might be imagined, only sustained and careful maintenance can preserve these brick buildings from serious deterioration in a tropical climate with severe monsoons. Given the general dilapidation of most of the brick monuments in Bengal—only a small number of which are actually under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India, the Department of Archaeology of the Government of West Bengal, or the Department of Archaeology and Museums in Bangladesh—a volume focusing on the Islamic buildings seems one way of drawing attention to this important but often neglected heritage.

While acknowledging the fragile nature of Bengal's Islamic architectural tradition, an immense vitality and originality must also be recognized. Perhaps nowhere else in the Islamic world is there a better illustration of the interaction between foreign and local architectural traditions. The effective metamorphosis of Middle Eastern and Central Asian architectural schemes, techniques and decorative patterns (introduced by way of fourteenth-century Tughluqabad) into a regional Bengali style is already apparent by the fifteenth century. Significantly, this regional Bengali style is defined by repeated references to pre-Islamic monumental traditions (Buddhist and Hindu temples) and also to contemporary vernacular models (the mud and thatch hut). Thus these monuments are both truly Islamic and Bengali, demonstrating the dynamic ability of Islamic architecture to transform itself by adoption and adaptation. It is, in fact, this very theme of adaptation which is stressed throughout the volume by the various scholars.

The first two contributions provide the background to the Islamic heritage of Bengal. In his Introduction Dr Enamul Haque refers to the synthesis of pre-Islamic tradition in the region and the artistic contribution of invading Muslims. The resulting architectural expression of Islamic Bengal is viewed here as a creative blend of foreign and local traditions. Dr Richard Eaton concentrates on the historical, cultural and religious dimensions of the period. His article defines four major phases in the evolution of Islamic Bengal—conversion, local integration, national integration and finally reform. Warrior-rulers, pioneer-saints and poets, together with architects and artisans, are shown to be active agents in the historical process. The next two contributions survey the principal Islamic monuments of both Bengals. Catherine B. Asher provides an illustrated inventory of key monuments, the most extensive ever produced, completely referenced to all published sources. Here the monuments are catalogued alphabetically by site. In contrast, Dr Syed Mahmudul Hasan classifies the mosques according to the different ground plans.

The following three chapters are devoted to studies of some important early sites. Dr Yolande Crowe discusses the Adina Mosque at Pandua; the early Muslim monuments at Bagerhat are examined by Professor J. E. van Lohuizen de Leeuw; while in Dhaka District,[1] eight Sultanate-period mosques are described by Perween Hasan. Nor have the lesser known later monuments in Bengal been overlooked; Catherine Asher considers those from the Mughal and post-Mughal periods. The late David McCutchion—whose pioneering documentation work in both Bengals has pro-

1. Hitherto written 'Dacca', the official transliteration of the name of the capital city of Bangladesh is now 'Dhaka'. This spelling is used throughout the present volume except in the references and bibliography which refer to published works using the earlier transliteration.

vided the basis for much subsequent research—observed important artistic continuities between Muslim and Hindu buildings. (The chapter reproduced here was originally published in 1968.) Finally, there is a note by Attilio Petruccioli on Louis Kahn's new mosque at Banglanagar. Here the process of introducing new architectural forms for religious buildings in Bengal is shown to be still continuing today. A glossary of technical terms used is included for reference.

AARP (Art and Archaeology Research Papers) is grateful to Unesco for having promoted the preparation of this volume (which may be considered as No. 20/21 in the AARP series) and for having agreed to publish it. AARP also wishes to express its deep gratitude for the interest taken in its activities by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and in particular for the grant which covered the editorial and production expenses involved in preparing this book. Scholars, both in Bangladesh and the West, have responded enthusiastically to the idea of a volume on Islamic Bengal, and have generously made available much new and unpublished material in their various articles. The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has graciously permitted the reproduction of photographs taken by Catherine Asher, while the Trustees of the David McCutchion Estate in London have allowed some of McCutchion's photographs to be included. The article by McCutchion is reprinted here with kind permission from the Asiatic Society in Dhaka.

To all these individuals and institutions, the editors of AARP offer their profound gratitude.

Introduction

Enamul Haque

Here it is not the intention to review the entire spectrum of the Islamic heritage of Bengal, or to attempt to present new facts or to offer any radical interpretation. While a few scholars are making their contributions on Islamic architecture and archaeology, I shall be offering a brief statement of a prefatorial nature only.

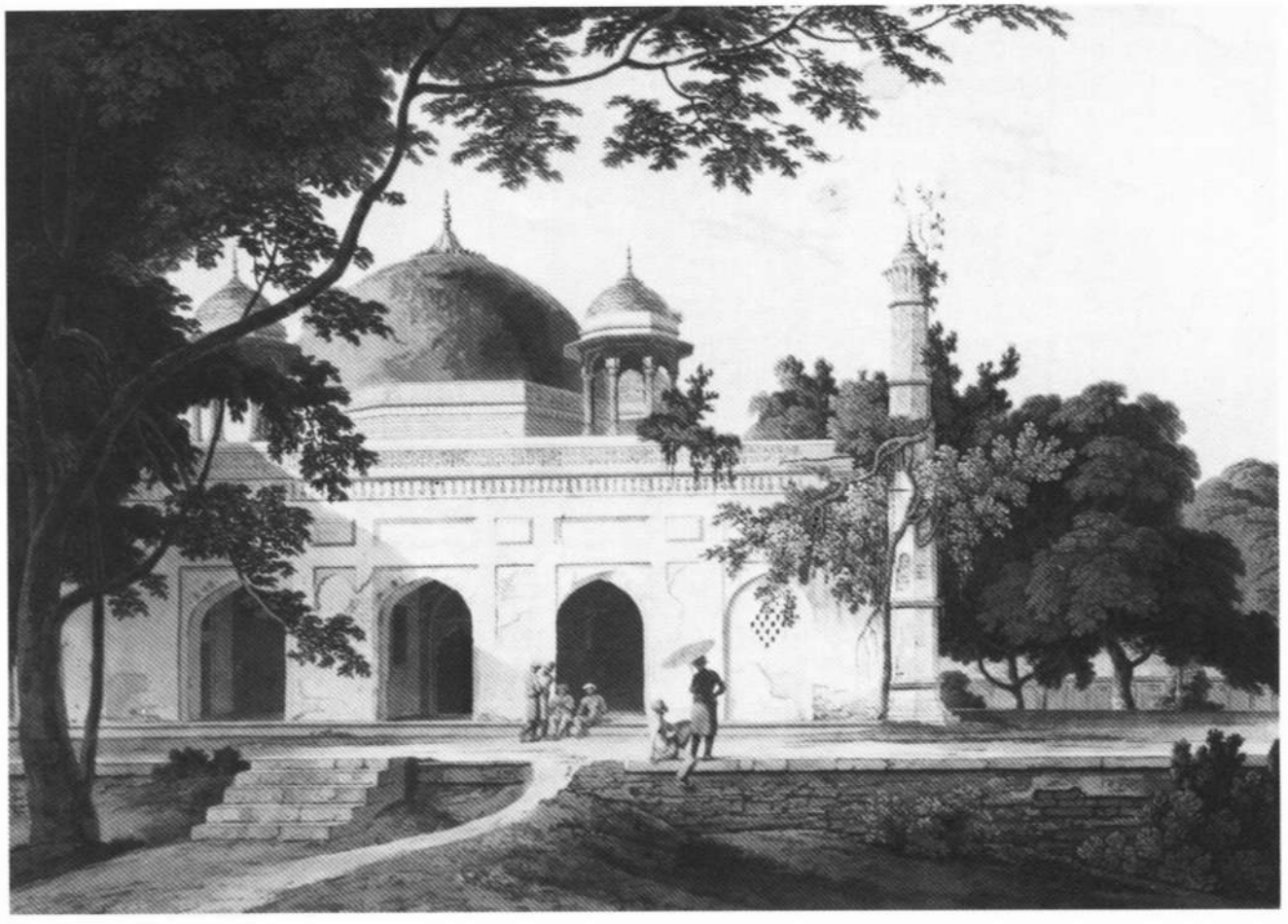
The life of Bengal and therefore its artistic heritage are largely determined by the two great river systems, the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. After girdling the icy peaks of the Himalayas, they eventually combine in the plains of Bengal and, through innumerable channels, leave behind an alluvial treasure that makes this delta one of the most fertile regions of the world. The proverbial agricultural plenty made it a very attractive centre of international maritime trade. Therefore, it was no wonder that from the very beginning of history Bengal gave its name to the bay that serviced such transactions. This unique deltaic situation, along with the frequently shifting rivers, exceptionally heavy rainfall, prolonged floods and growth of dense forest, considerably shaped the destiny of the people. It is only natural to anticipate that these geographic factors, quite unusual to the torch-bearers of Islam, continued to influence profoundly the growth and development of the art and architecture of Bengal in the same way during the Islamic period as they did before.

When it arrived in Bengal, Islam had more than half a millennium of maturity and an enormous wealth of varied experience. It was still an ascending force, politically and culturally, in all the continents known till then. The advent of desert-born Islam in deltaic Bengal was of the utmost significance to the local people.

The archaeology of Bengal, however much studied for earlier times, has yet to make a debut for the period surrounding the appearance and early centuries of Islam in Bengal. Except for some minor and so far little exploited explorations and excavations, no systematic archaeological information exists on the passage from a pre-Islamic to an Islamic culture. The initial Muslim settlers must have experienced a considerable ecological change in early Islamic times with the foundation of new urban centres and the reuse of the old ones for military, administrative and religious purposes, and the steady Islamization superimposed over a not-so-familiar riverine agricultural setting. The Turks who brought Islam to Bengal as a political power had very little or no knowledge of deltaic Bengal, nothing comparable to the situation in the western part of northern India or further west. Bengal did not become Muslim in its entirety, as did Iran and the Maghreb. Islam could not replace the Bengali language and alphabets or Islamize the collective memory of the Bengali pre-Muslim past. The naturalization of Bengal into Islam was neither immediate nor complete. While it took less than a decade to establish the Islamic empire in northern India, it took more than a century for more or less the whole of Bengal.

Although the Muslim takeover of Bengal—not forgetting the early contacts with sailors and saints—was principally the work of soldiers, it occurred without physical destruction and without massacres. Therefore, the Muslims inherited the sum total of the art and material culture of pre-Islamic Bengal along with an immense complex of associated collective memories, legends and myths. However, the degree to which pre-Islamic Buddhist- and Hindu-inspired artistic traditions have affected Islamic art in Bengal still remains to be studied. To what extent did the existing or newly established political, cultural and intellectual centres of Bengal which became important under Muslim rule, predominate in the creation of new forms or the grafting of newly imported ideals and tastes? How innovative were these centres? Did much appreciable urbanization take place during the period of Muslim rule against the overwhelming rural expanse of Bengal?

The history of early Islamic architecture in Bengal is not the same as the history of the early centuries of Islamic architecture elsewhere. The conquering Muslims of the thirteenth century already possessed a highly developed architecture of their own. By then, certain elements, such as the arch, dome, minaret, mihrab, etc., had been recognized as fundamental features of Islamic architecture. While the walls of the Hindu temples were pulsating with imagery,



Rajmahal, Tomb of Nawab Yusuf Khan. From Thomas and William Daniell, *Oriental Scenery*, Vol. III, No. 24, London, 1795-1808.
[Photo: By permission of the British Library, London.]

the representation of natural forms was prohibited in Islamic monuments. The mystery of the *garbhagriha* of the temple was by-passed by the clarity of the *iwan* of the mosque. Sculptured texts with decorative lettering appeared on the surface of the Muslim monuments with fully developed forms, when the Hindus had hardly anything other than carved figural compositions. Owing to a lack of easy availability of stone within its own boundaries, Bengal continued to be dominated by brickwork in its building art, and moulded terracottas made out of the fine textured alluvial clay were employed for the purpose of surface decoration. In fact, terracotta decoration reached a new dimension that attained an aesthetic individuality of its own, claiming equal glory with that of the mosaics of Damascus or the tiles of Isfahan. But the use of stone was not totally neglected: the Muslim architects of Bengal recognized its strength and whenever possible used stone pillars for supporting arches and domes. Stone was also used occasionally as the outer facing of walls, the inner core of which was made of bricks, to overcome the hazard of atmospheric humidity.

Although the Muslims came to Bengal with a corpus of well-established building traditions and imposed their method of construction on the local people, yet inevitably imported ideas and elements gradually felt the impact of local influences. The fusion contributed to the development of a distinctive indigenous style. Noting the advantages of the elasticity of bamboo, so universally employed in the dwellings of the Bengalis, the Muslim masons soon evolved a curvilinear form of roof which, after establishing itself as a permanent and prominent feature of architecture in Bengal, found its way even into the imperial Mughal monuments of Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Delhi and Lahore. Thus the *do-chala* and *char-chala* forms of roofs, made of bamboo and thatch, when translated into brick or stone buildings enriched the architectural traditions of the subcontinent, and also Islamic architecture as a whole. The two-centred pointed arch springing from the side pillars, and the cusping at the arches, also appear in Bengal for the first time in the subcontinent. The latter feature was employed outside Bengal nearly three centuries later by the emperor Shah Jahan.

As mentioned earlier, one of the characteristics of the pre-Mughal Islamic architecture of Bengal was the use of terracotta decoration on the surface. With the Mughals settling down in Bengal, plaster was substituted for the terracotta plaques. But the full-blooded tradition of terracotta art, when neglected in the Muslim monuments, readily found acceptance on contemporary Hindu monuments, along with the Islamic elements of arch, vault and cups. This adaptation of important elements of Islamic architecture by Bengal masons for non-Muslim architecture is another instance of the integration of imported and indigenous ideas. In pre-Mughal times terracotta decoration also substantially influenced stone decoration, as could be seen in the Kusumba mosque.

Notwithstanding the introduction of the basic Islamic architectural elements of arch and dome from the very beginning of the arrival of Islam in Bengal, it should not be overlooked that the traditional pre-Muslim corbelled roof continued to be used. This can be seen in the Tomb of Bibi Pari at Dhaka, an important Mughal monument belonging to as late as the last quarter of the seventeenth century. This building also had a false copper dome that was without any structural significance, which shows that the pre-Muslim tradition of corbelling was acceptable for its design even at such a late stage of Islamic architecture.

The comparative political isolation of pre-Mughal Bengal from the rest of the Muslim empire of the subconti-

nent left an imprint of rigidity on the contemporary monuments. But the consolidation of Mughal rule in Bengal ushered in an era of interflow of ideas with other parts of India and, in particular, with northern India, resulting in the development of a widely established, more or less standard layout in architecture. This was particularly noticeable in the mosques, where the earlier roofs with six, nine, ten, twenty-one, or seventy-seven domes gave way mostly to innumerable three-domed structures, with the extremely few exceptions of single- or five-domed ones. On the whole, the Mughal occupation of Bengal saw the growth of mosques, mausoleums, forts, bridges, gateways, *hammam-khanas, idgahs,* etc. to an extent that does not appear to have surpassed the varieties in concepts, styles, mediums, dimensions and above all aesthetic orientation manifested through fewer monuments of the same nature of the preceding Islamic period.

There can be no question that architecture in Bengal, as elsewhere, provided the main focus of Islamic art throughout its history. The seven centuries of Islamic architecture in Bengal identify a period when a vast and populous area changed from something else to Islamic, forming at once a federated unit of the world of Islam. It is mainly through these monuments that it is possible to discover the time it may have taken Islam to create an international architecture that could be clearly defined and identified. Here the artist or mason was continually exploring variations or combinations in a repertory of selected motifs: he was not a slave to any doctrine, yet he consciously followed a consensus of restrictions. With its great integrative power, Islamic architecture in Bengal avoided certain means of expression and emphasized others, resulting in a synthesis of restraint and freedom, of assimilation and rejection, of stability and movement, and, last but not least, of tradition and creativity.

Islam in Bengal

Richard M. Eaton

Despite its isolation from the heartland of Islamic civilization, the Bengal delta contains one of the most populous concentrations of Muslims in the world. Between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, millions of the native inhabitants of this wet tropical region—and especially those of the eastern portion now constituting Bangladesh—became absorbed into an expanding Muslim society that was largely agrarian in nature. During this same period, Islamic culture flourished to an impressive degree in a number of thriving urban centres throughout the delta. In the following pages, an attempt will be made to portray the major phases of the evolution of Islam in Bengal, with a special view to relating these to the evolution of Muslim architecture there.

In the year A.D. 1204 a renegade Turkish officer with a small band of cavalry rode into Nadiya, a capital of the last independent Hindu dynasty in Bengal, and dislodged the ruling Raja from power.[1] This event inaugurated a Muslim political connection with Bengal that was to last until the days of the British East India Company. But Bengal at this time was no *tabula rasa*, no cultural or social vacuum simply awaiting the imprint of Islam. Geographically, this part of the Indian subcontinent is a coherent region bounded by mountains and sea, forming in effect a cul-de-sac whose rich alluvial soils and marshy swamps have historically absorbed various ethnic groups and mixed them together to form the basic substratum of Bengali society and culture.

From about the sixth century B.C. Indo-Aryan settlers, bearing with them Sanskrit culture and the attendant hierarchic vision of the social order, began moving down the Gangetic Plain towards the region. In the process the non-

1. For a discussion of the date of this event, see Abdul Momin Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal, A.D. 750-1200*, Dacca, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1967, pp. 252-8.

Aryan hunters, fishermen and slash-and-burn horticulturalists already inhabiting the densely forested delta began to be absorbed into a Brahmanically structured agrarian society.[2] But unlike the situation in regions to the west, in Bengal the diffusion of Sanskritic culture among the aboriginal peoples was incomplete. For despite the west-to-east advance of Brahman communities and Buddhist monastic institutions, which was especially prominent between the fifth and twelfth centuries A.D., there is evidence that by the end of the pre-Muslim period land in western Bengal was more intensively cultivated than land in eastern Bengal.[3] This suggests a higher concentration of population in the Bhagirathi-Hooghly region of western Bengal than in the remote eastern edge of the delta, which was described in one royal grant as 'outside the pale of human habitation, where there is no distinction between natural and artificial; infested by wild animals and poisonous reptiles, and covered with forest out-growths'.[4] Moreover, since the majority of the ancient Hindu sacred sites were concentrated

2. Clarence Maloney, 'Bangladesh and its People in Prehistory', *Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies*, Vol. II, 1977, pp. 9-36.
3. Barrie M. Morrison, *Political Centers and Culture Regions in Early Bengal*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1970, pp. 149, 152.
4. Puspa Niyogi, *Brahmanic Settlements in Different Subdivisions of Ancient Bengal*, Calcutta, Indian Studies, Past and Present, 1967, p. 41.

Gaur, Kotwali Darwaza. From Thomas and William Daniell, *Oriental Scenery*, Vol. I, No. 4, London, 1795-1808. [Photo: By permission of the British Library, London.]

not in the eastern districts but along the Bhagirathi-Hooghly channel in the west, it appears that by the beginning of the Muslim period the aboriginal peoples of east and south Bengal had been, on the whole, less well integrated with or even exposed to Brahmanical society and culture than was the case in the west.[5]

Between 1204 and 1338, when Bengal was ruled by governors of the Delhi Sultanate, the Muslims' power-base was located at Lakhnauti, in the delta's northwestern corner, with eastern Bengal remaining a political and social frontier zone. It was into this fluid frontier environment that Shah Jalal (d. 1346) entered, exactly a century after the initial Turkish conquest of northwestern Bengal. One among dozens of early Muslim pioneers in Bengal, Shah Jalal is today widely revered as a saint, and his career is commonly understood, if only subconsciously, as a kind of metaphor for the Islamization of Bengal.[6] He was born in Turkistan during the turbulent thirteenth century, when Mongol armies raised havoc in the area, and is said to have been a spiritual disciple of the great Central Asian *shaikh* Saiyid Ahmad Yasavi. This *shaikh*, we are told, sent Shah Jalal to India with a party of 700 warrior-disciples (*ghazi*) on a militant evangelizing mission.[7] After reaching India, he and a band of 313 companions continued on to the city of Sylhet on the extreme eastern edge of Bengal. There, according to local traditions, Shah Jalal and his companions assisted Muslim commanders in the military conquest of Sylhet and the defeat of its Hindu Raja, an event which we know from inscriptional evidence occurred in 1303-04.[8] His earliest known biography, compiled in the mid-1500s, depicts Shah Jalal and his companions as roving warriors who had lived on booty on their 'far-flung campaigns' en route to Bengal. This source also states, however, that after defeating the Raja of Sylhet, Shah Jalal distributed the spoils of victory among his followers, whom he then allowed to settle down as local community leaders and householders.[9] This points to a process of community formation, a process by which groups of pioneer newcomers settled the land, married local women, and established the nuclei of new Muslim communities.

Our understanding of Shah Jalal's historical role is enhanced by a contemporary account of him and his movement at Sylhet written by the famous North African traveller Ibn Battuta, who visited India in the 1340s. By this time Shah Jalal's name had become sufficiently renowned that when Ibn Battuta visited Bengal in 1345 he took the trouble to travel to Sylhet and pay his respects to the venerable Turk. 'This *shaikh*', he tells us,

5. For the sacred geography of early Bengal, see S. C. Majumdar, *Rivers of the Bengal Delta*, Calcutta, University of Calcutta Press, 1942, p. 66; Surinder Mohan Bhardwaj, *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1973, pp. 36-7, 81; Joseph E. Schwartzberg (ed.), *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp. 32, 34.

6. See John P. Thorp, 'Masters of Earth: Conceptions of "Power" among Muslims of Rural Bangladesh', Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1978, pp. 63-4.

7. Shaikh Ali Sher (d. *c.* 1562), *Sharh-i Nuzhat al-Arwah*, reproduced in Muhammad Ghausi, *Gulzar-i Abrar* (comp. *c.* A.D. 1613), Persian manuscript, Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal, No. 259, fol. 41. See S.M. Ikram, 'An unnoticed account of Shaikh Jalal of Sylhet', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 1957, pp. 65-6. Since Ahmad Yasavi died in 1166, Shah Jalal must have been a disciple of one of the *shaikh*'s less-renowned successors in Turkistan.

8. H. E. Stapleton, 'Contributions to the History and Ethnology of North-eastern India', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, new series, XVIII, 1922, pp. 413-4.

9. Ikram, op. cit., pp. 65-6.

was one of the great saints and one of the unique personalities. He had to his credit miracles (*karamat*) well-known to the public as well as great deeds, and he was a man of hoary age. . . . The inhabitants of these mountains had embraced Islam at his hands, and for this reason he stayed amidst them.[10]

10. Mahdi Husain (trans.), *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1953, pp. 238-9.

Here is a portrait of a man credited even during his lifetime as one who could produce miracles, and as the agent of the local people's conversion to Islam. The early chronicles of Muslim activities in Bengal are replete with stories of men who, like Shah Jalal, had typically come from Central Asia animated with the *ghazi* (warrior) spirit so characteristic of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Possessing a vivid character and an observable power that in the public mind was considered supernatural, these men became exalted as saints.

Shah Jalal was but one of many pioneers in Bengal who took part in a movement that was not only religious in nature, but also social and economic. For between the twelfth and the early sixteenth centuries, the entire river system of the Bengal delta underwent a profound change, the most important aspect of this being the gradual eastward migration of the Ganges River from its old channel through the Bhagirathi-Hooghly system in western Bengal, into ever eastward channels. Finally, by the early sixteenth century, the Ganges had linked up with the Padma, which carried the great river's main channel into the heart of eastern Bengal.[11] As this occurred, so the active part of the Bengal delta shifted eastwards, and with it, the basis for an intensification of wet-rice agriculture.

11. N. D. Bhattacharya, 'Changing Courses of the Padma and Human Settlements', *National Geographic Journal of India*, Vol. 24, Nos. 1 and 2, March-June, 1978, pp. 63-5.

Significantly, these changes in Bengal's ecological system coincided with the growth of Muslim power in northwestern Bengal. They also coincided with the earliest thrust of Muslim pioneers, many of whom enjoyed the financial or political backing of the Muslim state, into the province's political and economic frontier in the east and south. Many early Bengali saints, whose shrines are located in a large arc extending from the Twenty-four Parganas and Khulna Districts in the south, through Noakhali, Comilla and Sylhet Districts in the east, are associated with the clearing of the jungle and the teaching of wet-rice agriculture, along with, of course, the preaching of Islam.[12] It appears, then, that in this earliest phase of the Islamization of Bengal Muslim pioneers took part in the settlement of this land, and that some of them actually organized the indigenous peoples for purposes of clearing the land for rice cultivation. Over time, these same indigenous peoples seem in turn to have sanctified those pioneers by whose hands they had become integrated into an expanding agrarian economy. Such a pro-

12. See, for example, L. S. S. O'Malley (ed.), *Bengal District Gazetteers, Twenty-four Parganas*, Calcutta, 1914, pp. 74-5; L. S. S. O'Malley (ed.), *Bengal District Gazetteers, Khulna*, Calcutta, 1908, pp. 26-7; J. E. Webster (ed.), *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers, Noakhali*, Allahabad, 1911, p. 101.

cess might explain the growth of a predominantly Muslim peasant population in the eastern, or ecologically active, portion of the delta.

The second major phase in the evolution of Islam in Bengal witnessed, between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, a remarkable process by which the new religion lost its foreign character and became firmly rooted in Bengali culture. Islam was now made available and accessible to millions of common folk by merging a rich legacy inherited from the Middle East with Bengali values, symbols and conceptions in ways that were readily intelligible to the common folk. This process was facilitated in two ways: first, by the emergence of an independent line of Muslim kings who, cut off from the political and cultural activities of north India, evolved their own political and cultural base; and secondly, by the efforts of a number of Bengali poets.

Prior to 1338, while Bengal was still ruled as a province of the Delhi Sultanate, Muslim armies had consolidated their grip over much of the delta, with their provincial capital at Lakhnauti (later called Gaur), and regional capitals at Satgaon and Sonargaon. Each of these cities attracted soldiers, scholars, administrators and artisans from north India or the Middle East. In each, *madrasas* (colleges) and mosques were built, and a vibrant urban Islamic culture flourished. We can see the expansion of Muslim political power in early Bengal reflected in the growth of towns where coins were struck: Lakhnauti (from 1236), Sonargaon (from 1305), Satgaon (from 1328), Pandua (from 1339), Mu'azzamabad (from 1358), Chittagong (from 1415), Faridpur (from 1436), Khalifatabad (from 1516), Nusratabad (from 1520), and Sharifabad (from 1539).[13]

Not for long, however, was Bengal to remain a mere appendage of Delhi. Those same geographical factors that had shielded the delta and allowed a distinctive regional culture to evolve within it also tended to isolate it from outside influence. Delhi, after all, was far away, and Turkish cavalry despatched from north India repeatedly bogged down in Bengal's monsoon-soaked swamps. As a result, within a century and a half of the Muslim conquest in 1204, a new dynasty of Muslim kings asserted its independence from Delhi, inaugurating a tradition of de facto independence that lasted from 1338 to 1576.

It was during this period, especially during the restored Ilyas Shahi dynasty (1433-86) and the Husain Shahi dynasty (1493-1538), that a uniquely Bengali Muslim culture flourished. Put more precisely, the independent sultans of this period permitted Bengali culture—whether expressed in architecture, religion, language, of literature—to flourish

13. M. Mir Jahan, 'Mint Towns of Medieval Bengal', *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. I, No. 4, 1953, pp. 398-414.

Muslim rulers of Bengal

Rulers	*Principal capital*	*Dates*
Governors of the Delhi Sultanate	Lakhnauti	1204–1338
Independent Sultans		
Ilyas Shahi dynasty	Pandua	1342–1415
House of Raja Ganesh	Pandua	1415–1433
Restored Ilyas Shahi dynasty	Gaur	1433–1486
Abyssinian Sultans	Gaur	1486–1493
Husain Shahi dynasty	Gaur	1493–1538
House of Sher Shah Sur	Gaur	1538–*c.* 1553
Afghan Sultans		
House of Muhammad Khan	Gaur	*c.* 1553–1564
House of Taj Khan Karrani	Tanda	1564–1576
Viceroys of the Mughal Empire	Dhaka	1576–1717
Nawabs of Bengal	Murshidabad	1717–1765

and combine with Islamic styles and influences drawn from north India, Central Asia, or the Middle East. Consider, for example, the matter of architecture. Of the total of 127 dated mosques constructed in Bengal in the entire period from 1200 to 1800, fully ninety-two, or almost three-quarters of the total, were built in the period 1450 to 1550.[14] These figures clearly point to profound changes that were taking place in Bengali society during that critical hundred-year span of time, and no doubt relate to the growing size of the Bengali Muslim community.

But to understand these changes we must consider not only the number of mosques built, but also the style in which they were built. The earliest Muslim monuments of Bengal, those built before *c.* 1410, possessed a foreign or imperial air, as in, for example, the *minar* or victory tower at Chota Pandua, or the Adina Mosque in Pandua. Mosques built by the later independent sultans, on the other hand, were far more modest and, architecturally speaking, fit in more closely with the local culture. Bearing low domes, low facades, and curved cornices, and lacking *minars* or enclosed compounds, these mosques seem not to have been concerned with projecting the majesty of religion or the power of the state. Rather, by adopting the *chala*, or thatched bungalow, as their model, they appear to have been more concerned with presenting Islam in an idiom already encompassed within the architectural experience of the common Bengali folk for whom they were intended.[15]

The same themes of court patronage and cultural

14. Based on data in Shamsud-Din Ahmed (ed. and trans.), *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. 4, Rajshahi, Varendra Research Museum, 1960, pp. 317-18.

15. Hitesranjan Sanyal, 'Religious Architecture in Bengal (15th-17th Centuries), a Study of the Major Trends', *Indian History Congress, Proceedings*, 32nd session, Vol. I, 1970, pp. 415-17.

accommodation are found in the language and in literary developments in this period. Thus a Chinese traveller who visited Pandua observed in 1433 that although Persian was spoken by some in the Muslim court, 'the language in universal use is Bengali'.[16] By this time over two centuries had passed since the initial Turkish conquest of Bengal, and the quoted observation reveals the extent to which the ruling class had accommodated itself to the local environment. What was more important, the Muslim sultans reoriented the court's focus from patronizing Sanskrit literature, as the last Hindu dynasties of Bengal had done, to patronizing Bengali literature. Beginning in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, and especially under the enlightened rule of Ala al-Din Husain Shah (1493-1519) and his successor Nasir al-Din Nusrat Shah (1519-31), the court at Gaur supported the writing of important Bengali works such as *Manasa-Vijaya,* by Vipra-dasa; *Manasa-Mangala,* by Vijaya Gupta; *Krishna-Mangala,* by Yasoraja Khan; *Shri Krishna-Vijaya,* by Maladhar Basu; and translations (from Sanskrit) of portions of the *Mahabharata* by Vijaya Pandita and Kavindra Parameshvara.[17]

Much of this literature reflected the powerful Vaishnavite devotional movement that in Bengal can be traced to sculpture of the twelfth century Sena period immediately prior to the establishment of Muslim rule.[18] In the early sixteenth century this movement reached a high point in its development under the influence of the great saint Chaitanya (1486-1533). Emphasizing the ecstatic love of God manifested as Krishna, Bengali Vaishnavism encouraged the devotees to empathize with Krishna's lover, Radha. This movement struck a deep and responsive chord among large groups of common folk such as cultivators, rural artisans and fishermen—the very social classes to which Islam, at the same time, was appealing.[19] On the other hand the Vaishnavite movement was opposed by that class of conservative Shakta Brahmans who emphasized ritual over devotion, Sanskrit over Bengali, and high-caste exclusiveness over non-Brahman inclusiveness.[20] It is significant, then, that the Muslim court supported this broadly based movement, with roots deep in Bengali history, and did so not only by patronizing Vaishnavite literature but also by employing Vaishnavas to positions of trust in the administration.

Paralleling these developments, there flourished between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries a number of Muslim Bengali poets who wrote a body of literature—tracts, romances, epics, narratives, devotional poems—whose net effect, if not stated intention, was to present Islam to

16. P. C. Bagchi, 'Political Relations between Bengal and China in the Pathan Period', *Visva-Bharati Annals,* Vol. I, 1945, pp. 117.

17. Nihirranjan Ray, 'Mediaeval Bengali Culture, *Visva-Bharati Quarterly,* Vol. II, No. 2, August-October, 1945, p. 54; Md. Enamul Haq, *Muslim Bengali Literature,* Karachi, Pakistan Publications, 1957, pp. 38-9.

18. Susan L. Huntington, 'The Origin and Development of Sculpture in Bihar and Bengal, ca. Eighth to Twelfth Centuries', Ph.D. thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1972, pp. 409-10.

19. Ralph W. Nicholas, 'Vaishnavism and Islam in Rural Bengal', in David Kopf (ed.), *Bengal, Regional Identity,* East Lansing, Mich., Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1969, p. 40.

20. Edward C. Dimock, Jr., *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaisnava-Sahajiya Cult of Bengal,* University of Chicago Press, 1966, pp. 112-14.

the common folk in idioms readily familiar to them. To be sure, some poets felt regret and even shame at using a 'non-Islamic' language for this purpose. Even those who reassured themselves that religious truths could legitimately be conveyed in any language seem to have been conscious of a certain tension in using vernacular Bengali for this purpose.[21] Nonetheless, this was an absolutely essential task, since the masses of rural folk did not know Arabic or Persian. But the problem was not a merely mechanical one of translating Persian or Arabic works on Islam into Bengali. What was fundamentally necessary was the complete adaptation of the religion—its moods, symbols and values, as well as its specific saints, prophets and conceptions of divinity—to the Bengali cultural universe.

21. See Asim Roy, 'The Social Factors in the Making of Bengali Islam', *South Asia*, Vol. 3, August, 1973, p. 28.

Part of the task of these poets, then, was literary: to clothe an austere creed born of the desert with imagery drawn from the jungle and the steaming rice swamps of the Bengal delta. A story set in biblical Egypt, for example, alludes to dark forests with tigers and elephants; the countryside abounds with banana and mango trees, peacocks and chirping parrots; people eat fish and curried rice, sweet yoghurt and betel nuts; women glitter in silk saris or glass and gold bangles, and everywhere wafts the sweet aroma of fresh rice and plants.[22] These poets also tended to draw parallels between historical or mythological figures of Islamic lore and those of Indian or Bengali lore. In this way Ali, for example, is portrayed as a great archer, comparable in skill with celebrated archers in the Hindu tradition; and the wars between the early Muslims and the infidels of Iraq are compared with the wars of the epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.[23]

22. See Qazi Abdul Mannan, *The Emergence and Development of Dobhasi Literature in Bengal up to 1855*, Dacca, University of Dacca, 1966, pp. 86-102.

23. See Roy, op. cit., p. 32.

The more critical part of the poets' task was fitting the specifics of the Islamic faith into the local religious universe, which was a most diverse and multifaceted one. Although the masses of the countryside, especially in the eastern delta, were not firmly integrated into the Hindu caste system and its supporting ideological framework, they were nonetheless familiar with the older Hindu epics. One sixteenth-century poet tells us that 'Muslims as well as Hindus in every home' would read the *Mahabharata*. Another poet of the same century mentions Muslims being moved to tears on hearing of Rama's loss of his beloved Sita, in the epic *Ramayana*.[24] In addition to the Vaishnavite devotionalism mentioned above, the people of this period were also saturated with *mangala-kavya* literature, a local genre that celebrated the exploits, power and grace of specifically Bengali folk deities such as the snake-goddess Manasa and the forest-goddess Chandi.

24. Ibid., p. 29.

This rich indigenous substratum of religious culture naturally influenced the ways in which medieval Muslim poets presented Islam to the Bengali people. Thus Radha's passionate love for Krishna, the central motif of the Vaishnavite devotional movement, was echoed in romantic tales drawn from the Islamic tradition such as that of Joseph and Zulaikha. 'Your face is as bright as the full moon', runs a description of Joseph that could easily pass for a Vaishnavite description of Radha or Krishna,

> and your eyes are black as if bees are buzzing round them. Your eyebrows are like the bow of Kama and your ears like lotuses which grow on shore. Your waist is as slim as that of a prowling tigress. Your step is as light as a bird's and when they see it even sages forget all else. Your body is as perfect as a well-made string of pearls. A maid, therefore, cannot control herself and longs for your embrace.[25]

25. Mannan, op. cit., p. 99.

A second way that poets tapped Bengal's religious substratum shows the influence of another important type of indigenous poetry, the *mangala-kavya*. Since this genre of vernacular literature celebrated one or another manifestation of divine power as the goddess, it struck to the roots of traditional Bengali religion, permeated as it is with mother-goddess cults. The influence of this aspect of Bengali religion on medieval Muslim poetry is seen in the emphasis many poets gave to the feminine aspect of divine power. We find, for example, a medieval ballad of Mymensingh invoking special reverence to Amina, the Prophet's mother, and to Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, who the ballad says 'was called "mother" by all excepting Ali'.[26] Another poet calls her 'mother of the world', and still another 'mother Tara'.[27]

26. Dinesh Chandra Sen (ed.), *Eastern Bengal Ballads*, 3 vols., University of Calcutta, 1923, 1926, 1928; Vol. 2, p. 283.

27. Roy, op. cit., p. 33.

It is in matters of cosmology and theology, however, that we observe the most interesting and important ways that poets shaped Islam to the Bengali environment. Saiyid Sultan, who flourished in the southeastern delta during the final quarter of the sixteenth century, is representative of a whole class of poets who concerned themselves in this way. The author's most ambitious literary effort, the *Nabi-Bangsa*, is thought to have been intended as a kind of 'national religious epic' for Bengali Muslims.[28] This work treats major deities of the Hindu pantheon such as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Rama or Krishna as successive prophets of God, followed in turn by Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. What is significant is that the poet simply identified the Islamic concept of a prophet *(nabi)*, or a messenger sent down by God, with the Hindu concept of *avatar*, or an incarnation of God. Similarly, each *avatar*/ prophet of God is given a scripture appropriate for his

28. Syed Sajjad Husain (trans.), *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts in Munshi Abdul Karim's Collection*, by Munshi Abdul Karim and Ahmad Sharif, Dacca, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1960, p. XXIV.

time. Thus the four Vedas, for example, are interpreted as successive revelations of God. But, as religion in the time of each *avatar*/prophet eventually became corrupt, God sent down later prophets with a view to propagating monotheism, culminating in the last and most perfect *avatar*/prophet, Muhammad.[29]

At one level, then, the *Nabi-Bangsa* epic presents a linear conception of religious development that moves forward toward the final prophecy of Muhammad. This, of course, accords fully with the orthodox Islamic understanding of prophecy. At the same time, however, the epic serves the further function of connecting Islam with the Bengali religious universe. Rather than repudiate that universe and the many deities that inhabited it, the *Nabi-Bangsa* affirms those deities and ties them in with Islamic conceptions of prophecy and divinity. If, then, in its formative period Islam was carried into Bengal by pioneer saints who, in their force of character and spiritual power embodied the religion, in this second phase its roots were deepened by poets who, in their vernacular works, adapted an originally foreign creed to the local culture.

A third phase in the evolution of Islam in Bengal becomes visible in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when, as a result of the Mughal conquest, Bengal became more closely integrated with north India than ever before. Although the Emperor Akbar conquered Bengal in 1576 it took several decades for Mughal generals to crush the various resistance movements mounted in the eastern districts by local chieftains. Only from 1613 was all of Bengal firmly integrated as a Mughal province, administered by viceroys appointed in Delhi. Consequently, the province in the seventeenth century lost a good deal of its regional character and began to resemble other Mughal provinces. This process is reflected in the stuccoed stamp of Mughal imperial architecture on the provincial capital, Dhaka. Linked now to a pan-Indian, if not a global economy, Bengal became the major exporter of rice in the subcontinent, while the influx of vast quantities of silver imported by European trading companies fuelled a rapidly growing textile industry that produced silks and fine cottons for a world market.[30]

While Mughal Bengal as a whole was becoming integrated with north India, the epicentre of civilization within the province was shifting eastwards. This resulted in part from the Mughals' systematic land-revenue administration and successful efforts to reclaim jungle and wastelands, which accelerated the opening of east and south Bengal for colonization and a more intensified rice cultivation.[31] More

29. Momtazur Rahman, Tarafdar, *Husain Shahi Bengal, A.D. 1494-1538, A Socio-political Study*, Dacca, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1965, p. 224; Roy, op. cit., pp. 31-3; Mannan, op. cit., p. 38.

30. Jadunath Sarkar, *The History of Bengal: Muslim Period, 1200-1757*, Patna, Janaki Prakashan, 1977, pp. 217-19; K. N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760*, Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 52.

31. See Sidiq Khan, 'A Study in Mughal Land Revenue System', *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 12, 1938, pp. 62-8.

importantly, though, the Mughals were moving with the long-term ecological drama referred to earlier—the eastward march of the active portion of the Bengal delta. Older cities of western Bengal were being eclipsed by newer cities in the east. Accordingly, both Gaur and Satgaon, though flourishing western cities of 40,000 and 10,000 inhabitants respectively at the beginning of the sixteenth century, had died by the end of that century, owing to the silting up of the rivers on which they had been situated.[32] The establishment of the eastern city of Dhaka in 1612 as the Mughal provincial capital was also part of this basic shift, since the city was better suited as a base not only for clearing the region of Arakanese pirates, but also for exploiting the resources of a developing frontier zone.

For most of the seventeenth century, Mughal rule in Bengal reflected the secular outlook of the emperor Akbar, during whose enlightened reign the province had been annexed. We see this secular spirit in the career of Islam Khan Chishti (d. 1613), the iron-willed Mughal general who directed the subjugation of eastern Bengal. In 1609, for example, he chastised one of his subordinate officers for having permitted the son of a Hindu chieftain to convert to Islam as a token of his political surrender.[33] In other words, Islam Khan clearly recognized that the political integration of Bengal with Mughal India did not in any way involve the religious conversion of its people. This secular outlook was continued by seventeenth-century Mughal viceroys, who built relatively fewer mosques and relatively more secular monuments like bridges or forts than did the independent sultans immediately preceding them.[34]

Socially, the most important result of the Mughal conquest was the growth of a class of Muslims calling themselves *ashraf*. Meaning in general 'nobles', 'gentlemen', 'men of high extraction', 'refined', or 'urbane', this term in the Bengali context also referred to that class of Muslims who claimed descent from migrants from some Muslim land to the west. It is true that *ashraf* elements had settled in Bengal as soldiers, administrators, scholars, etc. ever since the initial conquest of 1204. But the integration of Bengal with north India by the Mughals exposed the province to new waves of up-country *ashraf*, who settled throughout the province in the seventeenth century, especially in the new provincial capital of Dhaka. Indeed, most of the government officers and notables living in Dhaka in the 1630s were foreigners whose ancestors or who themselves had come from places like Kashmir, Mashhad, Tehran, Badakhshan, Mazandaran, or Gilan.[35] The influx of these Mughal *ashraf* had the further effect of dislodging an older *ashraf* group, Afghans,

32. Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires* (trans. and ed., A. Cortesao), London, Hakluyt Society, 1944, Vol. I, pp. 90, 91; R. K. Mukerjee, *The Changing Face of Bengal: A Study of Riverine Economy*, University of Calcutta, 1938, pp. 165, 189.

33. Mirza Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* (trans. M. I. Borah), 2 vols., Gauhati, Government of Assam, 1936, Vol. I, p. 32.

34. See Ahmed, op. cit., p. 317-38.

35. A. Halim, 'An Account of the Celebrities of Bengal of the Early Years of Shahjahan's Reign Given by Muhammad Sadiq', *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. I, 1953, pp. 355-6.

as the last ruling class of independent Bengal, and driving many of them into the more remote regions of east and south Bengal, where they re-established themselves as colonizers and local magnates.[36]

The Mughal period also witnessed, however, a widening social cleavage between *ashraf* Muslims and those rural masses who had been gradually becoming absorbed into a distinctively local variant of Muslim society since the fourteenth century. The former tended to be suspicious of the religious practices of rural Muslims, steeped as they were in the veneration of saints like Shah Jalal and in devotion to a host of syncretic cults such as those of Satyapri, Dakshin Ray, Panj Pir, etc.[37] For whereas the *ashraf* claimed foreign origins and patronized 'Islamic' languages like Arabic and Persian, the non-*ashraf* were of purely Bengali extraction and spoke only Bengali. And whereas the *ashraf* were predominantly urban-dwellers and disdained farming as a way of life, the non-*ashraf* were rural folk who readily identified themselves as cultivators of the soil. These socio-cultural differences were echoed in the poetry of Saiyid Sultan, who remarked that some Muslims rebuked him for using the Bengali language and for 'Indianizing' the teachings of Islam.[38] This suggests a tension between the minority *ashraf* population, who held the levers of social and political power, and the majority non-*ashraf* population, for whom Bengali poets like Saiyid Sultan had consciously attempted to mediate Islamic teachings.

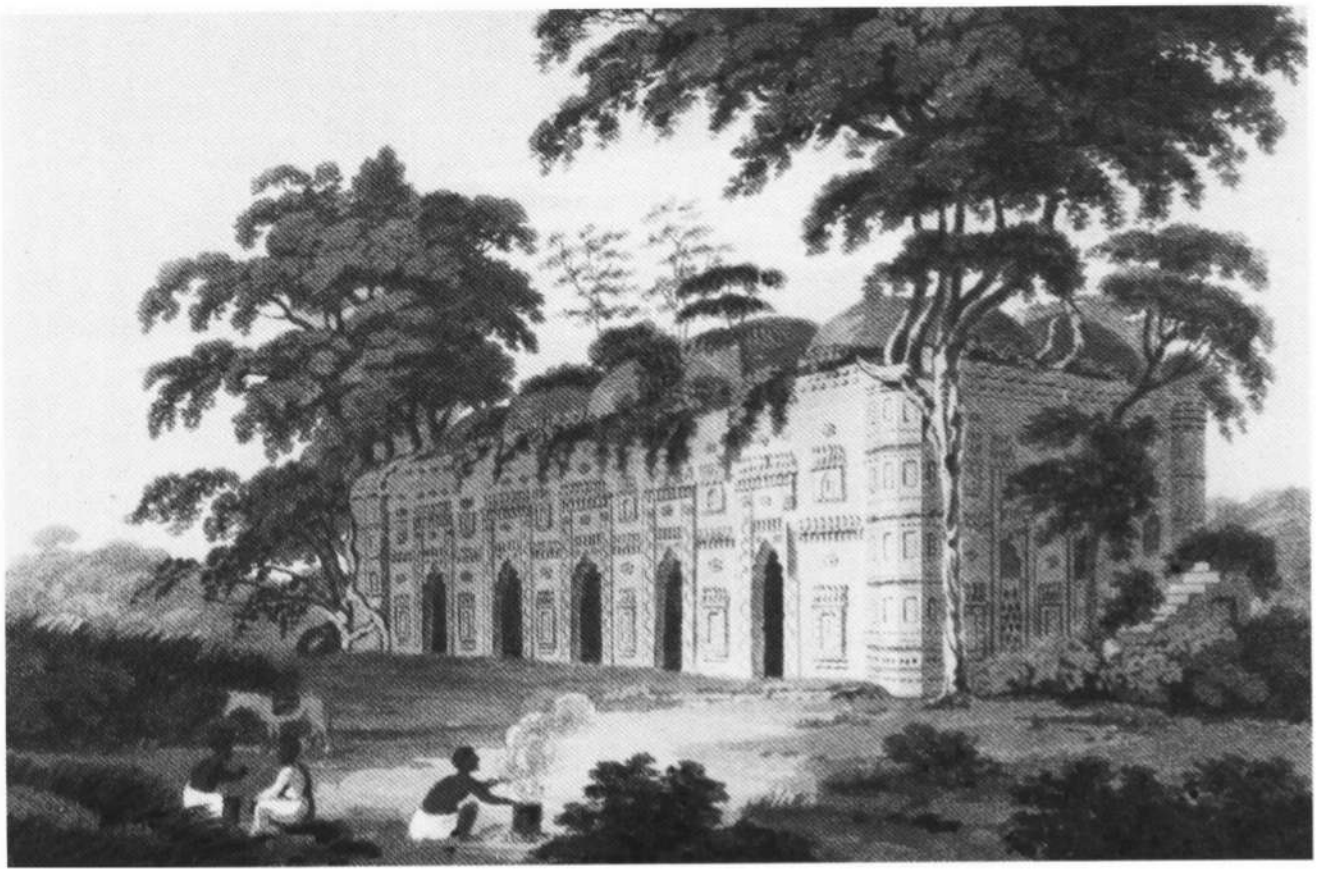
These developments set the stage for a fourth phase in the evolution of Islam in Bengal, the nineteenth-century period of religious reform. This was the age of the steamship, when many thousands of Bengali Muslims were able to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca and compare, first hand, Islam as practised in the Arab heartland with Islam as practised in their native countryside. The result was the advent of reform movements that urged rural Bengali Muslims to model their own religious culture more closely on that of Arabia. This 'Arabizing' process among rural Muslims covered a wide spectrum of traditional Bengali culture. It included, for example, the replacement of personal names like 'Chand', 'Pal', or 'Dutt' with Arabic personal names; the replacement of names for God like 'Shri Shri Huq' or 'Shri Shri Ishwar' with the Arabic 'Allah'; and movements to increase the Arabic content in spoken and written Bengali, to replace traditional Bengali dress like the dhoti and sari, and to adopt Arab dietary customs.[39] These changes in the cultural sphere were but one dimension of a reform movement that was to have profound social and political consequences in the twentieth century.

36. Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 187-8.

37. Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906: a Quest for Identity*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 5-27, especially p. 22. For examples of religious syncretism in medieval Bengal, see Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, pp. 674-83.

38. Haq, op cit., pp. 121-2.

39. See R. Ahmed, op. cit., Chap. 4, *passim*; James Wise, 'The Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 63, 1894, p. 56; P. M. Holt, et al. (eds.), *Cambridge History of Islam*, Cambridge University Press, 1970, Vol. 2, p. 77.



Gaur, Chota Sona Mosque. From H. Creighton, *The Ruins of Gaur*, Plate VI, London, 1817. [Photo: By permission of the British Library, London.]

In sum, Islam in Bengal has evolved through several distinct phases since the thirteenth century. In the earliest period, pioneer saints from older Muslim lands arrived and became the nuclei of new agrarian communities in the east and south, while in western Bengal immigrant Muslims built new cities, often on the sites of earlier Hindu cities. Several centuries later, in a Bengal independent of north Indian political or cultural influence, local poets communicated Islam to semi-Muslim rural communities by building on locally generated religious conceptions and practices. This spirit was given architectural expression by the independent sultans of Gaur, who built mosques in a distinctively Bengali style. The Mughal conquest in the early seventeenth century, however, re-established Bengal's link with north India and once again saw a rapid influx of foreign-born immigrants. As a legacy of this period, the Mughal *ashraf* left monuments that were imperial in style but largely secular in nature.

Finally, through improved communications resulting from British colonial rule, many Muslims in the nineteenth century became more aware of Islam as practised in Arabia, from which Bengal had remained distant and isolated for so long. This awareness fed into several powerful reform

movements that sought to free Bengali Islam of any local or Hindu influence, and to connect the Bengali Muslim, if only symbolically, with Arabia. Politically, these movements eventually led in the twentieth century to a demand for a separate Islamic state in Bengal on the departure of the British from India. Such reform movements were not reflected architecturally, however, until after 1947, when such a state, Pakistan, came into being. It was in this period that monuments were built in a distinctly Arab style, the outstanding example being the Baitul Mukarram mosque in modern Dhaka.

Inventory of key monuments

Catherine B. Asher

Seven hundred years of Islam in Bengal have produced a greater variety of buildings than can be seen anywhere else in the Indian subcontinent, a testimony to the genius of the Bengali architect. From the 1298 mosque of Zafar Khan Ghazi at Tribeni to the mosques of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Calcutta, distinctive Bengali styles emerge to form a rich architectural heritage. This inventory, arranged alphabetically by site, surveys and analyses the most important of these monuments.

By contrast to sultanate architecture elsewhere in the subcontinent, the pre-Mughal buildings of Bengal are richly embellished. They are, for the most part, brick structures ornamented with designs in brick relief and often with glazed tiles. The abundance of plan types, like the treatment of the façade, shows considerable variety. Whereas the buildings of most regions may be grouped by period—for example, the Tughluq style or Lodi style—the architecture of Bengal can best be seen as a continuous development, occasionally enriched by the impact of new ideas, but ultimately distinctively Bengali.

The architecture of the Mughal and post-Mughal periods is constructed within the imperial Mughal tradition, but all these buildings still maintain a regional identity. The Mughal capitals of Bengal—Rajmahal, Dhaka, Murshidabad, and Calcutta—are replete with monuments, many of them published here for the first time. Unlike the pre-Mughal architecture of Bengal, Islamic buildings constructed during the Mughal and post-Mughal periods are restrained and tend to be more subdued than contemporary architecture elsewhere in the subcontinent. While the reasons for this are

not altogether clear, one explanation may be that the builders did not want to construct monuments that might appear to resemble Hindu temples, which by this time in Bengal commonly used ornate brickwork like that of pre-Mughal Islamic monuments. Later, British architecture may have influenced the appearance of Islamic monuments in Bengal.

Although most of the principal Islamic buildings of Bengal are covered here, the list does not profess to be comprehensive. Some areas, such as Chittagong and Sylhet, are omitted, for the author has not studied the buildings there *in situ*, nor is there any recent scholarly study of them.

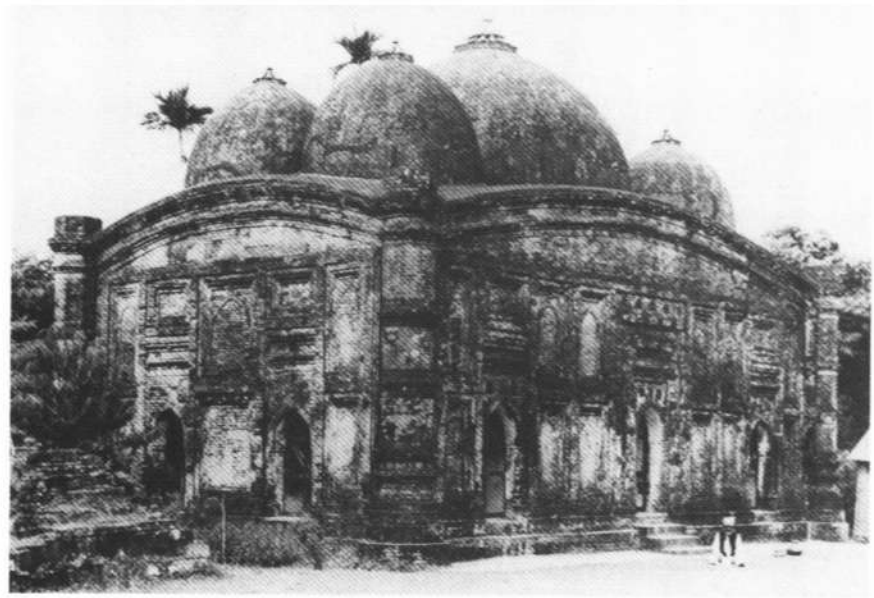
This inventory results largely from field work done by the author, with support from the American Institute of Indian Studies and the Aga Khan Foundation for Islamic Architecture. Most of the photographs were taken by the author and are published with the kind permission of the Aga Khan Foundation for Islamic Architecture. Some sites, however—Ashtagram, Atiya, Bagerhat, Basirhat, Egarsindhur, Gaur (Mosque and Tomb of Shah Nimat Allah), Hemtabad, Kheraul, Pathrail, Qasba, Rampal, Shahzadpur and Sura—were covered by the late David McCutchion, whose remarkable devotion to the art of Bengal took him to monuments not seen by any other scholar. His photographs, today housed in the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, are reproduced with the kind permission of the Trustees of the David McCutchion Estate.

Ashtagram (Mymensingh District, Bangladesh)

Qutb Mosque

Late sixteenth and
early seventeenth centuries

Bibliography: Dani 1961, 164–5; Hasan 1980, 100



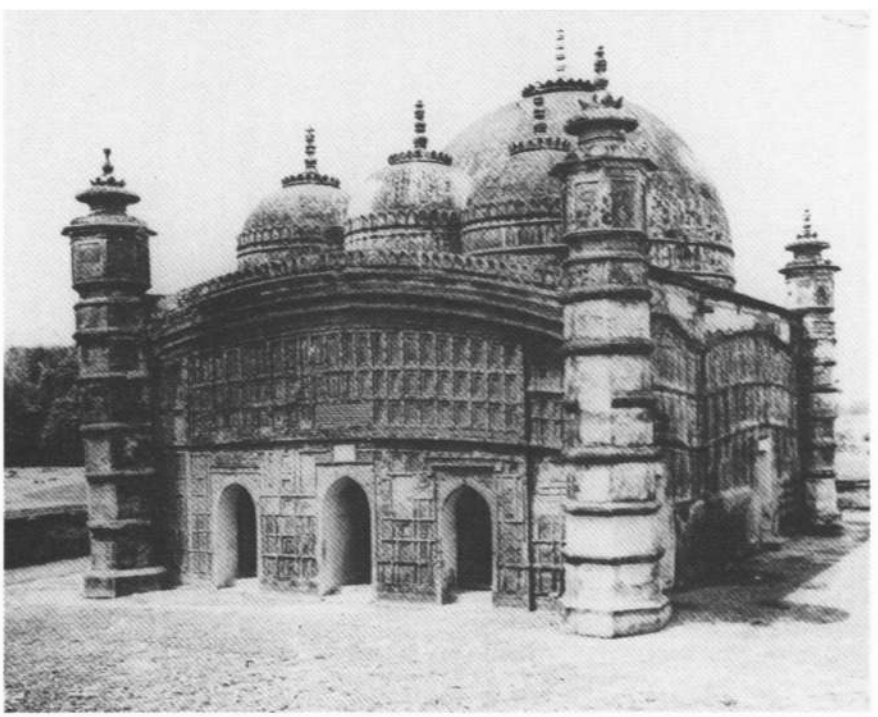
Named for a local saint, Qutb Sahib, this brick mosque reflects in its design both the innovative and the traditional nature of the Bengali architect. In plan, the mosque's prayer chamber consists of a single aisle entered on the east by three arched entrances, matched on the interior by three mihrabs, thus suggesting Mughal influence. In keeping with much Bengali architecture, the exterior corners are marked by engaged turrets, and the cornice's slope is exaggerated. The terracotta ornamentation is in keeping with that of other mosques in Mymensingh District, for example the Sadi mosque of 1652. The central dome of the roof is flanked on either side by two smaller domes, creating a five-domed arrangement that marks a departure from other Bengali prototypes. However, a similar arrangement is seen elsewhere in eastern India at Sher Shah's mosque in Patna (*c.* 1540) in Bihar. This is another indication that the architect of this mosque was familiar with architectural traditions outside of Bengal.

[*Photo:* David McCutchion.]

Atiya (Tangail District, Bangladesh)

Jami Mosque

A.H. 1018/A.D. 1609

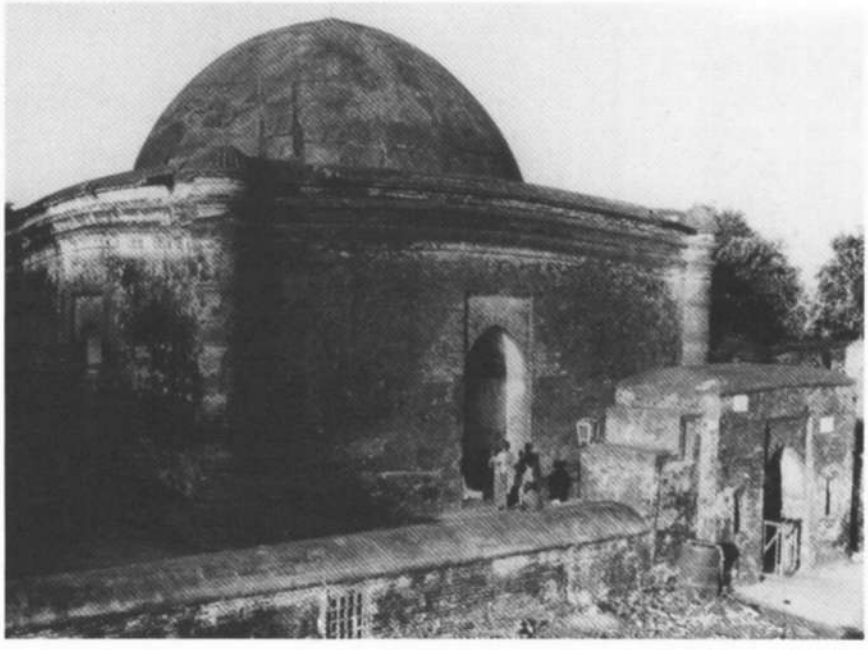


Bibliography: Annual Report of the Bengal Circle 1901-02, 28; Dani 1961, 253; Hasan 1980, 98.

The form of this rectangular mosque, consisting of a single-domed prayer chamber and attached east verandah, is perhaps unique during the seventeenth century. According to an inscription, it was built in 1609 by Sayyid Khan Panni, son of Bayazid Khan Panni, in honour of Pir Ali Shahanshah Baba Kashmiri. If it was built as a Jami mosque, it is the only one of its type that serves the function. Hence, the name by which it is now called may not reflect the mosque's original purpose. The terracotta relief work upon the east façade is divided into numerous small rectangular panels, a feature seen in the early sixteenth-century mosques of Gaur, for example the Jahaniyan Mosque, dated 1535. But characteristic of the Mughal period are the high drums of the domes with *kanjuras*, and also the *kanjuras* surmounting the curved cornice. [*Photo:* David McCutchion.]

Bagerhat (Khulna District, Bangladesh)

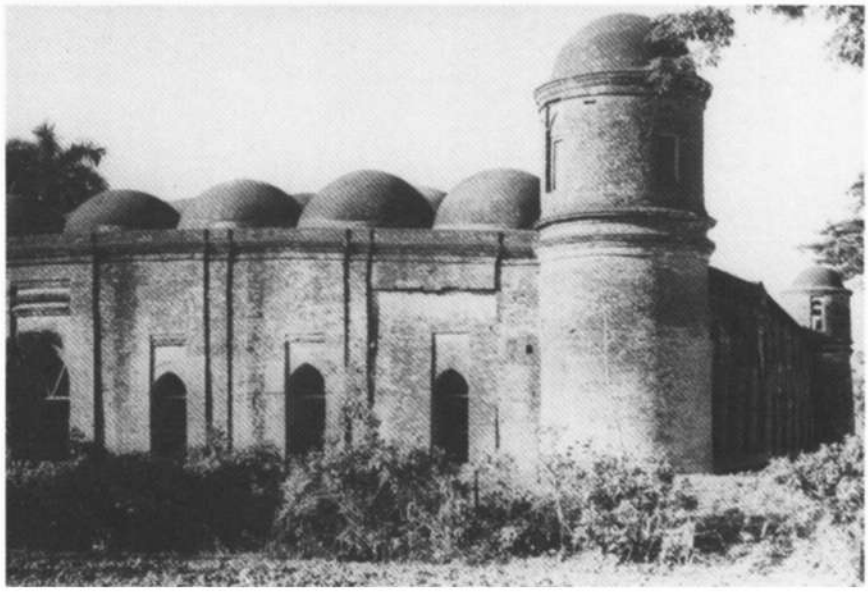
Khan Jahan's Tomb
A.H. 863/A.D. 1459



Bibliography: Ahmed, N. 1980, 2-3; Ahmed, S.D. 1960, 64-7; Bysack 1867, 130; Dani 1961, 141-2; Hasan 1980, 87-9.

Dated to 1459, the Tomb of Khan Jahan, an independent ruler in south Bengal, is a square single-domed structure with engaged corner turrets. It thus adheres in plan and elevation to the earlier Eklakhi Tomb in Pandua. String coursing appears on these four turrets and beneath the gently curved cornice of the roof, but the exterior walls are devoid of any other ornamentation. [*Photo:* David McCutchion.]

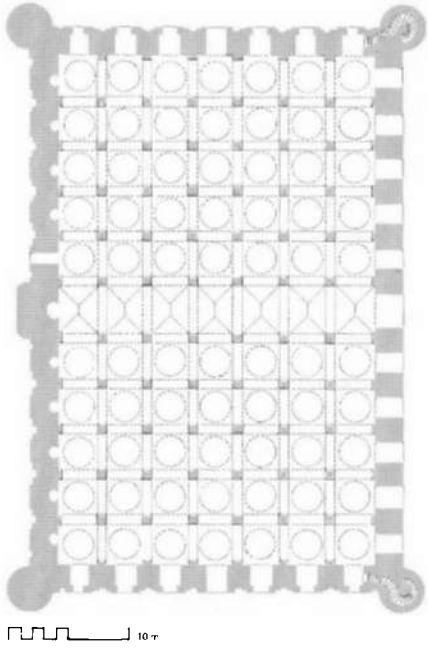
Saithgumbad Mosque
Mid-fifteenth century



Bibliography: Ahmed, N. 1980, 4-6; Bysack 1867, 132; Hasan 1979, 152-5; Hasan 1980, 89-90.

Although uninscribed, this large mosque (49 × 55 m) is considered the Jami mosque of Khan Jahan (died 1459). While he neither issued coins nor assumed the title of Sultan, Khan Jahan appears to have acted as an independent ruler of the Sundarbans. Rectangular in format, the Saithgumbad Mosque has massive engaged towers at each corner, rising high

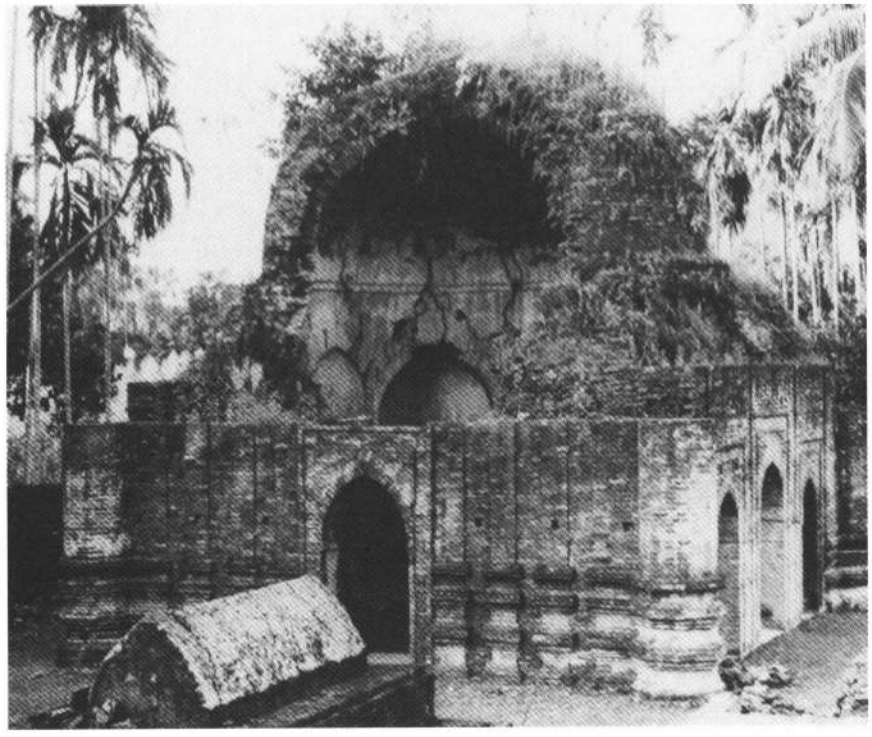
above the curved cornice and domes of the roof. The eastern façade has eleven entrance arches opening to a seven-aisled prayer chamber divided into seventy-seven bays. The corridor leading from the central entrance to the central mihrab is covered with a series of seven *char-chala* vaults, while the bays of the flanking side wings are domed. The product of an obscure provincial ruler, this mosque is the first extant structure to employ the *char-chala* shaped vault. The use of multiple *char-chala* vaults to cover the central corridor of a prayer chamber influenced the later Darasbari Mosque in Gaur. Both the interior and exterior are austerely ornamented, resembling the Tomb of Khan Jahan, the likely patron. The numerous pillars supporting the seventy domes and seven *char-chala* vaults create a sense of directional ambiguity, for the entire space appears like a forest of columns, a feature seen earlier in Bengal in the side wings of the Adina Mosque in Pandua. [*Photos:* David McCutchion.]



Zinda Pir Mosque
Seventeenth century

Bibliography: Dani 1961, 141–4.

The Zinda Pir Mosque is probably associated with the Shrine of Pir Ali, since its name means the living Pir. Adhering to a square single-domed mosque type first introduced to Bengal in the early fourteenth century, this particular structure, with its very high dome resting on squinches, is similar to Sadi's Mosque (1652) in Egarasindhur and probably dates to the same period. The exterior brick walls are more articulated than those of the austere fifteenth-century structures at Bagerhat, such as the Tomb of Khan Jahan (1459). [*Photo:* David McCutchion.]



Bagha (Rajshahi District, Bangladesh)

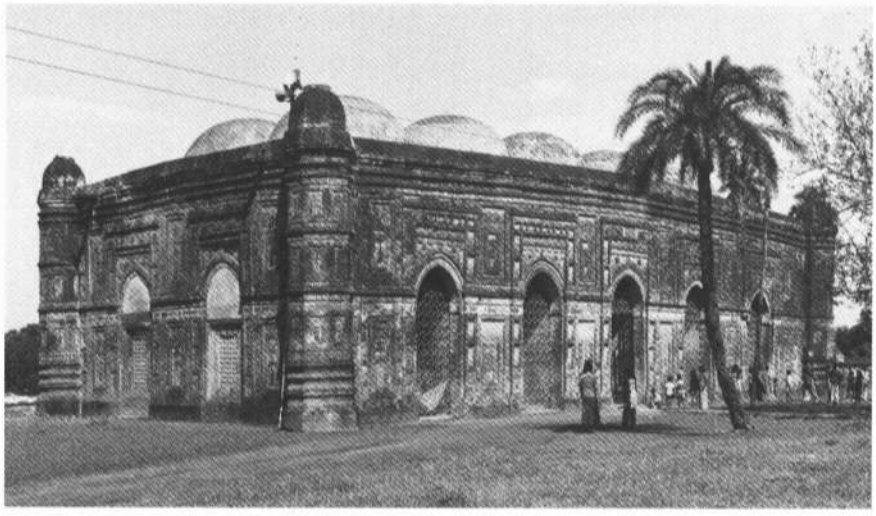
Mosque of Anwar Siraj al-Salikin
A.H. 1220/A.D. 1805

Bibliography: none

An unpublished inscription over the central bay of the east façade records that this mosque was constructed by Anwar Siraj al-Salikin in 1805. This small early nineteenth-century mosque belongs to the single-aisled three-bayed type well established earlier in Bengal: for example, many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mosques in Dhaka, Rajmahal and Murshidabad. The prayer chamber is covered with three *char-chala* vaults reminiscent of the Gulab Bagh Mosque (Murshidabad) dating to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, which has two such vaults and a central dome. Constructed of brick, Anwar Siraj al-Salikin's Mosque was originally covered with shallow cartouche-shaped niches covered with stucco.

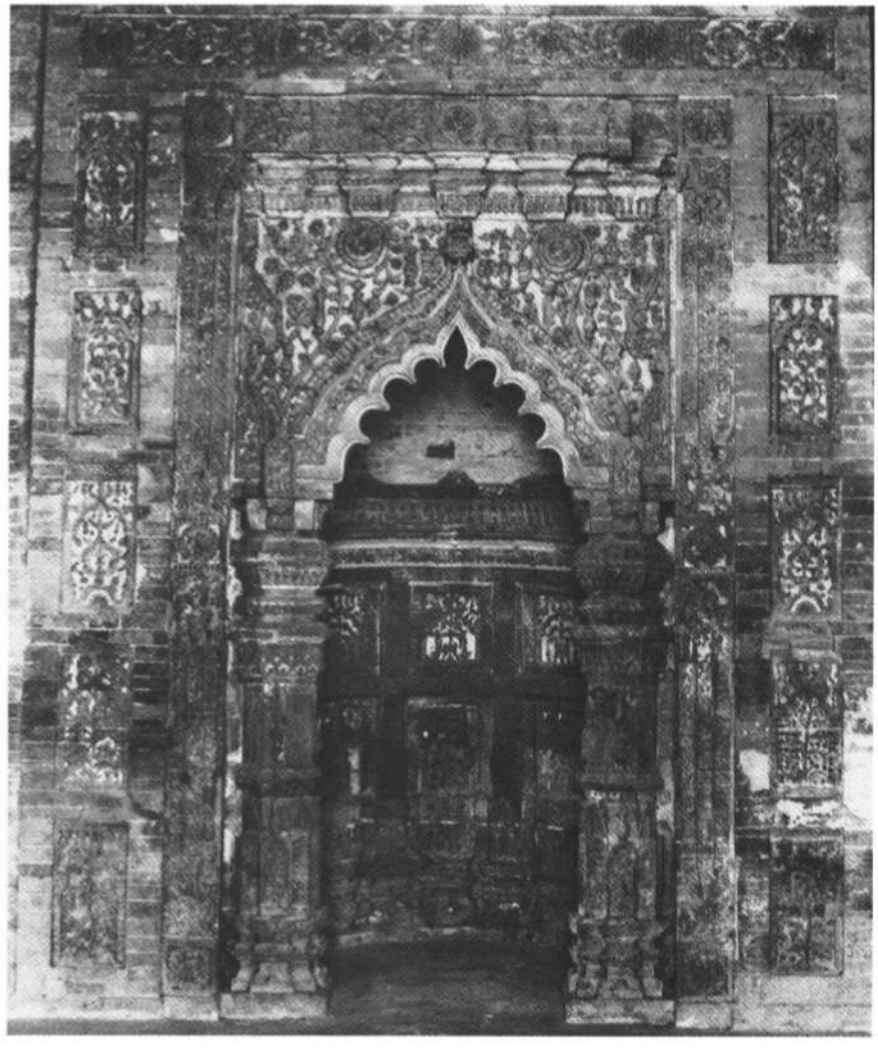
Jami Mosque

A.H. 930/A.D. 1523



Bibliography: Ahmed, S.D. 1960, 210-14; Dani 1961, 159-60; Hasan 1979, 136-7; Hasan 1980, 129-31.

According to an inscription, this building was constructed in 1523 as a Jami mosque by the Sultan Nusrat Shah, thus suggesting that Bagha in the sixteenth century was a site of considerable importance. In plan and elevation, this Jami mosque follows the ten-bayed type seen earlier, for example in the Tantipara Mosque in Gaur. It is famous for its exquisite brick relief ornamentation, and the organic arabesques and floral motifs depicting fruited and flowering mango trees are unsurpassed. The epitome of brick architecture, this mosque was constructed during a period also noted for its excellent craftmanship in stone and the extensive variety of architectural types. The richness of Bengali architecture at this time is paralleled by a flowering in literature.



Bandar (Dhaka District, Bangladesh)

Sonakanda Fort

Circa seventeenth century

Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 59; Dani 1961, 226; Hasan 1980, 67.

Like the Hajiganj river fort in Naryanganj, this fort, too, is located at a major junction of two rivers. It is larger than the Hajiganj fort. The rectangular enclosure walls have an additional projection consisting of a raised platform within an enormous circular bastion overlooking the river. This platform is entered by a refined cusped arched entrance at the top of a staircase in the fort's interior. Most probably a large cannon was mounted in this strategic position.

Basirhat (Twenty-four-Parganas, West Bengal, India)

Salih Mosque

A.H. 871/A.D. 1466-67

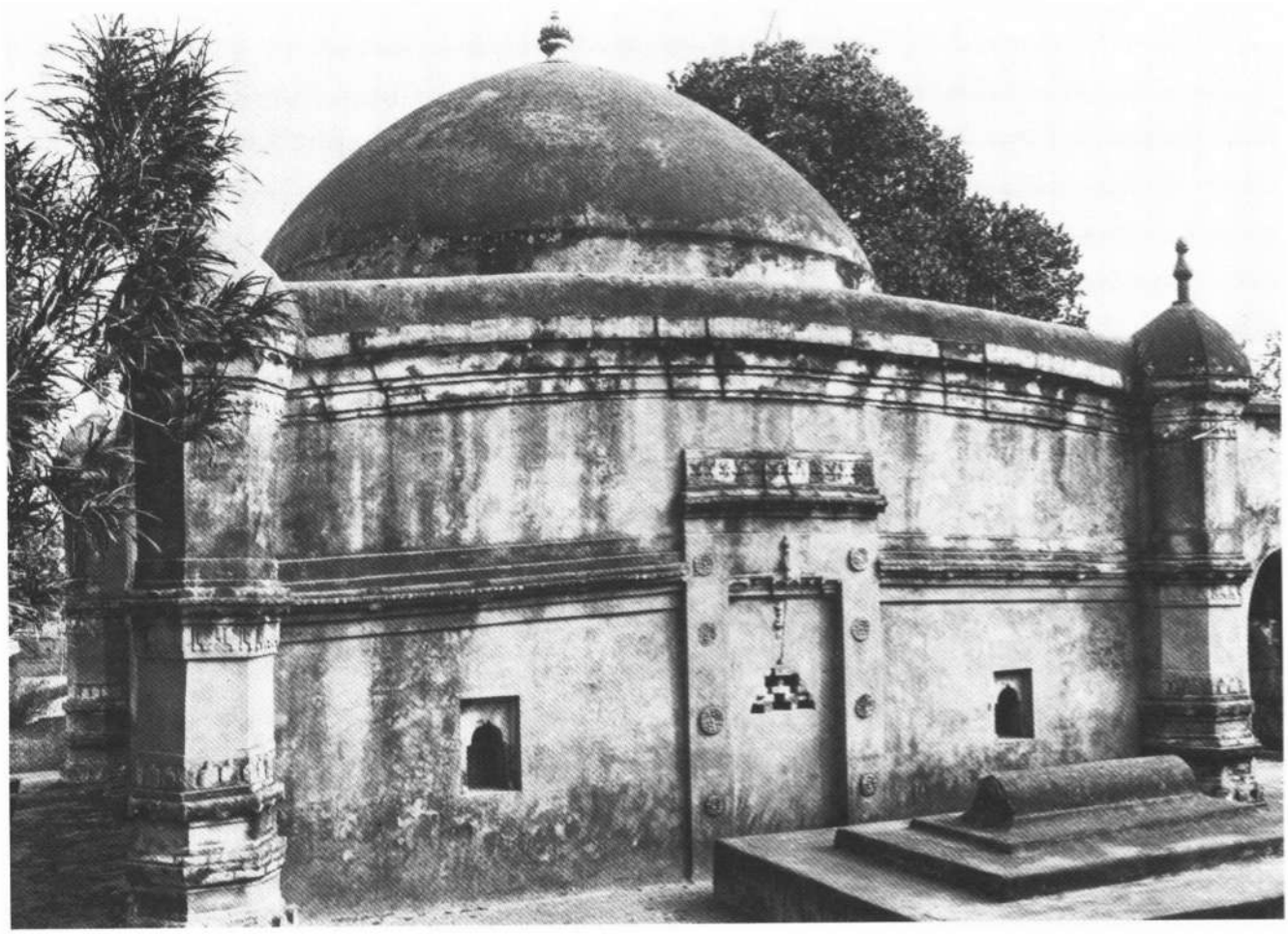
Bibliography: Dani 1961, 154; Hasan 1979, 141.

Although much renovated, the Salih Mosque, built in 1466-67 by a noble entitled Majlis al-Muazzam wal-Muharram Majlis Azam, appears to be the earliest dated mosque of the six-bayed variety. Entered by three archways on the east, the mosque is divided into two aisles by pillars taken from temples. The prayer chamber is roofed by six small domes. [*Photo:* David McCutchion.]

Burdwan (West Bengal, India)

Dargah of Pir Bahram

A.H. 970/A.D. 1562 and A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606



Bibliography: Ahmed, S.D. 1960, 256-58, 296-70; Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy 1955-56 D 3, 6, 14; Dani 1961, 271; Wali 1917, 177-84.

Pir Bahram, originally from Bukhara, was greatly favoured by Akbar, but left the court in annoyance after having been termed a Shia by opponents. Shortly after arriving in Burdwan, he died. Akbar is said to have given the land for his tomb, but this is questionable since the Mughals did not control Bengal at this time. The Tomb of Pir Barham, constructed in the regional style first established with the Eklakhi Mausoleum in Gaur, is a square brick structure with engaged octagonal turrets at each corner; the curved cornice is crowned with a single dome. A plaster veneer has covered much of the brickwork, though some remains visible. An inscription dated 1606 records the endowment of land for the maintainance of the tomb by Jahangir, an indication of the tomb's continued popularity.

Jami Mosque

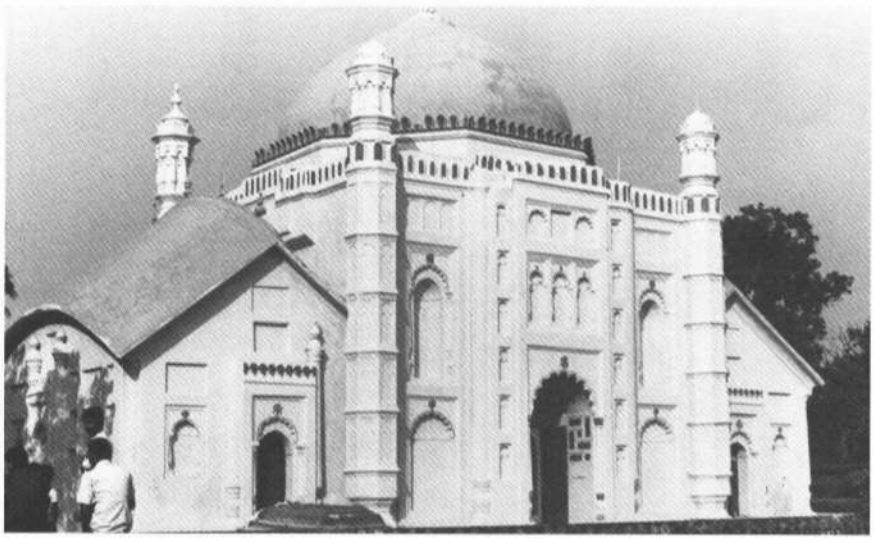
A.H. 1111/A.D. 1699

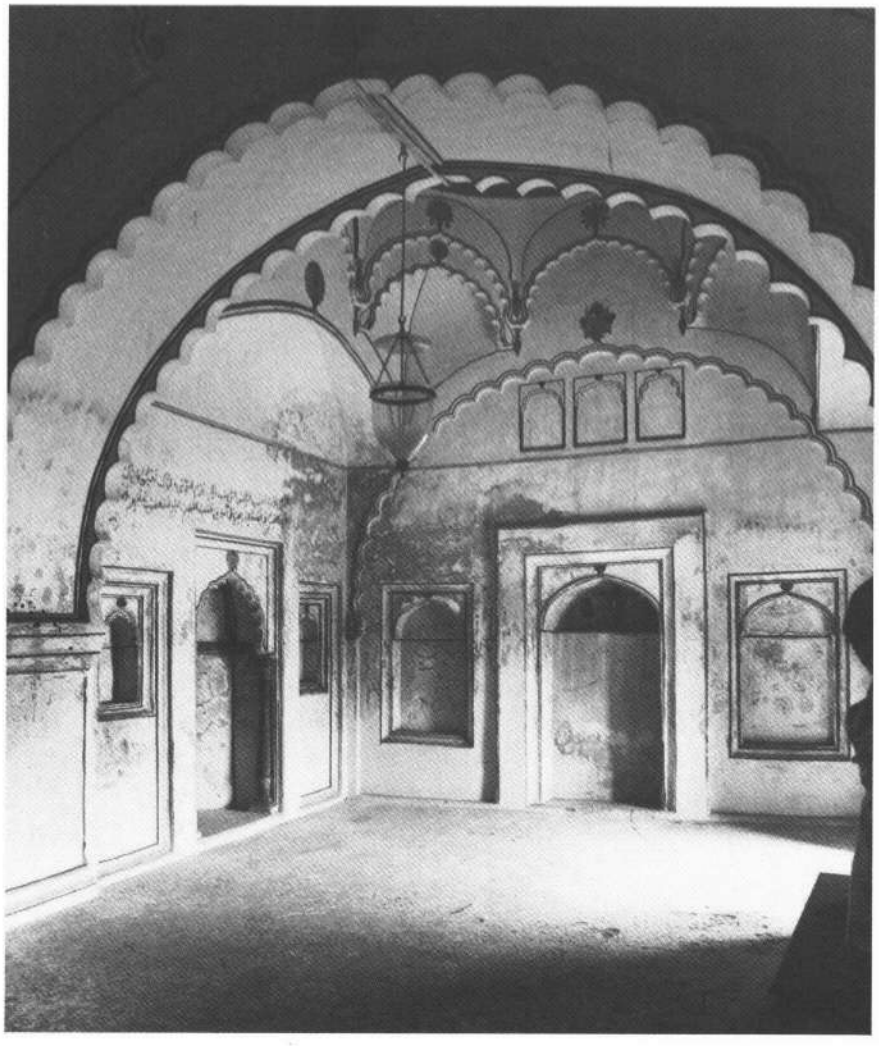
Bibliography: *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* 1955-56, D 6; Dani 1961, 272; Wali 1917, 188-9.

Local tradition states that this is a Jami mosque erected by Azim al-Shan, the governor of Bengal after the death of Anwar al-Shahid. However, Azim al-Shah's name is not mentioned in the inscription, and the building is not termed a Jami mosque in the epigraph. Moreoever, the heavy, unrefined features of this mosque do not suggest imperial patronage. The mosque's plan is most unusual at this time. Seven entrance arches mark the east façade, which is surmounted by three central domes, two *char-chala* vaults at either end and similar vaults over the covered east verandah. The seven entrances open onto an enclosed verandah that runs the entire length of the façade. Small arched doors on the verandah's west side give way to an austere prayer chamber.

Tomb Complex of Khwaja Anwar-i Shahid

Late seventeenth century





Bibliography: *Bengal Past and Present*, 1909, 333-8; Dani 1961, 271-2; Wali 1917, 177-89.

Perhaps the most picturesque monument in all Bengal is the Tomb of Khwaja Anwar-i Shahid, chief *amir* of Azim al-Shan, Aurangzeb's grandson and governor of Bengal. Khwaja Anwar died in an ambush in 1698. In homage to this loyal servant, the emperor gave a large sum of money for his burial. The tomb stands at the north end of a large complex entered on the south by a monumental gateway, flanked on the west by a mosque and on the east by a *madrasa*. In the centre of this compound is a large, deep tank with a pavilion reached by an arched causeway. In plan and elevation this tomb is unique in India. A square single-domed chamber is flanked on the east and west side by lower rectangular wings, each crowned with a steeply pitched *do-chala* roof, recalling the contemporary Tomb of Fath Khan in Gaur. The facade of Khwaja Anwar-i Shahid's Tomb is embellished with geometric patterns, deeply incised in stucco, and elegant cusped recessed niches. The decoration of this tomb foreshadows that seen on the later Pil Khana Mosque in Murshidabad.

Calcutta

Mosque of Ghulam Muhammad

A.H. 1251/A.D. 1835
and A.H. 1259/A.D. 1843.

Bibliography: none.

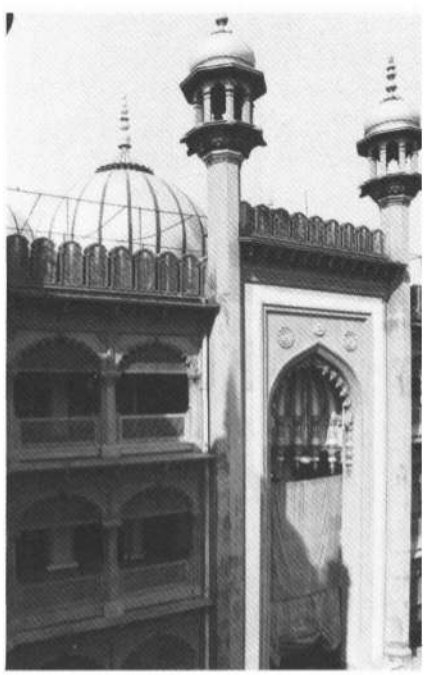
This mosque is the first of a series constructed in Calcutta by descendants of Tipu Sultan. The slightly later and more famous Mosque of Tipu Sultan, constructed in 1842 (described below), is nearly identical to Ghulam Muhammad's Mosque, situated in Calcutta's suburb of Tollygunj. The double-aisled rectangular mosque is constructed in the style of a British bungalow. The patron, Ghulam Muhammad, one of Tipu Sultan's twelve sons, spent over twelve years of his life in England and was a close acquaintance of Queen Victoria. Hence, a mosque constructed in the British idiom seems particularily appropriate. There are four inscriptions on the mosque's exterior—two are Persian and Koranic verses. The third epigraph gives the name and lineage of the patron, Ghulam Muhammad, and the date of the mosque's completion, 1835. The fourth inscription, a type rare indeed, reports that on 21 February 1843, that is, eight years after he completed the mosque, Ghulam Muhammad made an endowment for the mosque, Imambara and tank. In addition, and most surprising of all, the record includes the number of the government letter defining the boundaries of the property and granting it tax-free status.

Mosque of Shahbani Begum

A.H. 1256/A.D. 1840-41.

Erected five years after the completion of Prince Ghulam Muhammad's Mosque in nearby Tollygunj, this mosque was constructed by Shahbani Begum, granddaughter of Tipu Sultan and daughter of Prince Sarwar al-Din. Although smaller, this double-aisled six-domed mosque is closely modelled on Ghulam Muhammad's earlier mosque. All three of the mosques constructed by Tipu Sultan's descendants are double-aisled, multidomed rectangular structures. It is difficult to know the reason for abandoning the single-aisled plan, which had gained popularity during the previous three centuries in Bengal. Possibly multi-aisled mosques had become popular earlier in Calcutta, but alternatively the explanation may be found in the origin of Tipu Sultan's family. They came from Mysore and so would not have known older forms of Bengali architecture.

Bibliography: none.



Nakhoda Mosque

1942

This enormous mosque was erected in 1942 by the Muslims of Calcutta. In order to make use of the limited space in the crowded urban setting, the mosque was constructed in four storeys. An arched *pistaq* on the east façade is flanked on either side by four storeys of double-arched facades. Internally, each storey is divided into multiple aisles; however, the floors do not extend fully to the *qibla* wall, thus making the monumental central mihrab visible on all floors. Faced with red sandstone and white marble, many of the mosque's features recall the architecture of the imperial Mughals; perhaps this is a conscious attempt on the part of the builders to evoke a sentiment of days during which the subcontinent was unified under Muslim authority.

Bibliography: none.

Tipu Sultan's Mosque

A.H. 1258/A.D. 1842

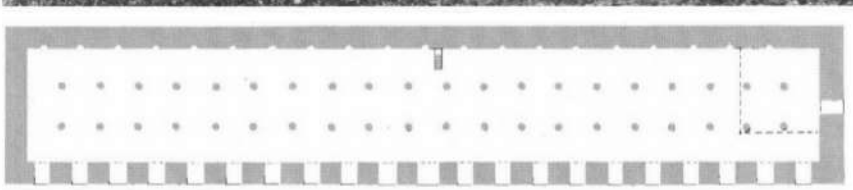
Bibliography: *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*, 1955-56, D 11-3.

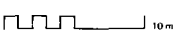
Although called Tipu Sultan's Mosque, an inscription on the main gate states that it was erected by Muhammad, son of Tipu Sultan, in 1842. Tipu Sultan had several sons whose name commenced with Muhammad, so the specific identity of the patron is not known. This mosque is situated in the heart of Calcutta's business district. In plan and format it is a copy of the slightly earlier Ghulam Muhammad's Mosque in Tollygunj; they both belong to a type not seen since the sixteenth century in Bengal, yet both show profound British influence. The rectangular prayer chamber consists of two aisles divided by four centrally placed piers containing Tuscan engaged colonettes. Ten internal bays are created by rounded arches that are supported on piers; the bays are all crowned by domes supported on squinches. The mosque's interior has the air of a classical European building; even the mihrabs are composed of double rounded arches, which instead of cusping have dentals derived from classical architecture. These are supported on tall engaged Tuscan colonettes. In keeping with a long-established Bengali tradition, the four corners of the mosque's exterior are marked with engaged turrets. These turrets, which soar high above the domes, are divided into a number of storeys and are embellished with shallow relief niches. This treatment of the engaged turrets is seen earlier in Bengal, for example at the Mosque of Mian Halal in Murshidabad (1801). However, the rest of the exterior surface appears to be unique to mosques in Calcutta. The south, north and east walls are pierced with arched entrances modelled on housing and offices built by the British. Rounded arches are filled with a fan motif supported by engaged Ionic columns. The actual entrances have shuttered doors of the type used on British-style bungalows.

Chota Pandua (Hooghly District, West Bengal, India)

Bari Mosque

Fourteenth century





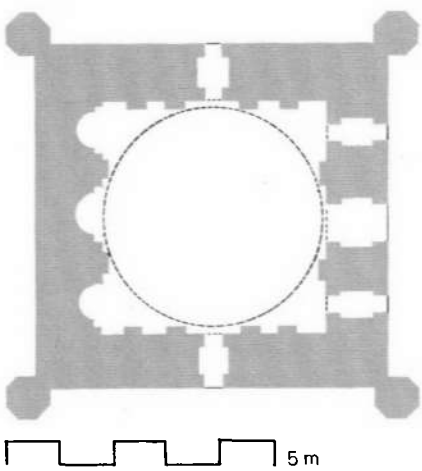
Rectangular in plan, this ruined mosque had an east facade with twenty-one entrance arches; each entrance was echoed by a concave carved-brick mihrab on the *qibla* wall. Two parallel rows of basalt pillars divide the mosque into three aisles, resulting in sixty-three bays; these were surmounted by sixty-three small domes supported by brick pendentives. The basalt pillars were reused from pre-Islamic structures and are not of uniform design: some bear traces of Hindu or Buddhist imagery. Plundered pillars were commonly used for buildings when Islam had been recently introduced to an area, and the pillars thus suggest that the Bari Mosque is datable to the early fourteenth century. Flanking the concave central mihrab on the north is the earliest extant *mimbar* in Bengal. This domed structure, made of carved basalt, served as the prototype for the *mimbar* in the Adina Mosque at Pandua. In the northwest corner of the mosque's interior is a solid raised platform, or *takht*, abutting the *qibla* wall. On the *qibla* wall at the level of the *takht* are small mihrabs and a *jali* screen that allowed air to enter this enclosed platform. Scholarly opinion is divided on the purpose of *takhts*, later common in multi-aisled Bengali mosques, and this is the earliest surviving example in Bengal.

Bibliography: *Bengal Past and Present*, 1909, 327-9; Cunningham XV, 124-5; Dani 1961, 48-9; Hasan 1979, 144-6.

Dargah of Sufi Sultan

Thirteenth century on

Bibliography: *Bengal Past and Present*, 1909, 328-30; Dani 1957, 30; Dani 1961, 45.



The saint Sufi Sultan, a contemporary of Zafar Khan Ghazi (see Tribeni, Mosque of Zafar Khan Ghazi), was celebrated for his role in the spread of Islam throughout Bengal. This tomb complex consists of several structures, including his square single-domed mausoleum and a mosque of nearly identical plan. These structures are the product of numerous reconstructions, making it difficult to determine the original appearance of the *dargah*. The tomb has a gently curved roof; the centre of each side slopes down slightly to meet engaged square turrets at each corner. While this feature is often seen in pre-Mughal mosques, the use of heavily whitewashed stucco over the brick facade suggests that in its current state the tomb is datable to a later period.

An inscription within the *dargah* describes a mosque built in 1477, during the reign of Yusuf Shah, by a noble entitled Ulugh Majlis-i Azam. It probably refers to the small square mosque situated to the east of the tomb. While the forms of this single-domed mosque and of its mihrabs are likely to be original, the pre-Mughal brick ornamentation has been covered with more recent stucco and paint.

Minaret

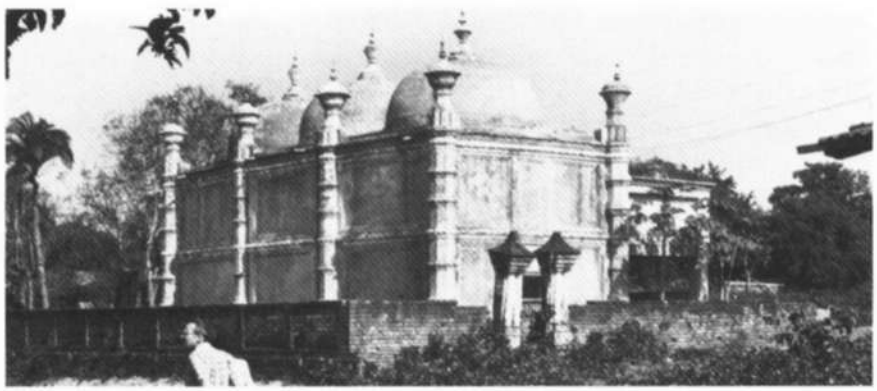
Early fourteenth century

This massive five-storeyed tower (38.5 m high) is situated about 50 m to the northeast of the Bari Mosque. Different from other minarets in India, which taper gradually towards the top, this tower is constructed of five successive tiers, each smaller in diameter than the one below. The exterior surface is stucco faced, although this may conceal the original brick façade. The tower is entered through a basalt post-and-lintel doorway pillaged from a temple. In all probability, this minaret served several functions: a prayer-calling tower, a victory tower and a watchtower.

Bibliography: *Bengal Past and Present*, 1909, 328; Cunningham XV, 126-7; Dani 1961, 46-8; Husain 1970, 61-3.

Mosque of Fath Khan or Gabarpara Mosque

A.H. 1140/A.D. 1727



Bibliography: Ahmed, S.D. 1960, 298-9.

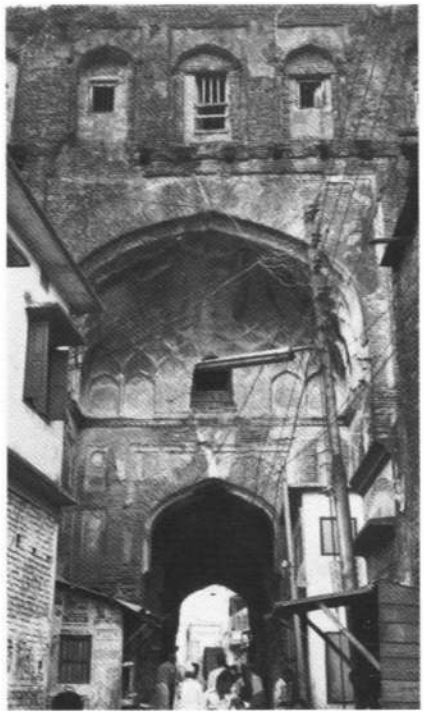
This small, rectangular, single-aisled mosque was constructed by Fath Khan, son of Shuja Afghan Sur, in the ninth year of the reign of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. Today it is locally known as the Gabarpara Mosque. A verandah has recently been constructed, obscuring the three original east-entrance arches. Engaged octagonal turrets surmounted by elegant *guldastas* are located at all four corners. The *mimbar* on the *qibla* wall, notable for its lack of ornamentation, is recessed, recalling *mimbars* first seen in the seventeenth-century mosques of Rajmahal. The three domes are supported on brick pendentives of a type used on the much earlier Bari Mosque in Chota Pandua, and later consistently found in Bengali Muslim architecture.

Dhaka

In 1608 the capital of Bengal was shifted from Rajmahal to Dhaka, then named Jahangirnagar. The reason for this shift was twofold: the changing course of the Ganges, which made Rajmahal's location less strategic, and also the increasing threats to Mughal authority by both Bengali *zamindars*, or landholders, and river pirates, which made a southern location for the capital more desirable. Dhaka remained the capital until 1639, when Shah Shuja, then governor of Bengal, re-established Rajmahal as the capital; however, Dhaka continued to be a major trade and administrative centre. In 1659 Dhaka was again made the capital of Bengal. It remained the capital until 1717, when Murshidabad officially became the administrative centre of the newly founded dynasty. The architectural remains of Dhaka are many. However, the majority have been completely altered in appearance. Thus this survey includes only those that adhere in some degree to their original appearance.

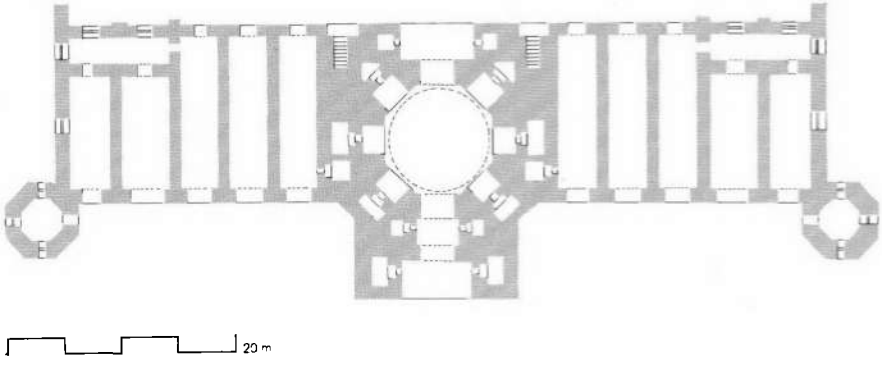
Bara Katra

A.H. 1052/A.D. 1644 and
A.H. 1057/A.D. 1646



Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 12-15; Dani 1961, 216-19; Hasan 1980, 56-57; Taifoor 1956, 159-60.

Built between 1644 and 1646 by the Diwan, Mir Abul Qasim, who also constructed an Idgah in Dhaka (1640), this large serai is reputed to have been one of the most magnificent structures in Dhaka. Today numerous modern structures have been added to some walls, while others are entirely destroyed. Originally the four walls of the serai contained living chambers and shops on all sides. The south side was marked with an elaborate multistoreyed gate containing an octagonal central chamber and numerous vaulted ancillary rooms and passages. A similar though less elaborate gate was on the north.



Chota Katra

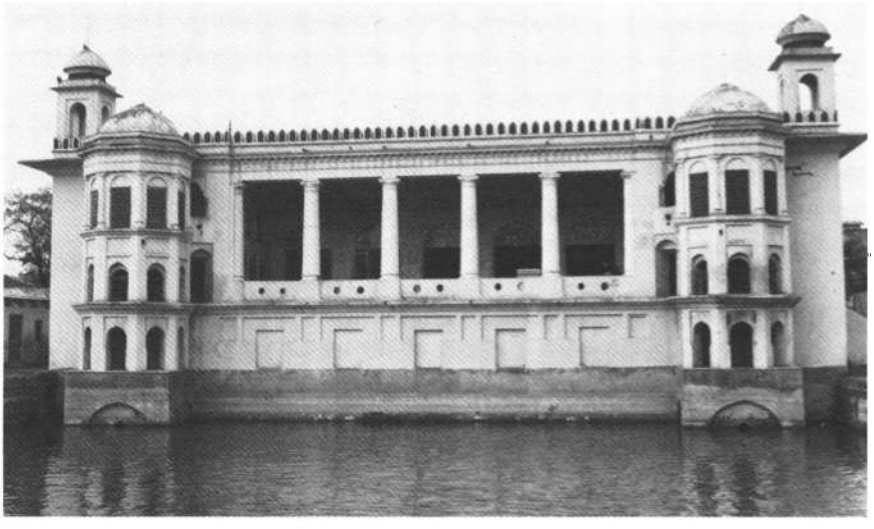
1663

Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 16; Dani 1961, 220; Hasan 1980, 57.

Modelled on the earlier Bara Katra, the smaller Chota Katra or serai was constructed in 1663 by the governor of Bengal, Shaista Khan. In its present condition, it retains none of its former spendour. Owing to encroachments upon the site by houses and shops, little can be determined of its original character.

Husaini Dalan

Seventeenth to twentieth centuries



Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 18-19; Dani 1961, 203-6; Dani 1962, 195-7; Hasan 1980, 58; Taifoor 1956, 161-2, 337-8.

Although the antiquity of this great Imambara, a religious structure constructed for the Shia community's celebration of Muharram, is disputed, its present condition dates to the late nineteenth century. Damaged by an earthquake, the current edifice was reconstructed by Nawab Asan Allah. Elements from both Mughal and British architectural traditions are incorporated in its construction. The south side, overlooking a deep tank, best illustrates the British features, with its four columns of classic order supporting the verandah. Mughal characteristics are recalled in the attached three-storeyed pavilion with arched windows and the row of *kanjuras* on the roof.

Idgah

A.H. 1050/A.D. 1640

Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 20-21; Dani 1961, 205; Dani 1962, 213-14; Hasan 1980, 61; Taifoor 1956, 162-63.

Built in 1640 by Mir Abul Qasim, administrator of south Bengal under the governor Shah Shuja. Intended for Id prayers, this *qibla* wall, 43 m long, consists of six shallow-niched mihrabs and a deep tripartite central mihrab. Originally the north, south and west sides of the large platform upon which the Idgah is situated were enclosed. Constructed during the period when the capital was shifted back to Rajmahal, this Idgah is a testimony of Dhaka's continued importance.

Khan Muhammad Mirza's Mosque

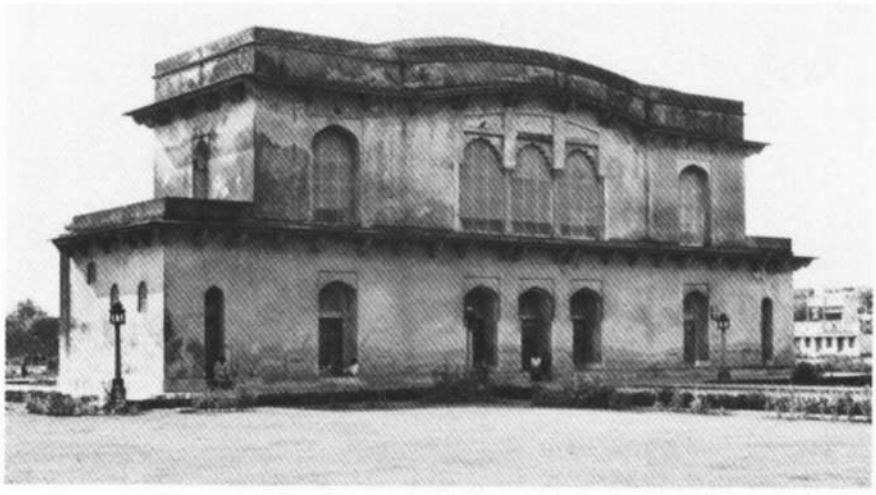
A.H. 1116/A.D. 1704

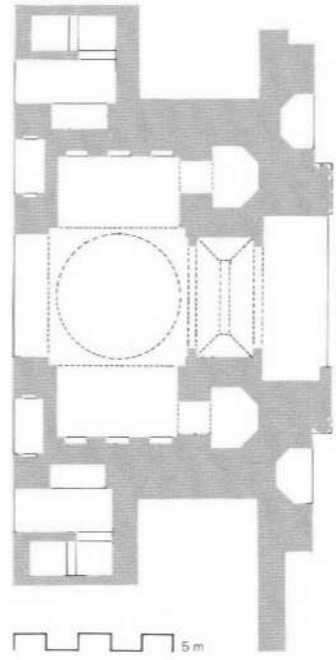
Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 25-6; Dani 1961, 203; Hasan 1980, 55; Taifoor 1956, 227-8; Wadud 1933, 239-40.

Situated on a tall plinth, this mosque was constructed by a noble, Khan Muhammad Mirza, in 1704. The large arched cells on the plinth were intended as a *madrasa*. The mosque is of the three-domed rectangular sort typical of this period. As at the Lalbagh Fort Mosque (1649), Khan Muhammad's Mosque has cusped entrance arches. Here each entrance is flanked by its own pair of slender engaged columns in addition to the four-ribbed engaged turrets at the corners, a more elaborate version of the east façade of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz's Mosque (1679). Thus it appears that the increased number of engaged columns used on the east façade of mosques in Dhaka is a possible indication of a late seventeenth- or eighteenth-century date. The central dome surmounting the mosque is larger than the two flanking domes, a common feature of Mughal architecture in Dhaka. The interior mihrabs have floriate engaged colonettes and cusped arches as well as elegantly moulded *kanjuras*, thus recalling the central mihrabs at the mosque of Haji Khawaja Shahbaz.

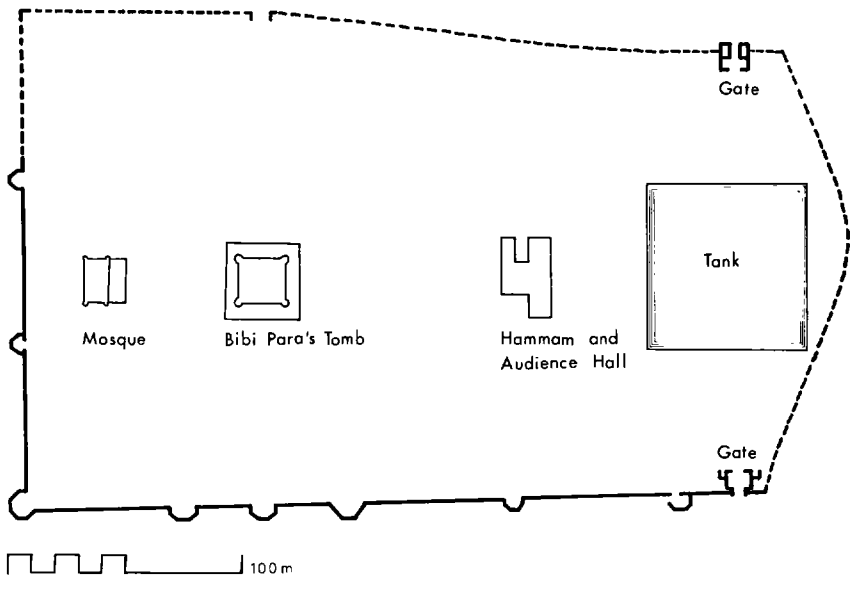
Lalbagh Fort

Late seventeenth century





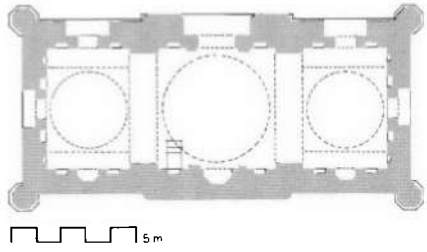
Bibliography: Ahmad, N. 1-14; Ashfaque 1970, 1-18; Aulad Hasan 1904, 4-11; Dani 1961, 221-5; Hasan 1980, 52-5; Taifoor 1956, 197-202.



According to tradition, the Lalbagh Fort was probably commenced sometime during the tenure of Prince Azam Shah (1677-79) and further embellished when Shaista Khan returned as governor of Bengal (1679-88). However, since the mosque within its confines is dated to 1649 (see the following), the present fort may have been constructed on the foundations of some earlier citadel. It appears that the fort was never fully completed, and indeed what remains today—a mosque, tomb, audience hall, *hammam,* tank and south entrance gate—can be only a fragment of the original conception. The portion of the Lalbagh Fort extant today probably was intended as a Diwan-i Khas; the structure on the east of the large square tank closely resembles the Sangi Dalan at Rajmahal; attached to the west is a small structure housing the prerequisite *hammam*. The south gate, a splendid three-storeyed portal built well within the imperial Mughal tradition, probably served as the main entrance. Other structures probably were planned on the east side of the tank facing the two-storeyed rectangular Diwan-i Khas; however, these were never constructed. A careful comparison of the remains of this citadel with other Mughal palaces of the seventeenth century indicates its original plan.

Lalbagh Fort Mosque

A.H. 1059/A.D. 1649 and
A.H. 1194/A.D. 1780



Bibliography: Ahmed, N. n.d., 11-12; Ashfaque 1970, 9-11; Aulad Hasan 1904, 11; Cunningham XV, 131; Dani 1961, 198; Dani 1962, 184-5; Hasan 1980, 54-5.

The date of this rectangular three-domed mosque inside the Lalbagh Fort is problematic. Traditionally it is considered contemporary with the Lalbagh Fort, constructed by Muhammad Azam in 1678-79. However, a decade ago Ashfaque read the date as 1649; today paint covers some of the numerals, but this reading appears to be correct. A second inscription dated 1780, also whitewashed, must refer to the mosque's restoration. The reading of both these inscriptions, confirmed in an unpublished source by P. Hasan and A. Quader, is corroborated by stylistic evidence.

The mosque conforms to a typical Bengali Mughal type; that is, a rectangular structure divided into three interior bays. Engaged turrets, ribbed in typical Bengali fashion, mark the four corners. A series of small rectangular niches embellish the east façade, a device seen earlier at the Jahaniyan Mosque in Gaur (1535). Above each of the three doors are half-domes ornamented with faceted stucco motifs. Similar entrances appear in imperial Mughal architecture even in Akbar's period; for example, at the Jami Mosque at Fatehpur Sikri. While faceted stucco work does appear earlier in eastern India, as in the central mihrab of Saif Khan's Mosque in Patna (1626), this is the first instance of such work on the entrance of a dated mosque in Bengal. Entrances embellished with faceted stucco work are common in Rajmahal during this same period: for example, at the so-called Akbari Mosque attached to Shah Shuja's palace. The Lalbagh Fort Mosque's north and south interior walls are divided into a series of horizontal panels, reflecting the motifs on the exterior. The three mihrabs contain faceted stucco work similar to that on the entrances. However, this mosque lacks the elaborate cusped arches or mihrabs seen in the mosques of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz (1679) and Khan Muhammad Mirza (1709), suggesting that the Lalbagh Fort Mosque's façade and interior reflect the architectural tradition of Shah Jahan's period in Bengal.

The mosque is surmounted by three fluted domes, and the side ones have a slightly constricted shape. These are features not seen in Bengal until the late eighteenth century: for example, the Qadam Sharif Mosque (1780) in Murshidabad. This is a indication that the inscription dated 1780 in the Lalbagh Fort Mosque refers to the reconstruction of the domes.

Mosque and Tomb of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz

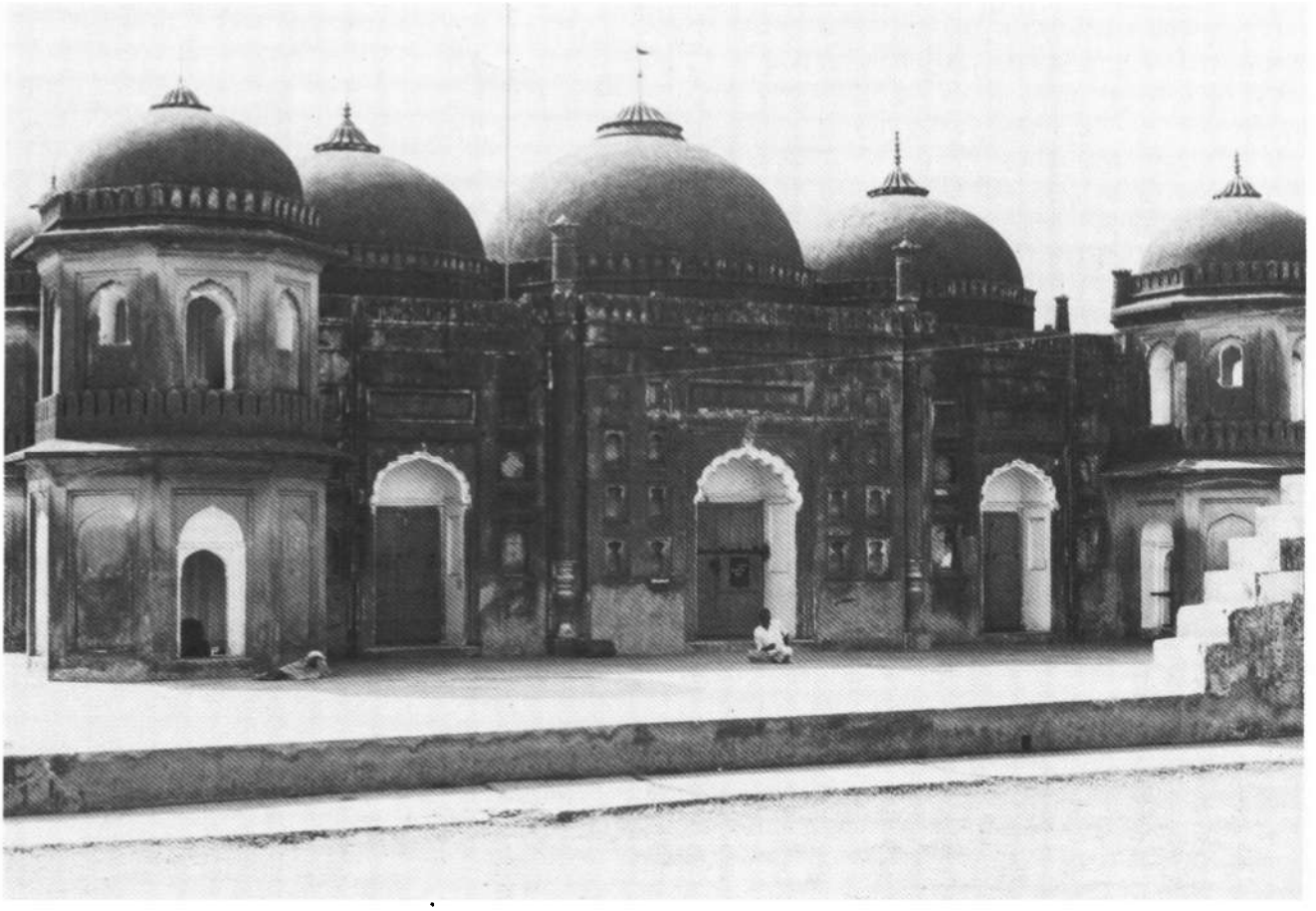
A.H. 1089/A.D. 1679

This mosque and tomb, constructed in 1679 by Haji Khwaja Shahbaz, a rich merchant of Dhaka, remains the city's most refined mosque. The elegance of its interior bespeaks the patron's wealth. The east exterior façade of this rectangular three-domed mosque has the usual three entrance arches, each set off by a series of arched recessed niches. In addition to the four engaged corner turrets, four slender columns embellish the east façade. The mosque's interior is divided into three bays by two lateral cusped arches supported by stone piers embedded in the east and west walls. This appears to be the first use of lateral cusped arches in a Bengali mosque's interior, and was doubtless inspired by imperial Mughal architecture, for example Aurangzeb's Moti Masjid inside Delhi's Lal Qil'a (*c.* 1662), and again in Bengal in the Tomb of Khwaja Anwar Shahid in Burdwan, built *c.* 1698. The central mihrab, particularly noteworthy, is highly ornamented with cypress-filled *kanjuras*, ornate arabesque plastic relief in the spandrels, a cusped arch, and engaged colonettes standing on bulbous floral bases. Due east of the mosque is the small, square, single-domed tomb with engaged turrets at each corner. Attached to the south side was a low rectangular chamber with a *do-chala* roof, now collapsed. While the purpose of this room is not clear, it perhaps served as a prototype for the more symmetrical Tomb of Khwaja Anwar-i Shahid in Burdwan.

Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 28-9; Dani 1961, 199-200, 210; Hasan 1980, 59-60; Wadud 1933, 326.

Satgumbad Mosque

Second half
of seventeenth century



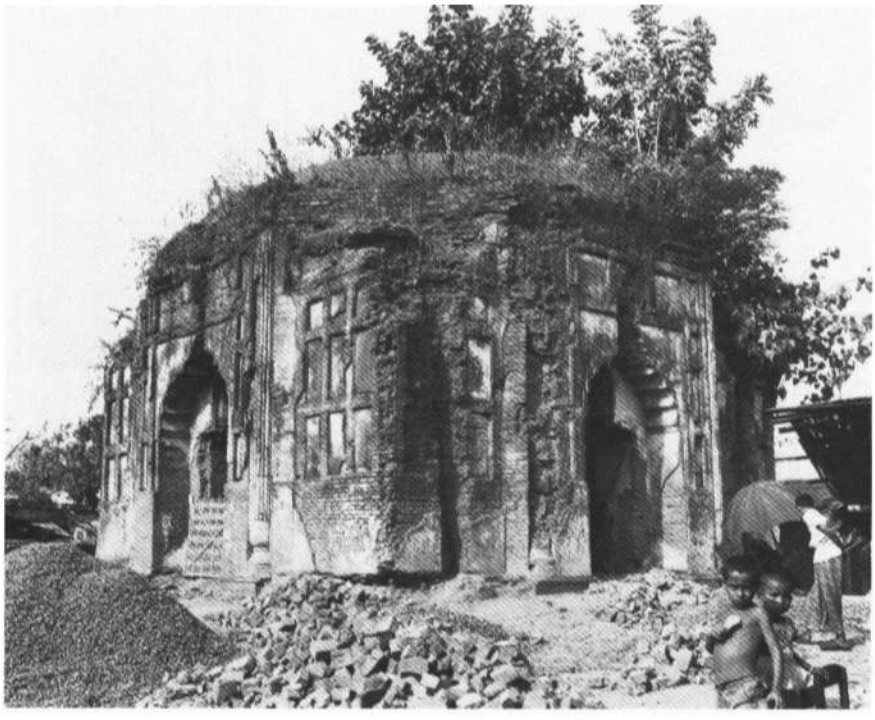
Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 40-1; Dani 1961, 200; Hasan 1980, 62-3; Taifoor 1956, 213.

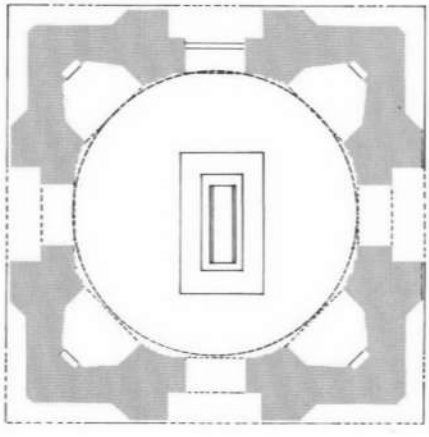
Picturesquely situated on the edge of a river, the Satgumbad Mosque in its exterior is the most innovative of all the Dhaka Mughal-period monuments. The north and south ends of this three-domed rectangular mosque are each marked by two enormous double-storeyed corner pavilions; when viewed from the east these give the impression that the mosque has five exterior bays. On the east are three cusped entrance arches flanked by shallow niches.

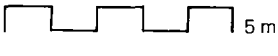
Slender engaged columns with bulbous bases demarcate the central bay, as seen at the Lalbagh Fort Mosque, although this mosque's colonettes are more prominent. Its interior compares favourably with that of others dating to the second half of the seventeenth century. The central mihrab has two rows of cusping, and its surface is embellished with moulded plaster relief, recalling the ornateness of the mihrab in the Mosque of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz.

Tomb

Seventeenth century





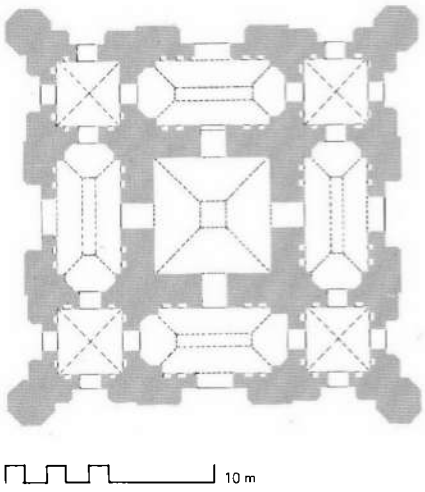


Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 41; Dani 1961, 208–10; Hasan 1980, 63; Taifoor 1956, 213.

According to one scholar, this abandoned square tomb east of the Satgumbad Mosque was constructed for a daughter of Shaista Khan. However, there is no evidence supporting this idea. The ribbed pilasters with foliate bulbous bases flanking each door recall those at the tomb of Bibi Pari in the Lal-bagh Fort (*c.* 1684). This feature, together with the cusped entrance arches and highly articulated façade, suggest a late seventeenth-century date. Dani indicates that this tomb originally had no dome but a flat roof; however, Aulad Hasan asserts it was domed, and the presence of an octagonal drum above the square walls corroborates this view.

Tomb of Bibi Pari

Late seventeenth century



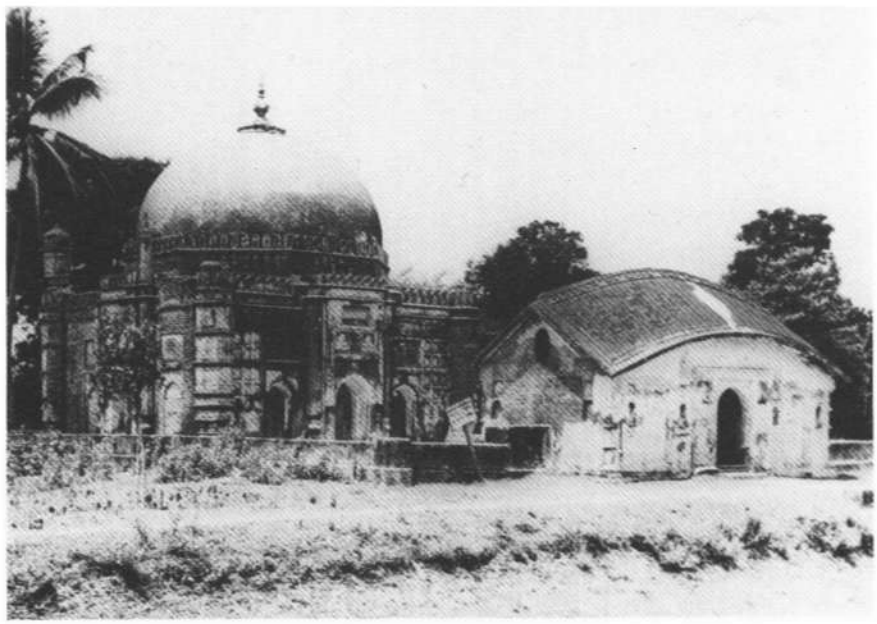
Bibliography: Ahmed, N. n.d. 9-11; Ashfaque 1970, 11-13; Aulad Hasan 1904, 8-10; Cunningham XV, 129-31; Dani 1961, 212-6; Hasan 1980, 52-4; Taifoor 1956, 197-202.

Aligned axially with the mosque on the west and the Diwan-i Khas on the east, within the Lalbagh Fort is the Tomb of Bibi Pari. It is most unusual for a tomb to command such a prominent position in close proximity to a Diwan-i Khas. According to tradition, the tomb was built by Shaista Khan, then governor of Bengal, for his favourite daughter, Iran Dukht, known commonly as Bibi Pari. She died in the late seventeenth century. However, the commonly accepted date of 1684 for Bibi Pari's tomb appears to be based on an erroneous reading of an inscription in the fort. The tomb itself is almost identical to that erected earlier for Shah Nimat Allah in Gaur. The internal arrangement of both mausoleums, with a central square chamber and surrounding continuous corridor subdivided into eight ancillary chambers, is derived from imperial Mughal mausoleums—for example, the Tomb of Itimad ud-Daulah in Agra (d. 1622). The ceilings of Bibi Pari's Tomb are corbelled internally, not vaulted. Scholars have attributed this to Hindu workmanship; however, corbelled ceilings are a feature of Mughal palace architecture: for example, in the Shish Mahal at Rohtasgarh (Rohtas District, Bihar) constructed entirely in the Mughal tradition. From the exterior, the tomb is a squat, square structure with a small central dome, once gilded, and four engaged corner turrets that rise above the flat roof, recalling the scheme of Itimad ud-Daulah's Tomb. Each side has three recessed arched entrances; the central entrance is flanked on either side by slender fluted pilasters with foliated bases. The style of these bases, in contrast to the plain bases on the columns of the Lalbagh Fort Mosque, are a further indication that the tomb is later than the mosque.

Egarasindhur (Mymensingh District, Bangladesh)

Muhammad Shah's Mosque

Late seventeenth century



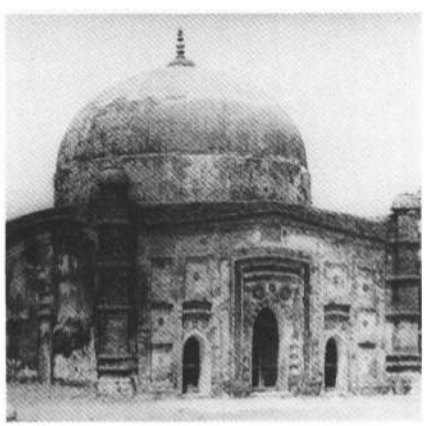
Bibliography: Dani 1961, 252-3; Hasan 1980, 97.

Following the square single-domed mosque type popular in Bengal, Muhammad Shah's Mosque is notable for its entrance portal, situated at the eastern end of the courtyard. This low rectangular building, with its *do-chala* roof, recalls Fath Khan's Tomb at Gaur. Like Sadi's Mosque in this same city, brick relief work embellishes the facade and interior; however, here the relief work in the shallow recessed cusped niches on the façade and the five-leaf floral motif at the top of each entrance arch suggest a much greater awareness of the Mughal tradition than is seen in the earlier Sadi's Mosque. [*Photo:* David McCutchion.]

Sadi's Mosque

A.H. 1062/A.D. 1652

Bibliography: Ahmed, S.D. 1960, 278-9; Dani 1961, 251-2; Hasan 1980, 96-7.



The patron of this mosque was Sadi, son of Shaikh Shiru, who belonged to a new type of patron in Bengal. By this time not only titled nobles could afford to construct mosques, but also some members of the religious community as well. In plan, the Sadi Mosque is a square brick structure with engaged corner turrets. The high single dome rises above a steeply curved cornice. Unlike contemporary monuments constructed in Rajmahal and Dhaka, the Mughal administrative centres where brick relief work is avoided, the Sadi Mosque is richly embellished with brick relief work that draws its floral creeper and other motifs from a pre-Mughal Bengali repertoire. The cusped central mihrab with its curved top cornice echoing the exterior façade, is a masterpiece of seventeenth-century brickwork, equalled only by contemporary Bengali temples, for example, the Shyama-Raya temple at Bishnupur (Bankura District).
[*Photo:* David McCutchion.]

Gaur (Malda District, West Bengal, India, and Rajshahi District, Bangladesh)

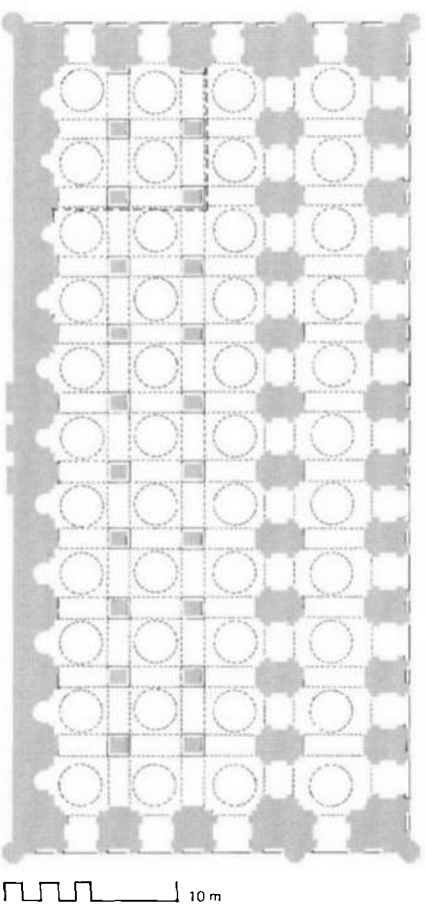
The site of the capital of the last Hindu dynasty ruling Bengal, Gaur became the capital of the first Muslim rulers of Bengal and again served as the Bengal capital from the mid-fifteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries. Most of the extant remains in Gaur belong to this later period, though a few structures were built during the Mughal period. Located on a branch of the river Ganges, the long narrow city ran north to south and was protected on the north, south and east sides by a high earthen rampart and on the by the west Ganges. To the south of the Kotwali Darwaza, the southernmost section of the walled city, lay a suburb replete with mosques, *madrasas*, tanks and shrines. Today the Kotwali Darwaza serves as a border between West Bengal and Bangladesh. The southern suburb contains the Chota Sona Mosque, the Darasbari Mosque and other buildings. It is now part of an area called Chota Sona Masjid, in the Nawabganj Subdivision of Rajshahi District, Bangladesh. The walled city and inner citadel to the north, still called Gaur, are in Malda District, West Bengal, India. Early travellers and explorers describe Gaur as a well-populated and magnificent city. Indeed, Humayun considered Gaur so beautiful that he renamed the city Jinnatabad, Abode of Paradise. Subsequently the city, already sacked once by Sher Shah's army, was ravaged by time, weather and earthquakes. It was also pillaged by *zamindars*, who coveted the copious supply of brick and stone building materials; as a result, little remains to suggest Gaur's fabled spendour.

Most of the monuments were originally inscribed, but some epigraphs were lost and others were removed for safekeeping. Now it is not always clear which inscription belonged to which structure, in spite of the fact that much scholarship has been devoted to matching epigraphs with monuments. Thus, unless reliable evidence exists suggesting a monument was constructed under a particular dynasty, only general dates will be given here, rather than the precise dynastic dates suggested by other scholars.

Bara Sona Mosque

A.H. 932/A.D. 1526

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 45-6; Ahmed, S.D. 1960, 216-8; Creighton 1817, V; Dani 1961, 130-3; Hasan 1979, 146-8; Ravenshaw 1878, 14-15.



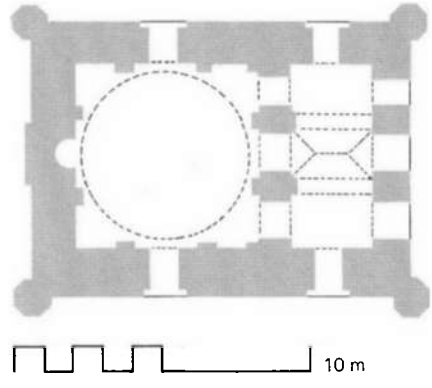
Constructed in 1526 as a Jami mosque by Sultan Nusrat Shah, the Bara Sona Mosque is about half a kilometre northeast of the Dahkil Darwaza, or ceremonial entrance gate to the imperial citadel, and perhaps intentionally aligned with it. Following the plan of the Darasbari Mosque, also in Gaur, the eleven arched entrances of the east façade open into a long domed verandah formed by wide piers on the east and west sides. The verandah, in turn, opens onto a prayer chamber composed of three aisles with eleven bays each. Like the verandah, the prayer chambers, now in ruins, was entirely covered with domes supported on brick pendentives. In the northwestern corner of the mosque, traces remain on a large *takht*. The mosque is stone-faced, but unlike the earlier stone-faced Chota Sona Mosque, the surface is not carved to imitate brickwork; the only ornamentation is a string coursing running across the structure at half its height. Majestic and sombre, the ornamentation on the Bara Sona Mosque stands in contrast to the ornately carved brick Jami Mosque at Bagha, built only three years earlier by the same sultan. This difference in styles raises interesting questions regarding the sultan's role in the appearance of the architecture he commissioned.

Chamkatti Mosque

Fifteenth to sixteenth centuries

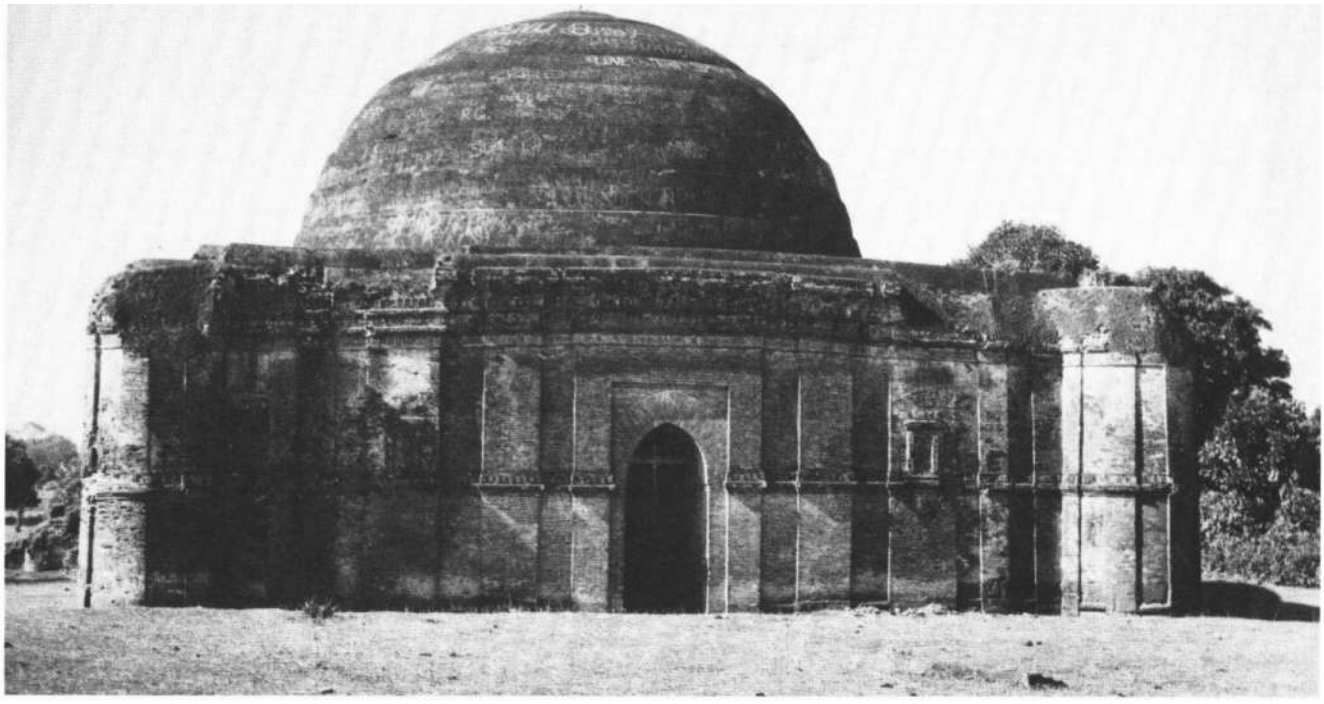
Bibliography: Abid Ali Kahn 1931, 69; Creighton 1817, XV; Cunningham XV, 60-1; Dani 1961, 104-5; Hasan 1979, 115-7, 190-4.

The Chamkatti Mosque is traditionally associated with an inscription now in the British Museum, dated to 1478 describing the erection of a Jami mosque by Sultan Yusuf Shah. However, this attribution is difficult to accept. The inscribed stone is approximately twice the size of the corresponding recession on the mosque's exterior (measured when the mosque was better preserved). Moreover, in Bengal pre-Mughal structures inscribed as Jami mosques are consistently multi-aisled rectangular buildings with a *takht* in the northwest corner. The Chamkatti Mosque has a small, square, single-domed prayer chamber preceded by a vaulted verandah on the east, thus giving the entire mosque a covered rectangular format. The first dated example of this mosque-type is the Gopalganj mosque dated to 1460, but the plan continued to be popular into the Mughal period: for example, in the mosque at Atiya dated 1609. This mosque type is peculiar to Bengal, and some suggest that a need to escape the heavy rains of the region was responsible for its popularity. The glazed tiles and terracotta relief in the Chamkatti Mosque indicate that it is a pre-Mughal product of the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, corresponding to the period of active architectural patronage in Gaur.



Chika Building

Fifteenth to sixteenth centuries



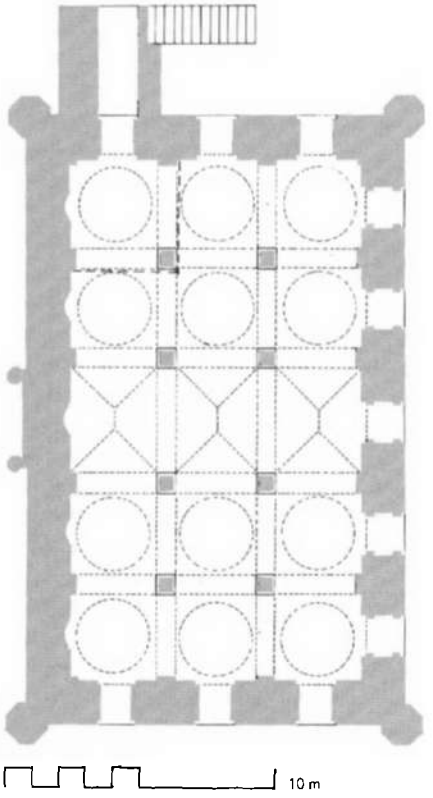
Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 65-6; Cunningham XV, 55-6; Dani 1961, 83-5.

The purpose of this building, named for the bats that once resided inside, is contested. Earlier scholars have identified it as a tomb, jail, mosque or office building. The presence of a long, open, multi-aisled verandah attached to the west side makes the latter identity most convincing. Moreover, local tradition asserts that this area housed administration. The Chika Building appears to be part of a quadrangle including the Gumpti Darwaza and aligned on the east with the Chika Building. To the south is a ruined pillared structure of which only the foundations are extant; possibly another structure was on the north.

The Chika Building is generally considered to date from the same period as the Eklakhi Tomb in Pandua, which is similar in plan and size. This similarity and the appearance of reused Hindu doors in the interior and sculptures incorporated into the base indicate an early fifteenth-century date. The Chika Building's austere facade, suggestive of a later date, may be more a reflection of the structure's purpose rather than date. This is one of the rare extant administrative structures.

Chota Sona Mosque

A.H. 899-925/A.D. 1493-1519



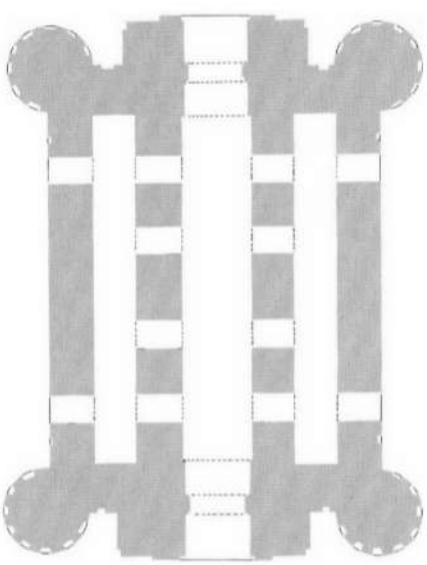
Located about seven kilometres south of the Kotwali Darwaza is this Jami mosque constructed during the reign of Husain Shah (1493-1519) by a noble, Wali Muhammad, entitled Majlis al-Majlis Majlisi Mansur. Today the mosque is known as the Chota Sona, or Little Golden Mosque, a reference to the gilding formerly on its domes. As in the Gunmant Mosque, the exterior and interior of this example are faced with carved stone, but the domes and vaults of the roof are brick. Five arched entrances mark the mosque's east façade. The interior prayer chamber is composed of three aisles with five bays each. A small *takht* stands on the northwest corner; since this is not an imperial mosque, nobles, too, must have secluded themselves from the public. The central corridor is covered by a series of *char-chala* vaults and the side wings by small domes, thus recalling the Darasbari Mosque, also located in this southern suburb of Gaur, as well as the mid-fifteenth-century Saithgumbad Mosque at Bagerhat. This mosque is noted for its exquisite carved black basalt, which emulates contemporary brick relief motifs.

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 79-83; Ahmed, S.D. 1960, 199-202; Cunningham XV, 73-6; Dani 1961, 136-40; Hasan 1979, 160-1; Hasan 1980, 120-7; Ravenshaw 1878, 38-9.

Dakhil Darwaza

Fifteenth or sixteenth century

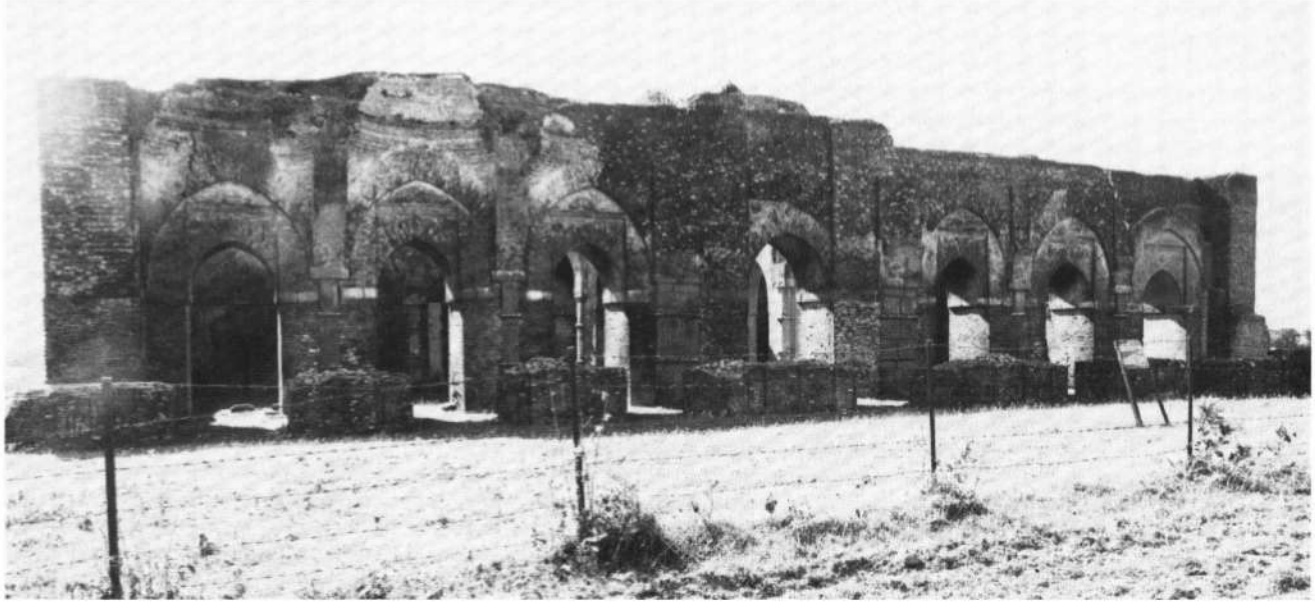
Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 50-2; Ahmed, S.D. 1960, 207-8; Creighton 1817, II; Cunningham XV, 50-2; Dani 1961, 98-103; Ravenshaw 1878, 16.



This monumental gateway, situated at the north of the imperial citadel, served as a ceremonial entrance to the citadel. Scholarly opinions regarding the date and patron of the Dakhil Darwaza vary greatly. Some feel it was constructed in the first half of the fifteenth century by the rulers of the restored Ilyas Shahi dynasty, but others argue that an inscription found nearby dated to 1519, describing the erection of a gateway by Nusrat Shah (the second ruler of the Husain Shahi dynasty), belongs to this gate. It is tempting to suggest that the Dakhil Darwaza was conceived as a ceremonial gate linking the citadel and Nusrat Shah's Jami mosque, the Bara Sona Mosque, finished in 1526 and located about one kilometre to the northeast. The exteriors of both the Bara Sona Mosque and the Dakhil Darwaza are more austere than other extant structures in Gaur, suggesting a link between the two monuments. The stone-faced Bara Sona Mosque relies only on a string coursing for ornamentation, and the Dakhil Darwaza's brick relief work is much less detailed than that of other monuments in the vicinity. The size and grandeur of this gate make the sparse detail insignificant. The gateway, 35 m in length, has a central barrel-vaulted passage and two flanking barrel-vaulted rooms, probably intended for guards. The exterior, originally 18.5 m high, consists of a deeply recessed *pistaq* flanked on either side by tapering corner turrets, thus endowing the portal with an imperial air.

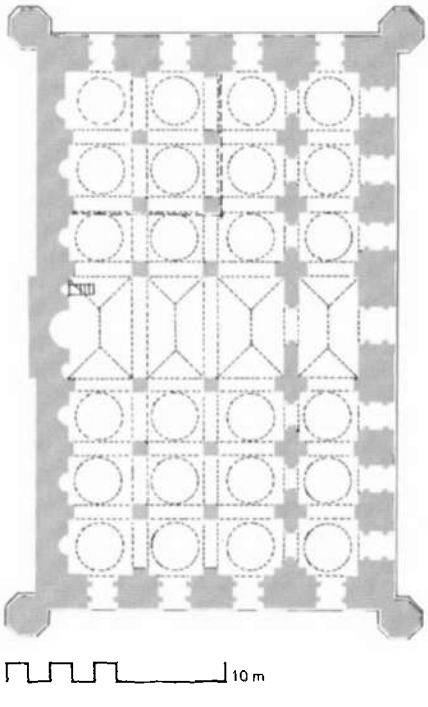
Darasbari Mosque

Late fifteenth century



Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 76-7; Ahmed, S.D. 1960, 104-6; Dani 1961, 108-12; Hasan 1979, 155-60; Hasan 1980, 114-8.

Located in the southern suburb of Gaur, this ruined mosque is associated with an inscription found in its vicinity recording the construction of a Jami mosque by Yusuf Shah in 1479. It is the second of two inscriptions found in Gaur recording the construction of a Jami mosque by this sultan, thus indicating that the size and population of Gaur dictated the need for a congregational mosque for each area of the city. This brick mosque's prayer chamber consisted of a central corridor covered by three *char-chala* vaults and flanked on either side by multi-aisled domed wings; the entire prayer chamber was proceeded by a verandah surmounted by domed side bays and a *char-chala* vaulted central bay. The design of this mosque is unique, drawing its components from a variety of sources. For example, the central *char-chala* corridor appears earlier at the Saithgumbad Mosque in Bagerhat. The east verandah, frequently located before a square prayer chamber, is used here for the first time in a rectangular mosque.



Dhunichak Mosque

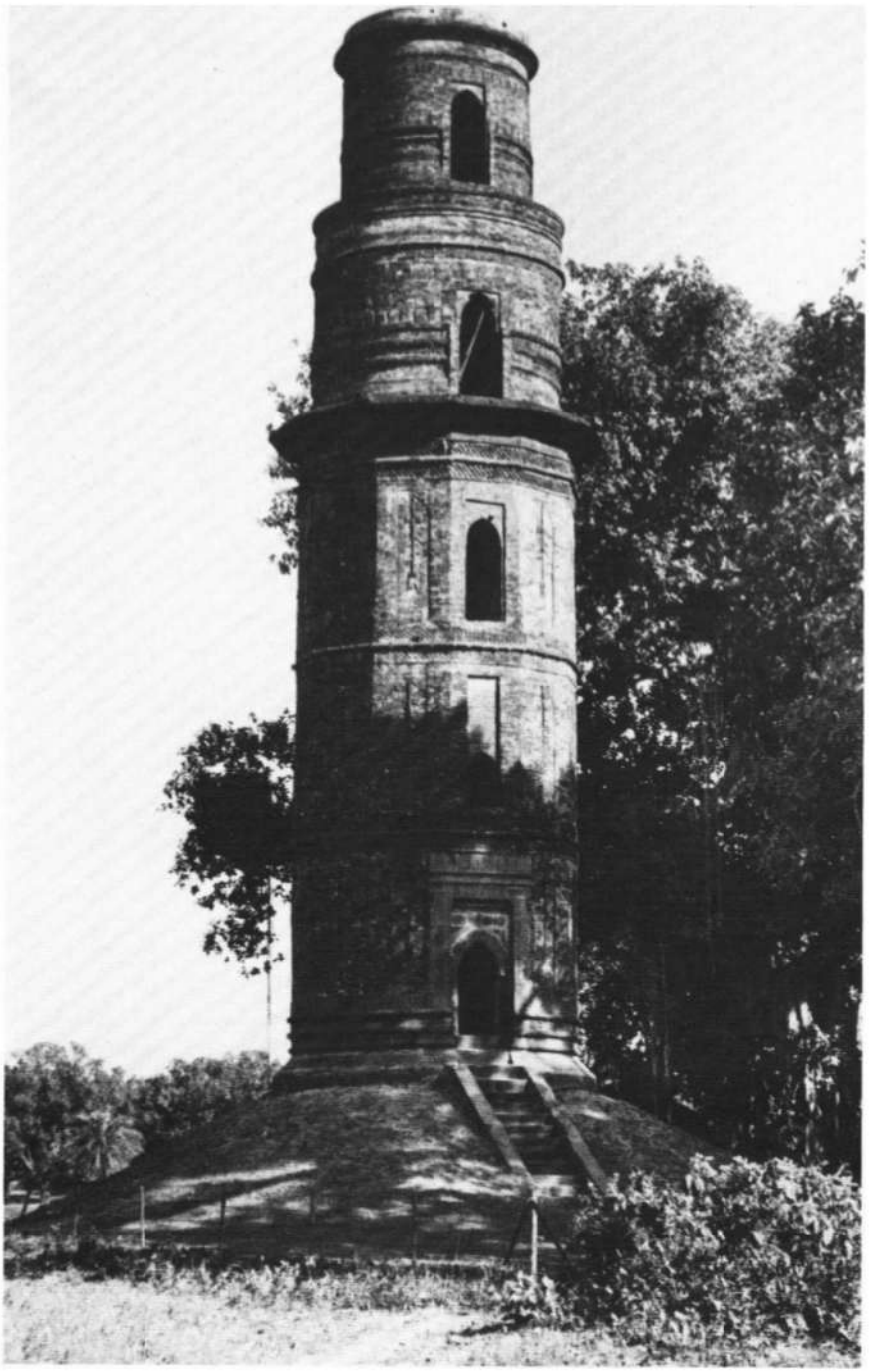
Late fifteenth, early sixteenth centuries

Bibliography: Dani 1961, 107-8; Hasan 1979, 126-7, 136; Hasan 1980, 119-20.

Situated in the suburb south of the walled city of Gaur, not far from the Rajbibi Mosque, stands the brick Dhunichak Mosque, now in a ruined condition. Only the west and north walls are still standing, although the foundations of the east and south walls are visible. Its interior was divided by basalt pillars into two aisles of three bays each corresponding to the three entrance archways. (Some scholars, however, have not described this accurately or drawn it properly on plans.) The mosque was surmounted by six domes supported on pendentives. While the Dhunichak Mosque bears no inscription, it was probably constructed in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, when six-bayed mosques such as the Mosque of Baba Adam at Rampal (1483) were popular.

Firuz Minar
Late fifteenth century

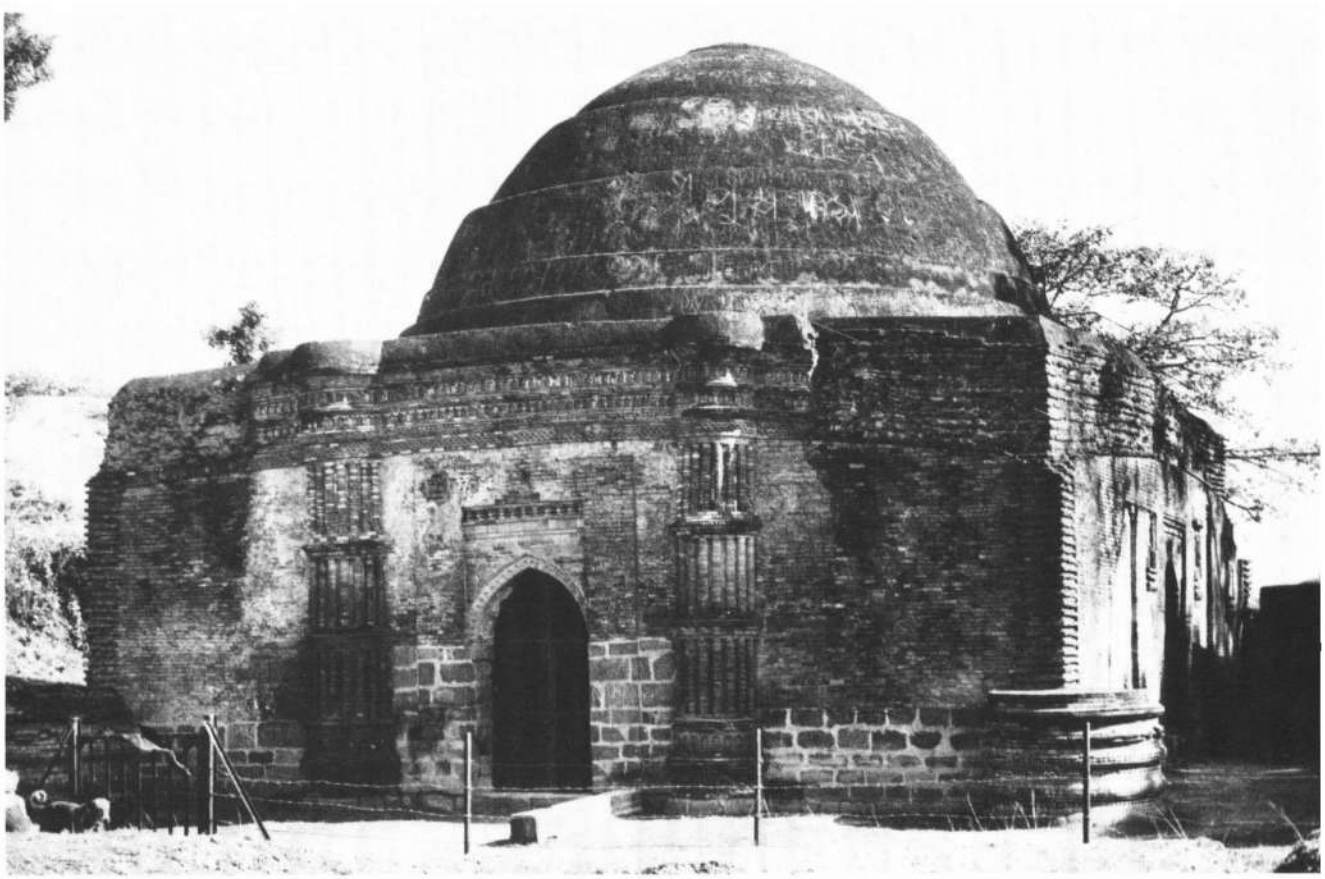
Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 52-3; Creighton 1817, I; Cunningham XV, 57-9; Dani 1961, 113-5; Husain 1963, 53-70; Ravenshaw 1878, 28; Salim 1903, 125.



This brick minaret, 26 m high, stands to the southeast of the Dakhil Darwaza, just outside the imperial citadel. It was originally attached to a mosque, which is no longer extant but is indicated by the large nearby mound. On the basis of a Persian chronicle, most scholars credit the construction of the minaret and mosque to Saif al-Din Firuz (1487-90), the second ruler of the Abyssinian Slave dynasty that overthrew the last Ilyas Shahi monarch. Standing on a twelve-sided plinth now covered with earth, the first three storeys of the minaret are polygonal while the top two are circular. Originally a small dome surmounted the structure, but today the roof is flat. Brick string coursings and shallow niches with a bell-and-chain motif articulate the exterior. The entrance portal is fine carved black basalt, as is the *chajja* dividing the lower three storeys from the upper circular ones.

Gumpti Darwaza

Late fifteenth, early sixteenth centuries

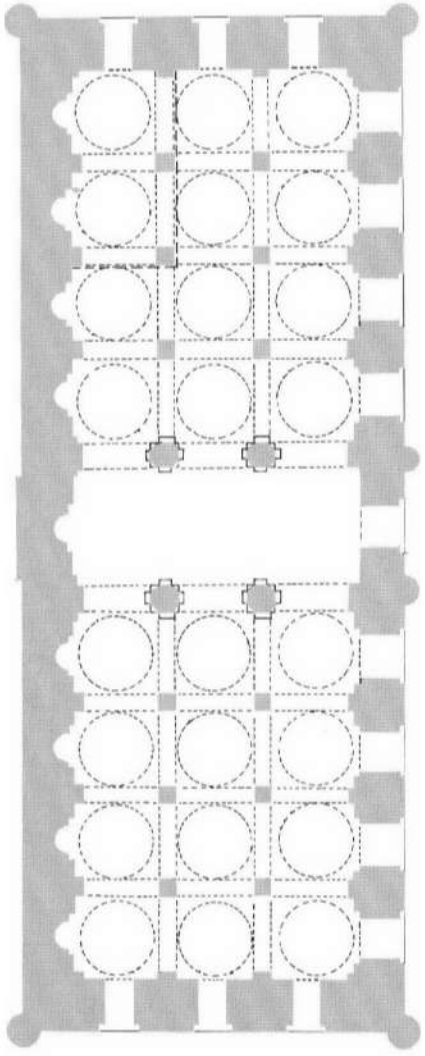


Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 66-7; Ahmed, S.D. 1960, 188; Creighton 1817, X; Cunningham XV, 51-2; Dani 1961, 119.

This gate, which served as an eastern entrance into the imperial citadel, differs in style and conception from the other two extant pre-Mughal gateways in Gaur. Instead of the monumental scheme of the Kotwali and Dakhil Darwazas, the Gumpti Darwaza is a small, square structure. The bases of engaged turrets remain at each corner, and fluted turrets flank the arched entrances on the gate's east and west façades. On the north and south sides are the remains of the citadel walls. The curved cornice of this gate is crowned with a single dome, supported in the building's interior by squinches. Multicoloured tiles, rather than extensive carved brickwork, are the main decoration, a feature also seen on the nearby Lattan Mosque. Imperial patronage of this gate may be assumed, since it forms part of the royal citadel built around the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries. However, which sultan constructed it is less clear. Several scholars feel that an inscription found in the Nimat Allah tomb complex (Gaur), describing the erection of a gate during the reign of Husain Shah in 1512, belongs to the Gumpti Darwaza, but no reason for this association is offered. The inscription is not necessarily an imperial one, since it gives only the regnal year, not a patron's name; moreover, there is no recessed area anywhere on the Gumpti Darwaza's facade corresponding to this inscribed slab. The Gumpti Darwaza, constructed in direct alignment with the Chika Building, was probably an entrance to some administrative unit of the citadel.

Gunmant Mosque

Late fifteenth,
early sixteenth centuries

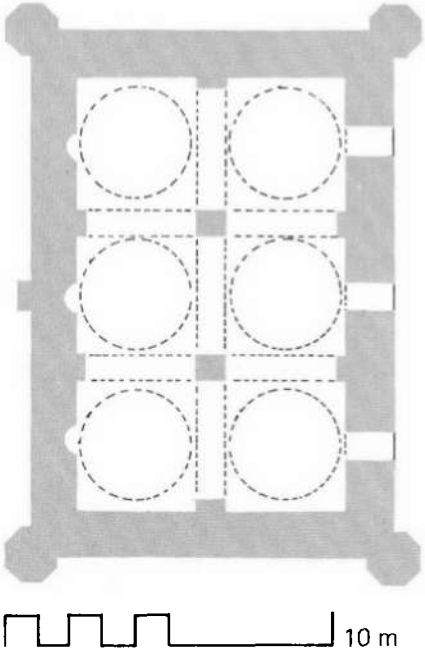


A multi-aisled rectangular mosque with a central barrel-vaulted corridor, the Gunmant Mosque reveals unprecedented influence from the Adina Mosque in Pandua, constructed a hundred years earlier. The exterior and interior of the Gunmant Mosque were originally faced with black basalt, which was subsequently stripped for use in other building projects. Many scholars have suggested that an inscription dated 1484, found nearby, recording the erection of a mosque in the time of Fath Shah (the last ruler of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty) by the commander-in-chief of the army, belongs to the Gunmant Mosque. It is tempting to postulate that this very high ranking noble was party to Fath Shah's assassination, and that signs of his personal ambition are reflected in the construction of the Gunmant Mosque, which utilizes the symbols of past political glory.

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 85-6; Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 122-4; Cunningham XV, 65-6; Dani 1961, 133-6; Hasan 1979, 98-103.

Jahaniyan Mosque

A.H. 941/A.D. 1535

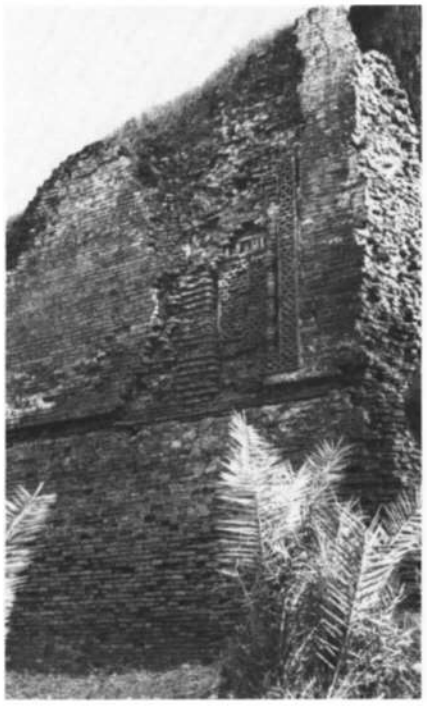


This six-domed building, the last inscribed mosque constructed in Gaur before Sher Shah's conquest of Bengal, was built by Bibi Malti during the reign of Ghiyas al-Din Mahmud Shah. It is a rectangular mosque divided into two aisles of three bays each. The east façade of this mosque follows a form begun earlier in the Qadam Rasul in Gaur, dated 1531. It is marked by three entrance arches and is divided by four horizontal curved bands; each band is further subdivided by repetitious brick panels filled with ornamental brickwork. As at the Qadam Rasul, the front engaged corner turrets are surmounted by *guldastas*, or small minarets, with lotus finials. Thus the elephant lotus-topped *guldastas* of sixteenth-century north Indian architecture, first seen on the tomb Sher Shah built for his grandfather in 1542 at Narnaul (Mehendragarh District, Haryana), may be ultimately traced to a Bengal origin.

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 92-3; Dani 1961, 125; Hasan 1979, 141-3.

Kotwali Darwaza

Fifteenth century

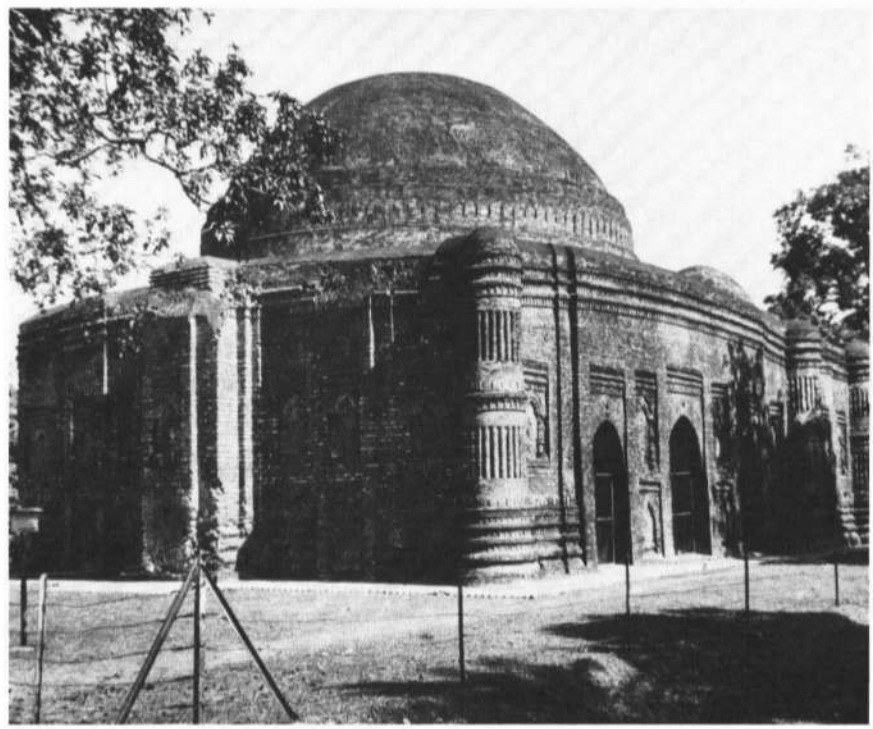


The Kotwali Darwaza, the southernmost gate in the city's walled ramparts, is now in ruins; however, early nineteenth-century drawings testify that this gate, made of brick, once had a monumental pointed entrance arch flanked on either side by massive semicircular bastions. Today the only feature remaining, besides the enormous inner core, is a small niche of bricks. This niche's engaged colonettes, supporting a cusped arch and surrounding moulded bricks, recall much of the brickwork on the mihrabs at the Adina Mosque at Pandua. As outer defences would be the primary concern of the ruler of any newly established city, the Kotwali Darwaza was probably constructed by Nasir al-Muhammad Shah I, of the later Ilyas Shahi Dynasty, the first ruler to build actively in the new capital.

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 76; Creighton 1817, IV; Cunningham XV, 69-70; Dani 1961, 94-5; Ravenshaw 1878, 34.

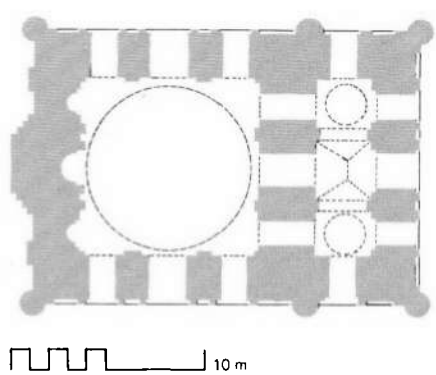
Lattan Mosque

Late fifteenth,
early sixteenth century



Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 72-5; Creighton 1817, IX; Dani 1961, 120–4; Hasan 1979, 119-23; Ravenshaw 1878, 32.

The Lattan Mosque, datable to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, is the best-preserved example of a covered rectangular mosque composed of a single-domed square prayer chamber preceded by a vaulted verandah. The mosque is lit by four arched openings on the north and south sides and three arched entrances on the east façade. A ribbed *char-chala* vault flanked on either side by a small dome covers the central bay of the verandah. The single dome of the square prayer chamber rests on brick pendentives, which in turn are supported by deep squinches at the room's four corners. The Lattan Mosque's interior is embellished with a profusion of multicoloured glazed tiles, the most renowned example of this famed art. The articulated brick exterior, too, was covered originally with glazed tiles, but much of this work has been destroyed.



Lukochori Darwaza

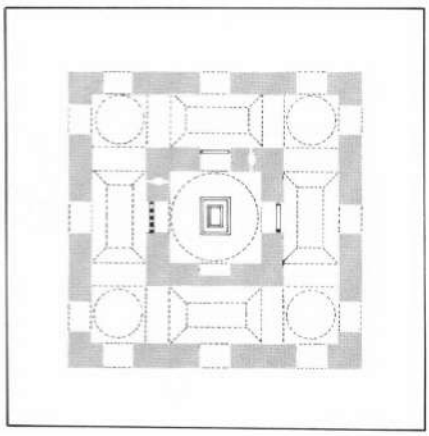
Mid-seventeenth century

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 69; Dani 1961, 259; Ravenshaw 1878, 26.

The Lukochori Darwaza, the eastern gate of the Gaur citadel, is reputedly one of several structures built in Gaur by Shah Shuja. This three-storeyed tripartite gate has a central four-pointed arch flanked on either side by arched entrances two storeys high; the entire gate is crowned by *kanjuras*. This plastered brick Mughal-style gate is situated just south-east of the Qadam Rasul, a complex which, in addition to the sixteenth-century shrine housing the Prophet's foot-print, is entered by a seven-teenth-century Mughal gate and contains a guesthouse of the same period. As all the other major extant seventeenth-century structures at Gaur are associated either with religious personages or relics—for example, the tomb of Nimat Allah—it is probably safe to assume that the Lukochori Darwaza was designed specifi-cally as an entrance to the Qadam Rasul.

Mosque and Tomb of Shah Nimat Allah

Seventeenth century



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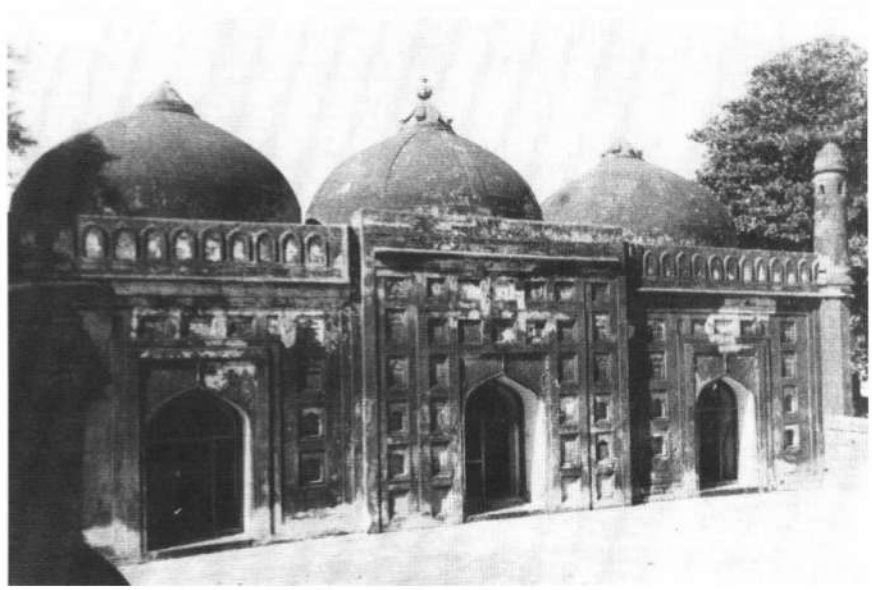
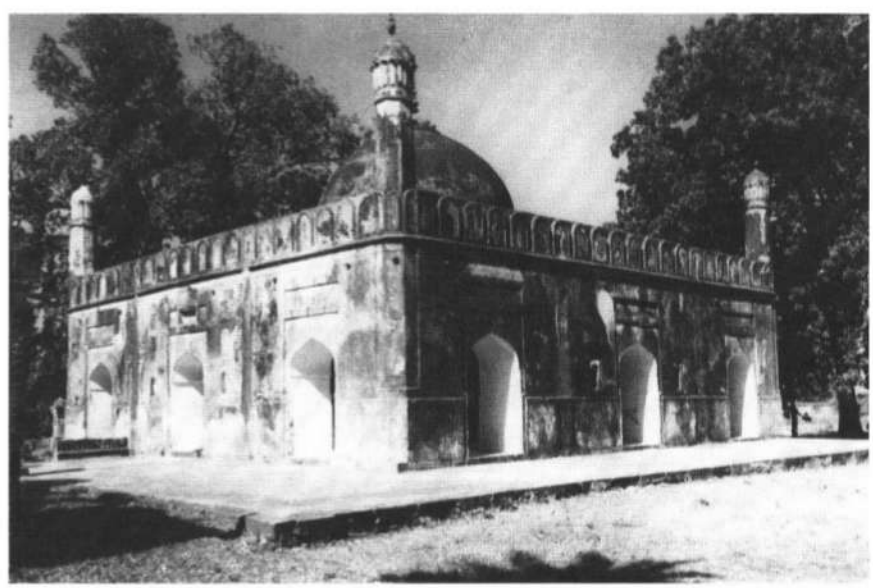




Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 83-4; Dani 1961, 256-9; Hasan 1980, 127-8.

The Mosque and Tomb of Shah Nimat Allah are located approximately one kilometre to the north-west of the Chota Sona Mosque, south of the walled city of Gaur. Neither structure is inscribed, but tradition asserts that Shah Shuja, governor of Bengal, constructed the mosque and tomb for his own spiritual leader. The mosque belongs to the typical three-domed Mughal type popular in Shah Shuja's capital, Rajmahal: for example, the so-called Akbari Mosque, probably part of Shah Shuja's palace compound.

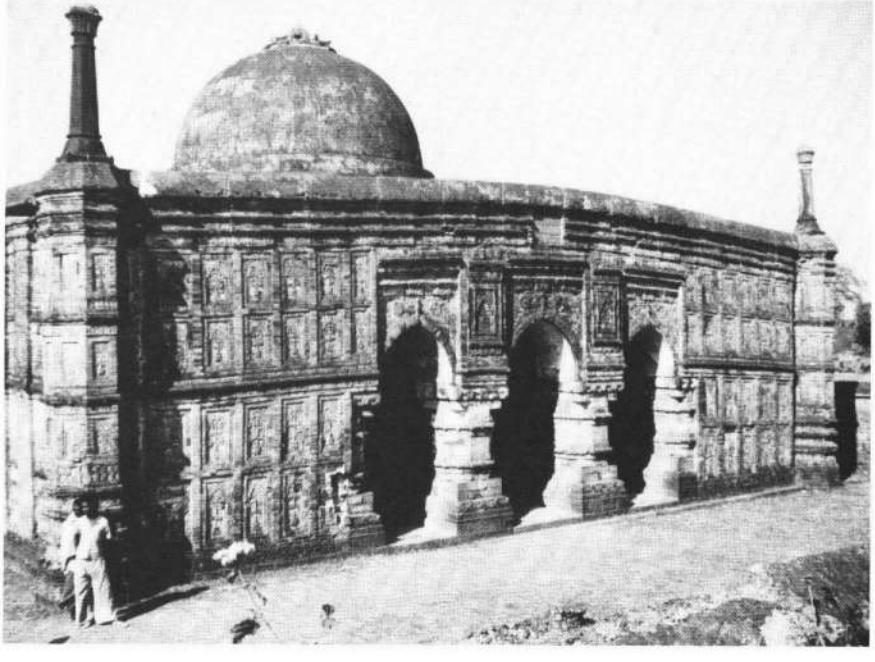
The Tomb of Nimat Allah may be the first extant tomb in Bengal to show the influence of imperial Mughal mausoleums. It is a low, square building pierced by three entrances on each side and surmounted by a single dome. Internally, the tomb has a central square chamber containing the sarcophagus and is completely surrounded by a domed and vaulted verandah, from which the central chamber may be entered. An almost identical internal arrangement is seen in the Tomb of Itimad ud-Daulah, constructed in Agra by the empress Nur Jahan earlier in the seventeenth century. This tomb type is seen again in Bengal in Bibi Pari's Tomb in the Lalbagh Fort in Dhaka. [*Photos:* David McCutchion.]

Mosque façade
Seventeenth century

Bibliography: none.

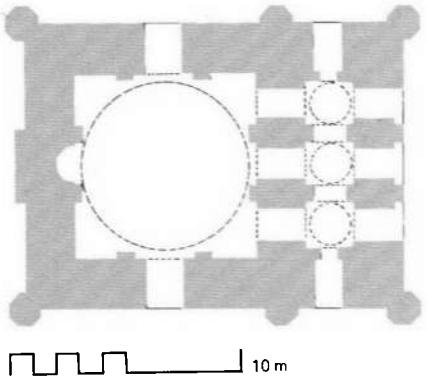
The ruined east façade of this Mughal-period mosque (locally called Lal Bazaar Dargah) lies in a mango grove to the northwest of the Gunmant Mosque. Originally this mosque appears to have had three entrances on the east façade that led to a single-aisled three-bayed prayer chamber, thus resembling a typical Mughal mosque—for example, the Mosque of Nimat Allah in Gaur.

Qadam Rasul
A.H. 937/A.D. 1530



Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 61-4; Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 228-9; Creighton 1817, XI; Dani 1961, 125-9; Ravenshaw 1878, 20-3.

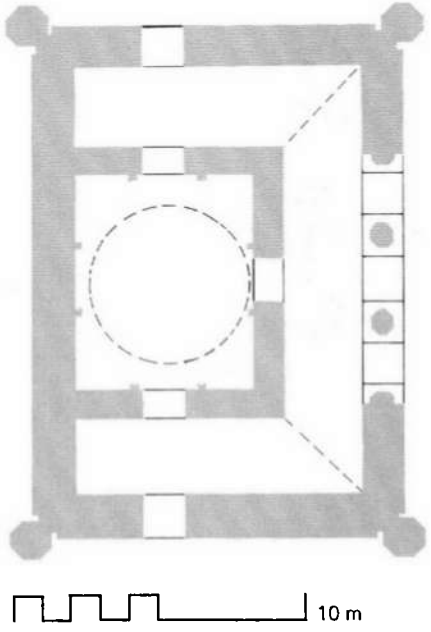
Constructed in 1530 by Sultan Nusrat Shah to house a representation of the Prophet's footprint, the Qadam Rasul is a rectangular brick structure whose east façade has three centrally placed arched entrances resting on octagonal piers. A vaulted verandah is located on the north, east, and south sides; each side of the

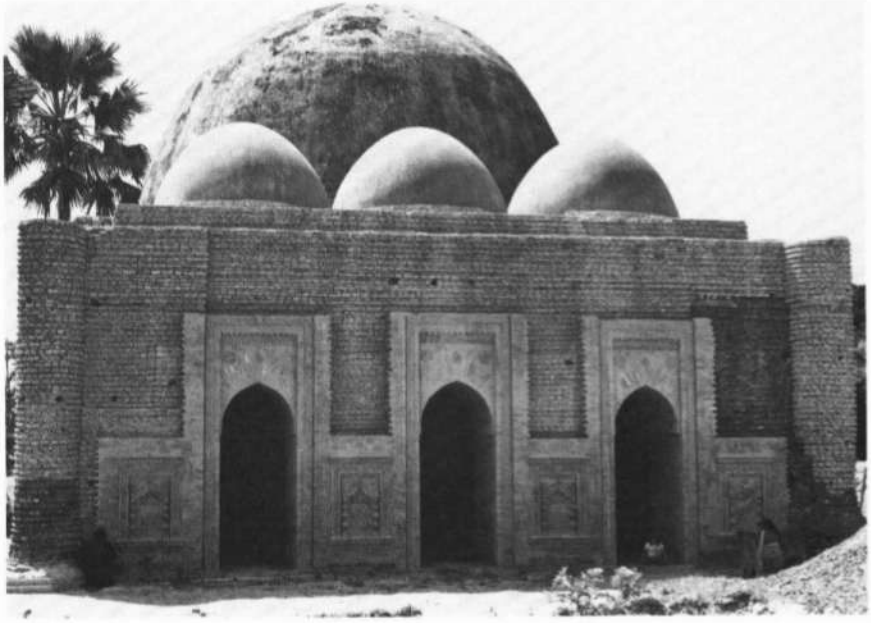


verandah opens on to a central square room that contains the relic. The north and south exterior walls are articulated merely by alternating recessed panels, but the east façade is highly embellished, with four rows of panels filled with a cusped-arch and hanging-bell motif, reminiscent of the brickwork on the Bagha Mosque, built some seven years earlier also under the patronage of Nusrat Shah. Among the structures in the compound, the Qadam Rasul appears to be the earliest. The guesthouses, gateway and other buildings probably date to the Mughal period and must have been erected in conjunction with the Lukochori Darwaza.

Rajbibi Mosque

Late fifteenth,
early sixteenth century



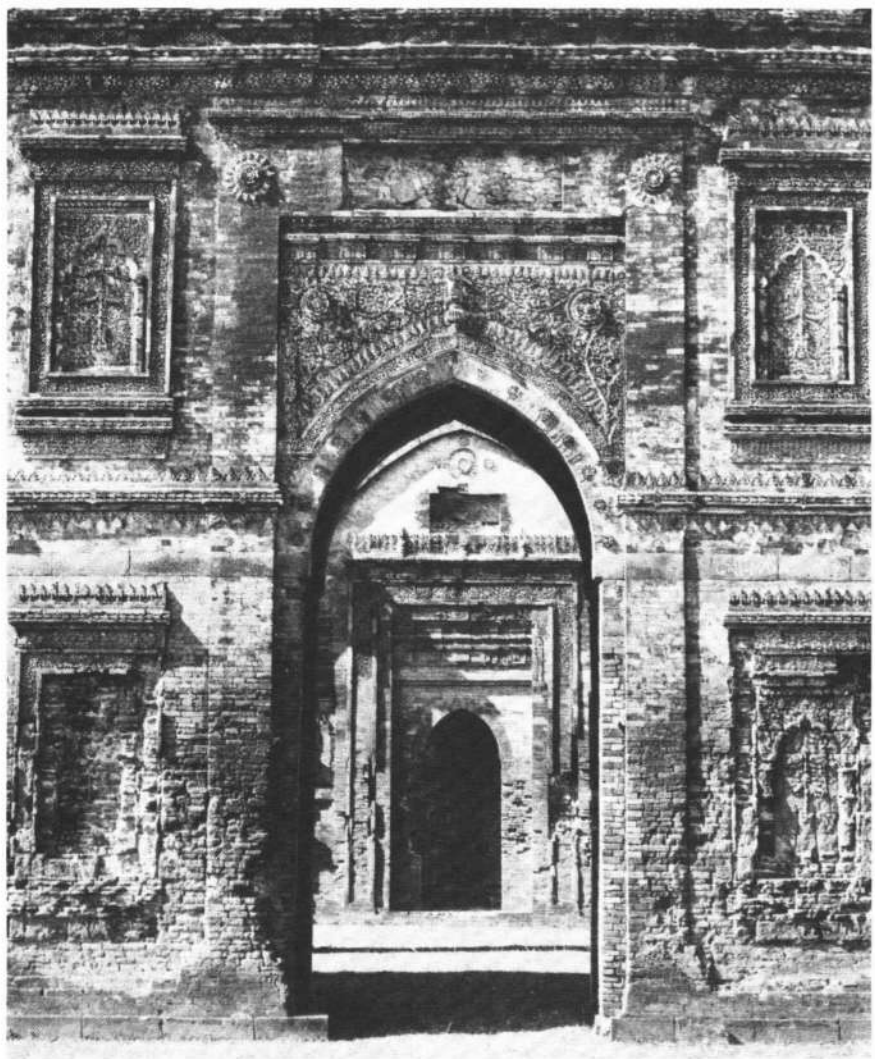


Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 76; Dani 1961, 112; Hasan 1980, 117-9.

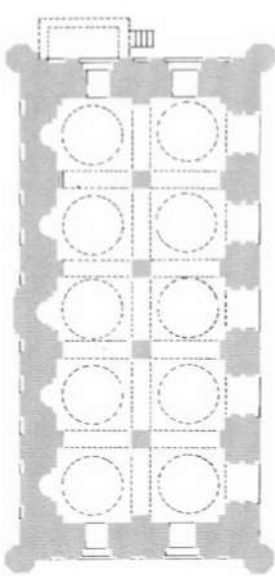
The Rajbibi Mosque, very recently restored, is located in a suburb of the old walled city of Gaur, southeast of the Kotwali Darwaza. It is a rectangular mosque composed of a domed square prayer chamber and a three-domed verandah. The east façade and inner core of this structure are brick; however, the *qibla* wall and its three mihrabs are faced with carved stone, a feature seen earlier in the Adina Mosque of Pandua (1374–75) and probably reintroduced into Bengali architecture with the Gunmant Mosque, traditionally dated to 1484.

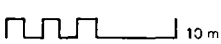
Tantipara Mosque

Late fifteenth century

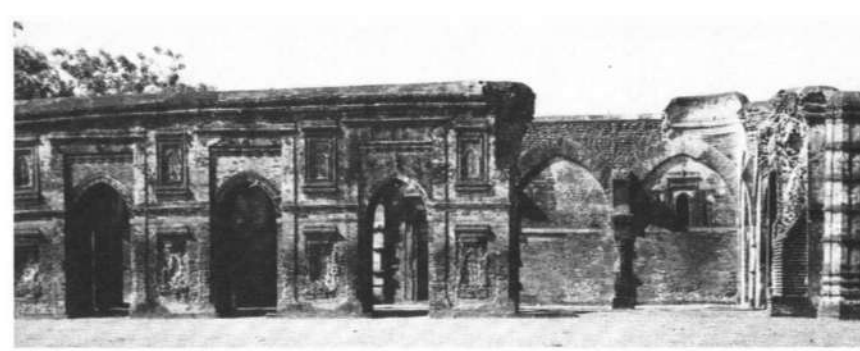


Situated about one kilometre from the Kotwali Darwaza within the walled city of Gaur, the ruined Tantipara Mosque is associated with an inscription dated 1480, now in the Qadam Sharif, describing the erection of a mosque during the reign of Yusuf Shah by a high ranking noble, Khan-i Azam Khaqan Muazzam Mirsad Khan. Rectangular in plan, the Tantipara Mosque has five entrance arches on its east façade corresponding to the number of mihrabs on the interior *qibla* wall. In addition, a small *takht* stood in the northern corner of the *qibla* wall. The interior is divided into two aisles by four newly carved black basalt pillars, thus resulting in ten bays. Each bay was covered by a dome resting on pendentives. The roof's cornice is gently sloped, and each exterior corner is marked by an engaged octagonal turret, features common to Bengali architecture. The delicate, flowing brick relief work on this mosque is among the best in all Bengal.





Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 71-2; Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 106-8; Creighton 1817, XII; Cunningham XV, 61-2; Dani 1961, 105-7; Hasan 1979, 131-4; Ravenshaw 1879, 30.



Tomb of Fath Khan

Seventeenth century

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 65; Dani 1961, 184-7; Ravenshaw 1878, 24.

This tomb, located in the Qadam Rasul Compound, is stated to be that of Fath Khan, although it bears no inscription. Fath Khan was the son of a general sent by Aurangzeb to subdue Shah Nimat Allah, who the emperor felt was inciting Shah Shuja, governor of Bengal, to rebel. The tomb consists of a small rectangular chamber with trabeated openings on the north, west and east sides. Constructed of stucco over brick, the tomb has a *do-chala* roof (with a single curved spine and two curved eaves). This may be the first extant example of such a roof, later to gain considerable popularity in imperial Mughal architecture both inside and outside Bengal.

Gopalganj (Dinajpur District, Bangladesh)

Mosque of Ulagh Nusrat Khan

A.H. 865/A.D. 1460

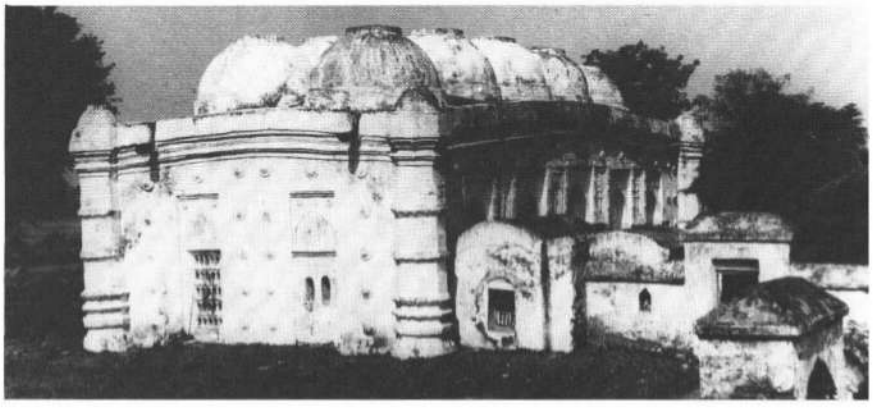
The Gopalganj mosque is the first dated example of a type that maintained great popularity into the Mughal period. A square, single-domed prayer chamber is flanked by a narrow vaulted verandah on the east. From this verandah, three arched entrances lead to the prayer chamber.

Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 77-3; Dani 1961, 154; Hasan 1980, 75.

Hemtabad (West Dinajpur District, West Bengal, India)

Mosque

Early fourteenth century on



Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 159; Hasan 1980, 75-6; List 1896, 164; Martin 1838, II 633-7; 650.

An inscription dated 1501 is said to be on the Hemtabad mosque's façade. However, the eastern façade, with its five heavy stone piers and the high, rounded shapes of its ten domes covering the interior two aisles, are replicas of the plan, elevation and façade of the Mosque of Zafar Ghazi Khan, dated 1298, at Tribeni. Thus this mosque, situated next to the tomb of an early saint, Makhdum Dukh al-Posh, may be one of the earliest extant mosques in Bengal. The delicate brick relief work of the east façade appears to be a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century addition, possibly dating to the time of the mosque's inscription. [*Photo:* David McCutchion.]

Kheraul (Murshidabad District, West Bengal, India)

Mosque of Rafat Khan

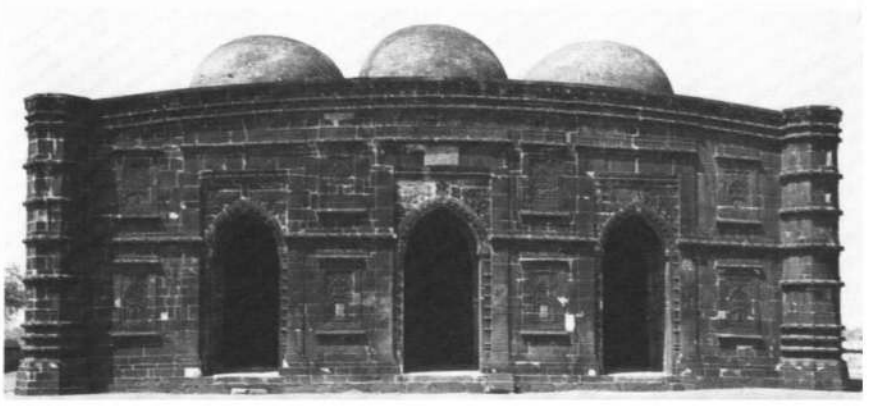
A.H. 900/A.D. 1495

Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 152-3; Dani 1961, 159; Hasan 1979, 113.

This covered rectangular mosque, consisting of a square single-domed prayer chamber and a domed verandah on the east, is a mosque type that found popularity throughout Bengal in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Built in 1495 by a noble in the service of Husain Shah, it is constructed entirely of brick, without any stone facing. The delicate brick relief work on the west exterior wall and interior *qibla* wall recall similar work on the Dhunichak Mosque in Gaur; the other walls are austere. [*Photo:* David McCutchion.]

Kusumba (Rajshahi District, Bangladesh)

Mosque
A.H. 966/A.D. 1558



Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 242-5; Dani 1961, 162-4; Hasan 1979, 143; Hasan 1980, 131-3.

The patron, Sulaiman, erected the Kusumba Mosque in 1558, during the tumultuous period of Afghan rule in Bengal under one of the last Suri rulers, Ghiyas al-Din Bahadur Shah. Sulaiman's name stands alone; no titles or lineage are included. However, on the basis of a local legend and other inscriptions of Sulaiman dated 1558, he may be identified as a newly converted *zamindar*, or landholder, of Kusumba, Chilman Majumdar. The Mosque itself reveals no debt to earlier Suri architecture of north India, but is constructed wholly within a well-established Bengali idiom. A six-domed stone mosque, it recalls the plan of the Mosque of Baba Adam in Rampal, dated to 1483. In keeping with all Bengali mosques of the period, the Kusumba Mosque features engaged corner turrets and a curved roof cornice. The stone-faced interior and exterior belong to the richly carved tradition of the Chota Sona Mosque in Gaur, rather than to the slightly more recent austere stone façade of the Bara Sona Mosque in Gaur, dated to 1526.

Mahasthan (Bogra District, Bangladesh)

Mosque of Mankalir Bhita
Pre-Mughal

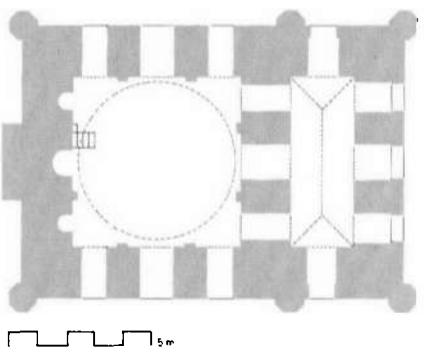
Bibliography: none.

Atop a mound at the ancient site of Mahasthan is the foundation of a mosque. On the east are remains of five entrances supported on brick piers. The interior was divided into three aisles by two rows of massive brick pillars, so the prayer chamber had fifteen bays. Although impossible to date with accuracy, the mosque probably belongs to the pre-Mughal period, when multi-aisled rectangular mosques were constructed frequently. But this mosque likely post-dates the Hemtabad Mosque and the Mosque of Zafar Khan Ghazi (1298) at Tribeni, which both have stone pillars, an earlier feature than the brick piers of this mosque at Mahasthan.

Mirzaganj (Bakerganj District, Bangladesh)

Masjidbari Mosque

A.H. 870/A.D. 1465



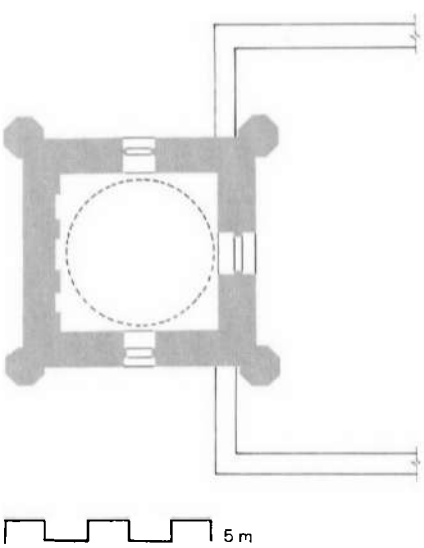
Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 81-3; Dani 1961, 148-50; Hasan 1980, 24.

Built in 1465 during the reign of Barbek Shah by a noble, Ajyal Khan, this is the second earliest dated mosque of the completely covered rectangular variety. As at the earlier dated mosque at Gopalganj (1460), a vaulted verandah precedes a square, single-domed prayer chamber. The verandah has three entrances on the east, and one each on its north and south sides; the prayer chamber has three arched openings on the east side as well as three each on the north and south sides. While the plan of this mosque appears to be derived from the architecture of north Bengal, the severity of the unrelieved exterior walls is in keeping with the regional tradition of south Bengal.

Molla Simla (Hooghly District, West Bengal, India)

Mosque

Fourteenth century on



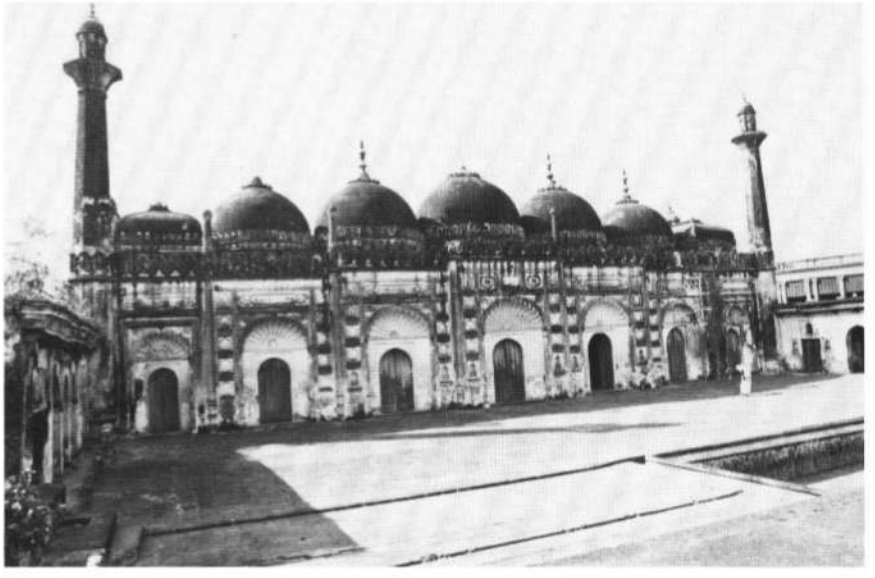
Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 38-40; Chakravarti 1910, 37; Dani 1961, 49-50; Hasan 1980, 112; Saraswati 1941, 22.

It is not clear whether the inscription dated to 1375 and found in a nearby *dargah* refers to the construction of this small, square, single-domed mosque in Molla Simla; even so, the structure is of considerable antiquity. Although restored many times, this mosque appears to be the first extant square mosque in Bengal. Though not a common mosque type in the rest of the subcontinent, precedent for this single-domed square scheme may be found in the initial phase of the Jamat Khana in the Dargah of Nizam ud-Din in Delhi, constructed in the late Khalji period, about 1320. In Bengal, single-domed square mosques continued to be constructed into the Mughal period: for example, the Goaldi Mosque at Sonargaon (1519) and the Sadi Mosque in Egarsindhur (1652).

Murshidabad (West Bengal, India)

Chowk Mosque

A.H. 1181/A.D. 1767



Bibliography: Majumdar 1905, 130–44; O'Malley 1914, 223.

The patron of this large, seven-bayed mosque, situated in the centre of Murshidabad, is identified in the inscription as Muni Begum, the highly influential wife of Nawab Mir Jaffar. It was constructed in 1767 under the supervision of Shaikh Khalil Allah. Even today the mosque presents a majestic appearance, with the graduated sizes of its five domes and two *char-chala* end vaults rising in a gentle upward slope towards the centre. The mosque is flanked by two slender minarets. The mosque complex is entered by an elaborately stucco-decorated portal on the east. Beyond the portal is a large enclosed courtyard with chambers for religious instruction. The mosque's east façade is ornately embellished with floral motifs, arabesques, cartouche patterns and cusped arch-shaped niches in stucco relief. The size of the mosque in relation to the compact scale of these motifs yields an overall appearance of restrained elegance.

The central entrance has a rounded, cusped central arch supported on slender engaged colonettes; the curved niche under the arch is embellished with a fan motif, beneath which is the actual arched entrance, flanked by shallow niches with cusped arches. The outlines of the arches and the niches are covered with bands of floral designs or arabesques. Slender engaged colonettes flank the entire bay. The remaining six bays are treated in an almost identical manner.

The ornate stucco relief seen on the exterior is echoed on the interior. Cusped lateral arches and squinches support domes whose drums bear repetitious leaf patterns in stucco. The mihrabs are similarly embellished. The taste for ornate stucco ornamentation in Bengali Mughal-style architecture can be seen in the interior of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz's Mosque (1679) in Dhaka, as well as in Khwaja Anwar Shahid's Tomb and Mosque in Burdwan. A further development of this type of decor is in the Mian Halal Mosque, of 1801, also in Murshidabad.

Chowk Serai Mosque

Late eighteenth, early nineteenth century

Bibliography: none.

As the modern name indicates, this mosque appears to be part of a larger complex intended as the serai for travellers. Parts of the enclosure wall, a well and entrance gate on the west are still extant. The mosque, though in a ruined condition, is a slightly less refined version of Mian Halal's mosque (1801), also in Murshidabad, and thus it is probably a contemporary structure.

Gulab Bagh Mosque

Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

Bibliography: none.

Completely overgrown with banyan trees, this picturesque ruin is located about 100 m west of the Pil Khana Mosque. The richness of the remaining floral motifs in the spandrels of the entrance arches recalls similar stucco work on the Mosque of Abd Allah (1780) and on the mihrabs of Mian Halal's Mosque (1801), also in Murshidabad. Stucco-work of this type, showing naturalistic open flowers with curved leaves and stems, does not seem to occur before the late

eighteenth century in Bengali architectural ornamentation. The three mihrab projections are indicated by *char-chala* roof motifs; this device appears as early as the mid-eighteenth century in Murshidabad. A central dome flanked by *char-chala* vaults surmounts the mosque.

Imambara

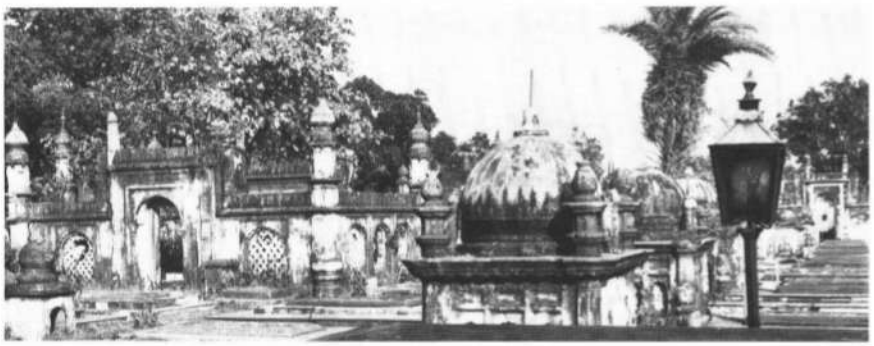
1847.

Bibliography: Beveridge 1867, 97-9; Dani 1961, 273-5; Majumdar 1905, 120-7; O'Malley 1914, 211-2.

This enormous Imambara, situated directly to the north of the palace, was built in 1847 to replace an earlier Imambara reputedly erected by Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah. The patron, Nawab Feredun Jah, appointed as supervisor Sadiq Ali Khan, mentioned also in the inscription on Nusari Banu's Mosque in Murshidabad. This Imambara is the largest in east India, measuring 209 m in length. The style of both the Imambara and the Medina in the interior courtyard, as well as the palace opposite, appear influenced by European architecture. The Imambara's south facade is divided into two storeys, each containing numerous large trabeated, shuttered windows; the central entrance consists of a round, cusped arch flanked on either side by Tuscan columns surmounted by a flat cornice. This opens directly to the Medina. It has a deep verandah supported on Tuscan columns and is crowned with a high bulbous dome.

Jaffarganj Cemetery

Late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries

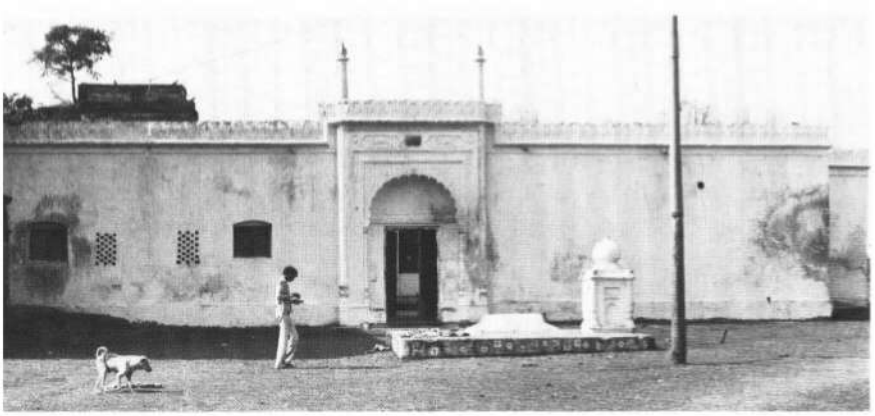


Bibliography: Majumdar 1905, 141-2.

Located near the estate of Nawab Mir Jaffar (d. 1765), this cemetery contains the graves of all the Nawabs of Bengal, from Mir Jaffar to the last of the line, Humayun Jah (d. 1838), as well as other important family members. While the small, domed grave-markers are modelled on monumental single-domed tombs, the actual graves are small and open to the air. The use of small open-air graves reflects a trend seen in other parts of India from Aurangzeb's time on; for example the open-air grave of Muhammad Shah in the Nizam ud-Din Dargah in Delhi. Open graves following the Koranic injunction for burial may have been considered mirrors of piety.

Karbala

A.H. 1219/A.D. 1804 and
A.H. 1271/A.D. 1854



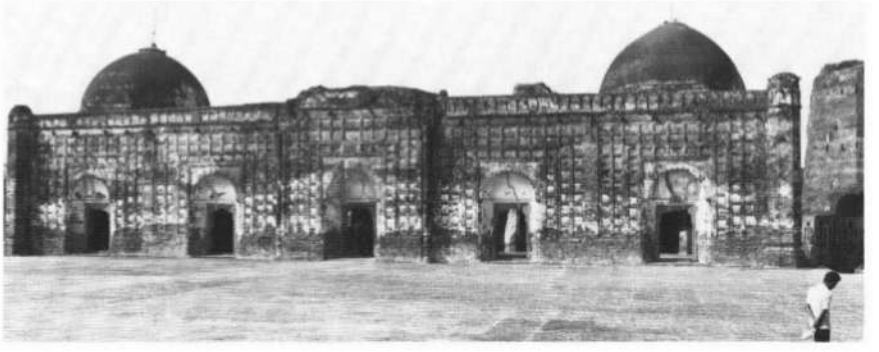
Bibliography: Majumdar 1905, 178.

According to an inscription on an interior wall, this Karbala or Husainia, a building where *tazias* are buried during Muharram, was constructed in 1804. A second inscription, located over the central entrance of the east façade, also mentions the construction, repeats the date, and further states that Ambar Ali Khan was the patron. It also notes that in 1854 Darab Ali Khan enlarged the building. Majumdar, in passing, mentions Darab Ali Khan as a highly placed court eunuch who left most of his wealth to religious institutions; this epigraph indicates that the remodelling of this Husainia was one of his acts of piety. While the later inscription is embedded above the cusped, arched east entrance, the stucco motifs on this entrance are reminiscent of those on Mian Halal's Mosque dated to 1801 (Murshidabad). It is thus possible that the new epigraph was substituted for the older one, while otherwise the entrance was left intact. The west interior verandah, supported on Tuscan pillars similar to those seen on the Imambara of 1847, has a decided mid-nineteenth-century character. Thus this wall and much of the interior are probably the product of Darab Ali Khan's patronage.

Katra Mosque

A.H. 1137/A.D. 1724-5

Bibliography: Banerji 1972, 1-8; Beveridge 1892, 338-9; Dani 1961, 275-6; Hunter 1876 IX, 74-5; Majumdar 1905, 171-3.



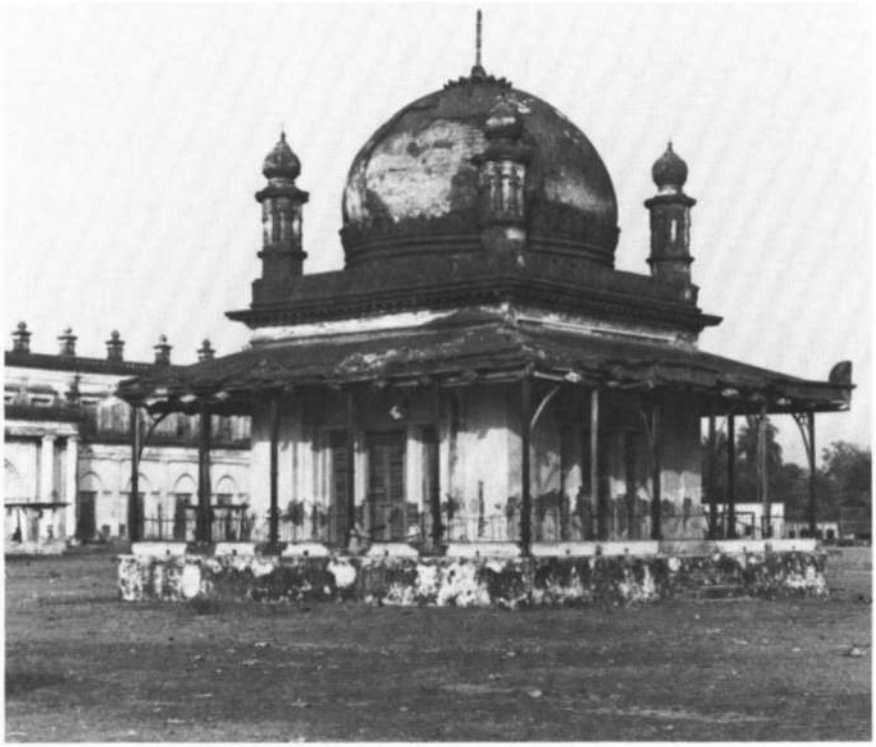
In 1717 the powerful and dynamic governor of Bengal, Murshid Quli Khan, officially transferred the capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad, a city he named in honour of himself. The Katra Mosque was constructed as the new capital's Jami mosque. According to an inscription over the east façade, this great five-bayed rectangular mosque, today ruined, was built in 1724-5. The mosque, which also contains Murshid Quli Khan's grave, was finished only a few years before his death in 1727, and it is tempting to suggest that this monument was conceived as a memorial to himself in the city he constructed. The mosque sits on a high plinth some 54 m square and is surrounded on all four sides by a row of double-storeyed domed cells that form a cloistered continuous verandah around the east courtyard. Murshid Quli Khan is buried in an unpretentious tomb under the multi-arched entrance portal leading to the great courtyard. Originally a huge octagonal minaret towered above the mosque at each of the cloister's four corners, but today only two of these minarets are extant. The four minarets are probably derived from imperial Mughal architecture, for example the corner-placed minarets at the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore built in 1674.

Modern scholars and local people say that these cloistered cells housed a market; however, the artist Hodges reports seeing in 1760 a magnificent *madrasa* or theological college around the mosque, and a nineteenth-century writer says that the rooms were used by readers of the Koran to pray for Murshid Quli Khan and also as a serai for travellers. It is hardly likely that chambers opening directly into a mosque's courtyard would be used as a noisy market. In addition, the tradition of plinths housing *madrasas* was well established in Bengal. For example, the plinth of Khan Muhammad Mirza's Mosque (1706) and the plinth of the mosque ascribed to Murshid Quli Khan, Kartalab Khan's Mosque, both in Dhaka, were used as *madrasas*.

A mosque of this enormous scale is unusual in the Mughal period in Bengal, although the Jami mosque at Rajmahal and Farrukh Siyar's Jami mosque in Dhaka (*c.* 1703-6, now modernized and not included here) are precedents that Murshid Quli Khan probably emulated. The mosque, as is characteristic of Bengali buildings, has four engaged corner turrets. In addition, the east façade has a massive quality reminiscent of pre-Mughal Bengali architecture, for example the Jahaniyan Mosque in Gaur (1535). The exterior surface is covered on all sides with rows of rectangular panels, again recalling the surface treatment of the Jahaniyan Mosque. The five arches of the east façade are rounded and cusped; under these are trabeated black basalt door-frames pierced with rounded cusped openings. While most Bengali mosques constructed in the late sixteenth century or early seventeenth have pointed arches, the Satgumbad Mosque in Dhaka also has rounded arches. This may point to an early European influence on Bengali architecture. The prayer chamber's interior is divided into five bays by lateral arches. Each bay contains three mihrabs, giving a total of fifteen. Another mosque whose prayer chamber is constructed in this same scale and format in Murshidabad is the Futi or Broken Mosque. As the name indicates, it too is in a ruined condition, but it appears to be contemporary with the Katra Mosque.

Medina

Eighteenth century

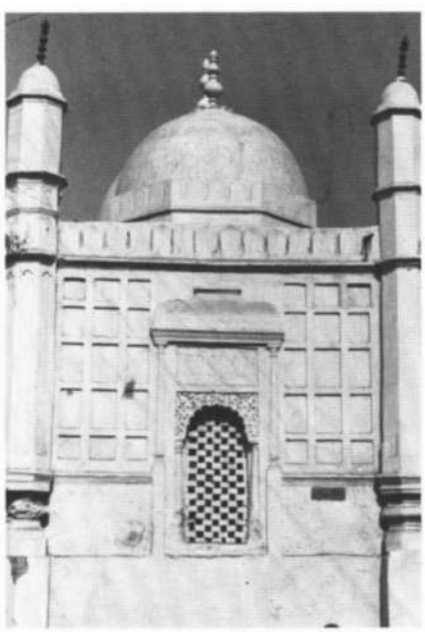


Bibliography: O'Malley 1914, 211.

This Medina, standing between the palace and Imambara of 1847, is considered the only part remaining of Siraj ud-Daulah's original Imambara, which was twice burned. According to tradition, this single square-domed building sits on foundations filled with earth carried from the Karbala in Mecca. Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah is said to have put the first basket of sacred earth into the foundations. This neglected structure has several features that link it strongly with the mid-eighteenth-century architectural tradition of Murshidabad.

Mosque of Abd Allah

A.H. 1194/A.D. 1780



Bibliography: *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*, 1955-56, D 43.

Inscribed to 1780, this mosque, situated in the heart of Murshidabad town, was constructed by Abd Allah, whose identity is otherwise unknown. A modern verandah has been added to the east façade, which appears similar to the façade on Saif Allah's mosque in Murshidabad, dated to 1748. The mihrab projections on the exterior of the west wall are in the form of *do-chala* and *char-chala* vaults, again a motif seen in Murshidabad as early as the mosque at Shuja al-Din's Tomb, dated to 1743. The above-mentioned features appear commonly in Murshidabad architecture datable throughout the eighteenth century; however, the naturalistic floral forms seen on the north and south bays seem to occur in Murshidabad only in the late eighteenth century. Similar motifs appear on the Gulab Bagh Mosque, another structure datable to the late eighteenth century.

Mosque of Farhat Allah Khan

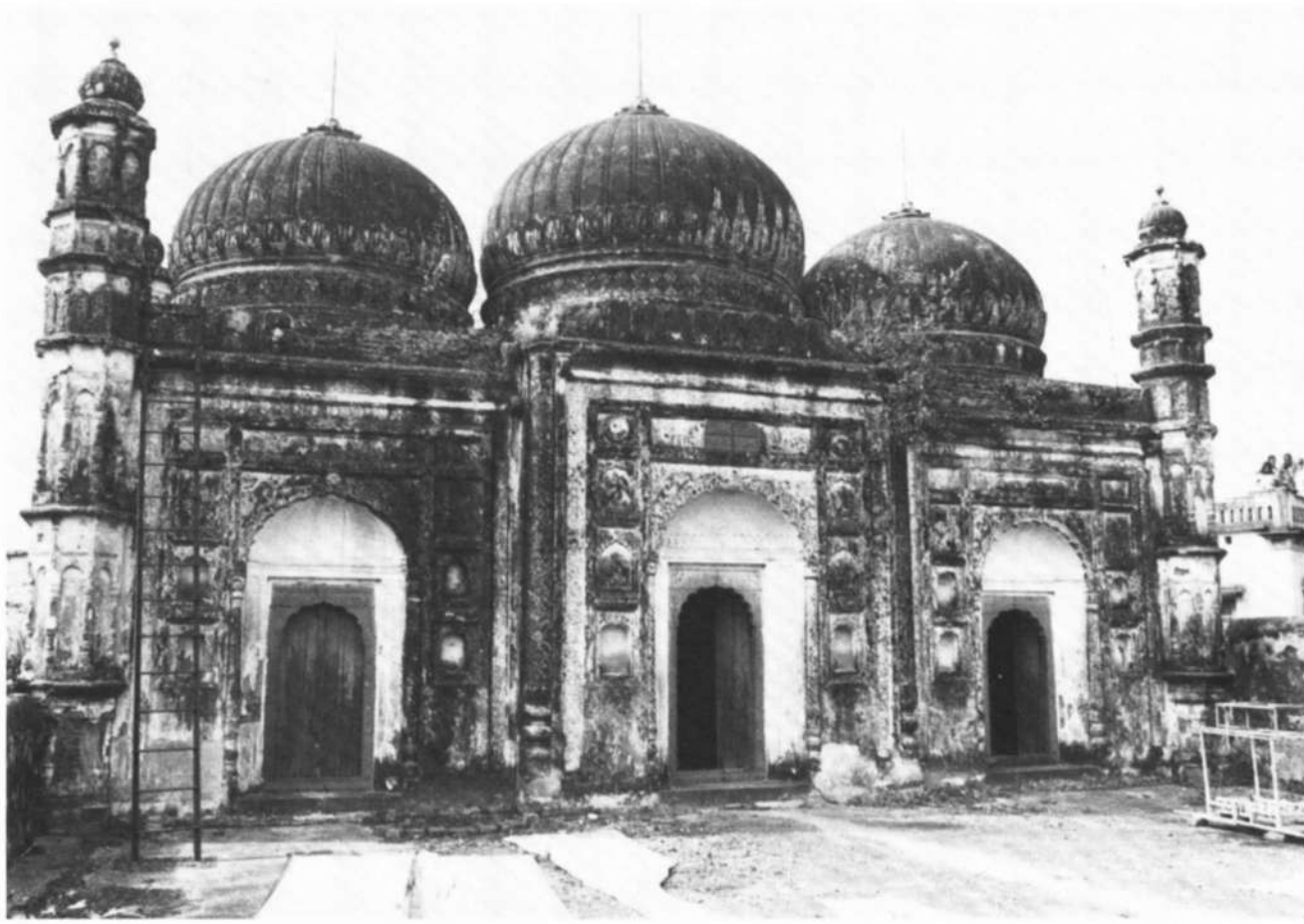
A.H. 1237/A.D. 1821

Bibliography: none.

Constructed only twenty years after the highly ornate Mosque of Mian Halal (Murshidabad, 1801), Farhat Allah Khan's Mosque has a more austere appearance. Each of the three entrance bays of this flat-roofed mosque is flanked by a continuous recessed rectangular frame; the entrance arches are supported on engaged colonettes. Neither the interior mihrabs nor the walls bear any traces of ornamentation. The mihrab projections on the west exterior wall, however, are the *do-chala* roof forms, seen on many Murshidabad mosques during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The increased austerity of this mosque's appearance may reflect a general trend in Murshidabad during the nineteenth century.

Mosque of Mian Halal

A.H. 1216/A.D. 1801

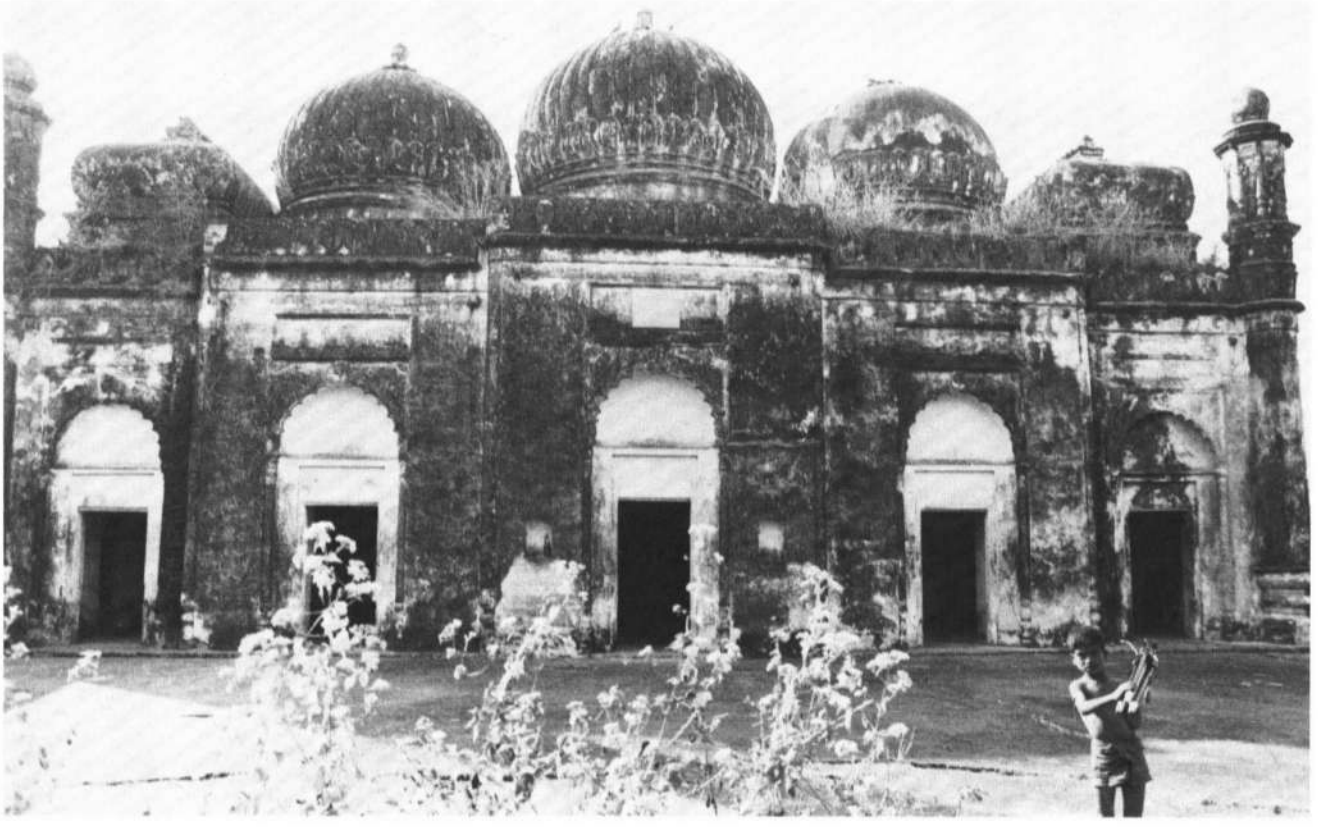


Bibliography: none.

The patron of this splendid early nineteenth-century mosque, Mian Halal, is otherwise unknown. The treatment of this mosque's three-bayed façade recalls that of Muni Begum's Chowk Mosque, built in 1767, while the three fluted bulbous domes surmounting the mosque are similar to those on the Qadam Sharif Mosque, dated to 1788, also in Murshidabad. The variety and richness of the interior stucco motifs upon the walls, arches and mihrabs, including flowers, peacocks and cusping, is the most elaborate on any Murshidabad mosque included here. A study of the dated extant mosques suggests that the early nineteenth century, the period during which Mian Halal's Mosque was built, may mark both the high point and terminal date for the popularity of ornate mosques. After this, more sedate structures came into vogue, possibly owing to the influence of British architecture.

Mosque of Nusari Banu

A.H. 1145/A.D. 1735 and
A.H. 1299/A.D.1881

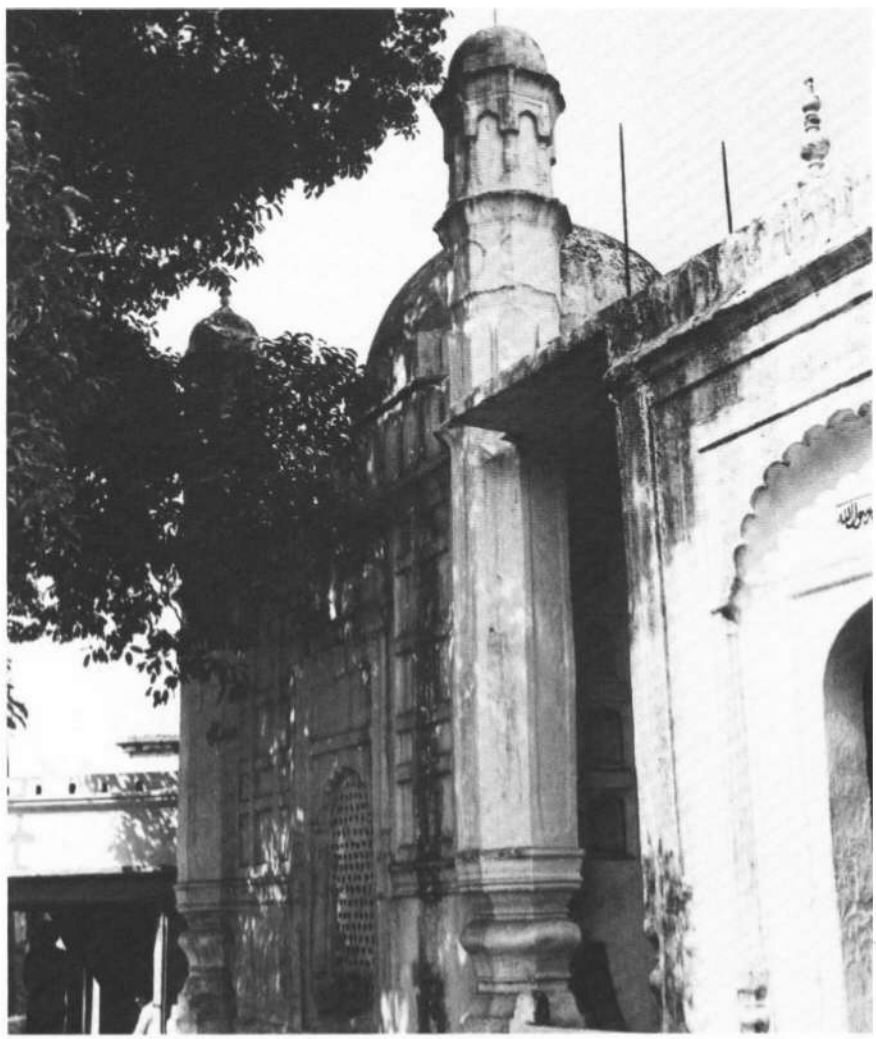


Bibliography: Majumdar 1905, 134–6.

This mosque is situated near the Chowk Mosque of Muni Begum in an area associated with the site of Murshid Quli Khan's palace. According to Majumdar, the east-entrance portal leading to the mosque's courtyard bears an inscription dated A.H. 1145/A.D. 1735 describing a mosque constructed in honour of Murshid Quli Khan's recently deceased wife, Nusari Banu. Her tomb is under the steps leading to the mosque, following the precedent of her daughter's and husband's tombs. The gateway today is now too overgrown with vegetation to examine the inscription, if indeed it still exists. However, an inscription now on the mosque's east façade dated to A.H. 1299/A.D. 1881 ascribes the design and construction of the mosque as it currently appears to Sadiq Ali, surely the same person who designed the great palace Imambara; it further states that the mosque was completed by Nazir Ali Khan. The tightly constricted floriate necks of the ribbed bulbous domes as well as the floriate bases of the *do-chala* roofs indicate a nineteenth-century date. They compare favourably with the domes on the Mian Halal Mosque, dated to 1801, rather than with the rounded domes of the Aliverdi Khan's Mosque at Shuja al-Din's Tomb, dated to 1743, indicating that the mosque's present form is largely a nineteenth-century product. The façade is devoid of much ornamentation, reminiscent of the mosque of Farhat Allah Khan in Murshidabad, dated A.H. 1237/A.D. 1821, reflecting a trend in Murshidabad during the nineteenth century.

Mosque of Saif Allah

A.H. 1161/A.D. 1748



Bibliography: *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* 1956-57, D 42.

The patron of this small three-domed mosque constructed in 1748 was Saif Allah, otherwise unknown. Although heavily reconstructed, the mosque has three recessed arched entrances surmounted by rounded cusped arches standing on engaged colonettes. These are flanked on either side by small recessed niches. The southern and northern façades are divided into a series of panels, recalling the exterior treatment of the Katra Mosque, also at Murshidabad and dated to 1724-5. Three small rounded domes surmount the structure.

Mosque of Shah Nisar Ali

A.H. 1192/A.D. 1778-9

Bibliography: *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* 1955-56, D 50.

Conservative in ornamentation, this small three-domed rectangular mosque lacks the rich stucco arabesque and floral ornamentation of the Chowk Mosque, constructed by Muni Begum about ten years earlier.

The only influence of this earlier imposing mosque upon Shah Nisar Ali's Mosque (dated 1778-9) appears to be the fan motif, ultimately derived from European architecture, in the central entrance

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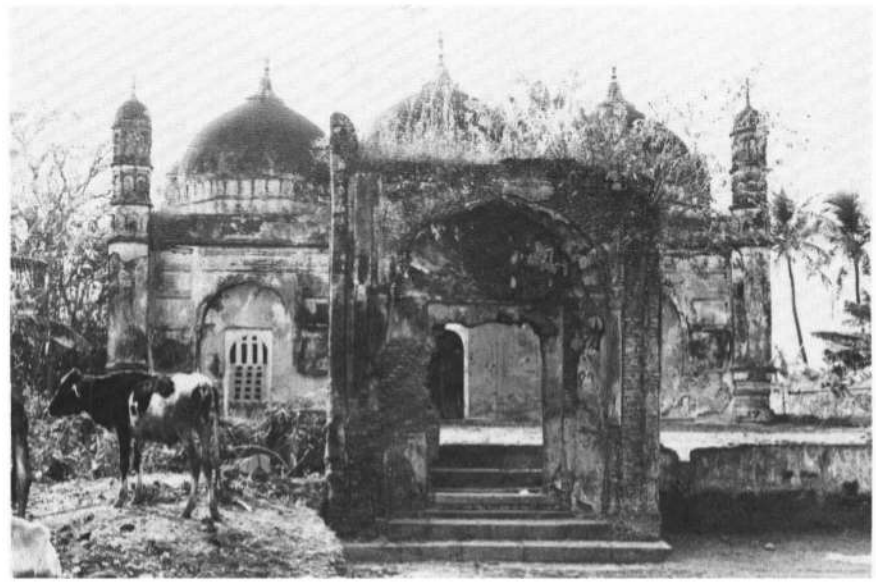
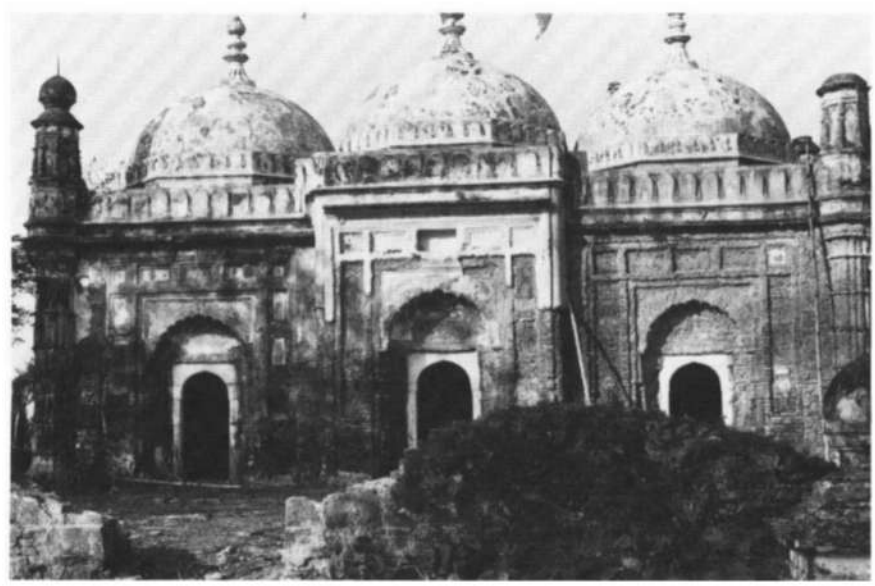
arch. Shah Nisar Ali's Mosque, situated directly to the west of the Jaffarganj Cemetery containing the graves of Nawab Mir Jaffar and his family, was probably erected in conjunction with the cemetery.



Bibliography: none.

Mosque

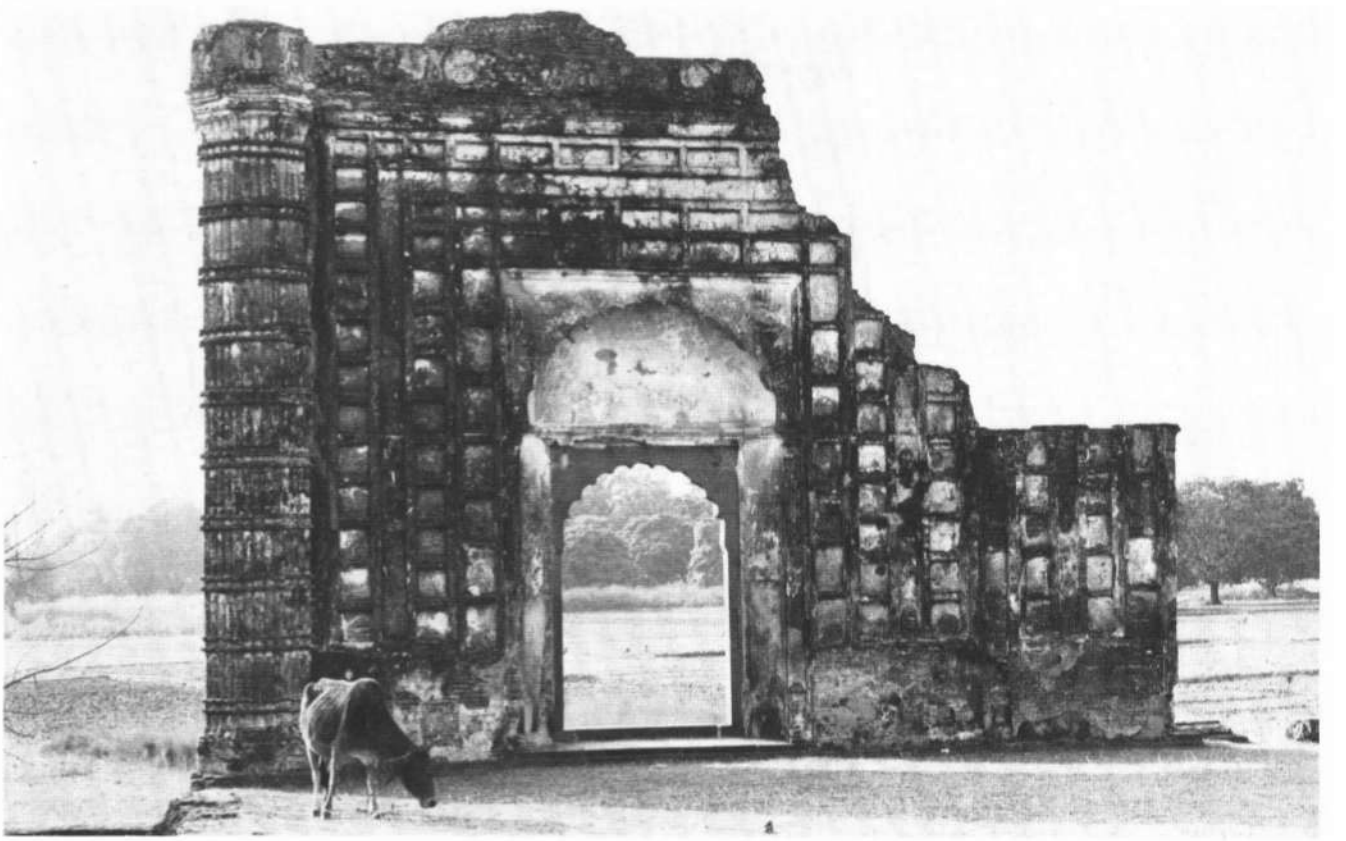
Eighteenth century



Approximately one kilometre south of the Pil Khana Mosque, is this small three-domed mosque bearing features indicating that it was probably constructed during the eighteenth century. The rounded domes on this mosque are a feature that are last seen in Murshidabad on Abd Allah's Mosque, dated to 1780. The rectangular panels flanking the entrance arches are seen in Murshidabad mosques throughout the eighteenth century. For example, they appear at both the Mosque of Azim al-Nisa Begum, datable to the mid-eighteenth century, as well as at Shah Nisar Ali's Mosque, dated to 1778-9. The mosque's interior has cusped lateral arches as well as mihrabs supported on engaged colonettes, thus suggesting a later eighteenth-century date.

Mosque and Tomb of Azim Al-Nisa Begum

A.H. 1147/A.D. 1734



Bibliography: *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* 1955-56, D 52; Majumdar 1905, 140-1.

Azim al-Nisa Begum was Murshid Quli Khan's only daughter, wife of Murshidabad's second Nawab, and mother of the third Nawab. According to an inscriptional slab embedded in the east-entrance portal to a mosque reputedly erected by the Begum, she died in 1734. Like her father, she is buried near the entrance to her mosque. However, as both the gate and inscriptional slab appear more modern than the mosque, it is possible they were added later in honour of the Begum. Today only the large raised plinth and the south exterior bay of the east façade of this mosque remain. The plinth has arched cells in its base, suggesting that this mosque, too, served as a school of religious instruction like her father's Katra Mosque. The remaining bay is very similar to the Katra Mosque's façade. Rectangular niches flank a cusped rounded arch under which is a rectangular basalt frame pierced by a rounded cusped entrance. The sole remaining corner turret is both fluted and ribbed.

Mosque and Tomb of Badr Nisa Begum

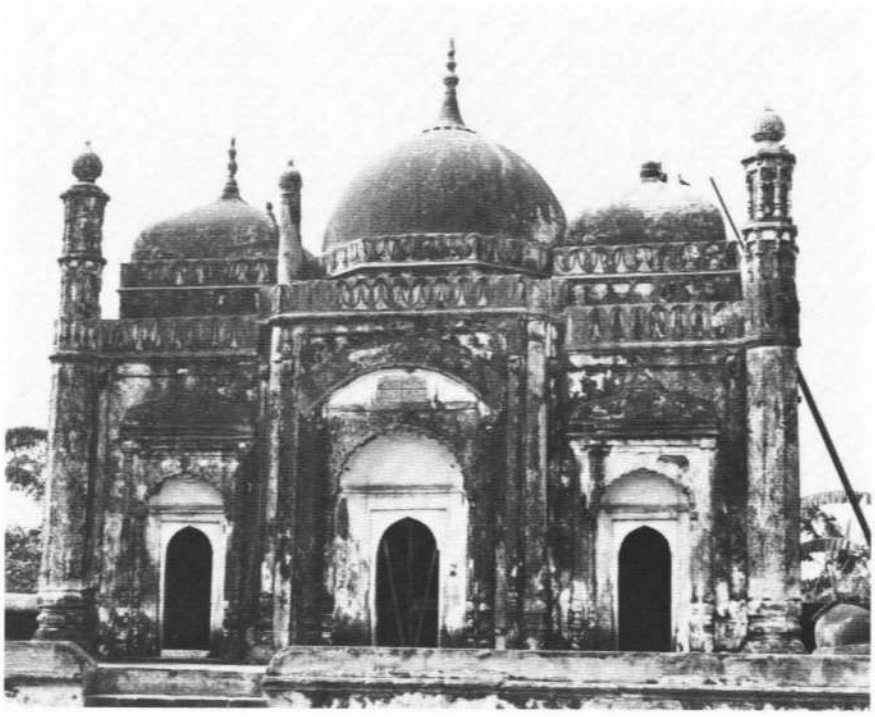
A.H. 1256/A.D. 1840

Bibliography: none.

According to an inscription over the mosque's east facade, this three-domed structure was constructed in 1840 by Badr Nisa Begum, doubtless a high-ranking lady belonging to the royal family. Although uninscribed, the small, single-domed tomb standing within the walled compound containing the mosque is probably Badr Nisa Begum's mausoleum. This is probably the only covered tomb in Murshidabad constructed during the nineteenth century. Both the interior and exterior of Badr Nisa Begum's Mosque feature cusped arches and limited stucco ornamentation. While the mosque's appearance is slightly more ornate than Farhat Allah's Mosque, constructed in 1821, both mosques indicate a preference for subdued façades in nineteenth-century Murshidabad architecture.

Mosque and Tomb of Nawab Shuja al-Din

Tomb: A.H. 1151/A.D. 1738-39
Mosque: A.H. 1156/A.D. 1743-44

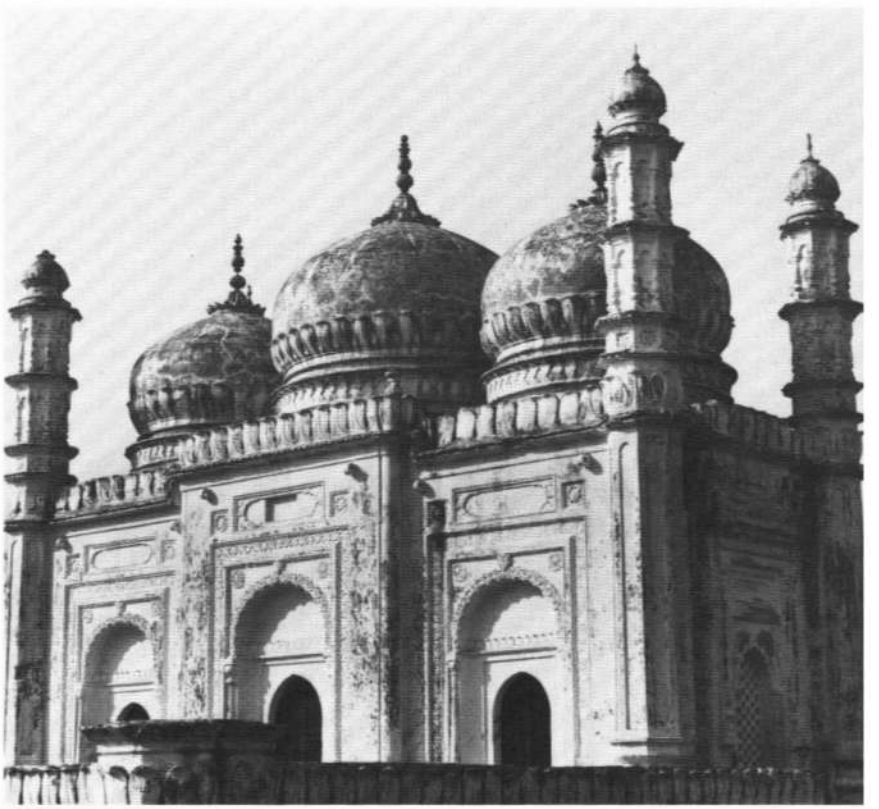


Bibliography: Majumdar 1905, 199-200; O'Malley 1914, 215.

The tomb's inscription states that Nawab Shuja al-Din constructed his own mausoleum in A.H. 1151/A.D. 1738-39, just a year before his death. Situated on the west bank of the Bhagirathi River in a locality called Roshnibagh, or Garden of Light, the tomb itself is a squat, rectangular flat-roofed structure with three openings on the north side; however, its appearance today so reflects the restorer's hand that it is difficult to determine what, if any, of this building is original. A small three-bayed rectangular mosque is situated in this walled garden compound to the north of the tomb. According to an inscription over the east facade, it was constructed by Mahabat Jung in 1743, a date determined by the numerical value of the inscription's final words. Mahabat Jung was the title of Aliverdi Khan, ruling in 1743, and thus surely the patron of this mosque. It is tempting to suggest that Aliverdi Khan constructed this mosque in close proximity to Shuja al-Din's grave to absolve his guilt for treacherously killing Shuja al-Din's son, Serferaz Khan, in order to obtain the throne for himself. This building may be the earliest dated Murshidabad mosque of the rectangular single-aisled type, based on the Mughal architecture of Dhaka and Rajmahal. In keeping with a long architectural tradition in Bengal, engaged turrets mark each corner. Slender engaged columns flank the central entrance bay, a feature seen in many mosques of Dhaka: for example the Mosque of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz, dated to 1679. The mosque is entered by three recessed basalt archways surmounted by rounded cusped arches, a feature seen earlier in Murshidabad at the Katra Mosque (1724-25) and Azim al-Nisa Begum's Mosque. Unlike those of the two earlier mosques, however, the cusped arches rest on engaged colonettes. The treatment of the remaining façade is also quite different. Above the central entrance arch is a plaster *do-chala* roof motif resting on engaged colonettes. The flanking bays contain similar devices except that here the motifs are shaped like *char-chala* roofs. The mihrab projection on the west façade also bears a *do-chala* design, one of the first to appear in this position on any mosque in Bengal. The mosque is surmounted by a central dome flanked on either side by a *char-chala* vault, thus recalling the end vaults on the mosque at Burdwan, dated 1699-1700.

Pil Khana Mosque

Eighteenth century

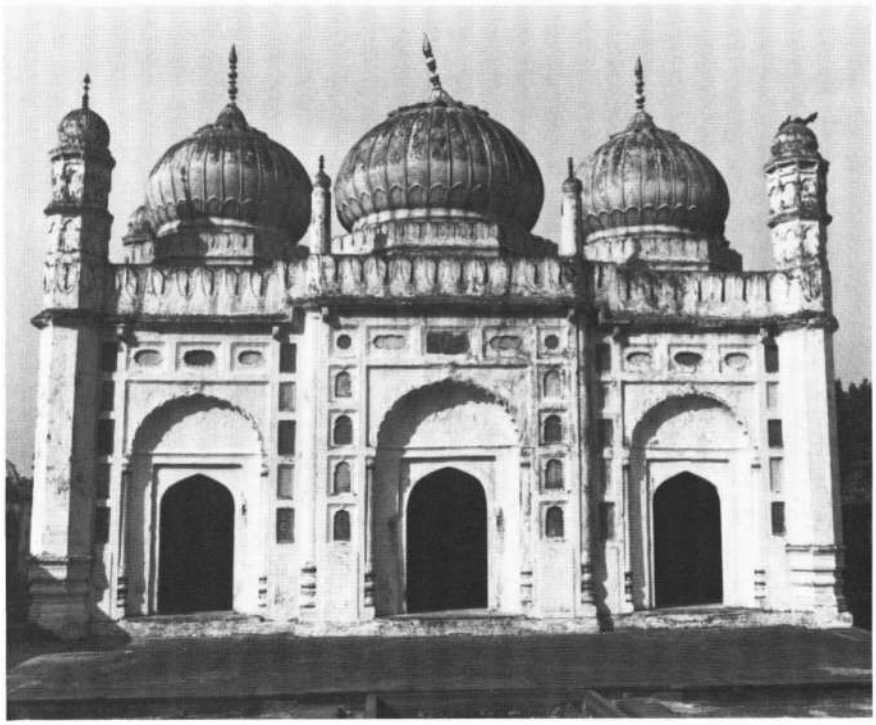


Bibliography: none.

Although this small mosque is uninscribed, the motifs of its east façade and interior closely resemble the floral and arabesque ornamentation on Muni Begum's Chowk Mosque, dated 1767. The constricted necks of the Pil Khana Mosque's domes are similar to those on the Mosque of Mian Halal (1801) and the Qadam Sharif Mosque (1780). The west exterior façade is noteworthy, for it appears to be a more elaborate and probably later version of the west facade on Aliverdi Khan's Mosque (1743) constructed at Shuja al-Din's Tomb in Roshnibagh. *Do-chala* or *char-chala* motifs supported on stucco pilasters adorn the mihrab projections of both mosques. The ornately cusped lateral and transverse arches, the cusped arches of the mihrabs and the motifs on the interior domes recall the stucco decoration on Muni Begum's Chowk Mosque. Thus the Pil Khana Mosque appears to be in the Murshidabad architectural tradition of the late eighteenth century.

Qadam Sharif

Mosque: A.H. 1194/A.D. 1780
Qadam Sharif Shrine: A.H. 1203/A.D. 1788



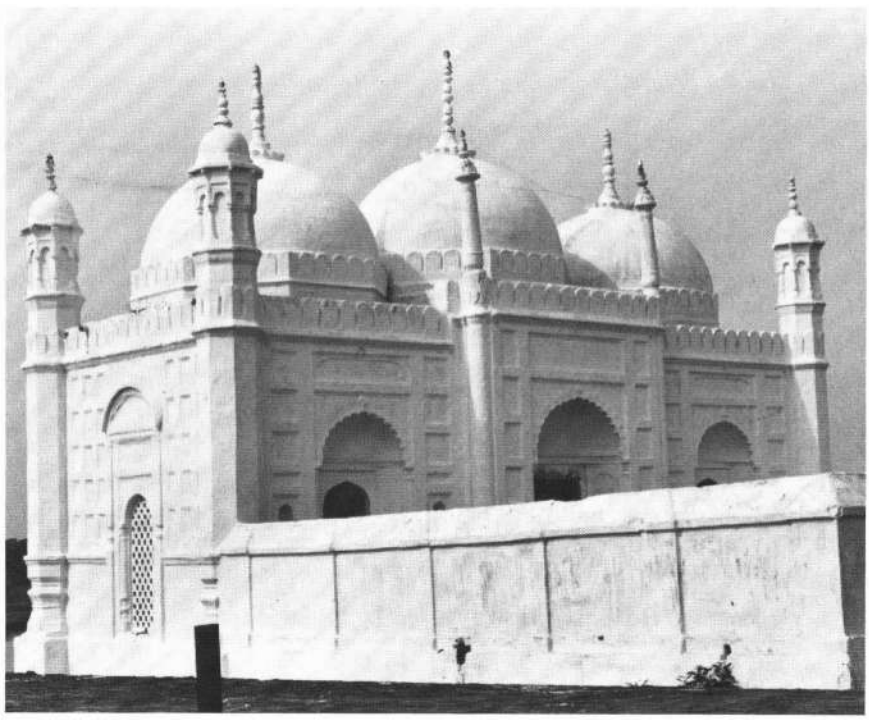
Bibliography: *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* 1974–75, D 336-7; Majumdar 1905, 176-8; O'Malley 1914, 214.

Housing an impression of the Prophet's footprint brought from Gaur, this large complex of buildings was built at various stages. Its earliest dated structure is the mosque, built in 1780-81; the patron is identified in the inscription as Khan-i Ali. According to Majumdar, this refers to Basant Ali, chief eunuch in one of the royal households. To support the shrine, Basant Ali established a trust based on two-thirds of his property. The shrine containing the Prophet's footprint was constructed eight years after the mosque, in 1788.

The east façade of the mosque closely resembles that of Abd Allah's mosque, dated to 1780, also in Murshidabad. One difference, however, is seen in the three domes surmounting the Qadam Sharif mosque. They are ribbed and have tightly constricted necks, giving a bulbous appearance. While domes of this sort are seen much earlier in the architecture of Bijapur and Delhi, for example in Qudsia Bagh (*c.* 1748), this may be one of the earliest appearances of such domes in a dated eastern-Indian monument. The interior features cusped lateral arches and mihrabs, thus giving this space an air of lightness. The shrine housing the footprint has an interior plan almost identical to that of the Qadam Rasul at Gaur, the previous home of the relic. The south façade that is the main entrance into the shrine has five arched entrances supported on moulded piers. A small bulbous dome covers the otherwise low flat-roofed structure.

Safid Mosque

Circa eighteenth century

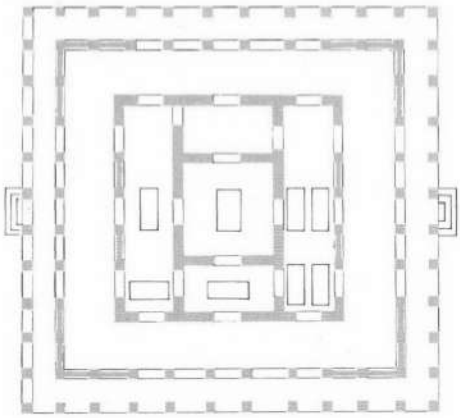


Bibliography: none.

Situated in the palace compound, picturesquely overlooking the Bhagirathi river, this jewel-like mosque bears the characteristics of the eighteenth-century style. The three rounded domes and the sedate rectangular panels flanking the entrance arches recall the Mosque of Saif Allah (1748) and the Mosque of Shah Nisar Ali (1780), both in Murshidabad. The east façade's central entrance is composed of carved pillars of black basalt with carving similar to those on the lintel at the Jumma Mosque in Rajmahal. According to many accounts, carved stones were taken from the ruins of Rajmahal by the Nawabs of Murshidabad to be utilized in their own buildings. This may be one such example: however, other highly carved black basalt members are virtually unknown at Murshidabad, thus casting doubt on the tradition. While local tradition holds that the nearby Zarad Mosque was constructed by the Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah (1738-57) stylistic features indicate that the Safid Mosque is more likely a product of his patronage.

Tomb of Aliverdi Khan

Circa 1756



Bibliography: Beveridge 1982, 340-1; Dani 1961, 277; Layard 1852, 504-11; Majumdar 1905, 198-9; O'Malley 1914, 219.

The famed ruler of Murshidabad, Nawab Aliverdi Khan, died in 1756 and was buried in a magnificent garden compound, the Kushbagh, or Garden of Delight. His tomb is a square, flat-roofed building, consisting internally of a central square chamber surrounded on all four sides by an arcaded verandah. The internal arrangement of the tomb appears to be a simplier version of Bibi Pari's Tomb in Dhaka, while the surrounding verandah recalls the Tomb of Bibi Miriam, also in Dhaka. The exterior appearance of the tomb, with its smooth, rounded open arches and low flat roof, more closely resembles a British-style bungalow than tomb types traditionally associated with Bengali nobility.

Zarad Mosque

Late eighteenth century

Bibliography: Majumdar 1905, 128.

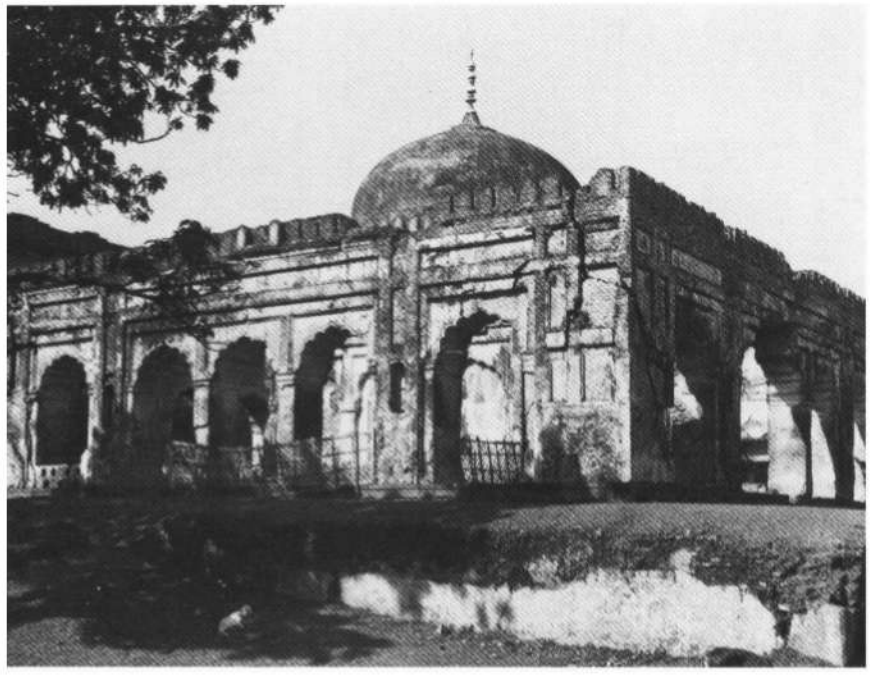
The Zarad Mosque, situated in the palace compound overlooking the river, was, according to local tradition, constructed under the patronage of Siraj ud-Daulah (1738-57). However, the three enormous bulbous ribbed domes with constricted necks, a feature not seen in Murshidabad until the late eighteenth century (for example, at the Qadam Sharif Mosque, dated to 1780), indicate that the Zarad Mosque was not built during this Nawab's lifetime: rather, Siraj ud-Daulah probably built the Safid Mosque, situated only about 100 m to the south.

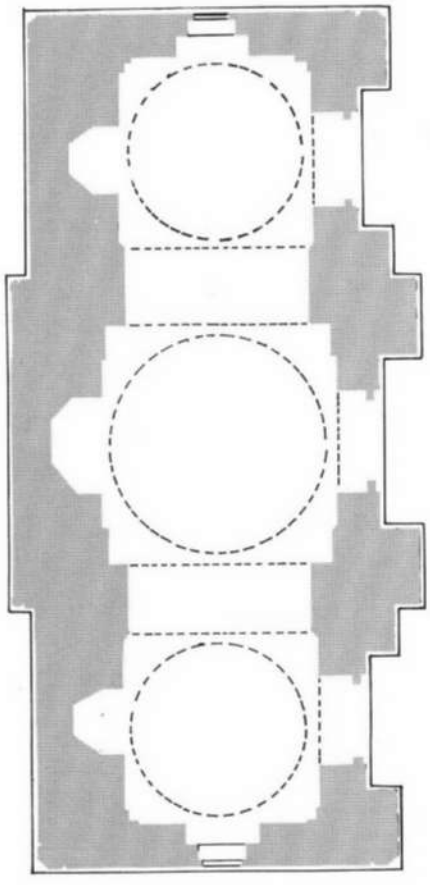
Narayanganj (Dhaka District)

Bibi Miriam's Mosque and Tomb

Late seventeenth century

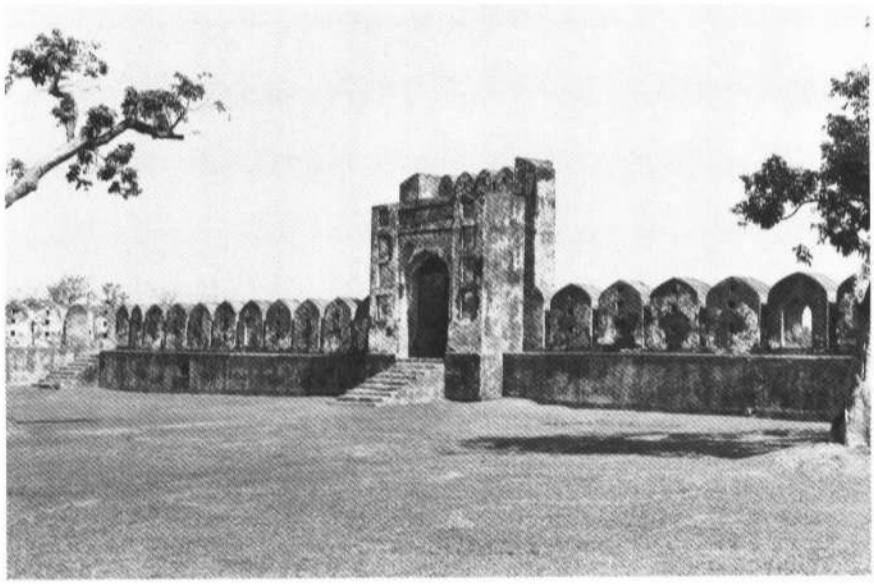
Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 59; Dani 1961, 200, 216; Hasan 1980, 66.





The Mosque and Tomb of Bibi Miriam, traditionally considered a daughter of the Bengal governor, Shaista Khan, are situated in a walled enclosure. A large entrance portal is still extant on the north side; probably the south side had a similar entrance. The mosque is a three-domed rectangular structure conforming to a type used widely in the late seventeenth century architecture of Dhaka. The tomb, now greatly ruined, consists of a central square-domed chamber surrounded on all four sides by an arched verandah. Originally this verandah was covered. Unlike the verandahs at the Tombs of Bibi Pari in Dhaka and Nimat Allah at Gaur, where each side is internally subdivided into three chambers, here each side of the verandah consists of a single chamber. This recalls the scheme of earlier eastern Indian Mughal-period tombs, for example the tomb of the famous Chishti saint Makhdum Sahib at Maner (Patna District, Bihar) dated 1616, and the Tomb of Iftikhar Khan in Chunar (Mirzapur District, U.P.) dated 1613-4.

Hajiganj Fort
Seventeenth century



Small forts such as this were constructed as a safeguard against pirate raids, a constant threat to the citizens of Dhaka. The Hajiganj Fort, located at the junction of two major rivers, consists of a high arched portal on the river side, rounded bastions and pentagonal-shaped walls pierced with holes for muskets. As with many other contemporary forts, there are no interior structures. But there is no reason to assume, as has been suggested, that these forts were only used in the monsoon. Rather, since the danger of pirate raids was constant, these forts probably served as checkpoints the year round. Forts of this type likely were constructed shortly after the Mughal settlement of Dhaka. The arched gateway of the Hajiganj Fort, embellished with rectangular niches filled with cusped arches, recalls the façade of the Lalbagh Fort Mosque.

Bibliography: Aulad Hasan 1904, 59; Dani 1961, 225; Hasan 1980, 65-6.

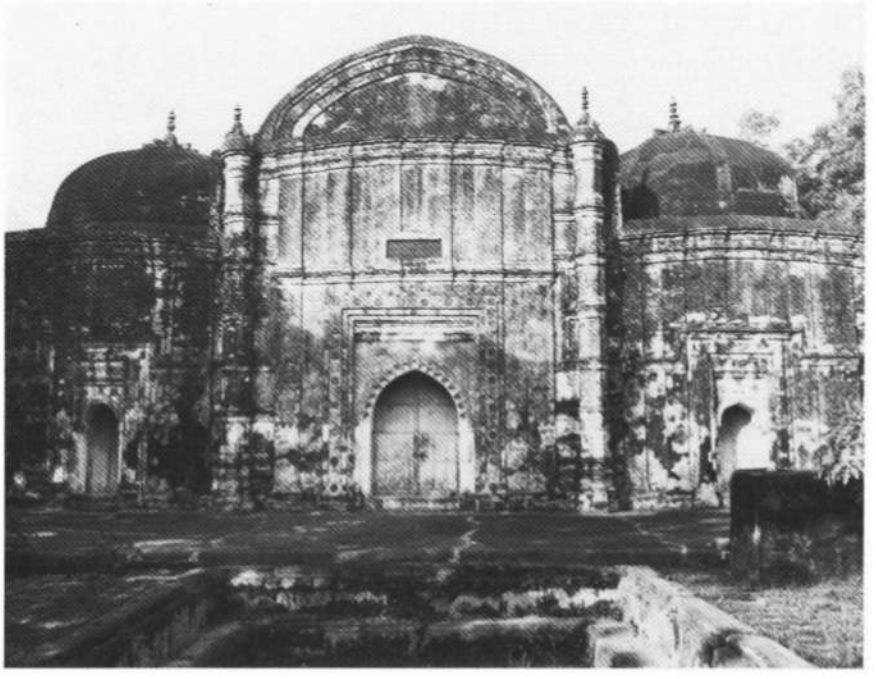
Old Malda (Malda District, West Bengal, India)

Jami Mosque
A.H. 1004/A.D. 1595-96

The third mosque in Bengal constructed with a central barrel-vaulted corridor, this so-called Jami Mosque is dated 1595-96 by the numerical value of a phrase in the inscription's last line. The mosque's scheme is based on both Bengali and north-Indian architectural features. In plan the mosque is single-bayed, a type seen earlier in the Kherua Mosque (1582) at Sherpur, but ultimately it was inspired by still earlier north-Indian mosque types. The central bay is covered with a barrel vault; only the Adina Mosque in Pandua and the Gunmant Mosque in Gaur have similar central vaults. However, unlike the design of these earlier prototypes, the flanking bays are each covered with a large ribbed dome, indicative of north-Indian influence. The central bay of the east façade rises high above the flanking bays. While a high central *pistaq* is commonly seen in north Indian mosques, for example

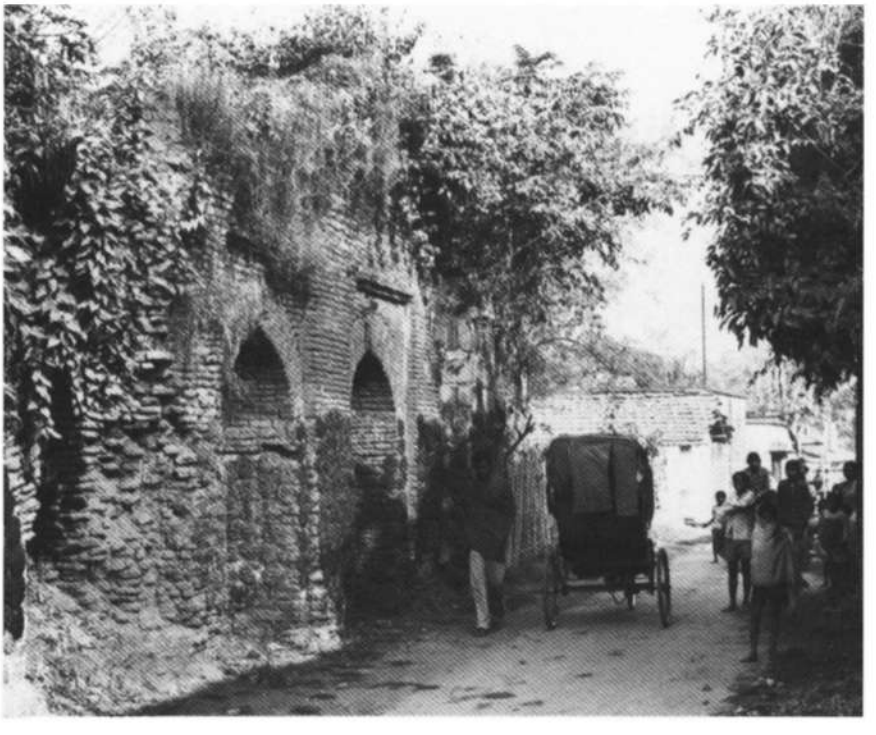
Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 151-2; Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 258-9; *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* 1959-60, D 31; Cunningham XV, 77; Dani 1961, 173-4.

the Qila-i Kuhna Mosque in Delhi (*c.* 1545) and the Jami Mosque in Jaunpur (*c.* 1465), this is its first appearance in Bengal since the Adina Mosque. But the cusped entrance arch, the brick relief motifs, curved cornice and engaged ribbed corner turrets are all common features of indigenous Bengali architecture.



Katra

Late sixteenth century



Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 148-9; Dani 1961, 171.

According to tradition, this serai, or Katra, was constructed originally as a warehouse for the famed cotton and silk products of Malda. Later this fortified enclosure was used to protect travellers at night. Today little remains of the rectangular walled enclosure except traces of the arched gateways on the north and south ends. Originally all four sides had small arched apartments, some traces of which are still extant. Local authorities assert that this Katra was constructed by the brother of the patron of the Jami Mosque at Old Malda.

Nim Serai Minar

Late sixteenth century

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 154-5; Dani 1961, 171-3; Husain 1970, 139-40; Mundy 1914, 72-3, 185.

This extraordinary minaret is situated at the junction of the Kalindri and Mahananda rivers, halfway between Gaur and Pandua and due west of the Jami Mosque. Although the function is not known, its location on a hill overlooking the rivers (at that time the major trade routes) suggests that among other purposes this minaret served as a watch-tower. Its scheme, however, appears to be inspired by the Hiran Minar at Fatehpur Sikri, which was probably a hunting-tower, and the Chor Minar in Delhi, used to display the heads of thieves. Sitting on an octagonal base with arched interior cells, possibly for guards, this circular tower narrows as it reaches the top, now broken. A staircase winds through the interior. Like the Hiran Minar, it is covered with stone projections carved to resemble elephant tusks. Since this structure is based so clearly on a Mughal model at Fatehpur Sikri, Mughal patronage is likely. It is tempting to suggest it was constructed when Raja Man Singh, Akbar's governor in Bengal, was subduing rebel forces, and instead of animal heads, these spikes were used to display rebel heads as a warning. Indeed, this is not impossible, for Peter Mundy, a traveller through the Mughal empire in 1631-32, makes several references to minarets displaying heads.

Shrine of Shah Gada

Sixteenth century on

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 149-50; Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 163-6; Dani 1961, 170.

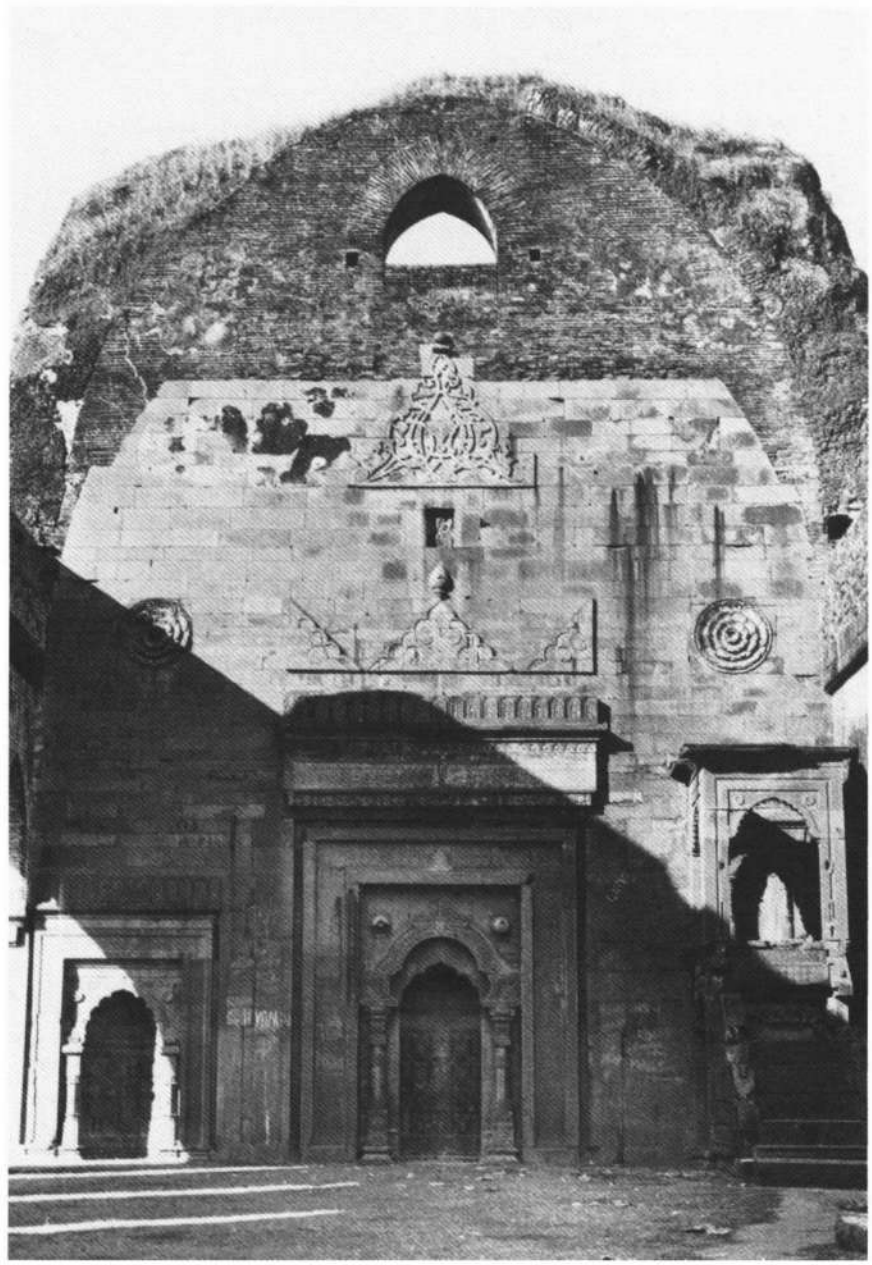
Nothing is known about Shah Gada, who is said to be buried in this small square tomb. Repeated restorations have made it difficult to determine the date of construction. Two inscriptions, apparently unrelated to the shrine, record the dedication of mosques in 1445 and 1505 and suggest that the tomb was built sometime after 1505 when these loose stones were embedded in the shrine's walls.

Pandua (Malda District, West Bengal, India)

Adina Mosque

A.H. 776/A.D. 1374–45

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 127-40; Cunningham XV, 90-94; Dani 1961, 55-73; Hasan 1970, 1-68; Hasan 1979, 59-97; Melik-Beglaroff 1888, 1-76; Ravenshaw 1878, 60-7.



The Adina Mosque, the largest in the subcontinent, was built in 1374 by Sikander Shah, the second sultan of the newly independant Ilyas Shahi dynasty. Situated in the old Bengal capital, Firuzabad, beside a major road leading to north Bengal, it was probably intended as a visual proclamation of this sultan's final defeat of the Delhi ruler and overlord, Firuz Shah Tughluq. While the Adina Mosque is greatly ruined, enough remains to determine its original appearance. In plan, the Adina Mosque conforms to a type traditionally associated with large congregational mosques; that is, a prayer chamber opening on to a courtyard surrounded on the north, east and south sides by a covered verandah. The prayer chamber is divided into two symmetrical wings by a central chamber, originally covered with a pointed barrel vault; however, this has collapsed. The east façade of the prayer chamber's north and south wings had screens of pointed brick arches supported on stone piers. The original appearance of the central bay's east façade is not clear, but possibly it resembled the central *pistaq* of the Dakhil Darwaza, another barrel-vaulted brick structure in nearby Gaur.

The barrel-vaulted central bay of the prayer chamber is unprecedented in India, for this area is usually domed. Barrel vaulting is not widely used in India, although it is seen on some earlier Tughluq structures, for example in secular buildings within Ghiyas al-Din's Fort of Tughluqabad (Delhi). Most likely the

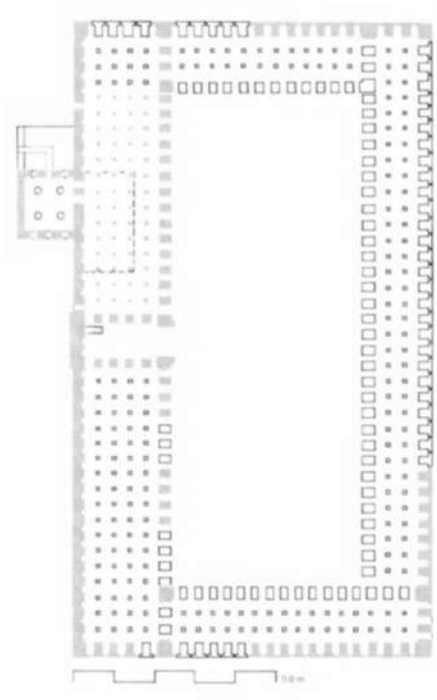
architect followed the basic scheme of the Begumpur Mosque in Delhi, accepted by most scholars as Muhammad Tughluq's Jami Mosque (*c.* 1350), with slight modifications. Both have a central *pistaq* flanked by lower multidomed wings. At the Begumpuri Mosque the central area is domed, while at the Adina Mosque, barrel vaulting, a technique used in Tughluq secular architecture, gains a new status. The Adina Mosque's barrel-vaulted central bay served as a prototype for other Bengali mosques, such as the Jami mosques of Rajmahal and Old Malda, both constructed in the late sixteenth century.

Barrel vaulting over the central bay allowed for an unimpeded view of the magnificent central mihrab area. This *qibla* wall is faced with dressed black basalt to three-quarters of its height; the remaining portion is brick. In the centre of this imposing wall is a large, exquisitely executed central mihrab, and a *mimbar* modelled on the earlier one at the Bari Mosque in Chota Pandua.

In contrast to the highly visible *qibla* wall of the mosque's central bay, a clear view of the *qibla* wall of the flanking wings is impossible, since four parallel rows of seventeen stone columns originally stood in each wing. The columns, surmounted by domes supported on brick pendentives, adhered to the technique already developed at the Bari Mosque in Chota Pandua. The mihrabs on the prayer chamber's side wings are made of recessed niches flanked by engaged colonettes of black basalt, above which are arch-shaped brick tympanums, each finely decorated with a different design of geometric and floral patterns.

In an area covering five bays abutting the *qibla* wall in the north wing are three superbly carved basalt mihrabs and two doors situated at the level of a *takht*. The exact purpose of this *takht*, a feature found in several large congregational mosques of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in India, is disputed. While some scholars argue that these platforms, originally screened for privacy, were for the ladies of the courts, it is more likely that they were intended for the sultan and his immediate entourage. The use of this secluded *takht* is probably derived from the same tradition as the *maqsura*, a screen around the mihrab and *mimbar* that in earlier times protected leaders of the Islamic community from enemy attack. In Bengal, raised *takhts* are a common feature of multi-aisled mosques throughout the sixteenth century.

In contrast to the elaborately ornamented *qibla* wall of the Adina Mosque's interior is the austere exterior façade. The east face of this complex, composed of brick, has no monumental entrance but consists of forty-one small trabeated entrances; above each is an arch-shaped window, a feature commonly seen in Tughluq architecture, for example the entrance to the *takht* at the Begumpuri Mosque. The north and south facades follow this



general arrangement but have moulded basalt plinths similar to those at the Tomb of Zafar Khan Ghazi in Tribeni. Fluted engaged turrets are at the four exterior corners. The west wall is the best preserved: the bottom half is stone-faced, and the top is brick embellished with brick relief work in niches.

Adina Mosque: entrance to *takht*

Fourteenth century

Bibliography: see Adina Mosque. For a photograph see p. 156 of Yolande Crowe's chapter, 'Reflections on the Adina Mosque at Pandua'.

Adjoining the north bay of the Adina Mosque's west exterior wall is a square structure with an L-shaped ramp on its north; on its east are two doors leading to the raised *takht* inside. These two doors, one of which is an ornately carved structure originally made for a Hindu temple, are the sole entrances to this *takht*. The square structure was originally divided into nine bays, supported on stone columns and roofed with nine small domes supported by brick pendentives. According to tradition, this chamber is believed to be the Tomb of Sikander Shah, the Adina Mosque's patron. While it is rare to find a tomb in India constructed to the immediate west of a *qibla* wall, there is precedent for doing so, such as Iltutmish's Tomb (*c.* A.D. 1325) in Delhi. However, since this particular structure serves as the sole entrance to the *takht*, it is difficult to imagine that it was originally built as a tomb. Moreover, its sloped L-shaped ramp resembles closely the royal entrances to fortresses, palaces and other secular structures, again suggesting that it was intended as an entrance and not a mausoleum. In addition, the spacing of the four interior columns leaves little room for the placement of a grave, an area usually covered with a single dome. Thus, we must assume that this structure served as a makeshift tomb after Sikander Shah was killed, but that it was not intended by the patron as his own mausoleum.

Bari Dargah

Fourteenth century on

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 97-106.

The Bari Dargah is built up around buildings erected in the memory of Shah Jalal (d. 1337), the major figure in the popularization of Islam in Bengal. The Jami Mosque was reputedly constructed shortly after Shah Jalal's death, and several inscriptions testify that additions to this *dargah* continued into the Mughal period. Owing to these and more recent renovations, it is difficult to ascertain the shrine's original appearance, although several pillars, door frames and *jali* windows, all ornately carved from black basalt, bear characteristics of fourteenth-century workmanship.

Choti Dargah

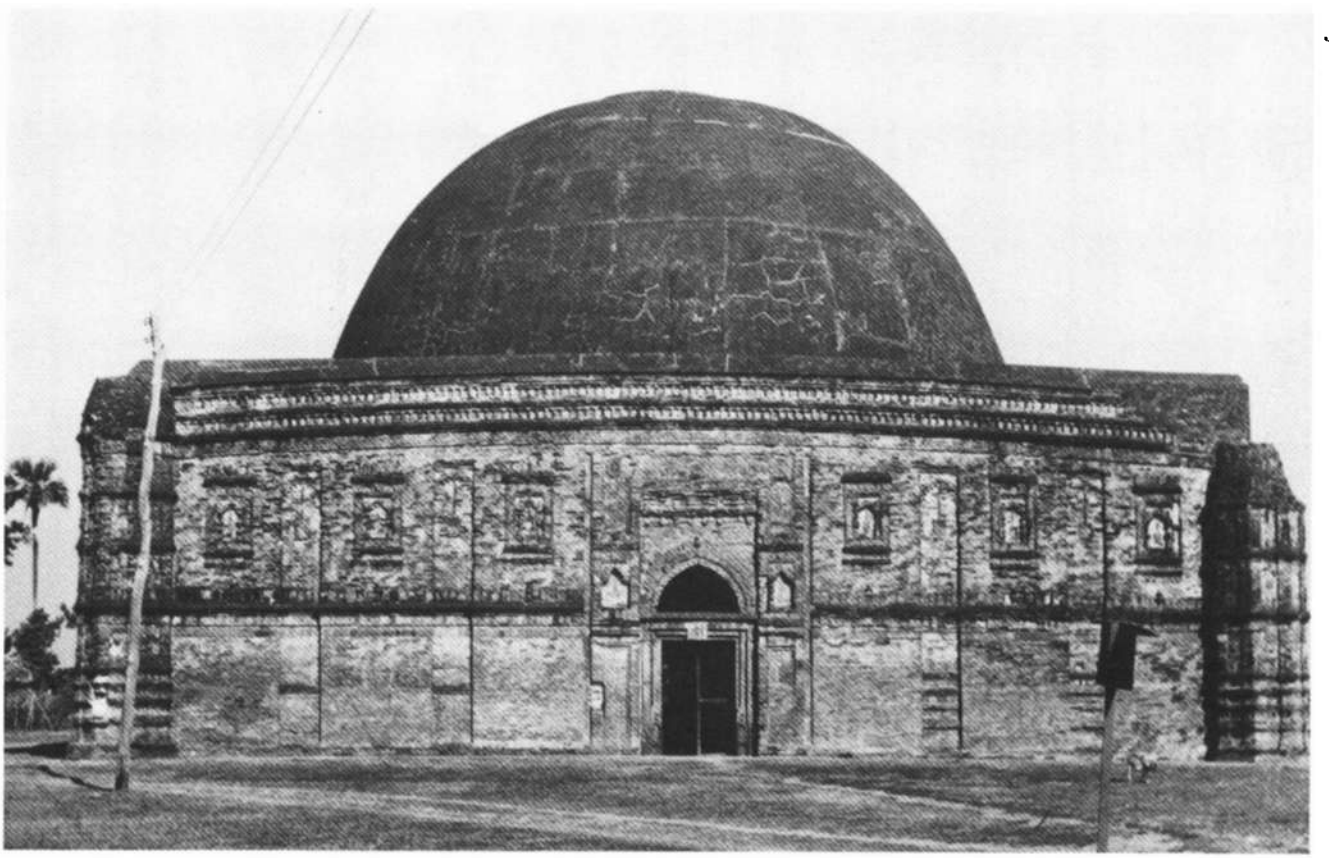
Early fifteenth century on

Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 107-20; Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 141, 145-7, 182, 233, 254-5, 305; Ravenshaw 1817, 48-52.

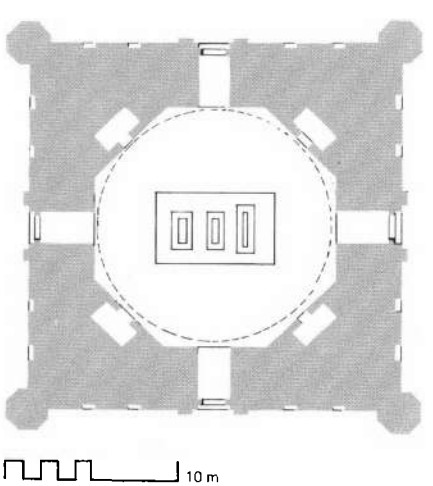
The nucleus of the picturesque Choti Dargah is the grave of Nur Qutb Alam (d. 1415), a saint who purportedly played a major role in the re-establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal after a brief period of Hindu leadership. As is common at celebrated *dargahs*, the tombs, mosque, tank, guesthouse and other structures of this complex date to a variety of periods. Inscriptional evidence testifies that the complex is the product of many patrons and renovations from the fifteenth century onward. Nur Qutb Alam's *chilla khana* (a chamber used for long periods of meditation), situated just to the west of the saint's grave, appears to have many sixteenth-century features, with its octagonal engaged turrets, curved cornice, cusped mihrabs and floor stones carved from black basalt, and may be the earliest building now in the complex.

Eklakhi Tomb

Early fifteenth century



Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 125-7; Cunningham XV, 88-90; Dani 1961, 76-83; Ravenshaw 1878, 58.

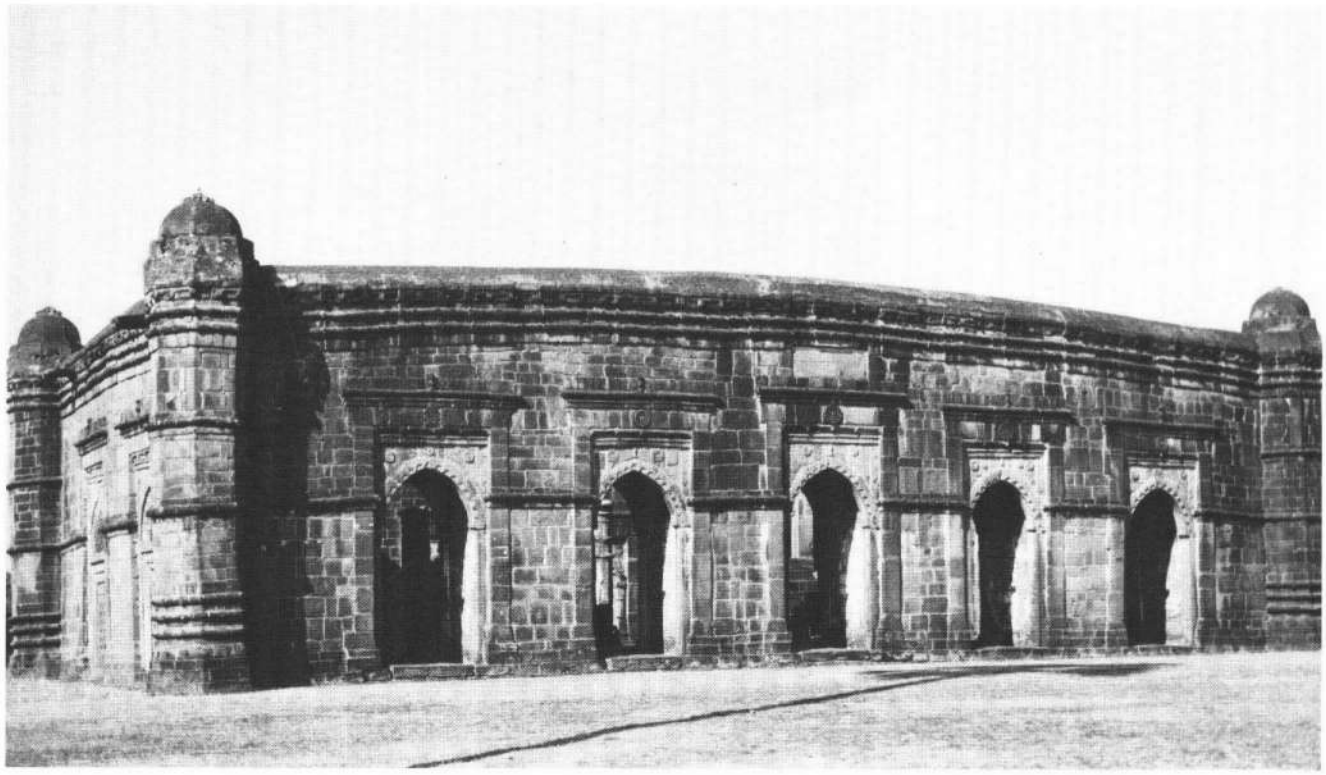


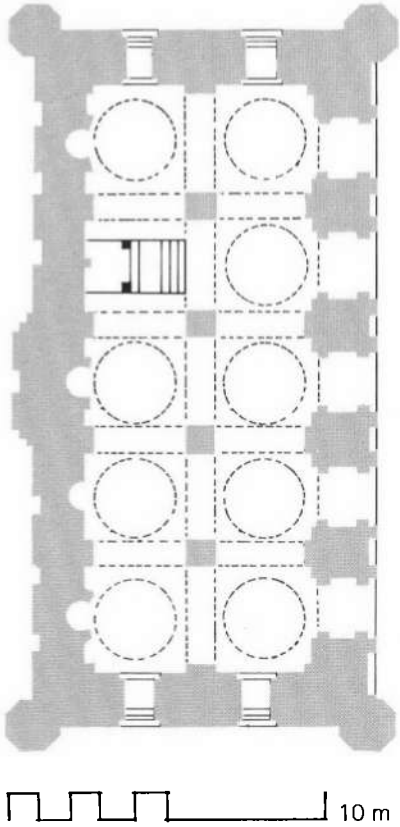
Tradition considers this square single-domed brick tomb is the mausoleum of Sultan Jalal al-Din (d. 1431), the converted son of the Bengali Hindu ruler Raja Ganesh. The proximity of this tomb to the Choti Dargah, the tomb of the revered saint Nur Quth Alam, Jalal al-Din's spiritual leader, makes this attribution convincing. The Eklakhi Tomb, one of the first extant square brick tombs in Bengal, and a model for subsequent structures of this type, evolves from the first square brick mausoleum in eastern India, the Tomb of Ibrahim Bayyu in Bihar Sharif (Nalanda District, Bihar) dated to 1353.

Instead of the unarticulated brick surfaces of Ibrahim Bayyu's Tomb, the Eklakhi Tomb's exterior walls are richly embellished with floral and geometric patterns. The gently sloped cornice of the roof—a feature generally believed to be derived from bamboo hut architecture—appears here in permanent material and becomes a trademark of Bengali architecture. The octagonal interior chamber is covered by a single ribbed dome supported on eight squinches, which rise above stone pillars embedded in the brick walls.

Qutb Shahi Mosque

Mosque: A.H. 990/A.D. 1583
Mimbar and gateway: A.H. 993/A.D. 1585





Bibliography: Abid Ali Khan 1931, 120-5; Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 266-8; Cunningham XV, 86-8; Dani 1961, 168-70; Ravenshaw 1878, 56.

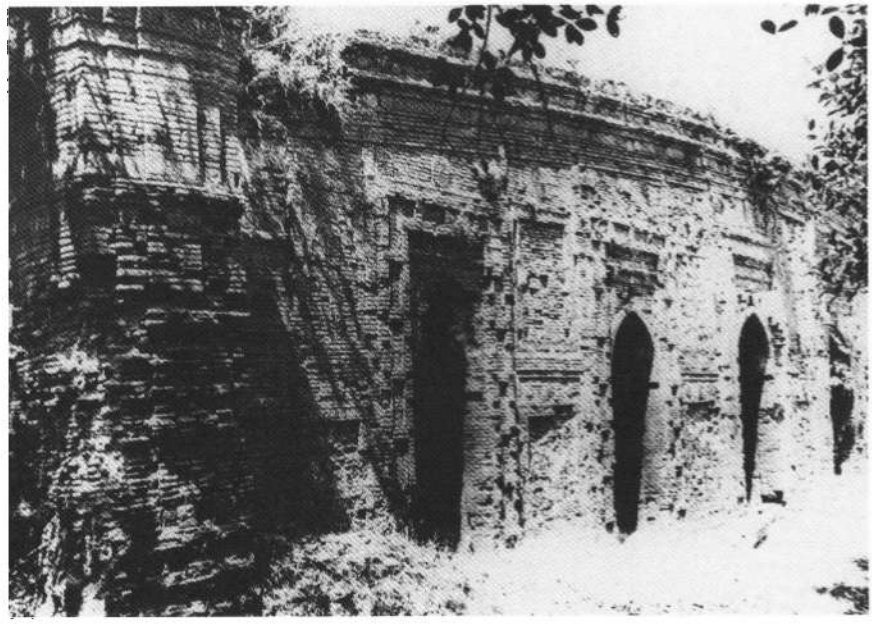
This mosque, constructed in 1582 by Makhdum Shaikh, a follower of Nur Qutb Alam, is situated just to the north of his famous *dargah*. The Qutb Shahi Mosque, named in honour of Nur Alam, is stone-faced. The carving of the mosque's façade is restrained and reminiscent of that on the Bara Sona Mosque. The five entrance arches of the east facade open directly on to a double-aisled prayer chamber. This is the last dated double-aisled small rectangular mosque until the nineteenth century. The *qibla* wall is embellished with five stone-carved mihrabs, and the *mimbar* is modelled on the one at the nearby Adina Mosque. Originally the mosque was covered with ten small domes resting on brick pendentives, but these no longer remain.

Pathrail *(Faridpur District, Bangladesh)*

Mosque of Majlis Aulia

Sixteenth century

Bibliography: Dani 1960, 158-9; Hasan 1980, 80.



Named for a celebrated local saint, Majlis Aulia Sahib, this rectangular mosque recalls the plan and ornamentation of the Bagha Jami Mosque (1523). Now in a ruined state, the mosque is entered on the east through five archways above which is a curved cornice. The double-aisled interior was originally covered by ten domes on brick pendentives corresponding to the number of interior bays.
[*Photo:* David McCutchion.]

Qasba (Bakerganj District, Bangladesh)

Mosque

Fifteenth to sixteenth centuries

Bibliography: Dani 1961, 148; Hasan 1980, 25; Saraswati 1941, 26.

The prayer chamber of this rectangular structure is divided by two parallel rows of stone pillars into three aisles of three bays each. Nine small domes cover the prayer chamber. In both its plan and the austerity of the brick ornamentation, the Qasba Mosque recalls the Masjidkur mosque of Khulna District. Both these buildings appear to date to the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, a period during which the multi-aisled prayer chamber was in vogue. [*Photo:* David McCutchion.]

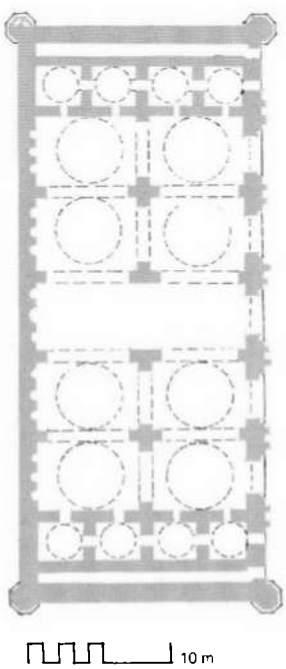
Rajmahal (Santal Parganas District, Bihar, India)

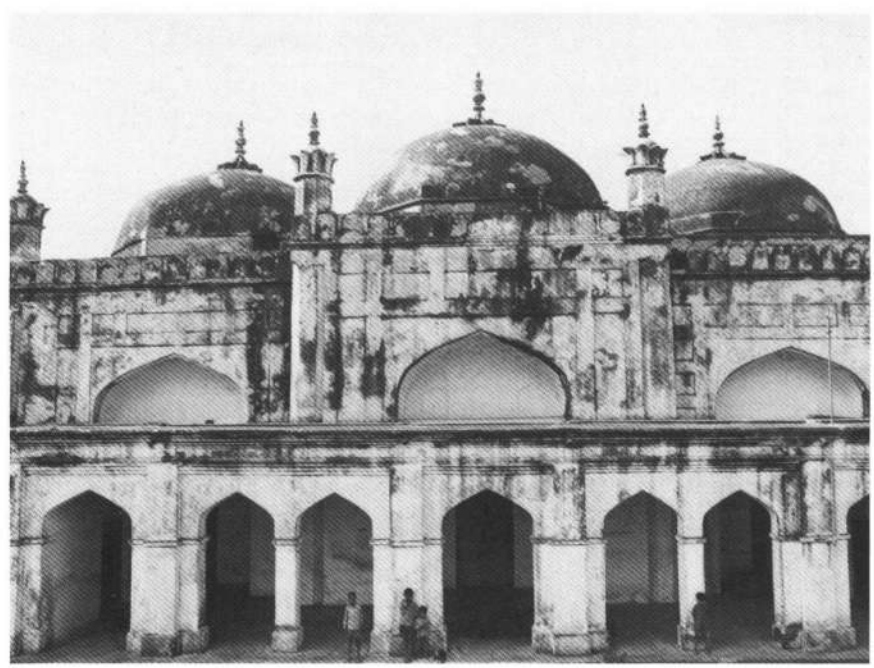
Rajmahal is situated on the western bank of the Ganges, the link between Bengal and north India, and just east of the Rajmahal Hills, a natural barrier to invaders. This city thus enjoyed great strategic importance. Although in modern Bihar, Rajmahal became the capital of Bengal between 1595 and 1606, when Raja Man Singh was the Mughal governor. Again it was the Bengal capital (1639-59) during much of the period when Shah Shuja served as governor under Shah Jahan. However, even after 1659, when the capital was shifted back to Dhaka, Rajmahal remained a major trade centre. Tavernier and Bernier, European travellers who visited the town in 1666, describe a thriving city; William Hedges's diary, written in the 1680s, frequently refers to Rajmahal as one of the only two mint towns in Bengal, the other being Dhaka. Today Rajmahal is a small town, but its innumerable monuments testify to its former importance. Many of these monuments, described by Buchanan-

Hamilton, who visited them in 1810, are either no longer extant or so ruined that they are beyond recognition. Conversely, many mosques still standing today are not discussed in these early reports. Thus the list included here is based largely on structures visited by the author, not on descriptions of early travellers.

Akbari Mosque or Asam Sais-ki Mosque

Mid-seventeenth century





Bibliography: Ahmad 1973, 149; Buchanan-Hamilton 1934, 84.

Although a fragmentary inscription dating to 1556 is in the mosque's compound, this three-domed rectangular structure appears to date to the seventeenth century. Its immediate proximity to the Sangi Dalan suggests that it may have formed part of the original palace complex. Although a modern verandah was added to the east façade and the mihrabs were pierced by windows when the mosque was used as a British dispensary, existing stylistic features suggest a mid-seventeenth-century date. The mihrabs' soffits, the intrados of the entrance arches, and the half-domes above the entrance arches, and the half-domes above the entrance arches all feature faceted stuccowork similar to that seen in the interior of the Sangi Dalan, as well as in the Lalbagh Fort Mosque at Dhaka, probably dated to 1649.

Bridge

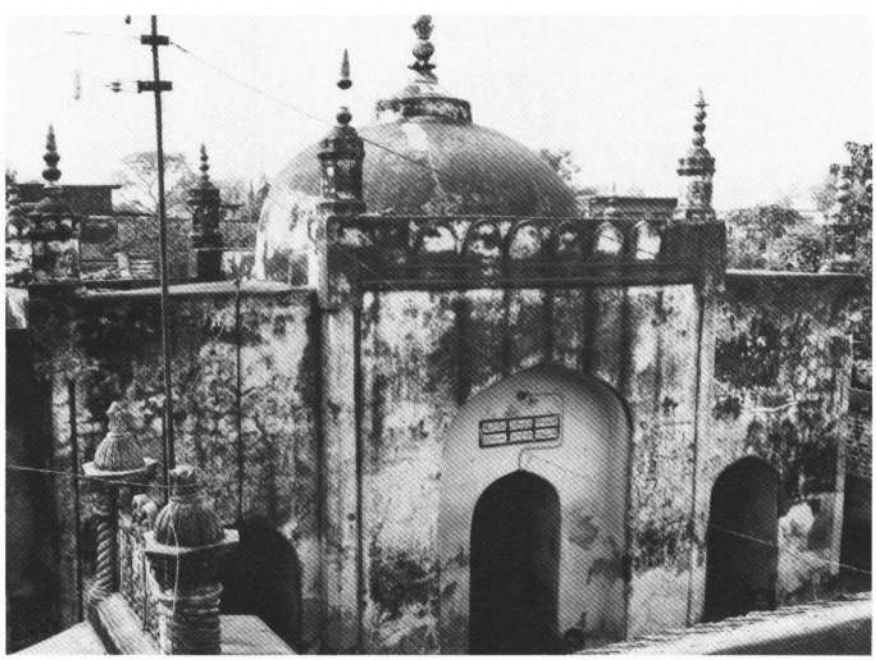
Sixteenth to seventeenth centuries

Bibliography: Dani 1961, 270; Kuraishi 1931, 219-20; Patil 1963, 480.

On the main Sahibganj-Rajmahal road, less than one kilometre to the northwest of the great Jami mosque, is a Mughal-period bridge still in use today. The bridge consists of five massive diamond-shaped piers supporting six arches and two circular bastions at either end. The bridge is constructed largely of brick, but the piers are stone faced to the springing of the arches. The Rajmahal Bridge, like many other contemporary examples—for example, the Athpula Bridge in Lodi Gardens, Delhi, sixteenth century—is curved, the centre marking its highest point, thus strengthening the structure against the water's force. Its proximity to the Akbar-period Jami mosque and *hammam* suggest that it was erected as an access to Raja Man Singh's city of Akbarnagar.

Choti Mosque

A.H. 1113/A.D. 1701-02



Bibliography: Ahmad 1973, 303-5; Blochmann 1875, 301.

Dated to 1701-02, this small mosque is a rectangular three-bayed structure surmounted by a single central dome. The east facade's central bay, larger in size than the flanking side bays, consists of a recessed central entrance arch over which is a projecting arched frame. On either side of this central portal are engaged columns with bulbous bases; engaged colonettes on the interior central mihrab have similar bulbous bases. This mosque lacks the typical Bengali feature of ribbed engaged corner turrets, making it unusual during this period in either Bengal or Bihar.

Hammam

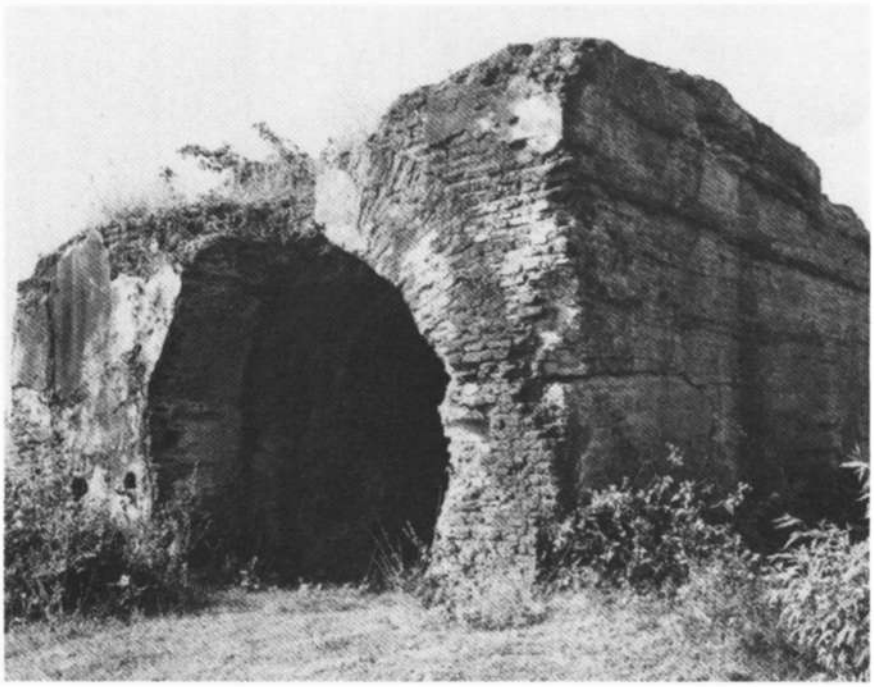
Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

Bibliography: Dani 1961, appendix, 5; Martin 1838, II, 68-9.

According to the early nineteenth-century sources, the Bengal capital founded by Raja Man Singh, named Akbarnagar, was situated in a locality called Hadaf. In this area, today known as Mangalhat, is the Akbar-period Jami mosque; and approximately half a kilometre due east, and located on a small hill, are the ruins of a brick structure composed of low interconnecting vaulted chambers. These remains, similar to the *hammams* at Fatehpur Sikri or the Mughal-period *hammam* in the Jaunpur Fort, suggest that this was a bath probably associated with Raja Man Singh's palace, no longer extant. The remaining stucco on the brick is completely smooth, like the stucco on the interior of the nearby Jami mosque, again suggesting that the *hammam* belongs to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, before the use of faceted stuccowork popular in the mid-seventeenth-century mosques of Rajmahal.

Hammam and Residence

Seventeenth century



Approximately three kilometres from the Sangi Dalan is a large *jheel*, or lake, on the banks of which are the remains of several brick structures. Although their purpose is not definite, they may well be Shah Shuja's pleasure retreat. One of these multistoreyed structures appears to have been a residence, while the other, a long, barrel-vaulted building, has similarities with *hammams* in other Islamic countries. In addition, traces of richly carved black basalt lying near the roadside are an indication of the architectural detail found on domestic structures. A careful study of these and other remains in the Rajmahal vicinity is of interest for the architecture and city planning of Bengal in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Bibliography: Martin 1838, II, 76; O'Malley 1910, 275; Patil 1963, 278.

Jami Mosque

Late sixteenth to seventeenth century

Although uninscribed, this enormous mosque, situated six kilometres west of modern Rajmahal town, was probably constructed by Raja Man Singh, Akbar's governor of Bengal, between 1595 and 1605 as the Jami mosque for the newly established Mughal capital of Bengal. During this period, Mughal authority in Bengal was challenged actively by renegade nobles, and it is possible that this imposing mosque, constructed in a combination of imperial Mughal and local Bengali styles, was intended as an official statement of the Mughal claim to Bengal. Certainly there is no precedent for such an extraordinarily large mosque constructed in any other provincial capital during this period. While this large rectangular mosque is today greatly ruined, a drawing by Buchanan-Hamilton done *c.* 1810 gives an

Bibliography: Banerji 1972, 4-5; Dani 1961, 259, 266-70; Desai 1972, 23; Kuraishi 1931, 217-9; Martin 1838, II, 69-70; O'Malley 1910, 276-7.

idea of its original appearance. The east facade consists of seven large entrances with four-pointed arches, the central one being a high, arched *pistaq* covering a barrel-vaulted central corridor. While recalling the original appearance of the Adina Mosque in Pandua or the Jami mosque in Old Malda, Buchanan-Hamilton's drawing indicates that the ornamentation upon the façade, now completely destroyed, closely resembled Akbar's Jami Mosque at Fatehpur Sikri, constructed *c.* 1570. In keeping with the Bengali tradition, engaged ribbed corner turrets marked the four corners. In addition, two similar engaged columns flanked the central entrance as at the Jami mosque in Old Malda. The entire structure was crowned with *kanjuras*, a feature long used on Islamic architecture in other areas of India, but here seen on the exterior of a monument for the first time in Bengal. The interior consists of a large central barrel-vaulted corridor flanked by two side wings. Each wing is divided into two aisles by massive brick piers; the resulting bays are covered by domes resting on brick pendentives, again in keeping with long-established Bengali tradition. Exceptions are the northernmost and southernmost bays; these are divided into two storeys, each containing four individual chambers. There is no precedent for this arrangement in Bengali mosque architecture; however, a similar arrangement is seen in the Jami mosque of Fatehpur Sikri.

Jumma Mosque
Seventeenth century

Bibliography: none.

Locally called the Jumma Mosque, this uninscribed mosque is the best preserved in Rajmahal today. A rectangular three-domed structure, this mosque belongs to the single-aisled type popular throughout the seventeenth century. Engaged ribbed turrets mark the corners; engaged columns flank the central entrance portal of the east façade, a feature also seen at Raja Man Singh's Jami Mosque at Rajmahal as well as at the mosque of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz in Dhaka, dated in 1679. The three entrance arches are of the four-pointed type seen at Man Singh's Rajmahal Jami Mosque. These entrance arches are neither surmounted by a half-dome with faceted stuccowork, nor are they recessed arches under a large projecting *iwan*, thus suggesting that the mosque may be one of the earliest extant seventeenth-century mosques in Rajmahal, possibly pre-dating the period when Shah Shuja made this city Bengal's capital once again. The niches on each bay of the east façade recall typical ornamentation seen on seventeenth-century mosques in Dhaka. A magnificently carved slab of black basalt is placed at the threshold of the central bay. When such pillars or stones are found in Islamic monuments, they are usually considered to be borrowed from Hindu structures. This, however, is not so, for similar carved pieces found in Islamic buildings from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century in eastern India imitate in stone the type of terracotta relief work seen in Bengali mosques of the pre-Mughal period, for example, the Tantipara Mosque in Gaur. Such carved pieces may be seen on the Jami mosque at Old Malda, Mirza Masum's Mosque in Patna (1614–16), and the Safid Mosque in Murshidabad (eighteenth century). The Jumma Mosque's interior is austere. The central mihrab is a simple tripartite recessed niche above which is a row of *kanjuras*; a small recessed *mimbar* is on the left.

Mahagun Toli Mosque

Seventeenth century

Bibliography: none

Together with the Raushan Mosque and the Mosque of Mahalla J. K. Mines as well as many other structures too ruined to identify, this mosque is situated along the road that leads from the Palace of Shah Shuja to Sakrigulli, one of the few passes through the Rajmahal Hills to modern Bengal. This major road lined with mosques and other buildings is reminiscent of Patna, the capital of neighbouring Bihar, a city whose construction was well under way before the founding of Shah Shuja's Rajmahal. While this abandoned three-domed rectangular mosque is greatly overgrown with vegetation, the appearance of faceted stucco in the mihrab suggests a mid- to late-seventeenth-century date.

Mania Bibi's Tomb

Late eighteenth century

Bibliography: Kuraishi 1931, 215-6; Patil 1963, 479-80.

Local tradition asserts that Mania Bibi, probably a concubine of Nawab Mir Jaffar of Murshidabad (d. 1779), is interred inside. This is a single-domed square tomb with slender, engaged, ribbed corner turrets and is entered on the south, north and east sides by three archways of equal size. The tomb was once brightly painted but is now devoid of all its stucco veneer. A sizeable square tank is situated immediately to the south of the tomb.

Mosque of Mahalla J. K. Mines

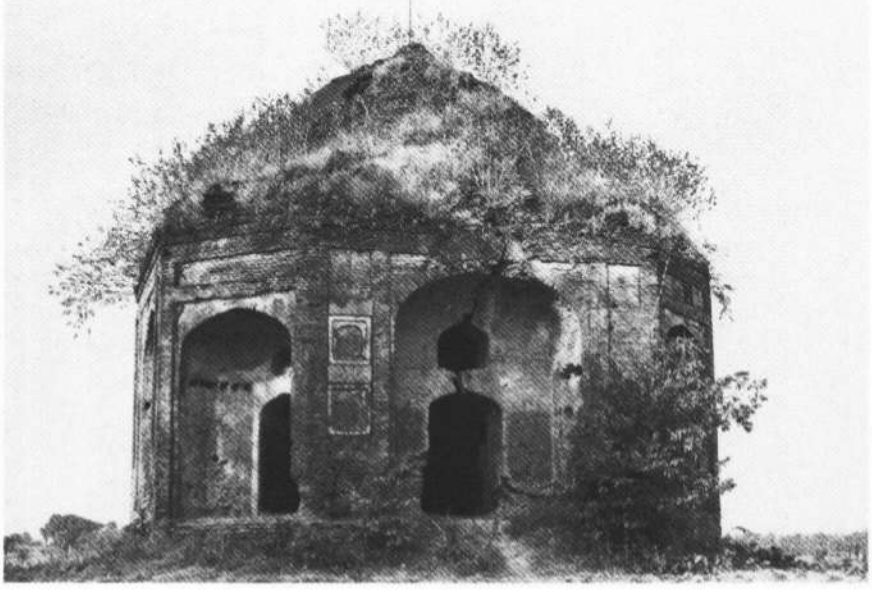
Eighteenth century

Nearly overgrown by trees, this mosque has lost even a local name and thus is designated by its modern locality. In accordance with most other mosques in Rajmahal, this rectangular structure has three entrance arches and is surmounted by three domes, thus adhering to a mosque type found throughout the subcontinent after the sixteenth century. Traces of a separate entrance portico to the mosque's east still remain. The bulbous base of the mihrabs' engaged colonettes and columns flanking the central entrance bay recall those of the Choti Mosque in Rajmahal (1701-02) and the Chowk Mosque in Murshidabad (1767). In addition, the stucco veneer shows no traces of faceting, thus suggesting that the mosque belongs to the eighteenth century, when this decorative device appears to have gone out of fashion in Bengal: for example, faceted stuccowork appears on no monuments from eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Murshidabad. During this period the Nawabs of Murshidabad ruled over Rajmahal, and probably this mosque is contemporary with their rule.

Bibliography: O'Malley 1910, 276; Patil 1963, 481.

Octagonal Tomb

Seventeenth century



This eight-sided tomb at Begumpur in Rajmahal may be related to the only octagonal tomb in Bengal previously published, the one in Nauda (Rajshahi District, Bangladesh), ascribed to the seventeenth century. The exterior ornamentation of the Rajmahal tomb appears less complex than that of the Nauda tomb; however, this may be a matter of local style or a particular patron's taste rather than an indication of an earlier date. Local people recall no traditions regarding the patron or the interred person.

Bibliography: none.

Pathargarh or Jagat Seth's Mint

Eighteenth century

Local tradition considers this dwelling the mint of the renowned banker of Murshidabad, Jagat Seth. However, it is unlikely that a mint would stand unprotected on the side of the main road. As O'Malley has suggested, it was more likely the dwelling of a wealthy individual. Now ruined, this structure has a stone base and brick superstructure. Rectangular in shape, this building had a central corridor with a double-storeyed room on either side. The main entrance appears to have been on the north; the interior walls of the upper storey were relieved by small plastered niches, recalling the depictions of interiors in contemporary paintings.

Bibliography: Patil 1963, 481; O'Malley 1910, 276.

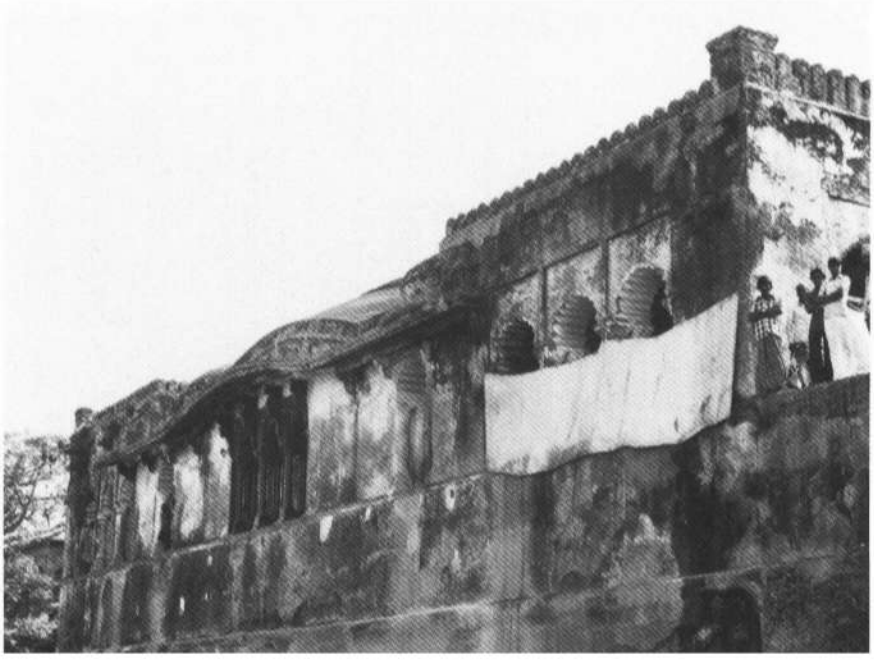
Raushan Mosque

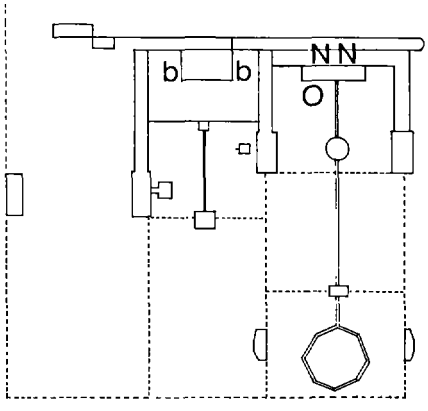
Seventeenth century

Like most mosques in Rajmahal, the Raushan Mosque bears no inscription. In plan and ornamentation it closely resembles the so-called Akbari Mosque near the Sangi Dalan and the Sirsi Mosque. The stucco ornamentation resembling a net-like pattern covering the interior pendentives is still intact, thus recalling similar work on the Mosque of Raja Bahroze (dated 1656-7) in nearby Kharagpur (Monghyr District, Bihar). Raja Bahroze had intimate dealings with Shah Shuja, and thus similarities in the architectural styles of their two cities does not seem surprising. A date of the mid-seventeenth century, during the period that Rajmahal served as Shah Shuja's capital of Bengal, appears most likely.

Bibliography: O'Malley 1910, 276; Patil 1963, 248.

Sangi Dalan
1739-59

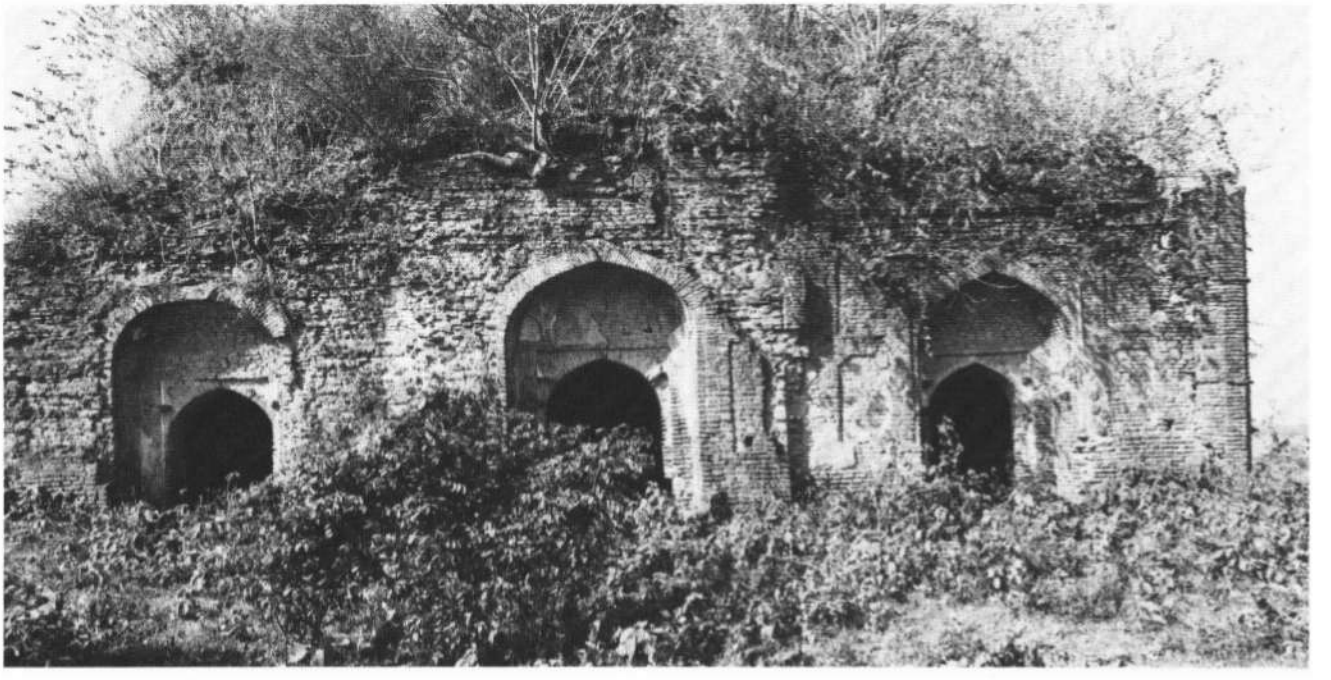




Bibliography: Dani 1961, 259-66; Desai 1972, 33-4; Kuraishi 1931, 216-7; Martin 1838, II, 70-6; Patil 1963, 274-7.

Buchanan-Hamilton, visiting Rajmahal in 1810-1, described in detail the remains of Shah Shuja's palace at Rajmahal; in addition, he included a ground plan of what remained in his time. Of the buildings included on his plan, today the Sangi Dalan (marked 'O' on plan) is essentially all that remains, although the modern police headquarters and an office appear to be constructed on the foundations of structures marked 'b-b' and 'N-N'. Overlooking the Ganges, this rectangular structure is divided internally into three chambers. The central chamber has a large cusped opening supported on highly polished black basalt pillars and is surmounted by a curved vault. The flanking chambers have similar arches in plaster. Structures with similar curved vaults are seen on contemporary palaces throughout the Mughal empire. Most notable among these are Shah Jahan's Khas Mahal at the Agra Fort and the hunting lodge built by Shah Jahan at Bari (Bharatpur District, Rajasthan). In eastern India, the Diwan-i Khas of the Lalbagh Fort is influenced by this design. The original purpose of the Sangi Dalan is unknown; traditionally it is said to be part of the Haram, but this would seem unlikely as the arches overlooking the river are open, not screened.

Sirsi Mosque
Seventeenth century



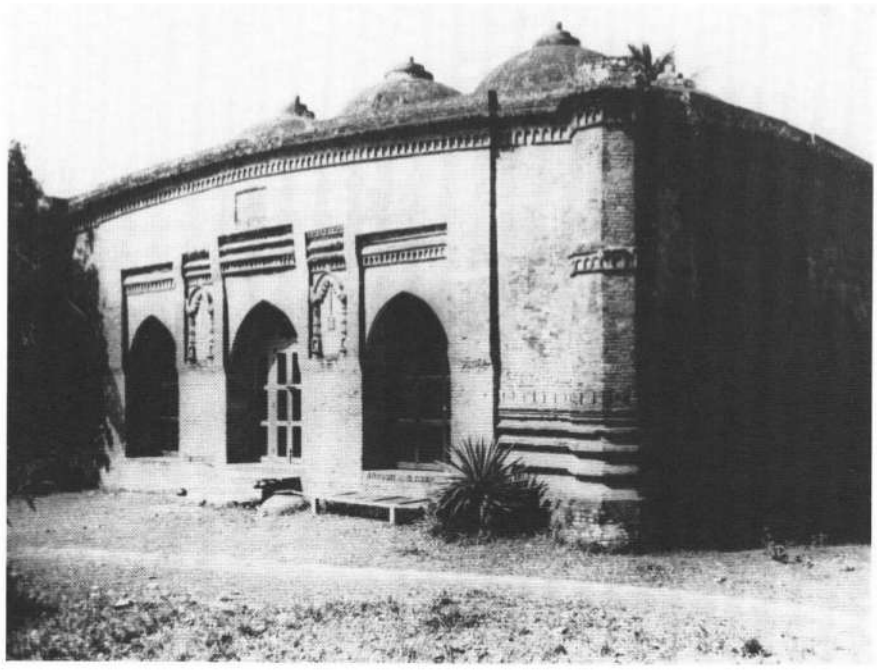
Bibliography: none.

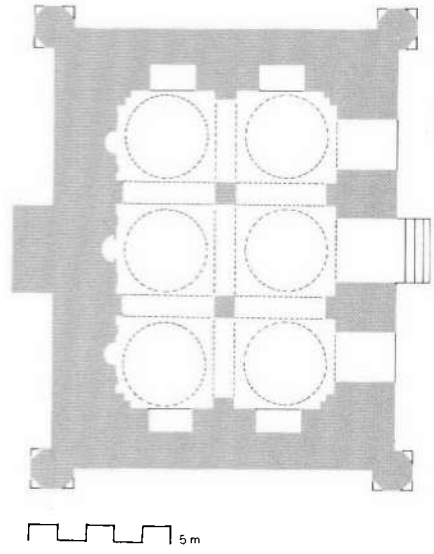
This rectangular three-bayed mosque, known locally as the Sirsi Mosque and situated in the Begumpur area of Rajmahal, originally appears to have been a structure of significance. On the east, the mosque is enclosed by a low wall entered by a tall gate. The three entrance arches have deeply recessed arched niches above the actual portal, thus recalling the nearby Choti Mosque dated to 1701-02. But what traces of stucco veneer remain on the mihrabs and entrances recall the faceted stuccowork on the Sangi Dalan's interior and the nearby so-called Akbari Mosque, both datable to the mid-seventeenth century. It thus would seem likely that this mosque was constructed at about the time that Shah Shuja made Rajmahal the capital of Bengal.

***Rampal** (Dhaka District, Bangladesh)*

Mosque of Baba Adam Shahid

A.H. 888/A.D. 1483





Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 118-20; Aulad Hasan 1904, 67-9; Dani 1961, 154-6; Hasan 1979, 128, 134; Hasan 1980, 72-3.

This six-bayed rectangular mosque at Rampal, near Dhaka, was constructed as a Jami mosque by Malik Kafur, a noble in the court of Fath Shah. Adjacent to the shrine of a famous saint, Baba Adam Shahid, it is the earliest of at least two extant six-bayed mosques identified in their inscriptions as Jami mosques; the second is the mosque at Satgaon (1529). The brickwork on Baba Adam's Mosque is of a different nature than contemporary brick structures at the capital, Gaur. The only ornamentation on the Rampal Mosque's exterior consists of mouldings, string coursings and two shallow niches. The three interior mihrabs have cusped arches supported on faceted pillars, but they bear none of the floral arabesques typical of the late fifteenth century.

[*Photo*: David McCutchion.]

Satgaon (Hooghly District, West Bengal, India)

Mosque of Jamal Din

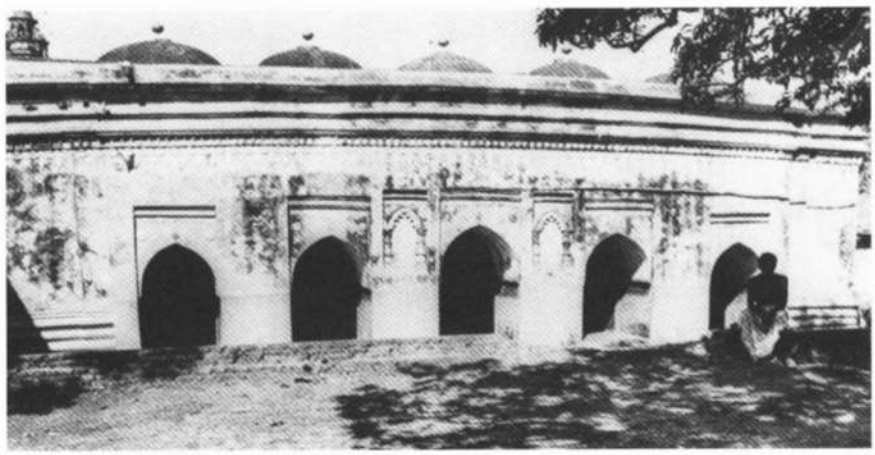
A.H. 936/A.D. 1529

Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 224-26; Crawford 1901, 21.

This mosque, built in the reign of Nusrat Shah by Jamal Din, son of Fakr al-Din, a well known saint from the Caspian, is a small rectangular brick structure. Yet the inscription of the facade describes this as a Jami mosque, thus suggesting that in Bengal, as elsewhere in India, the term 'Jami' had lost its original significance. Now only the the *qibla* wall and parts of the other three walls are standing. The mosque's interior was divided into two aisles by a single row of basalt piers. Six brick domes surmounted the mosque. Three mihrabs embellish the *qibla* wall; the north one is much smaller than the other two and is located at ground level. Usually Jami mosques in Bengal have a small elevated mihrab at the north end serving the *takht* located here. The ground-level location of this mihrab, then, must be due to an error of restoration.

Shahzadpur (Pabna District, Bangladesh)

Mosque
Fifteenth century



While not inscribed, this mosque, with a high canopied *mimbar* adjacent to the central mihrab, was probably constructed as a Jami mosque. The rectangular prayer chamber is divided by basalt pillars into three aisles of five bays each. The interior is covered by fifteen small domes supported on pendentives. The ornamentation on the east façade resembles the decor of Baba Adam's Mosque in Rampal, dated to 1483, suggesting that the Shahzadpur mosque is a contemporary structure. [*Photo*: David McCutchion.]

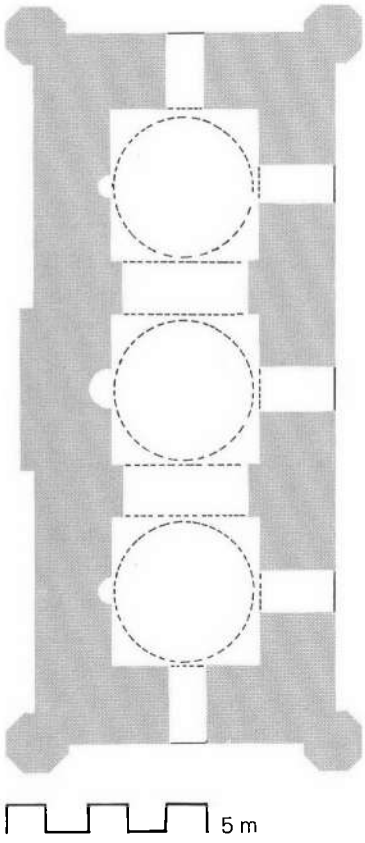
Bibliography: Dani 1960, 160-1; Hasan 1979, 144; Hasan 1980, 105-6; Wali 1904, 2.

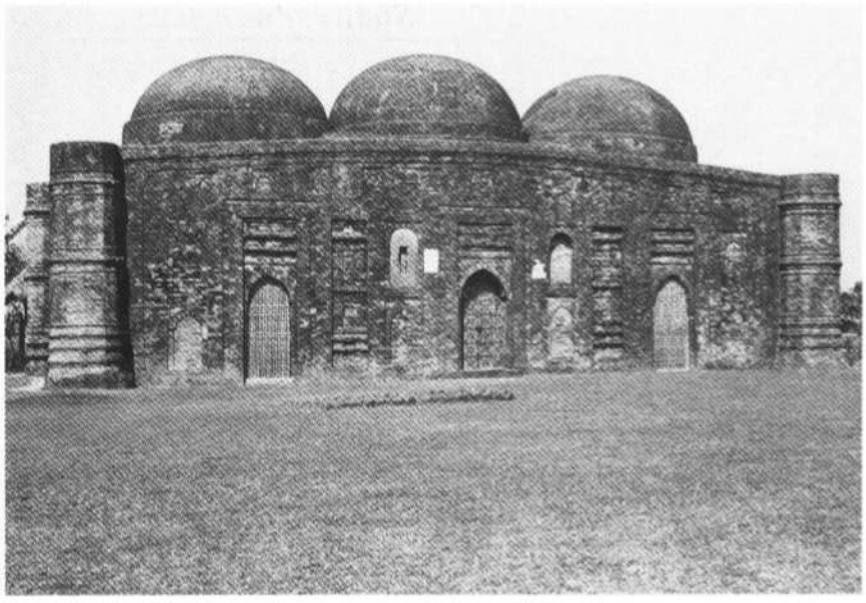
Sherpur (Bogra District, Bangladesh)

Kherua Mosque
A.H. 989/A.D. 1582

The Kherua Mosque was constructed in 1582 by Murad Khan, son of Jauhar Ali Khan Qaqshal Khan. Their clan joined others, forming a force of renegade Mughal *amirs*. They used Sherpur as a headquarters after declaring themselves independent of the Mughal emperor Akbar. The patron's Mughal ties, although politically severed, are revealed in the plan of the Kherua mosque, a type popular in the Delhi region since the fifteenth century. It is probably the earliest mosque of this type in Bengal. A single-aisled rectangular structure, this mosque is divided into three interior square bays by arches springing from the east and west interior walls; brick pendentives support the three domes. This mosque plan, whether three-bayed or five-bayed, becomes typical of mosque architecture in Bengal during Mughal rule and later. In addition, the language of the inscriptions, which were generally written in Arabic under the independent sultans of Bengal, is now Persian, a reflection of the increasing influence that north-Indian culture had upon Bengal

Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 161-6; Dani 1961, 276-9; Hasan 1980, 30-1; Horn 1894, 288-9.





in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. The mosque's exterior, however, is constructed in brick with simple ornamentation recalling Baba Adam's Mosque in Rampal. The engaged corner turrets and curved cornice recall indigenous Bengali mosque structures of the pre-Mughal period.

Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 276–7; Dani 1961, 178–9; Hasan 1980, 31; Horn 1894, 290–1.

Khondokar Tola Mosque (also called Badshahi or Husaini Mosque)

A.H. 1042/A.D. 1632

Dated to 1632, when Muazzam Khan was Shah Jahan's governor of Bengal, this mosque is one of the earliest constructed in Bengal after Akbar's reign. The patron, otherwise unknown, is identified as Sadr Jahan Mian Juan. Although ruined, this brick mosque is essentially a larger version of the Kherua Mosque, also in Sherpur but constructed fifty years earlier. One difference, however, is the exterior central bay, here given greater prominence by large engaged ribbed columns on either side of the central entrance. This feature possibly derives from the Jami mosque in Old Malda, dated 1595.

Shah Turkan's Mazar

Fourteenth century on

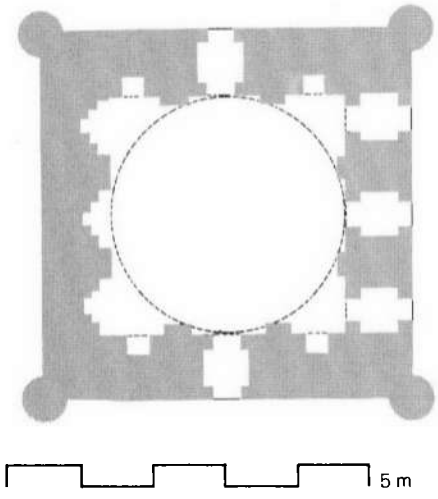
Killed in a battle with a Hindu king, Shah Turkan, a saint of considerable repute, was buried in two graves. His severed head rests in this shrine, while the tomb containing his body, also at Sherpur, is now in ruins. This single-domed square shrine, sitting high on a plinth, is a conglomerate product of many renovations. Its antiquity can be seen best in the south façade, which has stone pillars of different designs suggesting that they were reused, probably from a Hindu edifice. Originally, the shrine had a curved cornice, now straightened by an additional layer of plaster. Engaged corner turrets and string coursing are other pre-Mughal features. The stucco reliefs above the south entrance are Mughal in character, possibly added during the last period of Sherpur's importance.

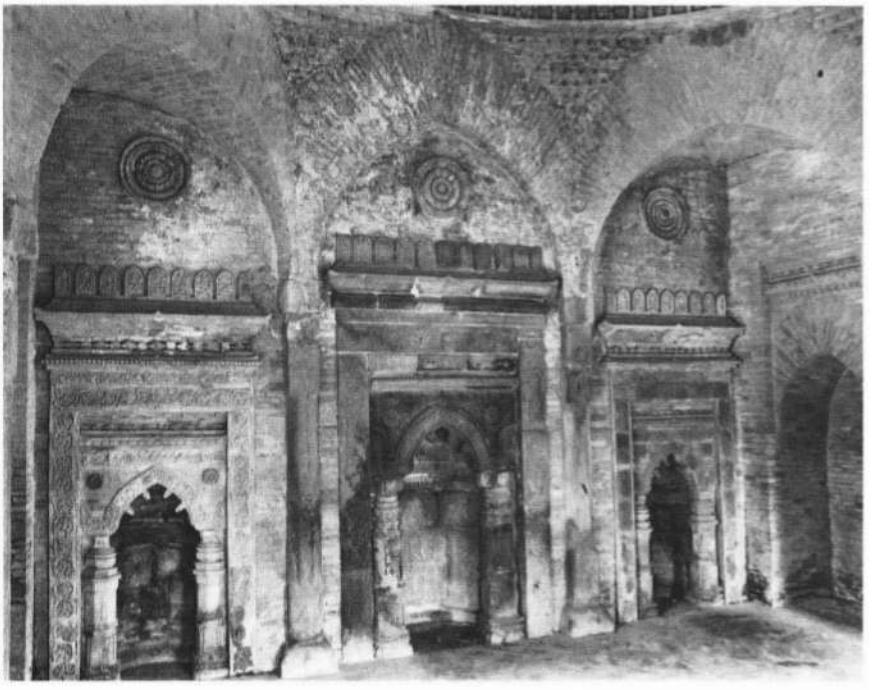
Bibliography: Hasan 1980, 29; *List* 1896, 186-7.

Sonargaon (Dhaka District, Bangladesh)

Goaldi Mosque

A.H. 925/A.D. 1519



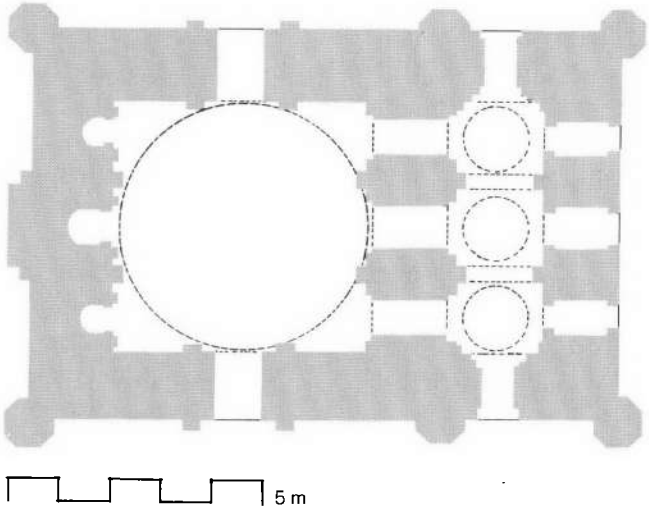


Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 198-9; Aulad Hassan 1904, 50-1; Cunningham XV, 143; Dani 1960, 61; Dani 1961, 237; Hasan 1979, 112; Hasan 1980, 72; Taifoor 1956, 42.

Constructed in 1519 during the reign of Husain Shah by the Mulla Hizabr Akbar Khan, the Goaldi Mosque is a simple, square single-domed structure. Recently restored, this mosque is entered on the east by three arched entrances and on the north and south sides by a single arched entrance. As in most square Bengali mosques, engaged ribbed turrets are located at each exterior corner, and the cornice is gently sloped. Brick embellished with delicate relief work is the principal material of construction, but the three mihrabs are carved from black basalt, a practice common to many monuments dating to the sixteenth century.

Sura (Dinajpur District, Bangladesh)

Mosque
Sixteenth century



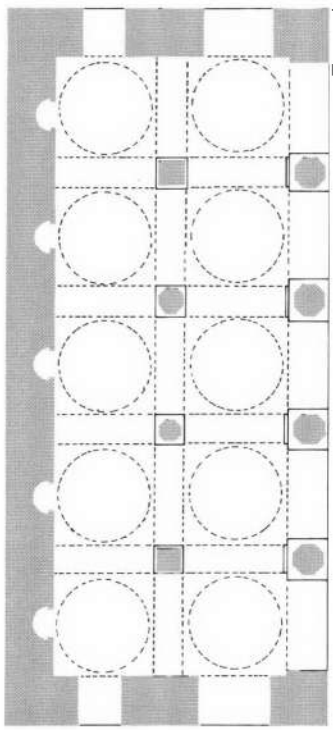
Bibliography: Dani 1961, 161-2; Hasan 1979, 113; Hasan 1980, 75.

The Mosque at Sura has a single-domed square prayer chamber flanked on the east by a verandah surmounted by three domes. This is a type particularly popular in north Bengal during the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. The delicate brick relief work of the north and south exterior walls recalls similar work on the Jami mosque at Bagha (1523), while the stone facing on the six engaged turrets and the carved basalt mihrabs relate well to carving on the Kusumba Mosque (1558). Although uninscribed, the Sura Mosque is probably datable to the sixteenth century in light of its close links with dated monuments of that time. [*Photo*: David McCutchion.]

Tribeni (Hooghly District, West Bengal, India)

Mosque of Zafar Khan Ghazi

A.H. 696/A.D. 1298 on



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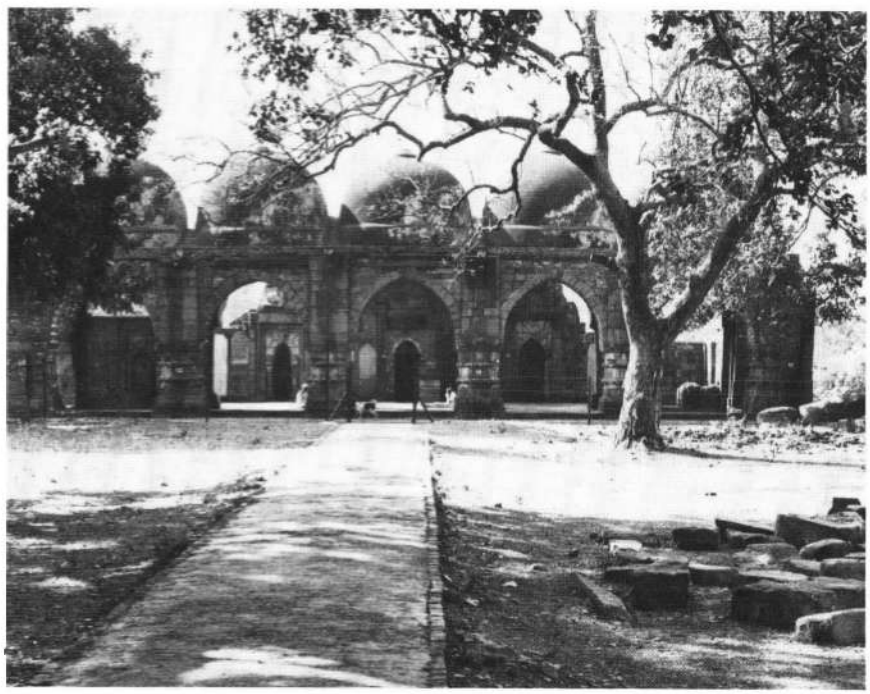


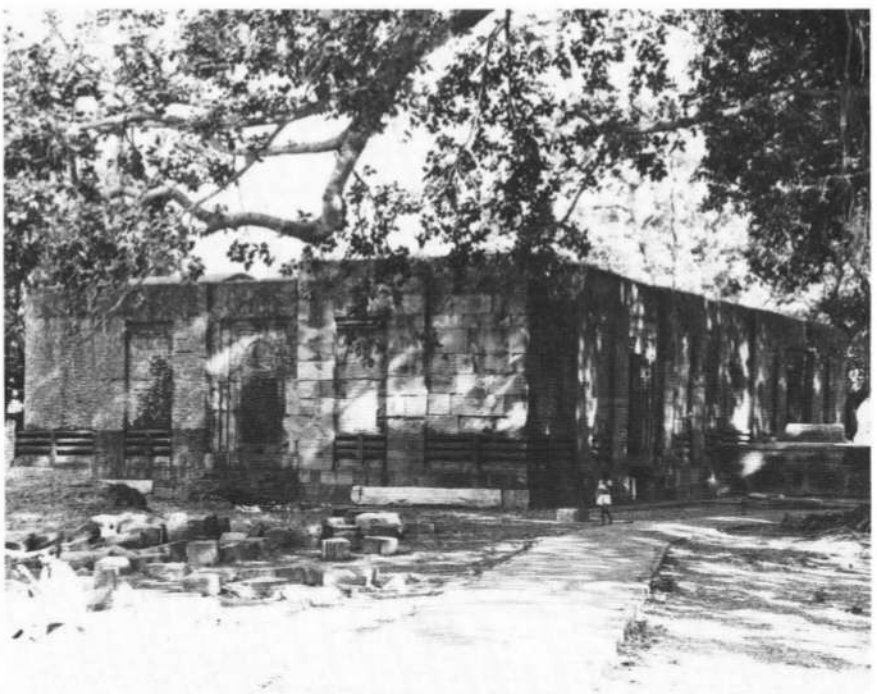
Bibliography: Brown 1968, 36; Chakravarti 1910, 23-4; Crawford 1909, 21-6; Dani 1957, 6, 54, 55, 62, 63; Dani 1961, 40-3; Hasan 1979, 127-31.

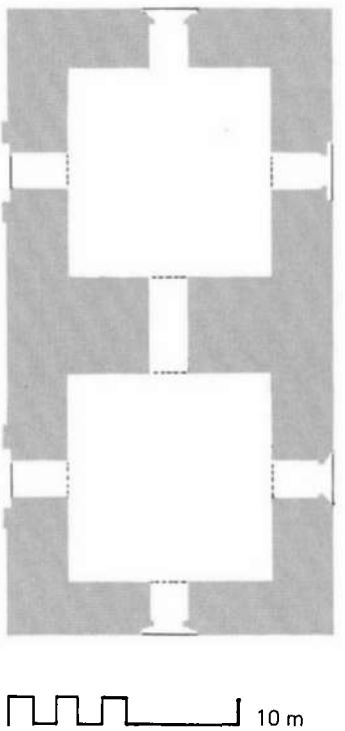
The Mosque of Zafar Khan Ghazi, a thirteenth-century military agent for the Sultans of Delhi, is traditionally dated to 1298 on the basis of an Arabic inscription over the central mihrab. However, several other inscriptions dating through the early sixteenth century and clearly not intended for this mosque are embedded in the *qibla* wall. Together with some later architectural features, these inscriptions suggest that parts of this mosque have been remodelled, though the simple rectangular plan has probably undergone little alteration. The east facade has five large basalt-faced arched entrances. The interior is divided into two aisles by massive piers modelled upon those found in pre-Islamic Bengali architecture. It was originally roofed by ten high domes resting on brick pendentives, but most of these have fallen. The three extant mihrabs appear to be original and are embellished with cusped arches, floral motifs, and in the case of the central mihrab, a rectangular frame with mouldings derived from temples.

The inscription dated to 1298 on the central mihrab, and thus certainly referring to this structure, curiously describes the building as a *madrasa* not a mosque. One other monument at Tribeni constructed under the patronage of Zafar Khan is also inscribed as a *madrasa*, yet it functions as a tomb (see Tomb of Zafar Khan). This suggests that during the early phase of Muslim rule in Bengal—an initial and vital period of conversion—all religious structures were valued primarily for their role in the proselytization of Islam.

Tomb of Zafar Khan Ghazi

A.H. 713/A.D. 1315





Bibliography: Ahmed, S. D. 1960, 28-9; Crawford 1909, 21-6; Cunningham VIII, Pl. VIII; Dani 1957, 6; Dani 1961, 43-4.

Local tradition holds that this is the tomb of Zafar Khan Ghazi, a military adventurer who played a leading role in the annexation of Bengal by the early Muslim Sultans of Delhi. Zafar Khan was active in the Islamization of south Bengal and there built several *madrasas*, schools for teaching Islam. This building may be the structure identified as a *madrasa* in the 1313 inscription carved on two basalt slabs and cemented into the sarcophagus of the tomb's interior. It functions, however, as a tomb and is the earliest extant mausoleum in eastern India. Using a *madrasa* as a tomb was a practice well known in the eastern Islamic lands of Zafar Khan's home. Some scholars have suggested that this double-chambered tomb is built on a temple plinth, the two rooms reflecting the *mandapa* and the *garbha-griha*. Although the double-room plan of Zafar Khan's tomb is unique outside of the Deccan, it is difficult to trace its origins with certainty. All the doorways are reused from an earlier temple, and sculpted panels, all bearing Vaishnava subject-matter, are embedded randomly on to the exterior base. Above rises a triple tier of finely carved mouldings, and the walls are in most places faced with large slabs of basalt. The superstructure no longer remains.

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Classification of mosques according to ground plan

Syed Mahmudul Hasan

Bengal came within the orbit of the Islamic dispensation in the thirteenth century, and from that time the region was studded with innumerable and highly ornate mosques. Successive generations of Muslim rule in Bengal gave the Muslims a political hold and also a base for the propagation of traditional and highly sophisticated forms of Islamic art and culture. The waves of conquests brought in their train a magnificent wealth of artistic heritage and influence from Arabia, Persia and Central Asia, which, in the process of transformation and transmutation, came to be merged with age-old local elements. The Islamic architecture of Bengal is not only magnificent and aesthetically satisfying; it also forms one of the most distinctive schools of Islamic architecture as a whole. The characteristic and creative phase of this architecture is most obviously represented by the skilfully planned, harmoniously balanced and elegantly decorated mosques.

Judged from their ground plans, mosques constructed in Bengal from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries can be divided basically into two types: the courtyard type and the enclosed type. Of the first (courtyard) type, the most interesting and ambitious example is the Adina Mosque at Hazrat Pandua.[1] The second (enclosed) type can be divided into two styles, square and rectangular.

Built by Sultan Sikander Shah in the year 1374–75, the Adina Mosque at Hazrat Pandua (once the capital of Bengal during the Ilyas Shahi dynasty in the fourteenth century) is one of the most ambitious architectural projects ever conceived and executed in the Indian subcontinent. This magnificent building is itself an experiment as it demonstrates

1. The present author uses the name 'Hazrat Pandua' in order to distinguish the city from another Chota Pandua in Hooghly District and also as a mark of reverence to the great saints of the former.

hitherto unknown architectural features such as the courtyard and the use of the barrel vault. Though the traditional rectangular layout of the mosque conforms to the time-honoured form of the Great Mosque at Damascus, curiously enough this rectangular type of courtyard plan was never repeated anywhere else in Bengal. Marshall gives the following description of the mosque:

> imagine an immense open quadrangle, more than twice as long as it was broad, bounded on its four sides by arched screens, every archway (and there were eighty-eight in all visible from the court) identical with its fellows and everyone surmounted by an identical dome, with nothing to relieve the monotony of the whole save a single archway which, rising higher and wider than the rest, fronted the vaulted *iwan* in the middle of the western side.[2]

2. Marshall, J. 'The Monuments of Muslim India', in the *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, Cambridge University Press, 1928.

The Adina Mosque is divided into two parts: the *iwan* or prayer hall, and the *sahn* or courtyard. The courtyard is surrounded on all sides by a thick wall of brick divided by arched openings forming the *riwaqs* or cloisters. The *iwan* consists of two wings, supported on pillars and divided by a rectangular vaulted nave in the centre of the western wall. The peculiar ground plan of the Adina Mosque also shows the impressive vaulted nave with a massive *iwan* arch forming a beautiful facade. Both the *iwan* arch and the vault, which trace their origin to Persian Islamic architecture, collapsed a long time ago. The arch screen in front of the nave also recalls Persian vaulted architecture. Experimental in conception as well as in execution, the imposing pointed barrel vault is unique in Bengali Islamic architecture, and was never repeated except in two monuments—the Gunmant Mosque at Gaur (1484) and the Mughal mosque at Old Malda (1596). The ground plan of the Adina Mosque shows that its northern wing contains massive pillars supporting the *zenana* gallery. This gallery was entered through the *zenana* enclosure, which was an adjacent square building outside the mosque immediately to the west.

One of the most striking features in the ground plan of the Adina Mosque is an opening in the *qibla* wall, which recalls similar elements in the Mosque of Ali Shah at Tabriz (fourteenth century). This interesting feature is observable in the Saithgumbad Mosque at Bagerhat (*c.* 1450). The most unimpressive aspect of the ground plan of the Adina Mosque is the lack of the monumental entrance gateway generally found in the courtyard type of mosque, as at Damascus. However, the Adina Mosque manifests an organic planning and a harmonious and skilful distribution of components accentuating its immensity, grandeur and sanctity.

Most of the mosques of Bengal are of the enclosed

type without a courtyard. The evolution of this type of structure was conditioned by the humid climate, which played a vital role in shaping architectural forms in Bengal. The incessant rain in the terraqueous country of Bengal led to the evolution of the enclosed type of mosque. Similar enclosed structures are to be seen in the Kalan Mosque and Khirki Mosque at Delhi, and in the Jami mosque at Gulbarga, all dating from the fourteenth century; Persian antecedents of the enclosed type of edifice may be seen in the fourteenth-century Il-Khanid mosques at Maranad, Ardabil, Barsian, Kaj, Deshti and Eziran. As mentioned earlier, the enclosed type of mosque in Bengal can be divided into two main categories. The rectangular category is further classified into single-domed chamber and multidomed chamber with aisles. From the standpoint of architectural planning, however, the rectangular type can be subdivided into four: (a) single-aisled, (b) double-aisled, (c) triple-aisled, and (d) seven-aisled.

Another interesting variety of the square type of mosque is that with a corridor, examples of which are found in the Mosque of Ulagh Nusrat Khan at Gopalganj (1460), the Rajbibi or Khania Dighi Mosque at Gaur (1437-87), the mosque at Mirzaganj (1465), and the Chamkatti Mosque (1478) and Lattan Mosque (1493-1519), both at Gaur. Other outstanding examples of this type are the Mosque of Rafat Khan at Kheraul (1494-95), and the mosque at Sura and Sankarpasa Mosque at Sylhet, both dating from the sixteenth century. The enclosed mosque type—which is in sharp contrast to the open-pillared courtyard type like the Adina Mosque—is well represented by the Gopalganj Mosque, where a corridor appears for the first time as a conspicuous architectural feature. The Rajbibi Mosque, which also conforms to this style, is a small, elegant building in Gaur. Typologically, this mosque cannot be earlier than the Chamkatti Mosque, which in many of its features seems to have served as its model. The Chamkatti Mosque differs from the Rajbibi Mosque in that the former has a verandah roofed over by the two barrel vaults and a central cross vault, while the latter has three small domes over the verandah. The most ornate of the mosques of Gaur is the Lattan Mosque, though it is now a travesty of its former grandeur. The domical construction certainly shows the builder's skill and technical excellence. As stated by Saraswati: 'Still more commendable is the construction of the massive dome, which is provided with a basement support, cylindrical outside and in the shape of a flattened vault inside.'[3] The pecularity of the verandah roofing in this structure lies in its distinct central *char-chala* or four-seg-

3. S. K. Saraswati, 'Indo-Muslim Architecture in Bengal', *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Vol. IX, 1941, p. 24.

mented vault in the centre. Undoubtedly this mosque demonstrates not only a 'building of much taste and even splendour' but also the most compact and architectonically satisfying plan.

The square type of Bengal mosque is also distinguished by a cubical prayer chamber with the usual corner towers, mihrab projection, and entrance gateways through massive walls except on the *qibla* side, but without any corridor. Square mosques are usually covered with a single dome, and there is mostly no corridor. The earliest known example of the square type without corridor is at Molla Simla (1375). Other similar examples are the Mosque of Binat Bibi at Narinda (1457), the Mosque of Khan Jahan Ali at Bagerhat (1459), the Dargah Mosque of Shah Shafiddin at Chota Pandua (1477), the mosque at Goaldi (1519), the mosque at Navagram (1526), the mosque at Bara Goali (sixteenth century), the Bibi Mosque at Sherpur (1678), Sadi's Mosque and Shah Muhammad's Mosque at Egarasindhur (seventeenth century), the mosque at Gurai (late seventeenth century), the Allah Kuri Mosque at Dhaka (1660), the mosque of Farrukh Siyar at Mahasthan (1719), etc. Though the Masjidkhur Mosque at Bagerhat (middle of the fifteenth century) belongs to the square type of mosque without corridor, it is a classic example of a triple-aisled edifice covered with nine domes. The graceful single-domed mosque at Goaldi has the usual corner towers and beautifully carved mihrabs.

The traditional style of mosque architecture in Bengal is rectangular and multidomed, and marked by several typical architectural features–rectangular plan, aisles hemispherical domes, pointed-arched entrances, curved cornices, corner towers, panelled walls, stone casings, *jali* windows, stucco and glazed tiles, stone-chiselling, etc. Saraswati observes that 'the multidomed type is characterized by an oblong structure which is divided into several aisles by rows of pillars, supporting the arches of the domes, their number depending on the number of interspaces formed by the division of the building into bays and aisles. As is usual in Bengal, curved cornices and polygonal turrets are also characteristic elements of such structures'. The most striking examples of the rectangular type having a single aisle and triple domes are the Kherua Mosque at Sherpur (1582 and 1609), the mosque of Shah Niamat Allah Wali at Gaur (1664-69), the mosque in the Lalbagh Fort in Dhaka (1679), the so-called Satgumbad Mosque at Muhammadpur (seventeenth century), the mosques of Shah Poran and Shah Jalal at Sylhet, the mosque of Shah Shuja at Comilla, and the mosque of Bibi Mariam at Narayanganj (all dating from the

seventeenth century). Of the typical three-domed rectangular type of the Mughal period having a *tahkhana* or substructure, mention must be made of Khan Muhammad Mirza's Mosque (1706), and the mosque of Musa Khan (eighteenth century), both in Dhaka.

A variation of the single-aisled triple-domed rectangular type is represented by the five-domed mosque of Qutb Shah at Hemtabad (sixteenth century). This type was copied in the mosque of Kartalab Khan at Dhaka (1700–4) and the Katra Mosque at Murshidabad (1724–25). The important architectural features of Kartalab Khan's Mosque are the Bengali *do-chala* hut-shaped structure adjoining the mosque on the north (used as the residence of the *imam*), the *tahkhana* or substructure, and the stepped well or *bauli* in front of the mosque. According to Dani, the Katra Mosque at Murshidabad 'is a copy of Kartalab Khan's Mosque'.[4]

4. A. H. Dani, *Muslim Architecture of Bengal*, Dacca, 1961, p. 276.

Of the mosques of Bengal the most common plan is the double-aisled type. This is illustrated by two varieties: six-domed and ten-domed mosques. An old mosque at Muazzamabad (1466–67), the mosque at Hathazari (1474–81), the mosque of Baba Adam Shahid at Rampal (1483), the mosque at Sailkupa (early sixteenth century), the Jahaniyan Mosque at Gaur (1535) and the mosque at Kusumbha (1558) are all typical double-aisled six-domed examples. The mosque at Rampal—named after the local patron saint, Baba Adam Sahid—is undoubtedly one of the most impressive architectural monuments of pre-Mughal Bengal. Conforming to the rectangular multidomed type and with all the requisite features of the period, the mosque is divided into two aisles by a longitudinal three-arched colonnade. It has the usual octagonal buttresses at the corners and curvilinear cornice. Stylistically, it anticipates similar six-domed rectangular mosques.[5]

5. S. M. Hasan, *Mosque Architecture of pre-Mughal Bengal*, Dacca, 1971, p. 127.

Some of the most beautiful mosques of Bengal are built on a double-aisled plan covered by ten domes in two rows. As a matter of fact, the earliest existing example in Bengal—Zafar Khan Gazi's Mosque at Tribeni (1298)—conforms to this rectangular ten-domed, double-aisled plan. No less striking than this example are the Tantipara Mosque (1480) and the mosque of Firuz Shah II (1489), both at Gaur, the mosque at Bagha (1523), and the Qutb Shahi Mosque at Hazrat Pandua (1582).

The most formative phase of Muslim architecture in Bengal began in the later part of the thirteenth century in the monuments of the newly conquered regions of Tribeni, Chota Pandua and Satgaon in the District of Hooghly. Zafar Khan Ghazi's Mosque at Tribeni is certainly far anterior to any Muslim building at Gaur and Hazrat Pandua,

the twin capitals of Bengal. This mosque betrays all the distinctive architectural features of the rectangular ten-domed structure without any corridor. It is the oldest of its type in Bengal, fulfilling all the rudimentary elements of a congregational place of prayer. The mosque has a rectangular prayer chamber divided into two aisles by an arcade on four sturdy black basalt piers. Both transverse and longitudinal pointed brick arches spring from these squat pillars to support the ten domes. The mosque is conspicuous for its lack of courtyard, fountain, minaret and corner towers.[6]

Zafar Khan Ghazi's Mosque is the prototype of the later rectangular double-aisled multidomed mosques, as observable in the Tantipara Mosque and the ruined Mosque of Firuz Shah II, both at Gaur. The first of these is the most carefully planned and tastefully ornamented mosque in Bengal. Divided into two aisles by a transverse arcade, as the plan shows, the Tantipara Mosque is a most impressive structure, having all the characteristic features of the traditional rectangular multidomed type—concave mihrab, octagonal corner towers, ten hemispherical domes, five entrance arches in the façade rising from squat pillars, and a mihrab projection.[7] The *zenana* gallery, which first appeared in the Adina Mosque at Pandua, is also found on the northern side on a raised platform. This mosque exerted a profound influence on the mosque of Firuz Shah II, the mosque at Bagha, the Mosque of Majlis Aulia at Pathrail (sixteenth century) and the Qutb Shahi Mosque at Hazrat Pandua (1582). The mosque at Bagha is one of the handsomest monuments in the District of Rajshahi, and serves also as a prototype of the Tantipara Mosque. Its chief merit, however, lies in the symmetry of its plan and in the delicate brick carvings.[8]

The most outstanding and architecturally satisfying mosques of Bengal are built on a rectangular triple-aisled plan. This interesting variety incorporates some peculiar architectural characteristics which are absent in the single-aisled and double-aisled types.[9] Some of the finest Bengali mosques belong to this triple-aisled type, which is classified into as many as five substyles: (a) with corridor, such as the Darasbari Mosque at Gaur (1479) with *char-chala* vaulted nave, and the Bara Sona Mosque also at Gaur (1525-26); (b) without corridor, such as the Bari Mosque at Chota Pandua (1342), the mosque at Qasba (mid-fifteenth century) and the mosque at Shahzadpur (fifteenth century); (c) with vaulted nave, such as the Gunmant Mosque at Gaur (1484); (d) with *char-chala* vaulted nave, as in the Chota Sona Mosque at Gaur (1493-1519); and (e) cross-planned, such as the Qutb Shahi Mosque at Ashtagram (late sixteenth century).

6. D. G. Crawford, 'Pandua and the Pandua Minar', *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. II, No. 6, 1908, p. 432; P. Brown, *Indian Architecture; Islamic Period*, Bombay, 1964, p. 35.

7. L. S. S. O'Malley and M. M. Chakravarti, *Bengal District Gazetter: Hooghly*, Calcutta, 1912, pp. 28-56.

8. A. Wali, 'On some Archaeological Remains in the District of Rajshahi', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. LXXII, No. 1, 1904, p. 110.

9. Hasan, op. cit., p. 166.

Though belonging to the triple-aisled variety with corridor, the Darasbari Mosque at Gaur is a unique example, having *char-chala* vaults over the nave.[10] It recalls similar distinctive features observable in the Saithgumbad Mosque at Bagerhat. Its importance lies in the fact that it is a *madrasa*-mosque, as found in Central Asia; like the *Madrasa*-mosque of Bibi Khanum at Samarqand, for instance. Its outstanding architectural elements are the usual *zenana* gallery (traces of which are still to be found above the corridor on the east), the massive pillars on either side of the central nave, and its overall majestic appearance.[11] Belonging to the triple-aisled type with corridor, the Bara Sona Mosque, though ruined, is one of the most impressive buildings still standing at Gaur. Ravenshaw notes that 'there are eleven arches on either side of the corridor and one at each end of it'.[12] The characteristic plan of this imposing mosque shows that the prayer hall is divided by two rows of pillars into three aisles. In each row ten substantial stone pillars carry eleven transverse arches. The mosque was roofed over by thirty-three small domes and has the usual octagonal corner towers, *zenana* gallery and semicircular mihrab in the *qibla* wall. The most curiously interesting features of this mosque are the spectacular arched gateways on the north, south and east sides of the wide quadrangle in front of the mosque. Similar imposing gateways may also be seen in the Chota Sona Mosque at Gaur.[13]

One of the earliest architectural projects of great magnitude in Bengal is the Bari Mosque at Chota Pandua: this is rectangular and triple-aisled without a corridor, and is roofed by as many as sixty-three domes resting on two arcades. The domes are built by concentric rings of bricks, following an arcuate rather than a corbelling system. As many as twenty-one decorated and semicircular concave mihrabs are found in the *qibla* wall on the west, and the same number of arched entrances appear on the eastern side. The building anticipates the Adina Mosque at Pandua in its canopied *mimbar, zenana* gallery, and multiplicity of small brick hemispherical domes. Two interesting examples of this substyle are the nine-domed mosque at Qasba and the fifteen-domed mosque at Shahzadpur.[14]

The Gunmant Mosque at Gaur is a typical vaulted and domed type arranged on a rectangular triple-aisled plan. Its vaulted nave recalls that of the Adina Mosque, and its most impressive part is the arched facade with twelve domes on either side of the central nave.[15] Its striking features are octagonal towers at the corners. As stated by Saraswati, 'it agrees in all essential respects with the great Adina Masjid at Hazrat Pandua, more than a century earlier in date'.[16]

10. Dani, op. cit., p. 110.

11. Abid Ali Khan, *Memoirs to Gaur and Pandua,* edited by H. Stapleton, Calcutta, 1931, p. 54, note 1.

12. J. H. Ravenshaw, *Gaur: Its Ruins and Inscriptions,* edited by C. Ravenshaw and annotated by A. Grote, London, 1878, p. 41, plates 5-7.

13. Hasan, op. cit., p. 168.

14. S. M. Hasan, *Muslim Monuments in Bangladesh,* Dacca, 1980, pp. 25, 104.

15. A. Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India Report,* Vol. XVI, p. 65.

16. Saraswati, op. cit., p. 18.

The architects of pre-Mughal Bengal experimented with a pecularily local building form, commonly known as *char-chala,* which is hut-shaped and four-segmented. Fergusson observes that

> besides elaborating a pointed-arched brick style of their own, the Bengalis introduced a new form of roof, which has had a most important influence on both the Muhammadan and Hindu styles in more recent times ... the Bengalis, taking advantage of the elasticity of the bamboo, universally employ in their dwellings a curvilinear form of roof, which has become so familiar to their eyes, that they consider it beautiful. ... Certain it is, at all events, that after being elaborated into a feature of permanent architecture in Bengal, this curvilinear form found its way in the seventeenth century to Delhi, and in the eighteenth century to Lahore, and all the intermediate buildings from, say, A.D. 1650, betray its presence to a greater or less extent.[17]

The most outstanding example of this type is the Chota Sona Mosque, aptly regarded as the 'gem' of Gaur.[18] It is a neat little rectangular building of great architectural variety and is the finest testimony to Muslim building art in its symmetry of plan, balanced adjustment of proportions, compactness and, above all, gaudy ornamentation. Two rows of chamfered pillars, each carrying five-pointed arches, divide the interior of the mosque into three longitudinal aisles. In each row there are four pillars of black basalt which, in their moulded string courses, cubical pedestals, dog-toothed ornament, and square abacus, recall those of the supporting pillars of the *zenana* gallery in the Adina Mosque.[19] In plan it resembles the Darasbari Mosque mentioned earlier, as it is divided by a broad *char-chala* vaulted central nave into north and south prayer halls, each covered by six domes. In typological ancestry, it recalls the scheme of the earlier Saithgumbad Mosque. As is usual, the Chota Sona Mosque has a *zenana* gallery, octagonal corner towers, semicircular mihrabs of exquisite ornamental design, and two projecting buttressed towers at the back of the central mihrab. Architecturally, this example marks the zenith of Bengali Muslim architecture; its plan is as satisfying as its ornamental embellishment.[20]

A typical exception to the triple-aisled and multidomed type is the Qutb Shahi Mosque at Ashtagram, which maintains a cross-plan by having a large central dome surrounded by four small domes at each corner.[21]

One of the most superb and imposing mosques of Bengal, the Saithgumbad Mosque at Bagerhat, testifies to the skill and expertise of the planners and architects. This massive structure of great architectural beauty exemplifies the seven-aisled multidomed type with *char-chala* nave.

17. J. Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture,* London, 1910, pp. 253–4.

18. Ravenshaw, op. cit., p. 38.

19. W. Francklin, *Ruins of Gaur: 1810-12,* India Office Library manuscript, pp. 19, 28.

20. Hasan, *Mosque Architecture,* op. cit., pp. 185–6; Cunningham, op. cit., p. 74.

21. Dani, op. cit., pp. 164–5.

According to Dani, 'the style derives its inspiration partly from the Tughluq architecture at Delhi, as the spreading bastions at the corners prove, but in general concept it is rooted in the Bengal style of the later Ilyas Shahi period, though here the buildings are more utilitarian as is clear from the stark plainness of the walls'.[22] The style is based on the various characteristic architectural features that mould the building art of a particular period, in which an individual plays only a minor role. The cross-currents of architectural ideas and techniques in Bengal in the later part of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as observed in the various typical monuments, undoubtedly led to the introduction of *char-chala* vaults, hitherto unknown in mosque architecture.

22. Ibid., p. 28.

The Saithgumbad ('sixty-domed') Mosque is, however, a misnomer: the rectangular building is roofed over by as many as seventy domes, symmetrically disposed on either side of the seven *char-chala* vaults of the nave. The interior is divided into seven transverse aisles (unique examples of their kind in Muslim Bengali architecture) by six longitudinal rows of arcades carried on slender carved pillars. There are seven concave semicircular mihrabs in the *qibla* wall, which has a peculiar postern gate like that in the Adina Mosque. Other novel features are the massive double-storeyed, circular, hollow, corner towers, and the impressive curvilinear cornice on the façade.[23]

23. Brown, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

In any study of the evolution of an architectural style, the ground plans of buildings undoubtedly play a vital role. A thorough survey of the Bengali mosques makes it evident that they maintained a complex variety of styles and sub-styles, though always manifesting the fundamental and unavoidable features of mosque architecture. This unity in diversity is the beauty of Bengali mosque architecture: it inevitably implies that Bengali architects and masons resorted to a wide variety of ground plans to express their innate building genius. Though standing in isolation, the great Adina Mosque exerted an overwhelming influence on later mosques in Bengal, particularly in respect to vaulting systems. Similarly, in the introduction of *do-chala* or two-segmented vaults and *char-chala* or four-segmented vaults, as well as prominent curvilinear cornices, the Saithgumbad Mosque maintained a close affinity with later monuments with similar distinguishing features. The unmistakable influence of Bengali Muslim architecture is seen in the Dimapur Palace in Assam, dating from the fifteenth century; particularly in the use of pointed arches, curved cornices and octagonal turrets recalling 'mosque fronts at Gaur and Pandua'.[24] (In this connection, it is to be remembered that Sul-

24. T. Bloch, *Annual Report, Archaeological Survey of India*, 1903-4, p. 21.

tan Husain Shah invaded Assam in 1498 and extended his influence there by defeating local rulers.) There is no denying the fact that the Bengali curved roof exerted a profound influence on the Hindu temples of the region constructed during the Muslim period and later, as well as on Mughal and Rajput architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Concerning the influence of indigenous Bengali architecture on Mughal building art, Abul Fazl rightly remarked that Agra contained 'building of masonry after the beautiful designs of Bengal and Gujarat, which masterly sculptors and cunning artists of form have fashioned as architectural models'.[25] The example referred to here is the *do-chala* golden pavilion at Agra Fort, commonly known as 'Bangla-i-Darshan-i-Mubarak'. *Do-chala* and *char-chala* buildings are also found at the Lahore Fort.[26] The Bengali temples of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries betray unmistakable Muslim influence in their curved cornices, pointed arches, octagonal turrets, wall panelling, stumpy pillars and domed construction. In this way, the distinctive aesthetic character of Bengali mosque architecture is seen to have profoundly influenced palace building in both northern and western India, and Hindu temple construction in Bengal itself.

25. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, trans. by H. Blochmann, Vol. 1, p. 180.

26. Hasan, *Mosque Architecture*, op. cit., p. 201.

Principal Bengali mosques according to ground plan, chronologically listed

A. Courtyard type

Rectangular, five-aisled and multidomed

Hazrat Pandua (Malda District)	Adina Mosque* (orthodox type with barrel-vaulted nave, 360 domes and *zenana* gallery) A.H. 776/A.D. 1374-75

B. Enclosed type

1 (i) Square with corridor (single-domed)

Gaur (Rajshahi District)	Rajbibi or Khania Dighi Mosque* A.H. 841-93/A.D. 1437-87
Gopalganj (Dinajpur District)	Mosque of Ulagh Nusrat Khan A.H. 865/A.D. 1460
Mirzaganj (Bakerganj District)	Masjidbari Mosque* A.H. 870/A.D. 1465
Gaur (Malda District)	Chamkatti Mosque* A.H. 883/A.D. 1478
Gaur (Malda District)	Lattan Mosque* A.H. 899-925/A.D. 1493-1519
Kheraul (Murshidabad District)	Mosque of Rafat Khan A.H. 900/A.D. 1495

Sura (Dinajpur District)	Mosque* Early 16th century
Sylhet	Sankarpasa Mosque 16th century
Atiya (Mymensingh District)	Jami mosque A.H. 1018/A.D. 1609

1 (ii) Square without corridor (single-domed)

Molla Simla (Hooghly District)	Mosque* A.H.
Narinda (Dhaka District)	Mosque of Binat Bibi A.H. 861/A.D. 1456
Bagerhat (Khulna District)	Mosque of Khan Jahan Ali A.H. 863/A.D. 1459
Chota Pandua (Hooghly District)	Dargah Mosque or Mosque of Shah Shafiuddin* A.H. 882/A.D. 1477
Mograpara (Dhaka District)	Mosque A.H. 889/A.D. 1484, rebuilt 1700
Bandar (Dhaka District)	Baba Saleh's Mosque A.H. 911/A.D. 1505
Deokot (Dinajpur District)	Mosque of Rukn Khan 1512
Sonargaon (Dhaka District)	Goaldi Mosque* A.H. 925/A.D. 1519
Navagram (Pabna District)	Mosque 1526
Bagerhat (Khulna District)	Chunikhola Mosque 16th century
Bara Goali (Comilla District)	Mosque 16th century
Bagerhat (Khulna District)	Ron Vilaypur Mosque 16th century
Masjidda (Chittagong District)	Mosque of Hamid Khan 16th century
Bagerhat (Khulna District)	Bibi Begni's Mosque 16th century
Bandar (Dhaka District)	Mosque of Haji Baba Salih 16th century
Bagerhat (Khulna District)	Singair Mosque 16th century
Zindabahar (Dhaka District)	Jami mosque (originally single-domed) 1612
Sherpur (Bogra District)	Bibi mosque (with curved cornice) A.H. 1038/A.D. 1628
Egarsindhur	Sadi's Mosque (with curved cornice) A.H. 1062/A.D. 1652
(Mymensingh District) Dhaka	Allah Kuri Mosque (with projected front on each side) 1660
Near Dulaikhal	Hayat Bepari's Mosque (imitation of Binat Bibi's Mosque)
(Dhaka District)	1664
Masjidpara (Mymensingh District)	Mosque 1669.
Dhaka (Nava Rai Lane)	Mosque (on raised plinth) Early 17th century
Egarsindhur	Muhammad Shah's Mosque (with rectangular projections
(Mymensingh District)	on four sides, *do-chala* gateway on east) 1680
Gurai	Mosque Late 17th century
(Mymensingh District)	
Mahasthan (Bogra District)	Mosque of Farrukh Siyar 1719
Masjidda	'Nine-Domed Mosque' Late 18th century
(Chittagong District)	
Muradpur	Maula Shaheb's Mosque 18th-19th century
(Chittagong District)	
Fauzderhat	Sadhu Mustaner Mosque 18th-19th century
(Chittagong District)	

1 (iii) Square without corridor (triple-aisled, multidomed)

Bagerhat (Khulna District)	Masjidkur Mosque (nine-domed) Mid-15th century

2 (i) Rectangular single-aisled

	(a) Two-domed with vaulted nave
Old Malda (Malda District)	Jami mosque (with hut-shaped cornice) A.H. 1004/A.D. 1595-96
	(b) Three-domed, simple
Gaur (Rajshahi District)	Dhunichak Mosque A.H. 841-93/A.D. 1437-87
Sherpur (Bogra District)	Kherua Mosque* (with curved cornice, internally divided into three small domed chambers) A.H. 989/A.D. 1582
Kamalpur (Bakerganj District)	Mosque 16th century
Arifail (Comilla District)	Mosque Early Mughal
Sherpur (Bogra District)	Khondokar Tola Mosque A.H. 1042/A.D. 1632
Dhaka	Shaista Khan's Mosque (on raised plinth) 1644
Chittagong	Jami mosque (three bays) 1668
Gaur (Rajshahi District)	Mosque of Shah Nimat Allah 1664-69
Sarail (Comilla District)	Mosque 1670
Chaukbazar (Dhaka District)	Shahi Mosque (on raised plinth, true Shaista Khani style) 1676
Kauranbazar (Dhaka District)	Shahi mosque 1679-80
Dhaka	Haji Khwaja Shahbaz's Mosque A.H. 1089/A.D. 1679
Dhaka	Lalbagh Fort mosque* (on raised plinth) A.H. 1059/A.D. 1649
Tejgaon (Dhaka District)	Malik Ambar's Mosque 1679-80
Dhaka	'Seven-Domed' Satgumbad Mosque (domes include corner towers) 1680
Parthaghata (Dhaka District)	Mosque 1690-1.
Sandwip (Chittagong District)	Mosque 17th century.
Comilla	Mosque of Shah Shuja 17th century
Narayanganj (Dhaka District)	Bibi Miriam's Mosque* 17th century
Bagerhat (Khulna District)	Tenga Mosque (with central square chamber and two side square halls) 17th century
Sylhet	Mosque of Shah Poran 17th century
Sylhet	Mosque of Shah Jalal 17th century
Burdwan	Jami mosque A.H. 1111/A.D. 1699
Chittagong	Dargah Mosque of Hazrat Bayazid Bostami early 18th century
Nawabganjbazar (Dhaka District)	Mosque (with *madrasa*) 18th century
Dhaka	Stare Mosque (mostly restored) 18th century
Dhaka	Khan Muhammad Mirza's Mosque (*tahkhana* and vaulted annexe on northeast, used as a *madrasa*) A.H. 1116/A.D. 1704
Dhaka	Mosque of Musa Khan (raised on a platform with a *tahkhana*, thoroughly renovated) 18th century
Parabazpur (Jessore District)	Mosque 18th century
Bazra (Noakhali District)	Mosque 18th century
Nabiganj (Dhaka District)	Mosque of Qadam Rasul 18th-19th century

Matubi (Noakhali District)	Mosque 1814-15
Kismat Maria (Rajshahi District)	Mosque (recently noticed) Early 19th century
Kamrangichar (Dhaka District)	Bara Mosque 1840
Badamtali (Dhaka District)	Amiruddin's Mosque 19th century
Englishbazar (Malda District)	Phandan's Mosque 19th century
Char Bhabanthpur (Dhaka District)	Jami mosque 19th century
Farazi Kanda (Dhaka District)	Jami mosque 19th century
Sunamganj (Sylhet District)	Jami mosque 19th century
Dhaka	Koshaituli Mosque 1919
Chaumuhani (Noakhali District)	Jami mosque 20th century
Maizdi (Noakhali District)	Jami mosque 20th century
Bhatipara (Sylhet District)	Jami mosque 20th century
Dhaka	Banga Bhaban Mosque 1960
Dhaka	Patuatuli Jami mosque 1964

(c) Three-domed with annex

Chittagong	Mosque of Qadam Mubarak (annexes on north and south sides) 1719

(d) Char-chala roof

Chaukbazar (Dhaka District)	Churihatta Mosque 1649

(e) Five-domed with annex

Dhaka	Kartalab Khan's Mosque (with *tahkhana* and *do-chala annex on north)* 1700-4

(f) Five-domed (simple)

Murshidabad	Katra Mosque A.H. 1137/A.D. 1724-25

2 (ii) Rectangular, double-aisled

(a) Six-domed

Basirhat (24-Parganas District)	Salih Mosque A.H. 871/A.D. 1466
Muazzamabad (Dhaka District)	Old mosque 1466-67
Hathazari (Chittagong District)	Mosque 1474-81
Rampal (Dhaka District)	Mosque of Baba Adam Shahid* A.H. 888/A.D. 1483
Sailkupa (Jessore District)	Mosque Early 16th century
Gaur (Malda District)	Jahaniyan Mosque* A.H. 941/A.D. 1535
Kusumba (Rajshahi District)	Mosque (with *zenana* gallery at northeastern corner) A.H. 966/A.D. 1558

(b) Ten-domed

Tribeni (Hooghly District)	Mosque of Zafar Khan Ghazi* A.H. 696/A.D. 1298
Kalna (Burdwan District)	Majlis Shaheb's Mosque (with *zenana* gallery) 1466-67
Gaur (Malda District)	Tantipara Mosque* A.H. 885/A.D. 1480
Gaur (Malda District)	Mosque of Firuz Shah II A.H. 894/A.D. 1489
Bagha (Rajshahi District)	Jami mosque (originally *zenana* gallery) A.H. 930/A.D. 1523
Pandua (Malda District)	Qutb Shahi Mosque* A.H. 990/A.D. 1583
Pathrail (Faridpur District)	Mosque of Majlis Aulia (with hut-shaped cornice) 16th century
Hemtabad (Dinajpur District)	Mosque (of Qutb Shah) 16th century

2 (iii) Rectangular, triple-aisled

(a) With corridor

Gaur (Rajshahi District)	Darasbari Mosque* (twenty-four domes with *char-chala vault, madrasa*-mosque) A.H. 884/A.D. 1479
Gaur (Malda District)	Bara Sona Mosque* (forty-four domes, originally with *zenana* gallery) A.H. 932/A.D. 1526

(b) Without corridor

Chota Pandua (Hooghly District)	Bari Mosque* (sixty-three domes with *chillah-khana*) A.D. 1342
Qasba (Bakerganj District)	Mosque (nine domes) Mid-15th century
Shahzadpur (Pabna District)	Mosque (fifteen domes) 15th century
Bangshall (Dhaka District)	Jami mosque (Ahl-i-Hadith) 1676

(c) With vaulted nave

Gaur (Malda District)	Gunmant Mosque* (twenty-four domes) A.H. 889/A.D. 1484

(d) With char-chala vault

Gaur (Rajshahi District)	Chota Sona Mosque* (twelve domes) A.H. 899-925/A.D. 1493-1519

(e) Cross-planned

Ashtagram (Mymensingh District)	Qutb Shahi Mosque (five domes, enlarged central dome) Late 16th century

2 (iv) Rectangular, seven-aisled (multi-domed with char-chala vault)

Bagerhat (Khulna District)	Saithgumbad ('sixty-domed') Mosque* (actually seventy domes and seven *char-chala* vaults) *c.* 1450

* Mosques marked with asterisks have their ground plans in the *Inventory of Key Monuments*, pp. 37-140.

Reflections on the Adina Mosque at Pandua

Yolande Crowe

For the plan of the Adina Mosque see p. 110.

During the second half of the fourteenth century, provincial governors of the Tughluq dynasty in India were breaking away from the central power in Delhi, although early in his rule, Firuz Shah III (A.D. 1351-88) embarked on a few expeditions, lured no doubt by the memory of some of his father's successes. Thus twice the Tughluq Sultan concentrated the bulk of his army on Bengal. The first campaign lasted from A.D. 1353 to 1355 and ended, it is reasonable to assume, in a stalemate despite the repeated attempts of the Sultan to bribe the local population. The oncoming monsoon forced him to give up the siege of Ekdala and retreat, while the relieved local ruler, Shams-ad-Din Ilyas Shah (ruled A.D. 1345-58), moved back to his nearby capital at Pandua and resumed his rule over his newly gathered possessions of Lakhnauti (Gaur), Satgaon and Sonargaon as *Shah-i Bangala*, a title he started using in 1352.[1]

As a sign of peaceful coexistence, gifts were eventually dispatched to Delhi. The envoys were on their way back with return offerings from Firuz Shah III when he heard of the death of Shams-ad-Din Ilyas Shah and ordered those gifts of horses and other valuables to be distributed amongst his own local followers. It was not long before a second eastern expedition was mounted. The monsoon caught up with it near Jaunpur, and the opportunity of a long pause was seized to found a new town, Jaunpur itself. In 1359 Firuz Shah III once more laid siege to the fortress of Ekdala, where Shams-ad-Din Ilyas Shah's son, Sikandar Shah I, had also taken refuge. The town again resisted the siege, and Firuz Shah III never ordered the final assault. The most important clause included in the subsequent treaty specified an annual tribute of elephants to be sent to Delhi. On this occasion, Sikandar Shah I received a jewelled

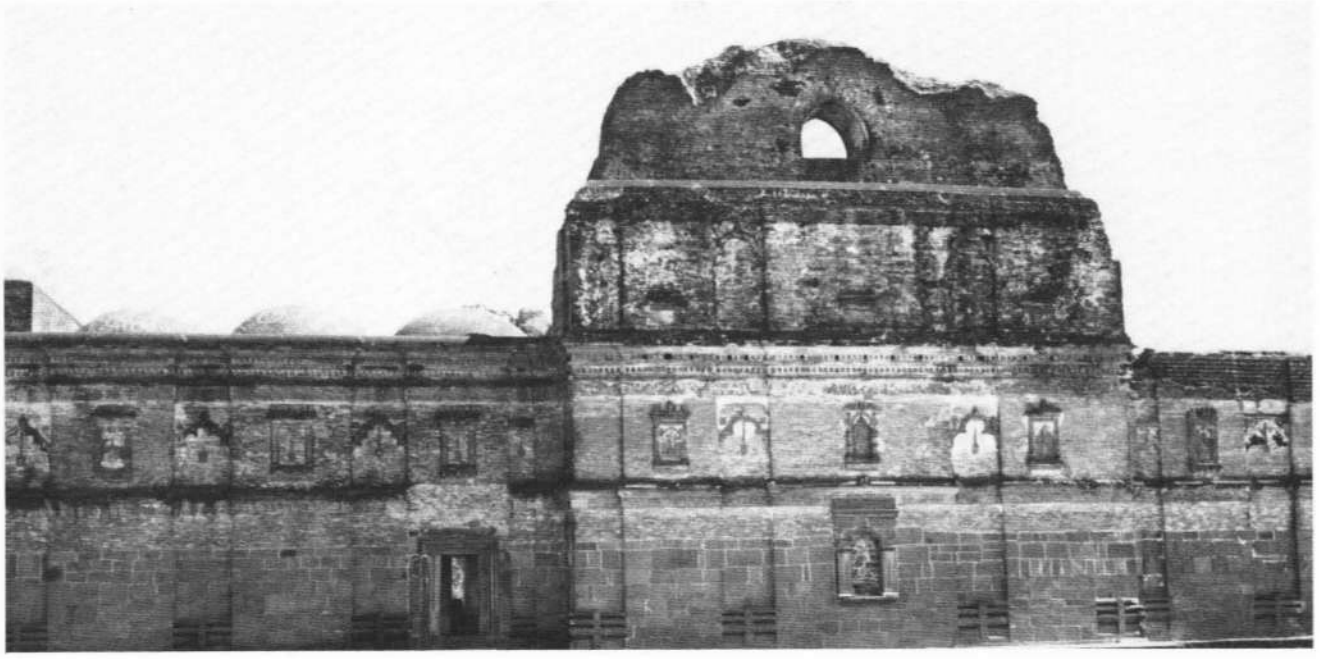
1. After the death of Ghiyas-ad-Din Balban, in A.D. 1287, Bengal became autonomous under the rule of its own governors, and under Shams-ad-Din Ilyas Shah the whole of Bengal was united.

Pandua, Adina Mosque. South prayer hall looking west towards the central *iwan*. [Photo: Catherine B. Asher.]

crown, a royal title and five hundred horses. Though the wilderness of Orissa almost got the better of his army and his entourage, Firuz Shah III found the detour by way of Puri and the destruction of the famous Jagannatha temple and other Hindu shrines a profitable exercise in religious fervour and elephant hunting. Subsidiary income for the financing of his building ventures in Jaunpur and at Firuzabad by the Jumna, started in 1355, would have also been required at the time. As to Sikandar Shah I, his subsequent preoccupation remained the confrontation with his one son by his second wife, which was to end in his own death on the battlefield in 1390. During his rule, the healthy autonomy he maintained in politics lead to great prosperity, which was reflected in the sound irrigation of a fertile land with cash crops such as cotton, sugar-cane and silk, besides the usual crops of rice and vegetables. It is against such a background that Sikandar Shah I ordered and watched over the construction of his vast mosque in Pandua.

Since in the past hundred years a number of studies have dealt with different aspects of the building,[2] it seems pointless to go over yet again the main characteristics of its fabric, though certain features might require further explanations beyond the cross-references within the monumental works of Creswell and Pope. In the first place, the date of the monument can now be read as A.H. Rajab 776/A.D. December-January 1374–75 on the inscription set in the western outer wall of the mosque. The titles of the ruler include that of 'the most perfect of Sultans of Arab and non-Arab lands.' The latter mention, which is often translated as 'Persia', may explain the common usage of the word *Adina* in connection with the mosque. This Persian

2. Syed Mahmudul Hasan, *Mosque Architecture of pre-Mughal Bengal,* 2nd ed., Dacca, 1979 gives a comprehensive bibliography on the subject from which the following list has been chosen: Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period,* Bombay, 1956; A. Cunningham, *A Tour in Bihar and Bengal, 1879-80, Archaeological survey of India Report,* Vol. XV, Calcutta, 1882; Dani, A.H. *Muslim Architecture in Bengal,* Dacca, 1961; Abid Ali Khan, *Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua,* edited and revised by H.E. Stapleton, Calcutta, 1931; J. H. Ravenshaw, *Gaur: Its Ruins and Inscriptions,* London, 1878; S. K. Saraswati, *Architecture of Bengal: I, Early Period,* Calcutta, 1976.



Exterior of west (*qibla*) wall. [Photo: The author.]

word, meaning Friday, goes back to medieval poetic vocabulary such as could have been used at the court. The Sultan and some of his entourage obviously would have kept on some of the traditions brought from Lahore a generation earlier. Later, Sikandar Shah I's son, Ghiyath-ad-Din Azam Shah, even invited the poet Hafiz to the court. Hafiz declined the invitation because of old age but sent verses. In the inscription itself the mosque is referred to as *al-Masjid al-Jami*.[3]

The vast area occupied by the mosque[4] reflects an ambitious building programme. Its precise measurements still need to be properly recorded: suffice it to say at this point that the outer dimensions are approximately 155 × 87 m, and the *sahn* itself is 122 × 46 m. The overall proportions of the building are more pleasing to the eye than that of the *sahn*, the length of which is more than twice its width. Only the western *qibla* wall still stands almost complete. Most of the *riwaqs* can be traced from the two inside rows of column bases and parts of the outer walls still *in situ*. When first built, the Adina Mosque would have accommodated a total of 260 columns and 370 brick domes inside its great walls. Even now the combination of stone facing on the lower part of these walls and brickwork on the upper part remains very impressive.

3. Hasan, op. cit., p. 64, note 27, p. 106.

4. There does not appear to be a recent plan of the mosque. See Cunningham's plan reproduced in Abid Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 127, and also the *Inventory of key monuments*, p. 110.

The *iwan*

The central *iwan*[5] with the main stone mihrab on its back wall divides the prayer area into two lateral halls with four inner rows of seventeen columns each. The northern hall includes a first floor covering an area outlined by three rows of seven columns, two columns removed north of the

5. The use of the term *iwan* seems preferable to *liwan*, which is less precise and leads to confusion. See O. Grabar, '*iwan*', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2, IV.

iwan. The impressive size of the elliptical vaulting of the *iwan* at the centre of the *qibla* wall is now only suggested by the remaining outline on the wall above the main mihrab. At its apex it could have measured about 18 m high and would have covered an area roughly 19.5 × 10 m. Although nothing remains of its façade on the *sahn*, a rectangular frame for its high entrance arch may be suggested, in the style of the Jami mosque in Cambay (Gujarat) or the Jamal Khana in the Nizamuddin complex in Delhi. Such a large opening, if screened like the contemporary Begampuri mosque in Delhi or later ones in Jaunpur,[6] would not have let in enough light. The poor supply of daylight in the first-floor area of the northern prayer hall is a real problem. As far as can be ascertained there does not seem to be any traces of such a screen.

This early example of an *iwan* in Bengal, if not the first one in the region, is somewhat echoed in the 1450s inside the Jami mosque of Jaunpur, although it is used there only in the two lateral enclosed prayer halls on either side of the central domed mihrab area. A majestic forerunner,[7] now in ruins, of the *iwan* in the Jami mosque, was ordered in Tabriz by the *wazir* of the Il-Khanid Sultan Oljeytu, Ali Shah Jilan Tabrizi, in the first quarter of the fourteenth century. The brick *iwan* over the prayer hall in front of the mihrab sprang to a possible height of 25 m and covered an area of about 65 × 30 m. The later Shamsiya *madrasa* in Yazd offers a closer example in time and space. It was built about A.D. 1365 on a far less grandiose scale by the order of Amir Shams-ad-Din Muhammad. After his death in Tabriz, his wife had his body carried back to Yazd and buried under the *madrasa*'s main dome, sited beyond the entrance *iwan*, almost contemporary with that of the Adina Mosque. Its brick vault is covered with painted plasterwork like many religious buildings of the period across Islamic lands.[8] The *iwan*, a foreign architectural feature, does not appear to have been adopted in Bengal, or for that matter anywhere in India. Its dual function of a shade against the sun's rays in the summer and a trap for the sun in the winter is relevant in Syria and Mesopotamia, but meaningless in the climatic conditions of the subcontinent. The size of the *iwan* in the Adina Mosque was perhaps too ambitious, and the local building traditions too strong, for the *iwan* to survive so far east.

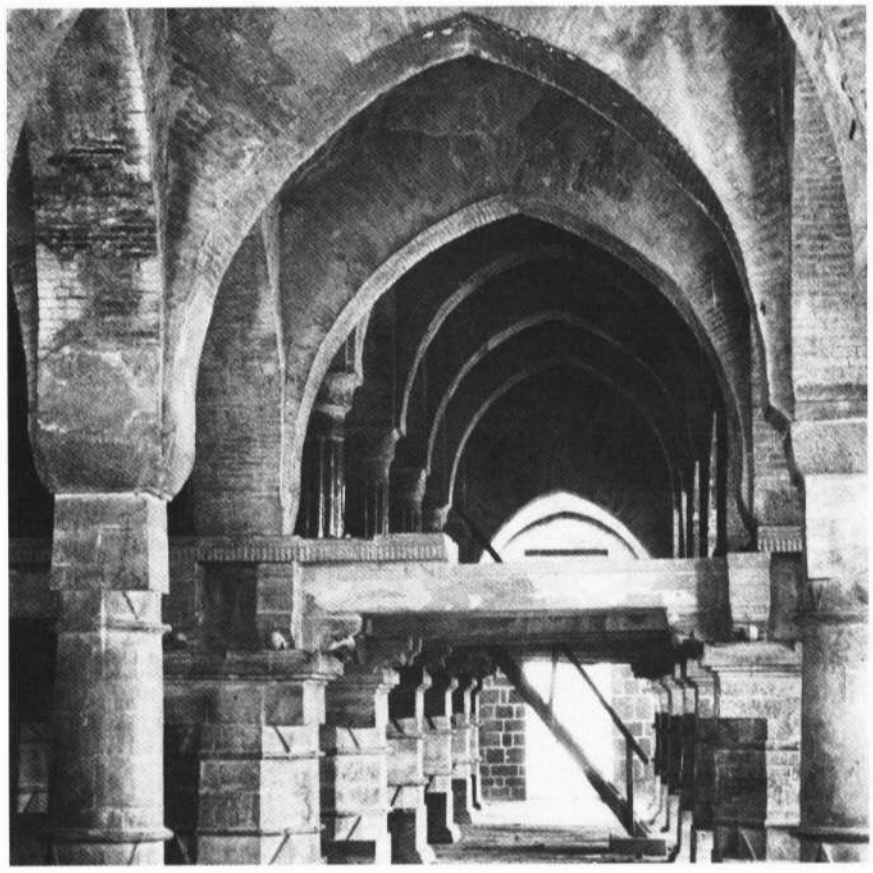
6. A. Fuhrer, *The Sharqi Architecture of Jaunpur*, Calcutta, 1889.

7. In works on Islamic architecture in India there has always seemed to be a tendency to seek for origins into the distant past and much farther west. The Jami mosque in Tabriz is close enough in time and space. See D. N. Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran: The Ilkhanid Period*, Princeton, 1955, pp. 146-9.

8. Ibid., p. 187. As an architectural feature, the single *iwan* was obviously popular in the fourteenth century, some of the best examples being in Transoxiana: Aq-Sarai at Shahr-i Sabz, started in A.D. 1380, and the reconstructed shrine of Khwaja Ahmad Yassawi at Hadrat-i, Turkistan. During the fifteenth century the Timurid *madrasas* and mosques often reverted to the four-*iwan* plan.

North and south prayer halls

From a total of eighty-nine arches springing from piers around the *sahn* now incomplete, thirty-three would have



Columns in north prayer hall. [Photo: Catherine B. Asher.]

spanned the east side and thirteen the north and south sides; fifteen still stand to the north of the central *iwan* on the west side. As to the south prayer hall, it includes the remains of five rows of seventeen columns each, none of them still standing *in situ*. When preserved, the stone plinths of the column bases are finely carved with two horizontal sections on each side of the square. Judging by the remains, Hasan has suggested that these columns were rather slender.[9]

A number of domes have survived in the north prayer hall, and in particular a group of fifteen higher domes over the area occupied by the so-called *badshah-ka-takht,* or ruler's throne. Much has been written about this *takht,* with reference to examples in Malwa and Gujarat.[10] It could indeed have been a special area for women's private worship. Such is the case of an area set aside for women's worship on the first floor of the Jami Masjid in Yazd. Nonetheless there are a few good reasons to consider it as a kind of elevated *maqsura* for the ruler, as the name implies. The two doorways that lead in to the *maqsura*—for convenience here called the upper mosque—have been made through the west wall and are markedly different in style: the north doorway rather austere and larger, the south doorway closer to

9. Hasan, op. cit., p. 93.

10. Ibid., p. 90.

Hindu craftsmanship with its deep and lively stone carving. The fact that they are two in number lays emphasis on the entrance to the upper mosque; they are indeed more impressive than the ground floor entrance on the west wall, sited north of the *iwan*, though the carving on its five receding frames is still Hindu in feeling, with some restraint. A further treble passageway is sited at the south-east corner of the mosque and remains the only other sizeable entrance for worshippers.

It has been left to Husain[11] to stress this importance of the western side of the mosque and, in effect, the two entrances to the upper mosque: the main Malda-Dinajpur road runs by the west side of the mosque compound. On the other hand, separate and ornate entrances such as these are not unknown in Anatolian mosques of the thirteenth century at Nigde and Divrigi, with even more ornate portals.[12] Could it be that for a couple of centuries certain Turkic Muslim rulers were led, by fashion or by fear, to set aside areas in mosques for their private use and their own safety? A further point will be made when dealing with the Koranic quotations of the mihrab and the four secondary ones in the upper mosque.

When he planned the upper mosque, the master builder attempted to introduce a relative harmony between the stocky pillars sustaining the platform and the more sizeable columns in the rest of the north prayer hall. Although the square stone plinth appears plain for the pillars, the slender square ones for the column bases show the same carved decoration as noticed in the south prayer hall, the base itself suggests the shape of a cube and the lower part of the circular shaft is emphasized by four sharp triangular accents poised across the inside of the angles on the bases.[13] Their upper tips carry a torus with triangles in reverse position for the upper torus, below a tapering cube instead of a capital; this sustains the entablature for the springing of the arch.

The shape of the twenty-one piers, to support the floor of stone slabs that used to pave the floor of the upper mosque, relates to that of the taller neighbouring columns in so far as they appear to be a compressed version of them. Although the plinth is plain and the base only half a cube, the torus and triangles encompass the now octagonal shaft both at the top and bottom. A square cornice supports the beam-and-bracket system for the paving of the upper floor. By contrast, the two inner rows of five fluted columns on the upper platform lend a certain elegance to the area. They carry loftier arches than the main columns of the north prayer hall; the eighteen domes they support are indeed

11. A.B.M. Husain, 'The Ma'dhana (?) of the Adina Masjid at Hazrat Pandua', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Vol. XII, 1967, pp. 263-4.

12. Y. Crowe, 'The East Window of the Great Mosque in Divrigi', *AARP*, Vol. II, 1972, pp. 105-13. Further discussion with Dr Aysil Tukel Yavuz has led the author to come round to her conclusions: the so-called window is a special door to the separate upper mosques in Anatolian thirteenth-century buildings. The Adina Mosque and its *badshah-ka-takht* reinforce this point.

13. An earlier example can be seen in the Zafar Khan Ghazi Mosque (A.D. 1298) in Tribeni: see Dani, op. cit., plate 1.2.

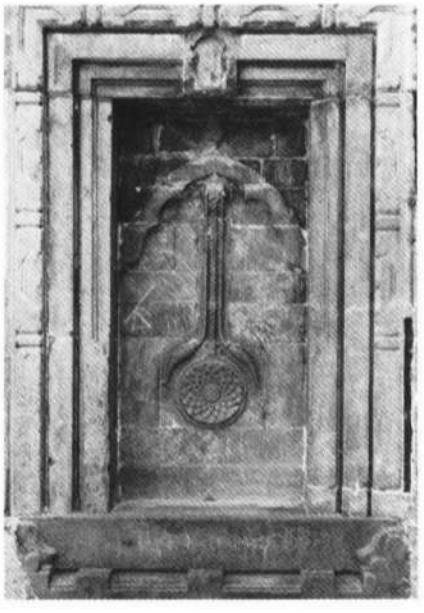
higher than the other domes around the *riwaqs*. A carved balustrade must have enclosed the platform, since there are traces of mortices below the outer arches. What remains of the carved cornice at platform level indicates a fine sense of decoration for the area and may reinforce the feeling voiced by Abid Ali Khan that 'the building was never properly finished'.[14] Were carved designs planned for the large piers and columns in the manner they had been implemented in mihrabs and terracotta decorations? Yet the 'militant' style of architecture produced under the Tughluqids in the same period called for very little ornament on the surface of buildings, and this is echoed on the *riwaqs* of the *sahn*.

14. Abid Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 129.

Suleyman tomb chamber

From all the accounts[15] the tomb chamber seems to have been an afterthought, which required the alteration of the access leading up to the upper mosque. Without any knowledge of earlier examples in the region, it is difficult to suggest the original appearance of that part of the outer west wall before the added tomb. The overall pattern of the large but shallow buttresses on it has been preserved and can be seen on the partition wall between the chamber and the upper mosque. With the collapse of the nine domes and some of the outer walls, this elevation is visible from the outside. The shallow buttresses number three and contain the two doors: to their north is a blind niche in a rectangular frame in the same style as those on the other outer, shallow buttresses but at a slightly lower level. The recessed area between them, outside as well as inside the chamber, are marked by a low fencing pattern in stone. Stone facing was used up to a

15. Cunningham, op. cit.; Abid Ali Khan, op. cit., pp. 138-9; and Hasan, op. cit., pp. 90-93.



Blind niche in tomb chamber. [Photo: The author.]

So-called Suleyman's tomb chamber. [Photo: The author.]

height indicated approximately by the top of the entrance portal to the side of the *iwan*. The remaining part of the wall and roofing would have been of baked brick, and for decoration terracotta and a plain plaster finish.

Since the nine-domed chamber is square, the same pattern of buttresses and fencing can be accepted for the four outer walls of the chamber. Great care was taken in the siting of the two outer walls against the mosque itself. On both sides they start at the level of a buttress prior to its decorative niche. Only four of the possible eight elongated *jali* windows have survived, now filled with plain baked bricks. Above soars the outline of a fine brick arch, presumably reflecting those of the dome. A similar arch rises above the larger of the two doorways into the upper mosque; the opening is off centre, another possible indication of the later addition of the tomb chamber. Finally, the outer portal is by far the largest entrance of the complex, with a triple stone frame, perhaps unfinished since there is minimal carving on it. The remains of the steps leading up to it reveal little of the original platform and its fine stonework.

Monumental doorway into tomb chamber. [Photo: Catherine B. Asher.]

Mihrabs and inscriptions

Over forty mihrabs line the *qibla* wall, with a great variety of stone and terracotta decoration;[16] they combine the best in geometric and foliated motifs, drawing on both Islamic and Hindu traditions. This work alone warrants a separate study. The cusped arches over most of the mihrabs point to an earlier tradition from across the Oxus, and are also found in Isfahan.[17] The height of sophistication and originality is reached on the *qibla* wall in the *iwan* hall. The highly decorated *mimbar* stands to the right; two of its broken steps reveal the reuse of Hindu stonework; the stone slab that covers its upper level recalls a coffered type of ceiling on its inner surface, with a circular opening at its centre.[18] To the left of the wall, a secondary concave mihrab occupies a space approximately half that of the main central mihrab. Both *mimbar* and secondary mihrab are dominated by a lotus-shaped rosette placed on either side of a crown-like pediment above the main mihrab.

The central axis of the *qibla* wall is stressed not only by the trefoil arch of the main mihrab, but also at its centre by a protruding calligraphic band that is the dominant feature of a composite lintel above the mihrab, halfway between the ground and the tip of the higher decorative triangle; this triangle is filled with an arabesque carved in low relief. At the centre of the so-called crown, the lower triangle encapsulates the following sentence in Arabic: 'God Almighty said: "Oh you believers, bow in prayer, touch the ground with your forehead and worship"', which reads as a most forceful order. As to the central calligraphic band, this contains a Koranic quotation from Sura 9, *al-Tauba*, Repentance, verses 18 and 19. It is one of the most popular quotations; not surprisingly, since it emphasizes God's blessings on the true believer who fears Him, pays his alms, and prays.

Only three other secondary concave mihrabs have been framed with further quotations; all three stand in the upper mosque, south of the two doorways and beyond a flat mihrab with only the Confession of Faith: 'There is but one God and Muhammad is his Prophet.' The carving on the three mihrabs also reveals virtuoso skills of earlier times, although the decoration is chiefly geometric. Mihrab number 3 has a seven-lobed niche with an added calligraphic panel, whereas on either side the two other mihrabs, each with a five-lobed niche, have only a pattern of rosettes in the panel above the niche. The calligraphy of the three frames rises above a regular scrollwork often noticed on Il-Khanid decorative panels.[19]

From north to south, the Koranic quotation on the first

16. There is at least one secondary mihrab in the south prayer hall, which also stands off-centre from the brick arch above it.

17. The cusped arch can also be seen above the window. The feature came into the northern plains of India through Afghanistan (mihrab in the Shah Mu'ayya-ad-Din at Charkh-i Logar south of Kabul) from Transoxiana. There is a recently discovered portal to the Jurjir Mosque in Isfahan dating back to the Buyid period.

18. Only the first slab from the wall remains *in situ*. An open half circle is still clearly visible.

19. Wilber, op. cit., ills. 18-8; Oljeytu's mihrab in the Jami mosque of Isfahan, dated A.D. 1310.

of the three concave mihrabs is a continuation of the verses on the main mihrab, from Sura 9, verses 20-2. In essence the text recalls that God rewards the believers who have followed His way with paradise and everlasting bliss. As already indicated, the second and central mihrab of this group differs from the two others with its additional inscribed panel above the five-lobed niche. It encloses verse 57 of Sura 33, *al-Ahzab*, the Confederates, and emphasizes the blessed nature of the Prophet. From Sura 48, *al-Fath*, Victory, verses 28 and 29, comes its framing inscription; here God has fulfilled the vision He gave to His ultimate prophet Muhammad; only the true believers are fearless and know how to pray. The last mihrab is framed by verse 256 from Sura 2, *al-Baqara*, the Cow; this underlines the almightiness and absolute knowledge of God. Such a choice of quotations from the Koran stresses the oneness of the nature of God and His sending of the prophet Muhammad on the one hand, and the duties and ultimate rewards for the true believers on the other. These are the chosen themes considered most suitable for a newly conquered land, the population of which should be attracted to Islam and the unique character of God in a land of many divinities and reincarnations. As in Buddhism or medieval Europe, it is the ruler who leads whatever faith he sponsors. Religious buildings like the Adina Mosque testify to the ruler's beliefs and to his duty to convert the local population. Whether the worshipping takes place in the central *iwan* or in the upper mosque, there is continuity in the Koranic message.

The various aspects of architecture in the *qibla* area of the mosque—*iwan*, prayer halls, upper mosque and tomb chamber—and the Koranic inscriptions found here, cannot but strengthen the importance of the Adina Mosque in the context of the Indian subcontinent during the last quarter of the fourteenth century. No other such grandiose construction had ever been brought to completion, notwithstanding the final stage of the Quwwat-al-Islam Mosque in Delhi. Even the rival dynasty of the Tughluqids never attempted the monumental size and the sophistication of low relief carving visible at Pandua. No doubt such an achievement reflects the power, strength and vision of the newly founded dynasty, which had set out to create an empire for itself in a land that had seen strong Hindu rulers and the last of Buddhism in India. The feeling for impressive proportions, the search for foreign forms such as the *iwan* and the remarkable quality of the carving all combine to make the Adina Mosque a unique experience in an architectural tradition which reverted in the fifteenth century to the sole use of baked brick for most of its monuments.

The early Muslim monuments at Bagerhat

Johana E. van Lohuizen de Leeuw

Over the past nine years Unesco has been assisting the Government of Bangladesh in the preparation of a programme to safeguard its historical monuments. The Buddhist monastery of Paharpur was immediately selected as one of the sites to be restored, for it is one of the largest monastic establishments discovered anywhere in South Asia and consequently a monument of international importance. Later on, the site of Bagerhat was added to the programme, as it contains the most imposing and best-preserved buildings of the early Muslim period in Bangladesh. Together, Paharpur and Bagerhat represent the two main historical periods of the country: the eighth to the twelfth centuries, in which Bangladesh was ruled by Buddhist monarchs, and the subsequent Muslim period, which started in the early thirteenth century.

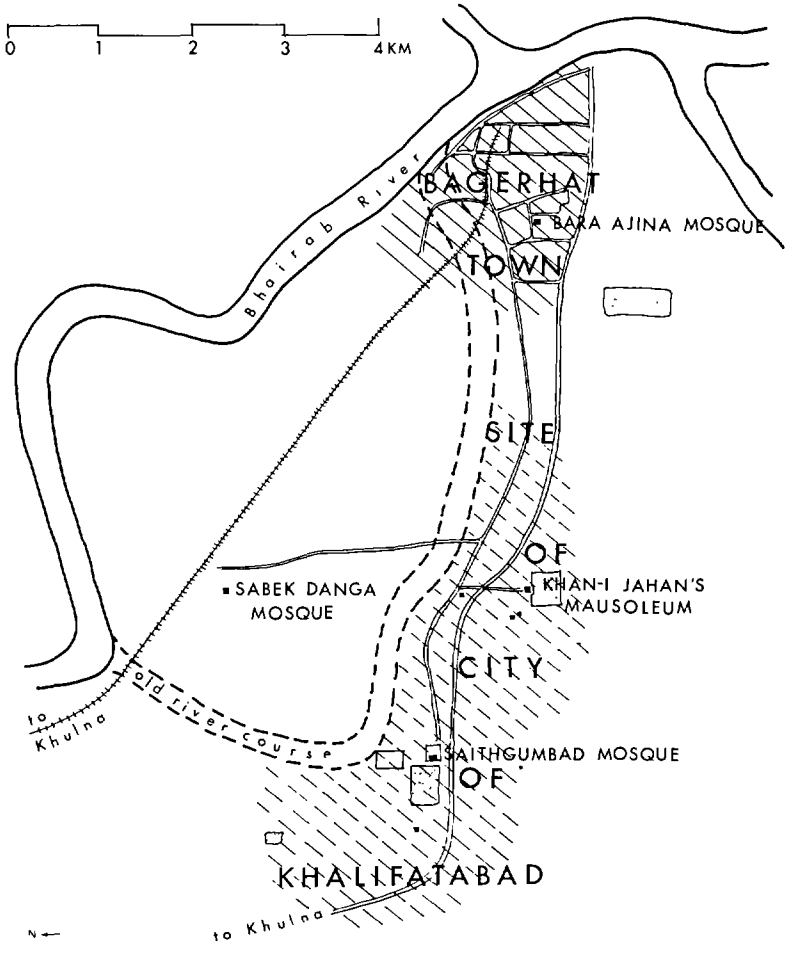
After preliminary work during the preceding years it was decided to send out a multidisciplinary team in 1982 to suggest ways and means for the rehabilitation of both sites. As Bangladesh is a delta area, the main building material is brick and consequently the monuments are often disfigured by the growth of lichen. At Bagerhat there is the additional problem of capillary action, which causes water saturated with salt to rise up in the walls. After drying out again the bricks are destroyed by the salt crystals. Moreover, there are signs of wear and tear due to the vast crowds of Muslim pilgrims visiting the holy place. Whereas the damage caused by these people is unintentional, there is unfortunately also a considerable amount of vandalism, in particular the robbing of bricks. In view of the numerous different problems at the two sites which Unesco intends to rescue,

Photographs are by the author unless otherwise indicated. For the plan of the Saithgumbad Mosque, see p. 42.

the team sent out to Bangladesh consisted of an architect-restorer, a second architect responsible for environmental planning, a hydrogeologist, an archaeologist and an economist who had to calculate and draw up the budget for all the measures suggested by the other members of the team.

In the first half of the fifteenth century Ulugh Khan-i Jahan founded a city of an unknown name not far from the present Bagerhat in Khulna District. Later it became a mint town of the independent Sultans of Bengal and was then called Khalifatabad. It is possible that the area had been settled previously but, if so, then the region had completely reverted to jungle by the time Ulugh Khan-i Jahan arrived. He founded his city in the midst of the wild and inhospitable Sunderbans, a vast, marshy and impenetrable tract along the coastline of southern Bangladesh.

Few reliable historical facts about the life of this legendary warrior-saint and founder of Khalifatabad are available. His name indicates that he was probably of Turkish stock, but it is uncertain whether he was sent out officially by the Imperial court at Delhi to found a Muslim colony in the distant and sparsely populated delta area, or whether he slipped out of the capital on his own account, or even if he



Map of Bagerhat and ancient Khalifatabad.

was rusticated from the court of Delhi and sent to the distant Sundarbans in retribution.[1] However, having founded the city of Khalifatabad, he must have ruled large areas of the marshes and the major part of the present districts of Khulna, Jessore, Patuakhali and Barisal. Several buildings constructed in the same style and material as the monuments erected by Ulugh Khan-i Jahan at Khalifatabad have been discovered in these districts and were consequently almost certainly built during his rule. In a region, 16 km north of Jessore, all the sweet-water tanks are ascribed to him, and many roads in the district are still named after him.

Though it appears that he owed no allegiance to the Sultans of Delhi, he may have been subordinated to the independent Muslim rulers of Bengal, who had their capital at Gaur, for he did not mint any coins of his own, nor did he assume any royal titles. Thus his political status remains quite vague and obscure. It seems that the physical geography of the intractable and distant Sundarbans perhaps offers a partial explanation of his virtual independence: when attacked, it is likely that he retreated into the swamps. This would also explain why neither town walls nor a fortress—which would have served him at the same time as his residence—have so far been discovered, although there is one unexcavated mound that is supposed to have been his dwelling.

The only reliable historical fact known about Ulugh Khan-i Jahan is provided by one of the inscriptions on his tombstone at Bagerhat.[2] It informs us that he died on 23 October 1459[3] and was buried the next day in the fine building that still stands on the banks of the beautiful Thakur Lake. It is here that he is said to have retired in his old age and to have led a religious life until he died. One of the reasons why history remains silent about him, apart from the date of his death, is that he probably died without issue. Had he founded not only a city but also a dynasty, then it is likely that a few more facts would have come to light by way of a hereditary family history. Two fakirs who were living near his tomb in 1867,[4] and who claimed to be his descendants, were unable to substantiate this, which they should normally have been able to do. After Ulugh Khan-i Jahan's death his capital reverted to jungle, only to be partially reclaimed very much later.

In the late eighteenth century the Nawab of Murshidabad granted a Muslim woman called Bahu Begum a *jagir* that included Bagerhat. At the time of the Permanent Settlement the East India Company changed this into an annual allowance, which lapsed after her death in 1794.[5] The *Calcutta Gazette* of 1 April 1790 carries a description of

1. Babu Gourdass Bysack, 'On the Antiquities of Bagerhat', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, 1867, p. 127.

2. A. H. Dani, 'Bibliography of the Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal (down to A.D. 1538)', appendix to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 1957, pp. 19-20.

3. A. H. Dani, *Muslim Architecture in Bengal*, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Publication No. 7, Dacca, 1961, p. 141.

4. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. II, *Districts of Nadia and Jessor*, Calcutta, 1867; reprinted, Dacca, 1973, p. 230.

5. *Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Khulna*, edited by K. G. M. Latiful Bari, Dacca, 1978, p. 374.

the monuments at Bagerhat but in the early nineteenth century the region seems to have reverted to insignificance; prior to 1863 it was still 'a piece of low jungle land'.[6]

We are therefore left guessing about the nebulous and intriguing personality of this staunch warrior and pious chief whose memory is still cherished throughout the area he once ruled, and who became the most important *pir* or saint of the Sundarbans. Since 1866 at least, pilgrims are known to have flocked to his tomb[7] but undoubtedly his grave was a centre of worship long before this.

Local tradition describes him as a wise and benevolent ruler devoted to the cause of Islam. According to legend he erected 360 mosques throughout his domains and beautified his capital with an equal number of sweet-water tanks,[8] so indispensable in the highly saline area of the Sundarbans. These artificial lakes and ponds are often called after his generals, some of whose tombs have survived in the region. The ancient city of Khalifatabad lay strung out over more than 6 km along the banks of the former course of the Bhairab River, and covered roughly the area between the present town of Bagerhat in the east and the Ghora Lake in the west.

With the exception of a few outlying remains, all the ancient monuments and ruins are situated along or near the main road of the former city, which skirted the banks of the old and now dried up bed of the Bhairab River. This road, which is known as Khan-i Jahan's road, was originally almost 2.5 m wide.[9] It has now been metalled, but in 1867 its brick-on-edge surface was still in 'fair order' and the road 'much used'.[10] Several other old roads, which can partly be traced even now, lead off at right angles from this main artery. In 1866 one of them was said to run directly from Gaur to Chittagong,[11] though this has never been verified. The geographical situation of both Bagerhat and Chittagong would, however, seem to make it far easier to travel by boat across the Bay of Bengal than by land, in view of all the rivers which would then have to be crossed before reaching Chittagong. Tradition reports that Ulugh Khan-i Jahan went on pilgrimage regularly to this last town in order to pay his respects to a Muslim saint whose historicity is confirmed by local sources in Chittagong.[12] In this connection it is interesting to note that there exists a single-domed mosque known locally as Hammad's Mosque at Masjidda, near Kumira not far from Chittagong.[13] It is described as a structure built in the Khan-i Jahan style, and may consequently have been erected during his time. In any case its architecture confirms the close connections between Khalifatabad and Chittagong in the fifteenth century. Apart

6. *Ibid.* 373.

7. See note 19 below.

8. *Bangladesh District Gazetteers*, op. cit., p. 46.

9. See note 19 below. Other sources mention as much as 12 feet, i.e. more than 3.5 m.

10. Hunter, op. cit., p. 229.

11. See note 19 below.

12. Hunter, op. cit., p. 230.

13. A. Karim, 'Two Hitherto Unnoticed Sultanate Mosques of Chittagong', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Vol. XII, No. 3, December 1967, pp. 321-31, especially pp. 325-31.

from the many roads and tanks attributed to Ulugh Khan-i Jahan, some brick bridges are also believed to have been built by him.[14]

In addition to all these utilitarian works, Ulugh Khan-i Jahan undoubtedly erected his own mausoleum and almost certainly also the spectacular and most impressive Saithgumbad Mosque—two buildings we shall discuss further on. The area of the former city of Khalifatabad is dotted with the remains of more than fifty ancient monuments and tanks, most of which are unidentified and in a complete state of ruin. Until now no scientific excavations have been carried out anywhere in the area, and we have therefore suggested an investigation of certain specific mounds that for one reason or another seem to be of special interest.

The main archaeological problem with all these remains is the robbing of useful bricks. This process must have been going on for centuries and is carried on down to the present day. In one specific case I could trace the course of a former boundary wall surrounding a monument to some length by following the line of an excavated ditch around the building, a procedure which might be called 'archaeology in reverse'. All the robbed bricks were and are used by the local population for the construction of houses as well as other useful purposes, and also for the pavement of roads, as already reported in 1867.[15] Owing to this continuing process an incredible amount of harm has unfortunately been done in the past, and this vandalism should now be stopped as soon as possible. The team has therefore proposed to designate two Monument Areas in which all the remaining buildings will be included; at the same time these monuments will be placed on the official List of Protected Monuments.

The style of these structures is a blending of local Bengali elements on the one hand, and architectural features derived from the imperial buildings of Delhi on the other.[16] Together, the shrines at Bagerhat form a highly important group of monuments representing the initial phase of Muslim architecture in Bangladesh. Their main architectural features are four corner towers, a curved cornice and fine terracotta decorations.[17]

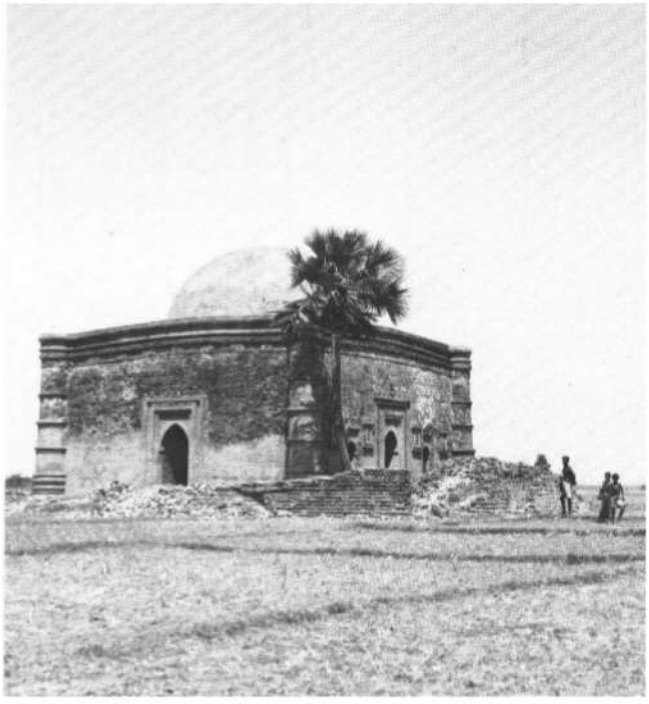
A good example of this style dating undoubtedly from Khan-i Jahan's time—the middle of the fifteenth century—is the Chuna Khola Mosque. It is beautifully decorated with carved bricks, but unfortunately the building has been damaged severely by salt water rising up in the walls. Several measures, such as a damp-proof course in the existing brick work, are now suggested in order to prevent further deterioration. The Chuna Khola Mosque stands in the open

14. *Bangladesh Distric Gazetteers*, op. cit., p. 377.

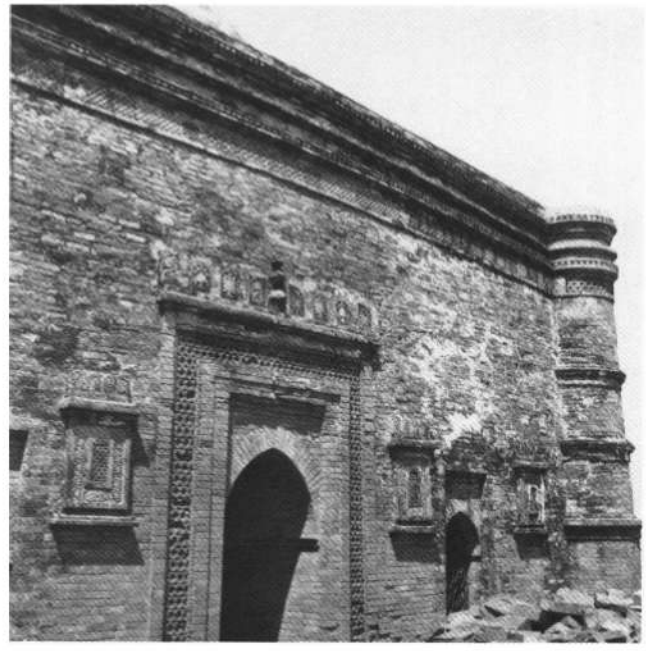
15. Hunter, op. cit., pp. 227-8.

16. The number of publications dealing with the monuments at Bagerhat is very small. Only six devote more than a few lines to them but even these confine themselves to the two most important buildings: the mausoleum of Ulugh Khan-i Jahan and the Saithgumbad Mosque. The six are: Bysack, op. cit., p. 126-35; Hunter, op. cit., pp. 227-31; R. E. M. Wheeler, *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan*, London, 1950, pp. 114-15; Dani, op. cit., 1961, pp. 142-7; Syed Mahmudul Hasan, *Mosque Architecture of pre-Mughal Bengal*, Dacca, 1979, pp. 151-5, and *Muslim Monuments of Bangladesh*, Dacca, 1980, pp. 86-90. Some of the other buildings are now mentioned in a pamphlet published recently by the Department of Archaeology and Museums: Nazimuddin Ahmed, *Bagerhat Monuments*, Dacca, 1980. See also note 18.

17. Dani's statements that 'the outer walls present a bare appearance without any plaster or ornamental variation' and that 'no terracotta art is displayed in these buildings' require some modification, though it is true that none of the monuments at Bagerhat are decorated as profusely as some of the buildings at, for instance, Gaur. See Dani, op. cit., 1961, pp. 28 and 143.

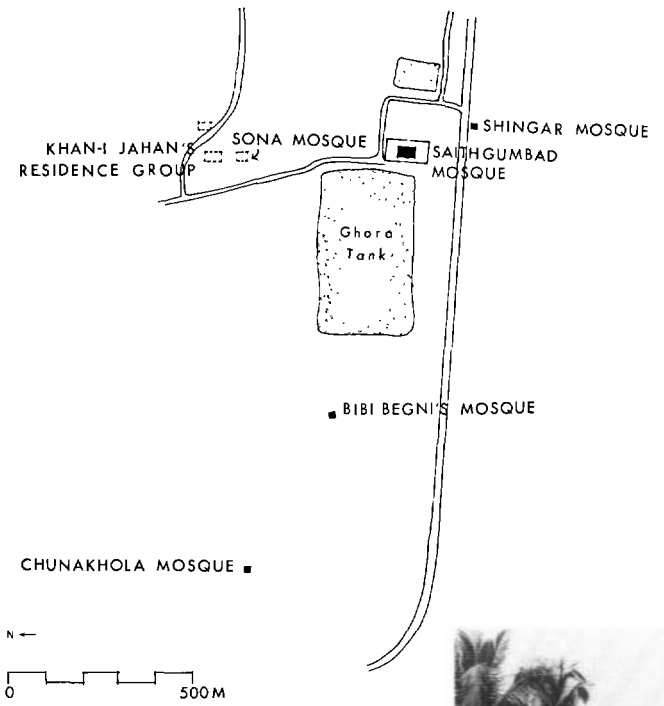


Bagerhat, Chuna Khola Mosque.



Chuna Khola Mosque, east side.

Bagerhat, Bib Begni's Mosque.

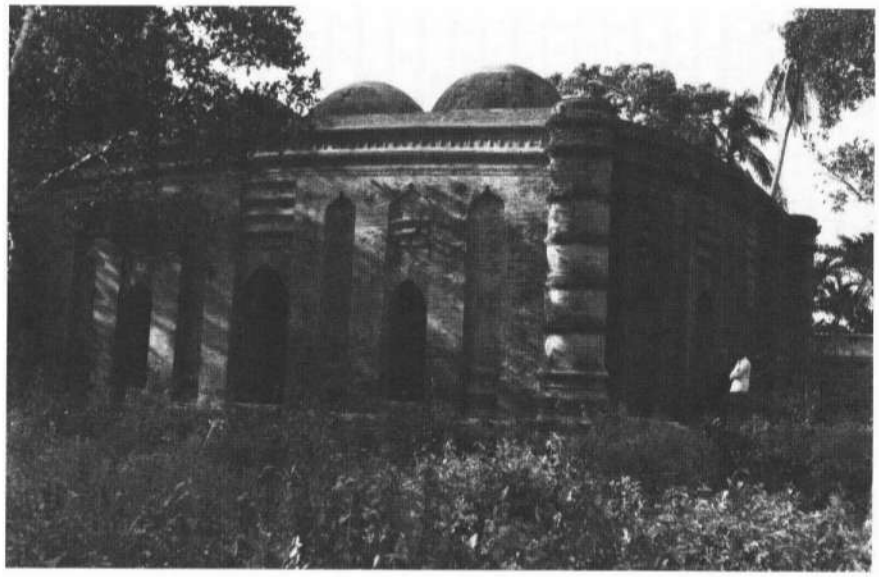


Bagerhat, Saithgumbad monument area.

Bagerhat, partly restored Ranvijapur Mosque. (Photo: Unesco.)

fields but many of the other monuments, such as Bibi Begni's Mosque, are surrounded by the lush vegetation so typical of this region; it is, therefore, often difficult to photograph them. Bibi Begni's Mosque has already been partly restored, and so has the Ranvijaypur Mosque. Unfortunately the small domes on the four corner towers of both sanctuaries are missing. The three buildings just mentioned all have one dome. That of Ranvijaypur is, moreover, the largest dome anywhere in Bangladesh. There is one shrine at Bagerhat which has nine domes[18] and for want of a name it has been called the Nine-domed Mosque. It is an elegant structure which, however, badly needs attention. Some monuments, such as Zinda Pir's Mosque, have already partly collapsed, but we hope to consolidate its remains as far as possible.

18. For a description of this building, see *Pakistan Archaeology*, No. 5, Karachi, 1968, pp. 21-2.

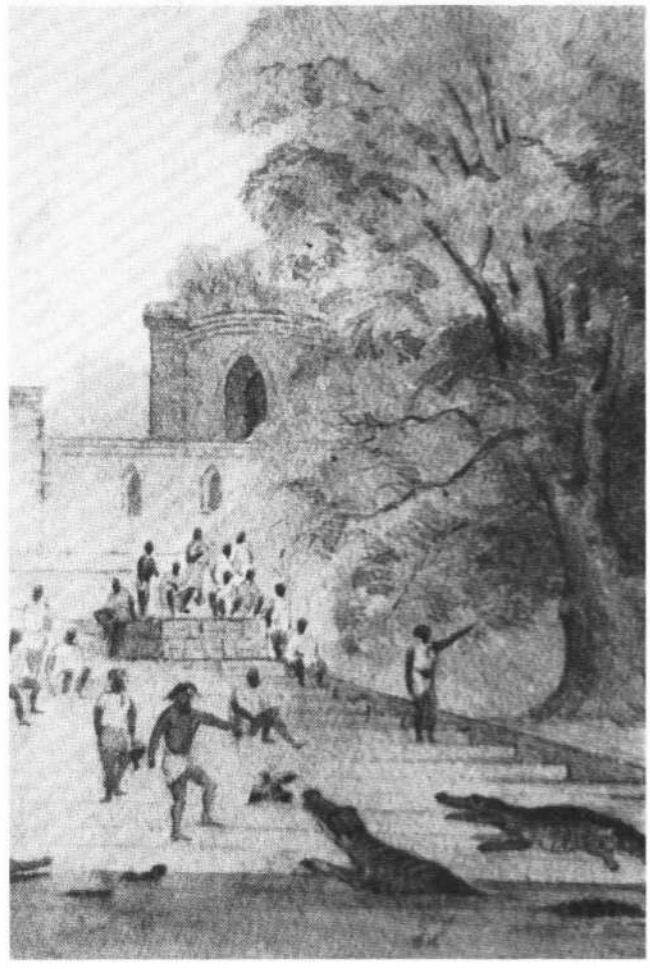


Bagerhat, Nine-Domed Mosque.

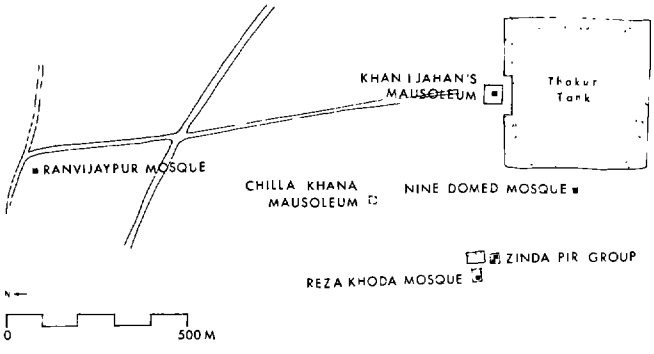
Bagerhat, partly collapsed Zina Pir's Mosque.

Bagerhat, Khan-i Jahan's Tomb.

Earliest representation of Khan-i Jahan's mausoleum. Watercolour made by Reginald Craufuird Sterndale in or just after 1866. [Photo: private collection, London.]



Bagerhat, Khan-i Jahan monument area.



The main edifice in one of the two Monument Areas is Khan-i Jahan's austere mausoleum. Owing to the holiness of the site it has survived the ravages of time. It is covered by a large dome and stands on a very high embankment made from the excavated material of the Thakur Dighi. This square artificial lake was almost certainly constructed by Ulugh Khan-i Jahan himself. A broad flight of steps leads down from the embankment to the lovely sheet of water. This lake, as well as the feeding of the crocodiles that live in it, are already mentioned in 1866 an unpublished manuscript I was lucky enough to discover recently in a private collection. Apart from a description of Ulugh Khan-i Jahan's mausoleum, it also contains several charming water-colours made by the author, Reginald Craufuird Sterndale, who was appointed Magistrate of the Sundarbans in 1866.[19] One of these illustrations shows the tomb and must be the earliest representation of the monument. While the author records that the adjacent buildings 'have fallen into ruins', the mausoleum itself is said to be 'in a fine state of preservation'. The same manuscript gives a careful des-

19. R. C. Sterndale, *Flotsam and Jetsam or Waifs and Strays from Sunderbundwaters and Central Indian Forests*, unpublished manuscript containing the description of a visit to Bagerhat in or just after 1866.

cription of the interior of the tomb, with some interesting details hitherto unknown from the few publications dealing with the monument:

The floor was covered with hexagonal encaustic tiles, of many patterns and colors, the cheif [*sic*] being blue white and yellow. The moulding round the doorways and praying niches and around the cornice are mostly of the same patterns and workmanship as those as Issuripoor, being carved in the brick.

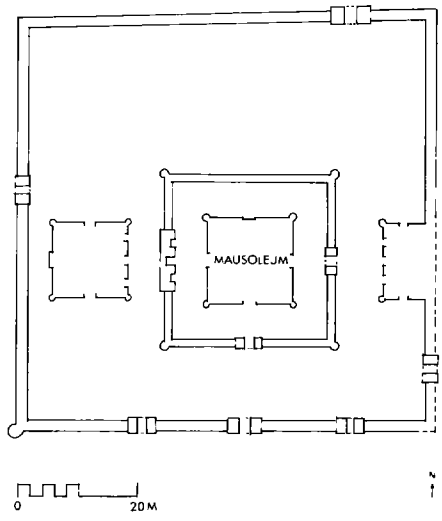
The tomb itself is of black stone, raised on three steps of the same material, the whole being covered with beautifully carved verses from the Koran in Arabic and Persian, those on the upper part being inlaid in scarlet and gold. The stone is said to have been brought from Gaur and it is exactly the same as that found in the ruins at Gaur and those at Rajmahal, which were brought from the former place.

Today the encaustic tiles on the floor have disappeared, but a few of them are now inserted in the three steps around the tomb itself. The scarlet and gold of the inscriptions on the upper part of the tomb have also vanished. As in many other Muslim mausoleums there is a crypt under the building containing the actual grave. In the early 1870s its entrance was opened up, and a flight of steps was discovered leading down to the crypt, the walls of which were found to be covered with inscriptions. At that time there was no opportunity to study them but it would now seem imperative to try and convince the religious incumbents of the shrine to allow the Department of Archaeology and Museums to make copies of these inscriptions, as they may well contain highly important historical information regarding Ulugh Khan-i Jahan's life.

Apart from the fact that the former entrance to the building on the north should be opened up again, the four corner turrets of the inner compound wall have to be restored where necessary. These turrets reflect the four large towers on the corners of the monument. On the southwest corner of the outer compound wall one such turret has survived, but the other three have disappeared and will now be rebuilt. In the inner enclosure wall baluster-*jalis* have been incorporated at regular distances. In the unpublished manuscript just quoted, the outer wall is described as 'loopholed', implying that in former days it had *jalis* similar to those of the inner enclosure wall, and these should now all be restored.

To the east of the mausoleum the outer compound wall contains the remains of a small building which seems to have been incorporated in it. There are indications that this structure once had a strongly curved roof and cornice, which would imply that it dates from a much later period

Khan-i Jahan's mausoleum complex.



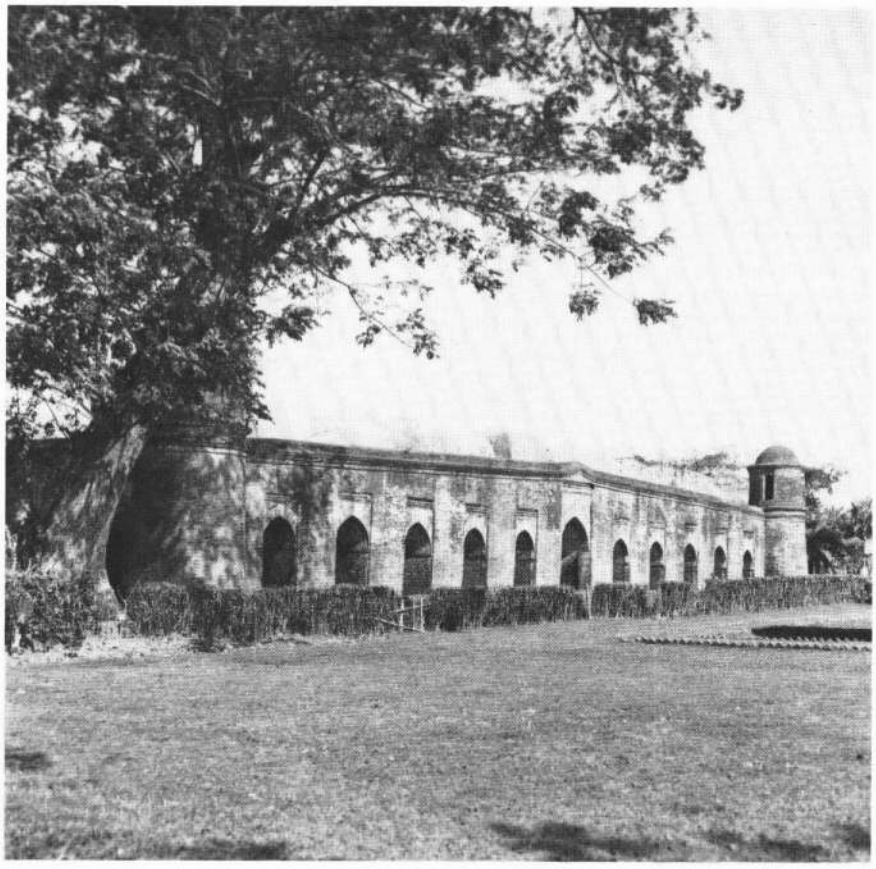
Jali of carved brick from Khan-i Jahan's mausoleum.

Bagerhat, partly restored Singar Mosque.

Wedge-shaped brick discovered where corner of former wall of Singar Mosque should be.

than the tomb itself. However, the location of this building exactly in the axis of the mausoleum and opposite one of the two entrances of the inner compound wall seems to indicate that this small structure was once the original gateway of the complex; the gateway on the north used today has no axial relation whatsoever with the main monument. The two corner turrets against the western wall of this small building support this suggestion. Its strongly curved roof and cornice would then be a much later restoration.

In connection with Khan-i Jahan's compound walls we must now take up the Singar Mosque. This is located in the other proposed Monument Area, which centres around the



Bagerhat, Saithgumbad Mosque from southeast.

great Saithgumbad Mosque. The Department of Archaeology and Museums has already restored the Singar Mosque to some extent, but its corner towers are still in a shocking state and will soon need more attention. After discovering traces of the former compound wall I calculated the position of one of its corners, and to my great joy uncovered a wedge-shaped brick at this point, which proves that the corners of this boundary wall must once have had turrets similar to those of the enclosure walls of Khan-i Jahan's mausoleum. Such corner turrets would, therefore, seem to be a common architectural feature of this period.

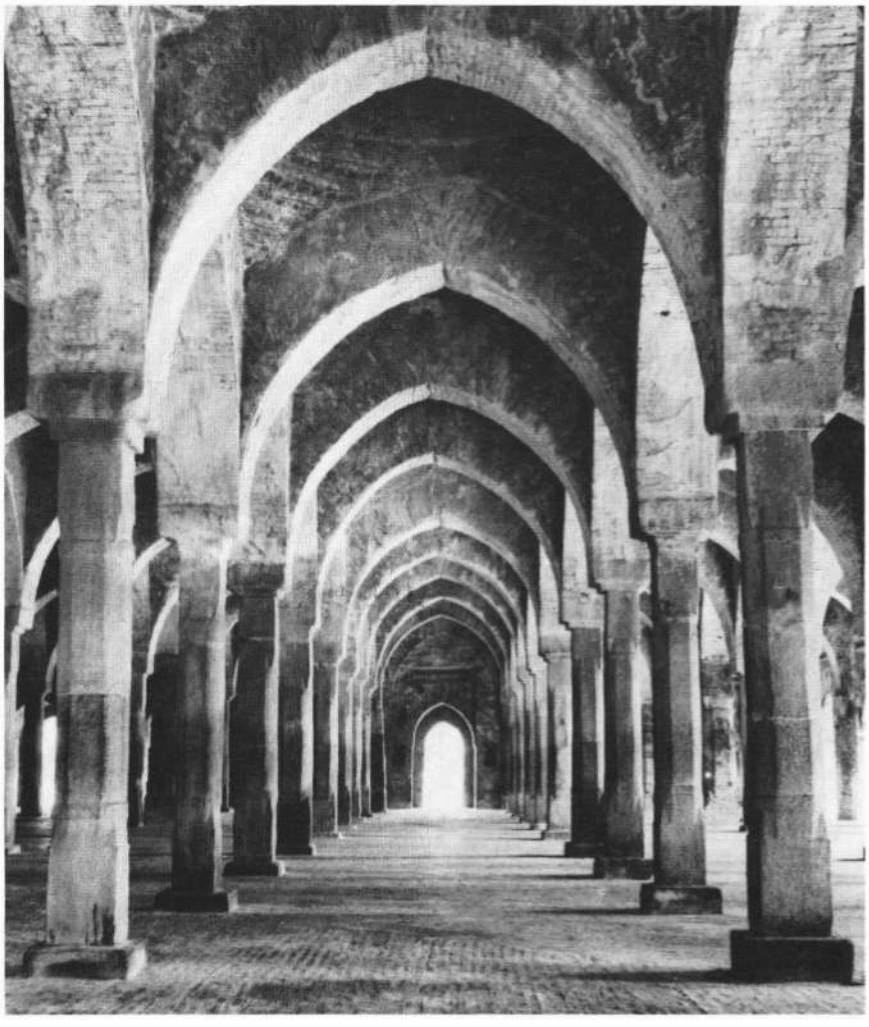
Finally we come to the most important monument at Bagerhat, the spectacular and impressive Saithgumbad Mosque, which is the largest mosque in Bangladesh, measuring 48 × 32.5 m. It is the main building in the second proposed Monument Area and is located on the banks of the lovely Ghora Dighi. Like the mosque itself, this artificial lake was almost certainly constructed by Ulugh Khan-i Jahan. The mosque is believed to be the earliest example of a structure with a more or less curvilinear cornice. This cornice, however, is rather unusual: it is not exactly curvilinear but slopes away in two straight lines from a small pediment over the central doorway. The building has a fine entrance

gateway, which is in an excellent state of preservation. The alignment of the compound wall could be traced for the greater part and will be reconstructed in the near future. On the front or eastern side the mosque has eleven arched doorways, the one in the centre being larger than the others. On each of the four corners are sturdy domed towers, two of which served as minarets. Their tapering walls which are not encountered in any other building in Bengal are reminiscent of the Tughluq style of architecture at Delhi. As such they are an interesting feature, for they would seem to point back to Ulugh Khan-i Jahan's place of origin.

The name of the monument, meaning 'sixty-domed mosque', is a misnomer, for the brick building is covered by seventy-seven domes,[20] which are supported by sixty slender stone pillars. The greater number of these domes are hemispherical, but seven in the central row are *char-chala*, i.e. four-sided. These are believed to be the earliest known examples of the well-known hut-shaped roof in Bangladesh.[21]

20. Adding the four domes on the corner towers the total is, in fact, eighty-one.

21. Hasan, op. cit., 1980, p. 90.



Saithgumbad Mosque interior. [Photo: Courtesy of the Department of Archaeology and Museums of Bangladesh.]

These *char-chalas*, as well as the strange curvilinear cornice and the tapering walls of the corner towers, all seem to indicate that the Saithgumbad Mosque stands at the beginning of the architectural development at Bagerhat. It was, therefore, almost certainly the first building constructed by Ulugh Khan-i-Jahan, for his mausoleum already shows all the characteristics of the mature style. Although the grand concept of the Saithgumbad Mosque could be interpreted as an effort on the part of Khan-i Jahan to establish his prestige, it undoubtedly also expressed his devotion to Islam.

The glorious interior of the building is particularly imposing. In 1867 the roof was said to be covered with jungle,[22] but already during the British period measures were taken to repair the edifice.[23] At present the main threat is the humidity, which encourages the growth of lichen and the encrustation of salt, endangering the beautiful decoration in carved brick of the ten mihrabs in the western wall. Unesco's efforts to save this magnificent mosque are obviously fully justified, for the Saithgumbad Mosque is undoubtedly one of the most impressive Muslim monuments in the whole of the Indian subcontinent.

22. Hunter, op. cit., p. 229.
23. *Archaeological Survey of India Annual Reports*, 1903-04, pp. 52-53; 1906-07, p. 8; 1917-18, part 1, p. 9; 1921-22, p. 77; 1929-30, p. 44; 1930-34, p. 37.

Saithgumbad Mosque, entrance gateway.

Saithgumbad Mosque, principal entrance on east.

Eight Sultanate mosques in Dhaka District

Perween Hasan

The District of Dhaka is located centrally in modern Bangladesh, and has existed in its present form since 1871. It has an area of 9,340 sq km, and is bounded on all sides except the north by large rivers. The *Ain-i-Akbari*[1] gives the first comprehensive list of administrative units: in those days Bengal was divided into nineteen *sarkars*. The area of Dhaka was shared by two *sarkars*, Bazuha and Sonargaon.

The Sultanate period in Bengal dates from A.D. 1338, when Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shah declared himself the independent ruler of Sonargaon, up to 1576, when Bengal finally became a province of the Mughal empire. Throughout this period, Sonargaon remained an important capital city, a mint town and a river port. The Mughals made Dhaka city the capital of Bengal.

The eight mosques of the Sultanate period extant in the District of Dhaka may be classified into two groups. The first and predominant type is the small square single-domed structure. Six mosques belong to this group:

1. Binat Bibi's Mosque at Narinda in Old Dhaka City.
2. Baba Saleh's Mosque at Khondkartola (Bandar)
3. Mosque at Mograpara (Sonargaon)
4. Baba Saleh's Mosque (adjoining his tomb at Bandar).
5. Goaldi Mosque at Sonargaon.
6. Mosque at Kusufganj.

The second type, of which these are two examples, is the rectangular mosque with six domes:

7. Mosque at Muazzampur.
8. Mosque at Rampal.

Except for the mosques at Goaldi and Rampal, none of the buildings listed here have rated more than a mere mention

1. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, transl. by H. S. Jarrett and revised by J. N. Sarkar, Calcutta, 1949, Vol. II, pp. 150-2.

Photographs and drawings are by the author

in any scholarly work. Only these two mosques are protected by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, and though extensively restored they retain many original features. The other mosques are in use by local communities, and have gone through several repairs and renovations, in some cases even enlargements. In spite of this, the basic forms of the original structures can still be recognized. The usual mode of enlargement is to add a verandah on the east; less commonly, one or more walls are knocked down and new space is added, which becomes part of the prayer chamber.

All the mosques are of brick with occasional use of stone in pillars, at the springing of arches, and sometimes in carved mihrabs. The buildings have curved cornices and four attached corner towers, which are generally octagonal. The occasional absence of towers can safely be attributed to later repairs. All arches are pointed, and the domes are hemispherical and drumless. The thickness of the walls varies from 1.3 to 2.3 m.

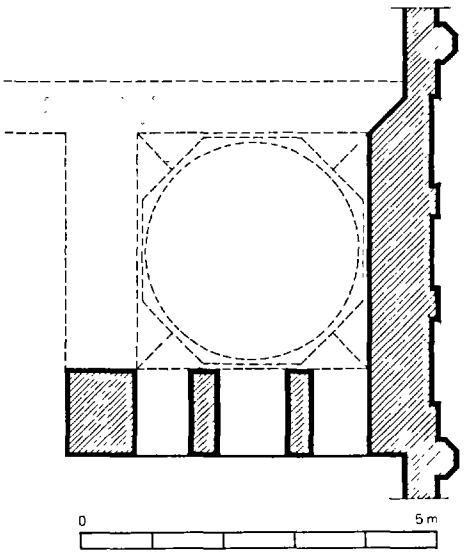
Square single-domed mosques

In addition to the characteristic features of Sultanate mosques noted above, the single-domed mosques possess a few other features unique to this type. There is usually a square chamber of small or medium size, with a dome above resting on squinches. This is true of all except one mosque in this group, that at Mograpara. There are three front entrances, the central one larger than the other two, and two other entrances on the north and the south sides. On the west wall, there are usually three mihrabs directly opposite the eastern entrances and reflecting the same hierarchy; that is, the central one is larger and more elaborate than the two at the sides. Five out of the six mosques in this group (the exception being the Yusufganj Mosque) are dated by inscriptions.

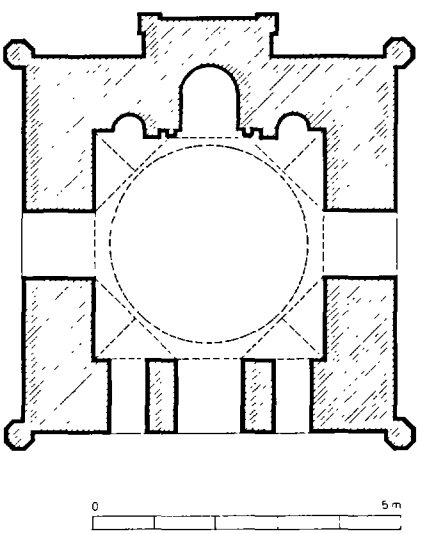
Binat Bibi's Mosque at Narinda in old Dhaka City

This mosque is situated on the bank of the Dulai Khal, a canal which now has been filled to accommodate a wide metalled road. The stone inscription slab,[2] which bears the date of A.H. 861/A.D. 1456, is now fixed on the outside of the east wall above the original central doorway. The inscription, in Arabic and Persian, does not mention any ruling king and simply describes the sponsor as the humble Musammat Bakht Binat, daughter of Marhamat.

2. Sayid Aulad Hasan, *Notes on the Antiquities of Dacca*, Dacca, 1904, pp. 27–8.



Mosque at Narinda, plan as it exists today.



Mosque at Narinda, reconstructed plan.

The building is now a congregational mosque and has been completely renovated and extended in all directions except the north. The original building was only 3.2 m square. The most recent extension has been the addition of two floors above the original one. However, it is still possible to state conjecturally what the structure of the original small mosque was like. The dome, the north wall, parts of the east wall, and only the upper portions of the south and west walls of the original structure have been retained. The engaged octagonal corner towers and curved cornice of this mosque are perceptible from the north. The drumless dome and curved cornice may also be viewed from the roof of the first floor, reached by a modern staircase.

Recessed panels on the exterior of the north wall emphasize the curved cornice and a blind arched window. This blind panel is surely an opening that has been blocked, as the alley on this side of the mosque is extremely narrow and leads to congested residential quarters. The recessed planes and the mosaic that covers the exterior of this wall and the domes seem to be later additions.

The first extension of the mosque was achieved by knocking down most of the south wall and duplicating the original square chamber on the south side. The new area is roofed by another low dome. A second and larger extension was carried out on the western side of the mosque by removing the lower portion of the mihrab wall which in the first extention was continuous with that of the original. The upper portion of this wall is supported by two pillars, and the whole western extension is roofed by a flat ceiling supported by concrete beams. A new verandah has been added on the east.

Mosque at Khondkartola (Bandar)

The mosque is locally known as Shahi Masjid. Bandar is just across the Sitalakhya river from Narayanganj, about 17 km southeast of Dhaka city and its river port.

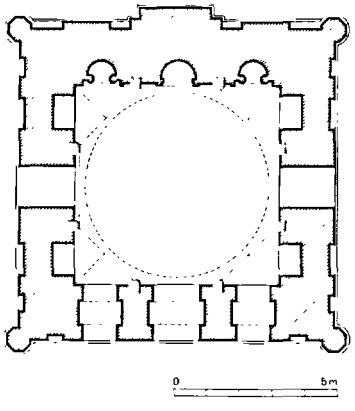
The Arabic inscription of the mosque[3] states that it was built by Malik al-Muazzam Baba Saleh during the reign of the Sultan Abul Muzaffar Fath Shah, and gives the exact date of 1st of Dhul Qa'dah, A.H. 886 (2 January 1482).

The exterior of the mosque—plastered surface, articulation with recessed rectangles, and dome raised on a drum—is proof of renovations undertaken during Mughal times. More recently a verandah with a corrugated iron sheet roof has been added in front. The interior of the mosque, however, retains most of its original scheme.

Measuring 6 m square internally, this structure is much

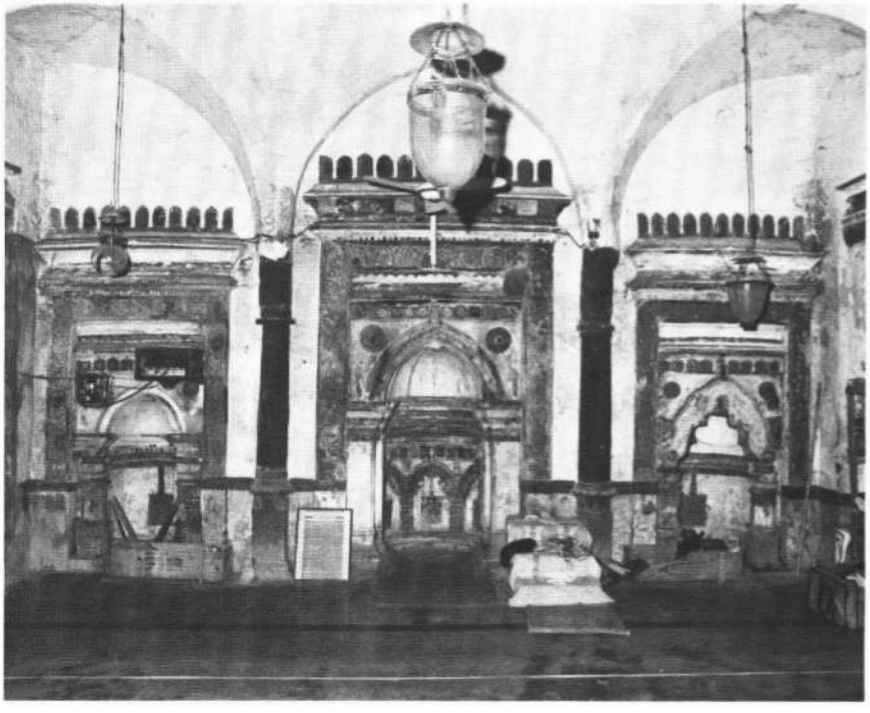
3. H. Blochman, *Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal (Muhammedan Period)*, Calcutta, 1968, pp. 77-8.

Mosque at Khondkartola, view from north.



Mosque at Khondkartola, plan.

Mosque at Khondkartola, *qibla* wall.



larger than Binat Bibi's Mosque. Baba Saleh's title, Malik al-Muazzam, gives us an idea of his official and social standing, and hence probably the largeness of his mosque. The three entrance doorways in the east are framed by arches outside and inside, with a pointed barrel vault in the middle. There is a doorway on both north and south sides, and two rectangular niches on either side of these entrances. The dome is carried on squinches, and the arches of these spring from the tops of stone pilasters, of which there are two in each wall. The three mihrabs on the west wall retain some original terracotta decoration in spite of all the plaster and paint. The lower section of the niche of the cental mihrab has three cusped arches with a rectangular motif hanging from a chain that descends from the apex of the arches. The rectangular motifs are not uniform in design: the one on the right has a hanging lamp engraved on it, while the other two have rosettes. There are *kalashas* (pots) with foliage between the arches, and a band of miniature pillars and cusped arches with floral discs inside. The two side mihrabs have lost most of their original decoration, and the surfaces of the hanging rectangular motifs are effaced.

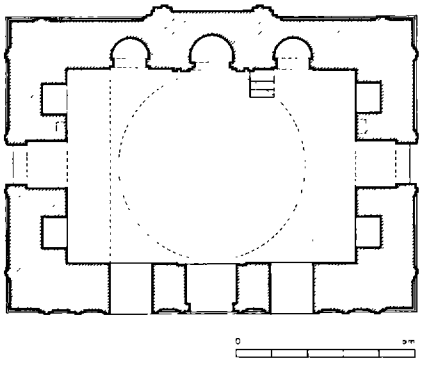
Mosque at Mograpara (Sonargaon)

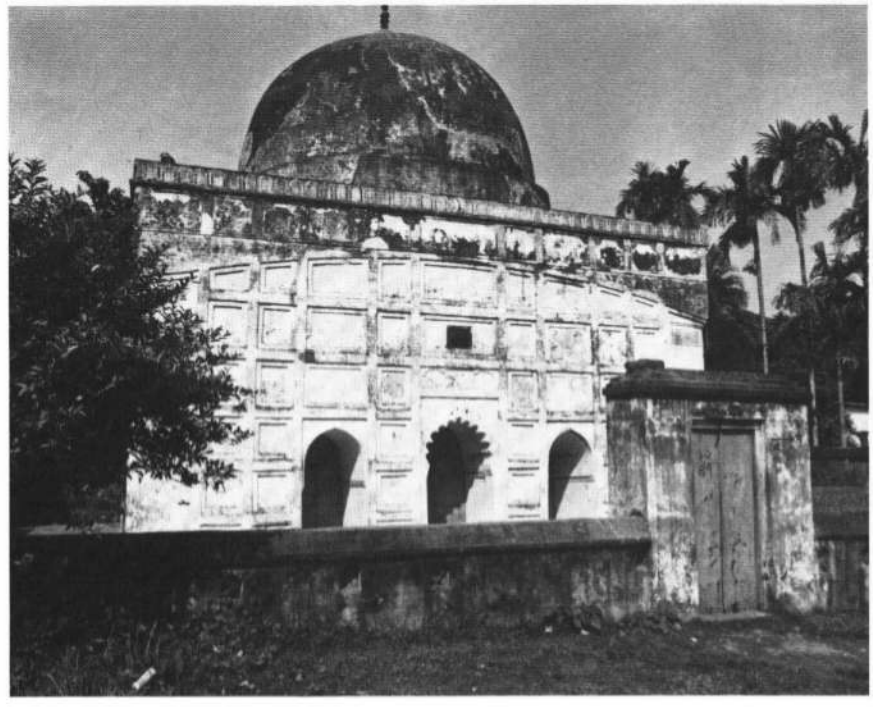
Locally known as Shahi Jami Masjid, this mosque is situated on the north side of the tomb of Pir Manna Shah Darvesh. The inscription[4] over the entrance is dated A.H. 1112/A.D. 1700, and from the exterior it is yet another example of renovation of old mosques during Mughal times. The exterior wall surface has been divided into rectangular panels in the manner of later Mughal buildings, and the dome has been heightened and raised on a drum. The central opening on the east side has been adorned with elaborate cusping. On the exterior, all sides display the curved cornice, over which a parapet with a level top has been added. The corner towers have disappeared.

The interior, although plastered, whitewashed and painted, reveals its Sultanate identity. The central mihrab, with its trefoil-cusped arch, pillars and the rosettes on the spandrels, reminds one of the central mihrab of the Goaldi mosque. The dome is carried on pendentives instead of squinches. The interior of this mosque is unique for another reason. Its internal dimensions are 5.2 × 7.7 m, the space on both sides having been increased by throwing two wide arches on the north and south sides. Had this been part of the Mughal renovation, then the curved cornice of the original structure would not have continued around the two arched areas; also it would hardly be worth while to demolish the two end walls for the sake of such a small increase in space. One doubts whether engineering techniques

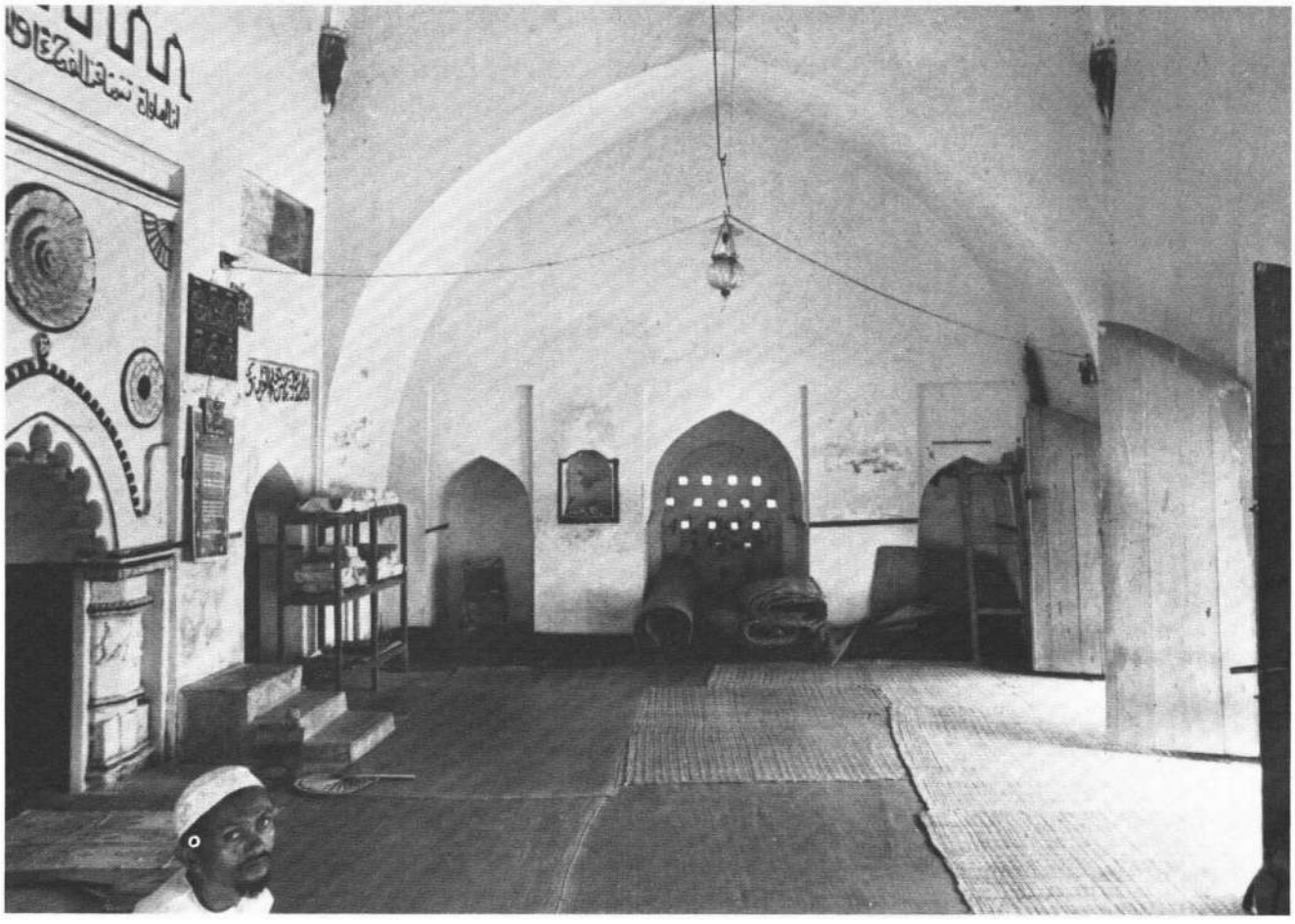
4. Alexander Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India: Report of a Tour in Bihar and Bengal in 1879-80*, Vol. XV, p. 141.

Mosque at Mograpara, plan.





Mosque at Mograpara, view from east.



Mosque at Mograpara, interior.

in Mughal times were sufficiently advanced to allow the architects to do away entirely with existing load-bearing walls. However, such transverse arches are common in Mughal mosques, where they are used to separate one bay from another.

The inscription ascribed to this building was first noticed by General Cunningham in 1879, when it was affixed to the enclosure wall of the mosque.[5] At that time it was considered by the villagers to be a sacred stone. Whenever someone was robbed, he would apply a coat of lime to the stone, and the stolen thing would be recovered. When the *List* of 1895 was made,[6] the stone was found inserted in the enclosure wall of the graveyard opposite the mosque. The lime was scraped off and the inscription was read again. Today, it is still in the same position and continues to be the object of superstitious rites. The Arabic inscription is dated A.H. 889/A.D. 1484, in the reign of Fath Shah.[7] Although the patron's name is missing, he must have been a distinguished courtier, judging by his titles of Muqarrab al-Daulah and Wazir of Muazzamabad (in Sonargaon) and Thana Laud (in Sylhet).

5. Ibid.

6. *List of Ancient Monuments in Bengal. Revised and Corrected Up to 31st August, 1895,* Government of Bengal, Public Works Department, Calcutta, 1896, p. 212.

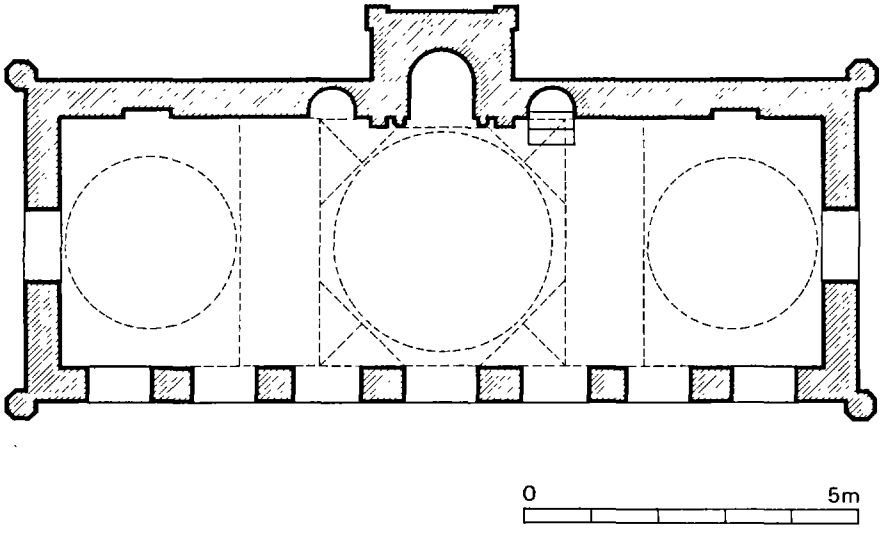
7. Cunningham, op. cit., Vol. XV, p. 141.

Baba Saleh's Mosque at Bandar

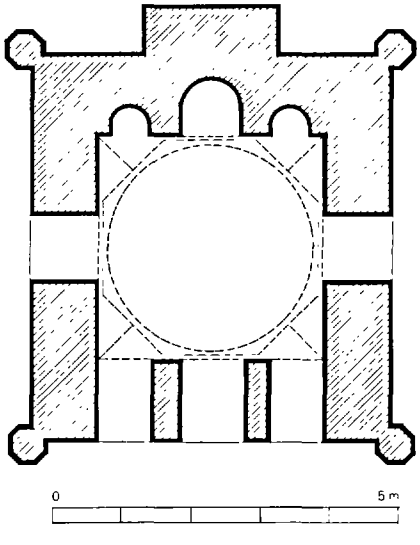
The mosque adjoins the Tomb of Baba Saleh and is within one kilometre of the mosque at Khondkartola. According to its inscription, it was built by the same Baba Saleh who built the latter mosque. This mosque dates from A.H. 911/A.D. 1505, in the reign of Husain Shah.[8] The reading of the second digit in the date, however, is doubtful. Baba Saleh is described in this inscription as 'Malik al-Muazzam, servant of the Prophet, who had made a pilgrimage to the two sanctuaries [Mecca and Medina], and has visited the two footprints of the Prophet, Haji Baba Saleh'.

8. Blochman, op. cit., p. 78.

Like Binat Bibi's Mosque, this one has been renovated in recent times, and enlarged almost beyond recognition. It is now a three-domed mosque with a large verandah in front with a flat, concrete roof. The original mosque consisted of a small square chamber, measuring 3.6 m square internally, and was only slightly larger than the original Mosque of Binat Bibi. This chamber has been retained as the central unit, to which northern and southern domed wings have been added. This was done after removing the lower parts of the walls on those sides, and retaining the upper parts as wide arches. Although three entrances have been shown on the east, the actual number and location of the original entrances are difficult to ascertain: the two side entrances seem to have been enlarged so as to extend into the original side walls. Both inside and outside, the walls have been completely transformed by recent renovations, so that no trace of their Sultanate origin remains.



Mosque at Bandar, plan as it exists today.



Mosque at Bandar, reconstructed plan.

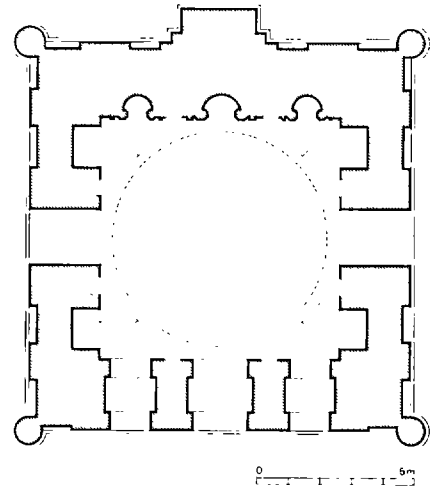
Goaldi mosque at Sonargaon

This mosque is dated by inscription, 15th Shaban, A.H. 925 (12 August 1519), in the reign of Husain Shah, and the patron is named as Mulla Hizabr Akbar Khan.[9] Before restoration by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, the dome and major portions of the south, east and north walls had fallen, the only exception being the mihrab wall on the west.

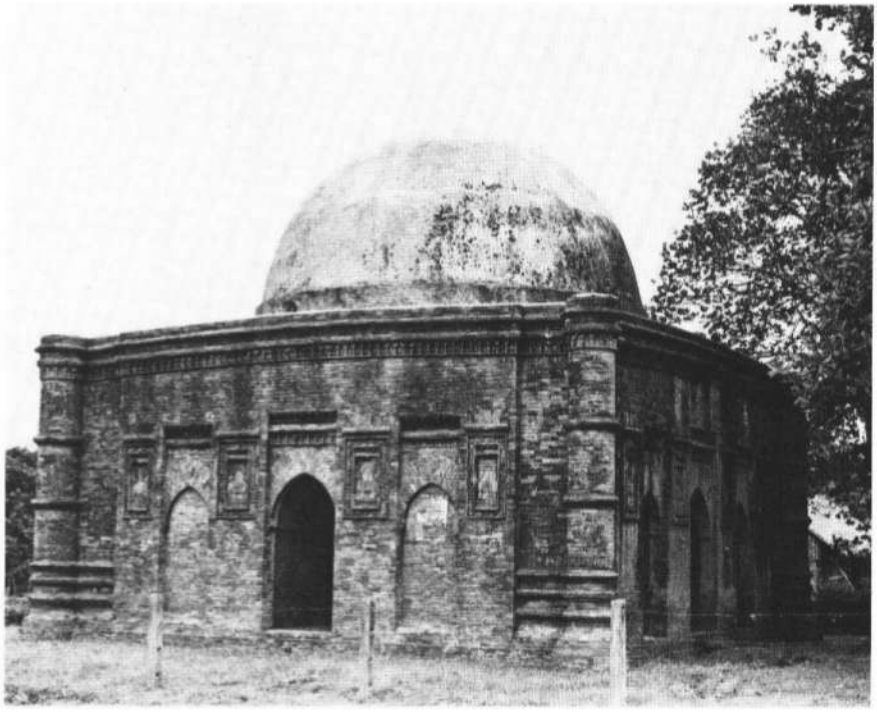
The interior measures 7.57 m square, and the building has the typical three entrances in front and two side entrances. The dome is carried on squinches, the arches of which spring from the tops of engaged stone pilasters, two on each wall. The central mihrab is also of stone; two pilasters supporting the arch carved out of a single stone piece. (The full-blown lotuses on stems carved on the spandrels are closely related to the lotuses held by the Hindu god Surya as seen in Bengali stone images.) The interior of the mihrab is also of stone and is carved with ornamental lamps. The rectangular slabs hanging from chains, inside the brick mihrabs on either side of the central mihrab, also bear lamp motifs.

The exterior of the mosque is decorated with rectangular panels that have miniature niches with ornamental hanging motifs. Around the cornice there is a row of even smaller niches, with floral motifs inside. The circular corner towers are an exception to the usual octagonal ones, and are the only examples in the mosques of Dhaka District.

9. Cunningham, op. cit., Vol. XV, p. 143-4.



Goaldi Mosque, plan.



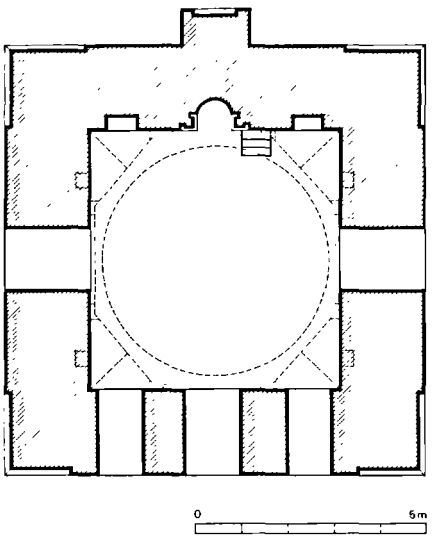
Goaldi Mosque, view from south-east.

Mosque at Yusufganj

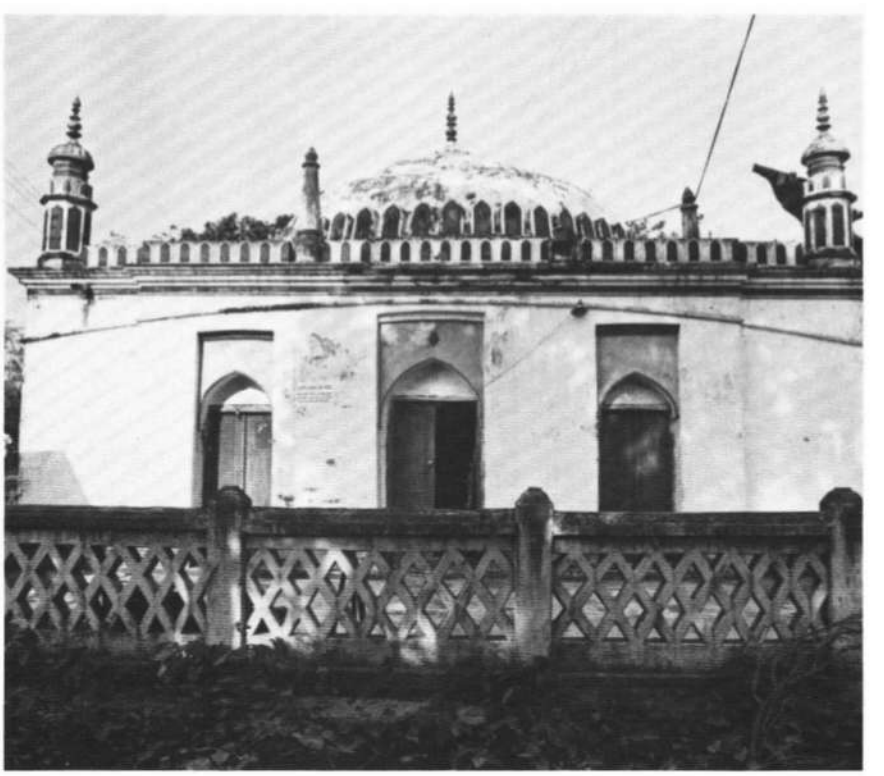
This mosque[10] is on the south side of the road to Mograpara. It is not dated by inscription. Both the exterior and the interior have been renovated, plastered, whitewashed and painted, but not enlarged. However, there are still some features that indicate its antiquity. The original curved line of the cornice is still visible below the straightened parapet, the dome is very low, and all the arches of the entrances and the central mihrab are pointed. The three entrance arches on the east and the two side openings are set within recessed rectangles. The corner towers have disappeared.

The interior measures 5.4 m square, and squinches are used in the transition zone between the square base and the dome. Except for the shape of the central mihrab arch, which is pointed, nothing else is left of the original mihrab. It is difficult to date a building that has so few of its original features left; however, on the basis of general similarity with other early mosques of this area, it may tentatively be assigned to the fifteenth century.

10. *List*, op. cit., p. 214.



Mosque at Yusufganj, plan.



Mosque at Yusufganj, view from east.

Rectangular mosques with six domes

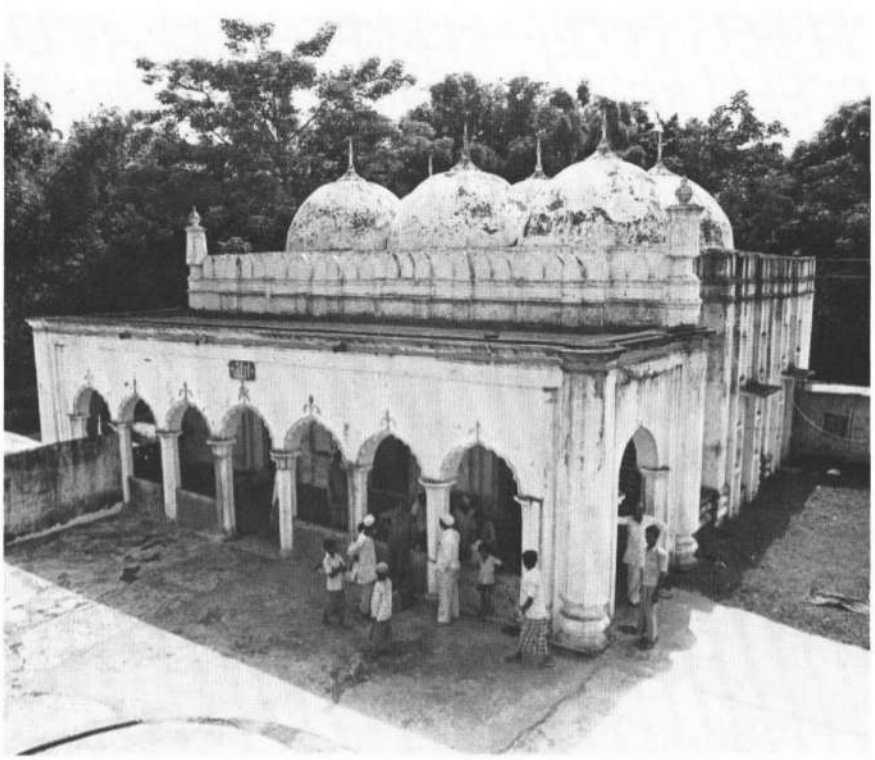
The arrangement of six domes in two rows divides these rectangular mosques into three bays and two aisles. The domes are raised on corbelled pendentives. There are two openings each on the north and south sides, and two stone pillars in the middle of the mosque. Otherwise, these six-domed mosques have all the usual characteristic features of the single-domed mosques.

Mosque at Muazzampur

The village, locally known as Majampur, is about 20 km north of Dhaka city. The mosque is inside an enclosed courtyard, on one side of which is the Tomb of Shah Langar, and a well, the water of which is said to have the same properties as those of Zamzam in Mecca.

The inscription stone, by which the mosque was dated, fell and broke into such little pieces that it became almost undecipherable.[11] The ruling king is named as Masnad Shahi Ahmad Shah, and the names of two other persons, Firoz Khan and Ali Musi Sultan, are also recorded. The building is assigned to the reign of Shams al-Din Ahmad Shah, as he is the only Sultan named Ahmad. This Sultan had a very short reign, from A.H. 836/A.D. 1432-33 to A.H. 839/A.D. 1435-36.

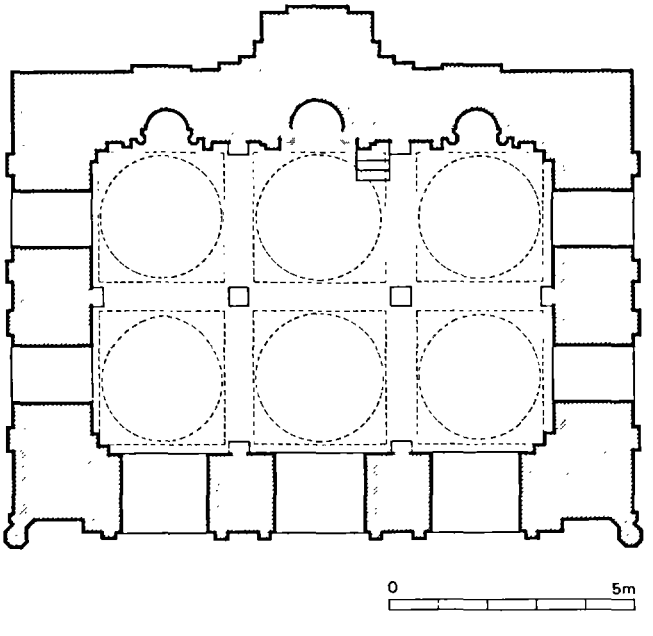
11. Aulad Hasan, op. cit., p. 54-5.



Mosque at Muazzampur, view from northeast.

The mosque has been renovated, and enlarged by a verandah in front. The cornices have been straightened and the domes rebuilt. Traces of the original octagonal corner towers remain inside the verandah extension, but the two western towers have disappeared. Parts of the original structure have been retained in the external west wall. In the centre of the mihrab projection there is a rectangular panel with a mihrab. This is complete with elaborately ornamented pillars, trefoil-cusped arch and lotuses on the spandrels; all of this is topped by a band of flowers. There is also an elaborate motif hanging by a chain from the apex of the arch.

The interior measures 9.5 × 6.3 m. There are three mihrabs, corresponding to the three front entrances, the central one being entirely of dark basaltic stone. The pillars of the central mihrab have bells hanging from chains carved on their shafts. The arch is trefoil-cusped and has lotuses on its spandrels. The stone wall of the mihrab niche has a hanging motif. The two side mihrabs are of brick with stylized lantern motifs hanging by a chain down the niche. The north mihrab is at present being used as a closet. There are two engaged pilasters of stone on each wall; these have square bases, octagonal shafts and square capitals. In the middle of the rectangular prayer chamber are two free-standing octagonal stone columns with circular bases. Their capitals are of different designs.



Mosque at Muazzampur, plan (without verandah).

Mosque at Muazzumpur, external projection of *mihrab* wall.

Mosque at Rampal

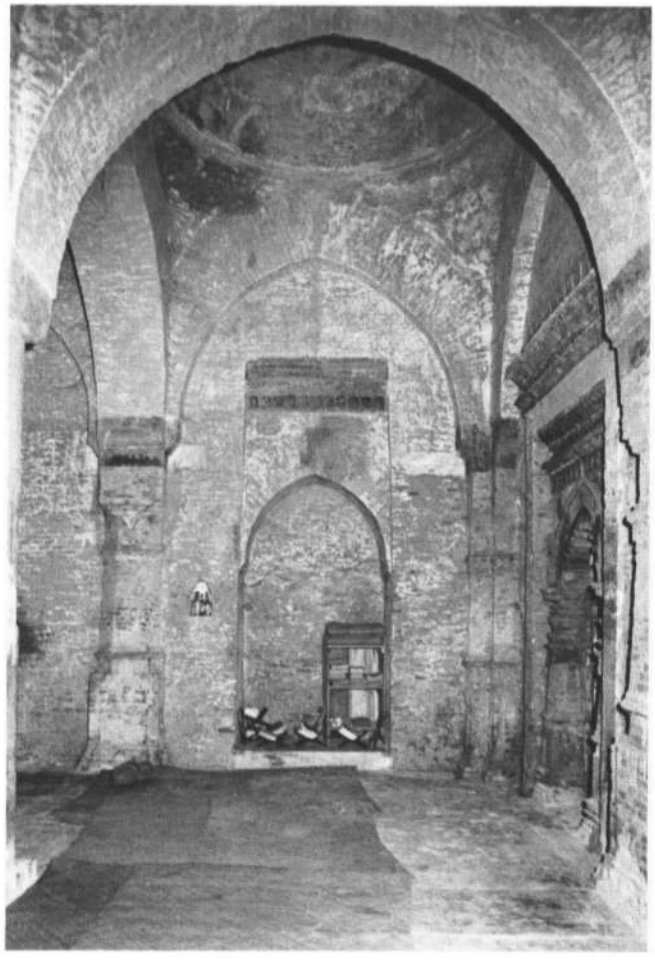
Locally known as the Mosque of Baba Adam, this is located near the Tomb of Baba Adam Shahid. The inscription tablet dates this congregational mosque from Rajab A.H. 888 (August 1483), in the reign of Fath Shah, and states that the builder was Malik al-Muazzam Malik Kafur; the tablet is affixed over the central doorway on the east.[12] The mosque has been restored by the Department of Archaeology and Museums.

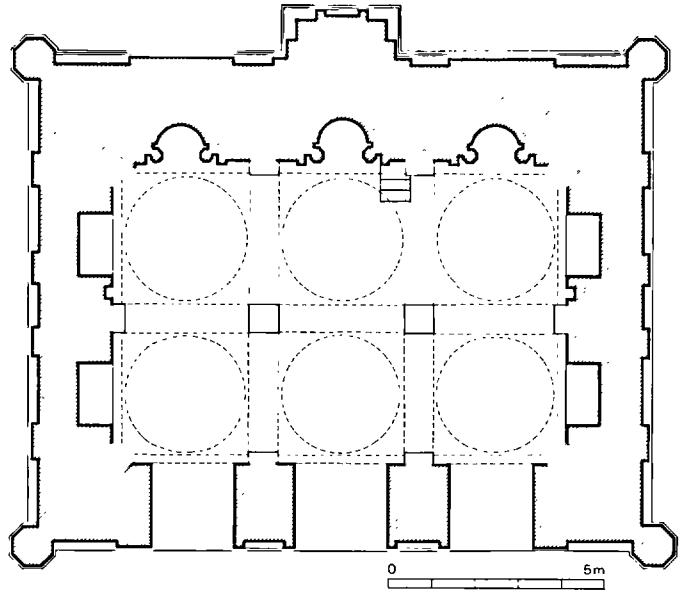
12. Blochman, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

The three entrance doorways are set within recessed rectangles, as are the rectangular niches on the north sides. A remarkable feature of this mosque is the absence of openings in the north and south sides; there are only blind niches where the openings would have been. Between the doorways in the east are arched niches set within rectangles, which have a decorative motif at the end of a chain hanging down from the apex of the arches. As in the mosque at Muazzampur, the same motif is repeated on the mihrab projection of the west wall.

The interior measurements, 10.36 × 6.93 m, are also

Mosque at Rampal, plan. (below); view from northeast (below right); interior (left).





close to the Muazzampur mosque measurements. There are two free-standing stone pillars inside, square at the base, then octagonal, and finally sixteen-sided; these have square capitals. There are engaged brick pilasters on the walls with stone imposts from which the arches of the pendentives spring.

The mihrabs are of brick, and the pillars of the central one have bells on chains with beads hanging down both sides, carved on the shaft. Except for the octagonal external corner towers and the very low domes, the style of this mosque recalls that of Goaldi.

Conclusion

Even if some of these buildings are much disfigured by renovations and additions, this is a significant group of mosques owing to the fact that seven out of eight are dated. Although decoration represents an important aspect of mosque design at this period, it has not been dealt with here in detail. Except for the two mosques that are protected by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, all the others have lost their decorations owing to renovation.

The manner in which the single-domed square structure stands out as the predominant mosque type in Dhaka is also typical of all other districts in Bangladesh. The close relationship of this type of building with the Bengali hut can hardly go unnoticed. In any Bengali village, the hut is a single-roomed rectangular structure with walls of mud reinforced with bamboo or wooden posts, or with walls of woven bamboo or reed matting with similar posts. The roof is generally *do-chala* or *char-chala*,[13] and the material may be reed over bamboo framing or the newer corrugated iron sheets over wood framing. A wealthy farmer may have a house built entirely of corrugated iron sheets with wooden framing, but it is still extremely rare for a villager to have a house built with bricks. Where such a building is found, it is likely that the roof will be a *char-chala* of corrugated iron sheets or clay tiles, rather than a flat concrete slab. There is evidence in literature, manuscript painting and temple art that the basic design of the hut has remained the same through the centuries.[14] The demand for a different type of housing has not arisen, as there have not been any major changes in the lifestyle of villagers during the years. Wealthy families of the past used brick and wood, while today their counterparts use brick and corrugated iron sheets. Unfortunately, no residential buildings of ancient times have survived, and the only buildings to have escaped the ravages of time are temples, mosques and tombs—that

13. *Do-chala:* a roof sloping down in two directions away from the central curved ridge at the top, formed by the meeting of the two slopes; the lower edges of the slopes are generally curved.
Char-chala: a roof sloping down in four directions; in a rectangular room the longer slopes form a ridge at the top and the end slopes are triangular in shape.

14. Nihar Ranjan Ray, *Bangalir Itihas, Adi Parba,* Calcutta, 1980, Vol. II, pp. 579-80.

is, buildings associated with religion. The veneration with which these structures were regarded must be one of the reasons for their preservation.

The typical village household is a cluster of huts, each for a different function but consisting of a single chamber. This arrangement is preferred to a large building with several rooms. The concept of the Sultanate mosque as a detached chamber devoted to the purpose of worship is singularly appropriate in this context.

As far as mosques are concerned, it seems that the Bengali patron rarely sought monumentality of the order of the Adina mosque at Pandua. As we have seen, the majority of the patrons were officers in the employment of the Sultan. That the building material was brick with ornamental decoration speaks of the wealth of the sponsors. The dome was chosen as the method of roof construction probably because of its association with Islamic buildings both in northern India and the Middle East. Secondly, if brick was to be used, a dome would not only be structurally more sound, but could be used more efficiently than a *do-chala* or a *char-chala* vault to cover a larger space. However, to accommodate the single dome, the shape of the chamber was changed to a square from the usual rectangle. When the building was larger and rectangular, several domes were used over square bays.

Be it single-domed or multi-domed, the curve of the cornice is always noticeable in Sultanate mosques, similar to the curved edges of the *do-chala* or *char-chala* thatched roof. The reason for the curvature in the thatched roof is found in the structural behaviour of bamboo, which is universally employed for framing thatched roofs, and not in drainage requirements, since the slopes of the *chala* are already excellent for this purpose. Bamboo is extremely strong in tension but very flexible. If bamboo members are laid horizontally in roof framing, they sag between vertical supports. To prevent this from happening, a slight upward curvature is given to all bamboo roofing members. This is normally done by varying the height of the supporting bamboo or wooden posts, their heights increasing towards the centre.

In a domed mosque, a slight variation in the levels of the roof ensures proper drainage of rainwater. The curvature in the cornice is not really necessary; neither are the corner towers. These were used because of the natural inclination to reproduce forms associated with a more familiar building material. Thus, even when the roof was a brick dome, a conscious decision was made to retain local flavour by incorporating forms and details that were totally unnecessary when building with bricks.

The Mughal and post-Mughal periods

Catherine B. Asher

Mughal architecture in Bengal generally has been viewed as if the buildings of Dhaka during the late seventeenth century represented the imperial style, while the architecture of other places such as Murshidabad or Rajmahal was a product of a local or regional styles.[1] However, recent fieldwork[2] suggests that architecture constructed in the imperial Mughal tradition appears well before the late seventeenth century. In addition, the mosque architecture in the Bengal capitals of Rajmahal, Dhaka and Murshidabad and other important centres maintains a stylistic continuity throughout the Mughal and post-Mughal periods.

After Sher Shah's death in 1545 Bengal was in a state of turmoil until the first decade of the seventeenth century, when the Mughals were effectively able to assert their authority. Bengal had been under the control of various Afghan houses until 1575, when Akbar defeated the last Afghan ruler. Then Bengal was incorporated officially into the Mughal empire, although Mughal control during this early period remained largely nominal. Several effective revolts against Mughal authority were staged by renegade nobles of the Mughal camp. Ironically, during this chaotic period, the Mughal style of architecture was introduced by rebel patrons.

When considering the architecture produced during the time when Bengal officially became part of the Mughal empire, one must remember that Bengali Islamic architecture had a marked regional character. Monuments such as the double-aisled six-domed mosque of Kusumba (1558), one of the last major structures of the pre-Mughal period, and the square single-domed Tomb of Pir Bahram (1562) at

1. The most detailed discussion is found in A. H. Dani, *Muslim Architecture in Bengal*, Dacca, 1961, pp. 166-278.

2. This research was supported by the American Institute of Indian Studies and the Aga Khan Foundation for Islamic Architecture.

Photographs are by the author. For additional illustrations, including plans of mosques at Sherpur, Dhaka and Rajmahal, see 'Inventory of Key Monuments', pp. 37-140.

Burdwan, with engaged ribbed corner turrets, were constructed only a decade or so before the Mughal style was introduced into Bengal.[3] These adhere in plan and format to architectural types developed several centuries earlier in Bengal. The extent to which these uniquely Bengali forms were maintained in the Mughal and post-Mughal architecture of Bengal is one significant consideration addressed in examining the development.

In 1580, Afghan chiefs revolted against Mughal authority and assumed power in Bengal: Masum Khan Kabuli, a renegade Mughal noble, became the ruler of Bengal, although the imperial Mughals maintained nominal control. By 1581 he had assumed the title of Sultan, as indicated by an inscription from the Jami mosque at Chatmohar (Pabna District).[4] Unfortunately this mosque has never been studied, and there is good reason to believe it is no longer extant, for it is not included in the otherwise thorough Bengal *List* of 1896. O'Malley mentions a ruined mosque in Chatmohar but includes no description;[5] thus it is not known if the Chatmohar Jami Mosque was constructed in a traditional Bengali mode or in the Mughal style that would have been more familiar to the rebel Masum Khan. However, in 1582 two mosques were constructed, each reflecting divergent stylistic traditions prevalent in Bengal during the late sixteenth century. The Qutb Shahi Mosque of 1583 in Pandua, built by Makhdum Shaikh in honour of the long deceased but deeply revered Nur Qutb Alam, adheres to a plan popular in Bengal through the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This stone-faced mosque is divided into two aisles and was originally surmounted by ten domes. Not only is the mosque constructed in a traditional Bengali style, but also the inscription is in Arabic,[6] the language of most pre-Mughal inscriptions in Bengal. This mosque marks the end of two traditions: stone-faced mosques were not built again in Bengal until the twentieth century, and this is the last small double-aisled rectangular mosque until the nineteenth century. A second trend is represented by the single-aisled three-bayed plan of the Kherua Mosque in Sherpur, built in 1582 by Murad Khan, son of Jauhar Ali Khan Qaqshal. This mosque type ultimately becomes standard in Mughal and post-Mughal Bengali architecture; however, due to a dearth of dated monuments, it is difficult to know how soon before the 1630s this type of plan became standard.

The Kherua Mosque's single-aisled, three-bayed plan had been popular in the Delhi region since the late fifteenth century. It was first seen in eastern India at the Jami mosque constructed in 1543 under the Sur dynasty and the

3. For illustrations and plans, where available of these and other Bengali monuments discussed here, see the 'Inventory of Key Monuments', pp. 37-140.

4. Shamsud-Din Ahmed, *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. IV, Rajshahi, 1960, pp. 259-60.

5. L. S. S. O'Malley, *Pabna*, Vol. 37 of *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Calcutta, 1923, pp. 116-7.

6. Ahmed, op. cit., pp. 266-8.

mosque of Habash Khan (1578), both at Rohtasgarh, a fort in Bihar of considerable importance. It served as headquarters of the Afghan rulers in Bengal until 1576 and then of the Mughals during the campaigns to annex Bengal.[7] The rectangular space of the Kherua Mosque's interior is divided into three square bays by two lateral arches. The three domes are supported on brick pendentives of the typical pre-Mughal Bengali type. Only three mihrabs and the *qibla* wall relieve the otherwise austere interior. These differ from most mihrabs seen in Bengali architecture in that they have *kanjuras* across the top, a feature common in the architecture of Delhi, for example, in the Bagh-i Alam-ka-Gumbad (1501),[8] but rare in eastern Indian architecture. Other motifs of the mihrab, however, are well within the Bengali tradition—for example, the faceted pier supporting the cusped arch. The exterior elevation follows Bengali forms, notably in its engaged ribbed corner turrets, sloped cornice and heavy brick facade, recalling the exterior treatment of Baba Adam Shahid's Mosque at Rampal (1483). Thus the mosque, though rooted in Bengali prototypes, already reveals considerable north-Indian influence.

The patron of the Kherua Mosque was Nawab Mirza Murad Khan, son of Jauhar Ali Khan Qaqshal.[9] The Qaqshal were an Afghan clan that sought to oust the Mughals from Bengal; Sherpur, the city in which the mosque is located, served as their headquarters and that of other rebels. The two inscriptions on the east facade, both in Persian, are written on the back of sculptured stelae, indicating that the rebel Qaqshals had no access to the quarries of Rajmahal.[10] After the thirteenth century, the reuse of Hindu materials in such prominent fashion is rare in Bengal.

The content of the inscriptions, too, is highly unusual, although perhaps particularly apt for a mosque constructed by rebels.[11] The inscription flanking the left central entrance, still *in situ*, recounts the story of two pigeons from Mecca, doubtless a metaphor for the rebel Qaqshal, who request from a fakir shelter in the mosque for themselves and friends. The fakir grants the permission but states that the mosque is small and will not shelter them from violence. In response, the pigeons say that God's wrath would be great if the mosque or pigeons were harmed. The second inscription also admonishes protection of the mosque. Such a plea for protection is appropriate to the work of rebels and appears to have been taken seriously, for the mosque was not destroyed when the Mughals seized Sherpur. The otherwise unknown Nawab Mirza Murad Khan is thus remembered for having erected the first extant

7. M. H. Kuraishi, *List of Ancient Monuments Protected Under Act VII of 1904 in the Province of Bihar and Orissa*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series, Vol. LI, Calcutta, 1931, pp. 148-9, 108.

8. There is no published view of this mihrab.

9. For a discussion of the Qaqshal and the importance of Sherpur, see Ahmed, op. cit., pp. 261-3.

10. Also see O'Malley, op.cit., p. 117.

11. For the complete text, see Ahmed, op.cit., pp. 263-6.

mosque of a type that was to become popular throughout Bengal between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

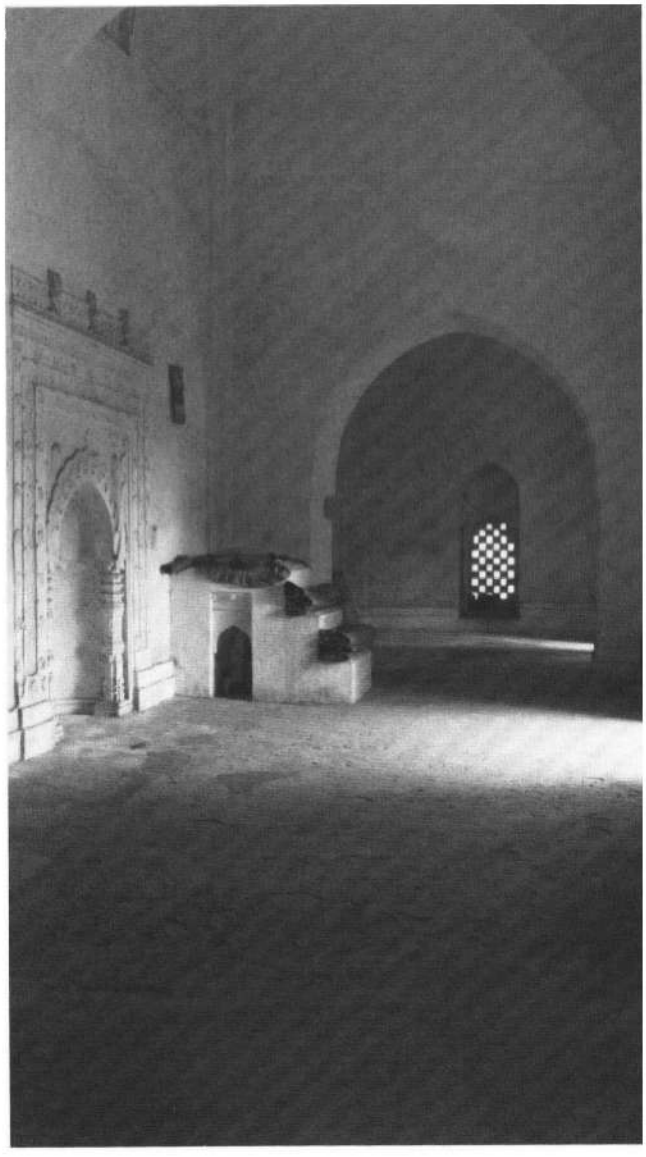
Datable after the Kherua Mosque, two Jami mosques, one in Old Malda and the other in Rajmahal, show the increasing influence of north Indian forms on traditional Bengali architecture. A phrase in the inscription of the Old Malda mosque identifying its location as 'dar Hind'[12] further shows the patron's links with all of north India, not just Bengal. Although no ruler's name is given in the inscription of the Old Malda mosque, the date, 1595-96, is indicated by the numerical value of the phrase 'Baitu'llah al-haram-i ma'sum' contained in the last hemistitch of the inscription.[13]

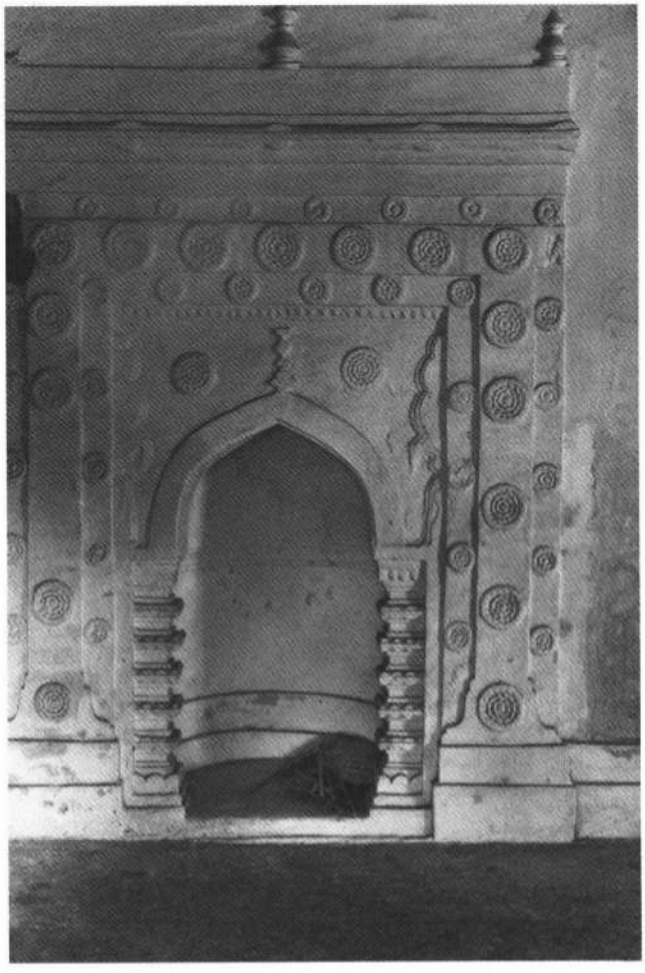
12. For the complete text, see *ibid.*, pp. 258-9.

The appearance of this Jami mosque is an unusual combination of Mughal and Bengali architectural features. In plan, it is a single-aisled mosque whose central bay consists of a barrel-vaulted chamber, while each of the flanking side bays is crowned by a large ribbed dome. This gives the interior a sense of open space rarely seen in Bengali rectangular mosques but common in north-Indian examples. The idea of a central barrel-vaulted corridor is derived from Bengali prototypes such as the Gunmant and Adina mosques (at Gaur and Pandua, respectively). North-Indian influence is seen in the single-aisled plan with domes surmounting the side chambers. More typical of Bengal architecture is the terracotta ornamentation on the mihrabs and exterior, but it is no longer the flowing organic type seen, for example, in the Bagha mosque of 1523. Instead, small terracotta medallions and other isolated motifs reminiscent of the ornamentation on Pir Bahram's Tomb (Burdwan) appear on the mosque's vast surface. The façade is further articulated by alternating recessed vertical panels and string coursings, recalling the Bara Sona Mosque in Gaur (1526) and the nearly contemporary Qutb Shahi Mosque in Pandua (1583). The mosque's exterior is today covered with a plaster veneer, possibly original. Since the mosque dates to a time when terracotta decoration was losing favour and ornamented plaster facades were gaining popularity in Bengal, the unusual use of the two media in combination shows a noteworthy overlap.

13. Z. A. Desai has provided me with the correct reading of the chronogram, yielding the year A.H. 1004/A.D. 1595. Both Ahmed (see note 12) and Stapleton in Muhammad Abid Ali Khan, *Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua* (revised and edited by H. E. Stapleton), Calcutta, 1931, pp. 151, omitted the *kasra* indicating the possessive case.

In the same year as the Old Malda mosque was built (1595) Rajmahal was established as the capital of Bengal by Akbar's brilliant and newly appointed governor, Raja Man Singh. The capital, then named Akbarnagar, was chosen for its strategic importance in combating rebel forces. About 50 km northwest of Gaur, the capital was situated on the west bank of the Ganges and just east of the Rajmahal Hills, natural barriers to invaders. According to the *Akbar*





Old Malda, Jami Mosque, *mihrab* in south bay.

Old Malda, Jami Mosque, interior from south.

Nama, the 'choice city' was quickly constructed.[14] Ruins of a *hammam*, probably part of Raja Man Singh's palace, are still extant, as is an enormous mosque, uninscribed but traditionally considered the Jami mosque of Akbarnagar. Situated due west of Man Singh's palace site, this mosque is another example of combined north-Indian and Bengali styles. However, it appears to derive much inspiration specifically from Akbar's Jami mosque at the imperial capital of Fatehpur Sikri,[15] perhaps consciously emulating a building of the political centre. The mosque[16] has a central barrel-vaulted corridor flanked on either side by double-aisled side wings. The northern and southern bays are two storeyed, each containing four vaulted chambers. The arrangement of the end chambers is unknown in Bengal, but it resembles that of Akbar's Jami mosque at Fatehpur Sikri.[17] In addition, the spacious interior affords a clear view of

14. Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nama*, Vol. III (translated by H. Beveridge), reprint edition, Delhi, 1973, p. 1042. A. K. Sinha has prepared a yet unpublished article on the ruins of Rajmahal.

15. Dani, op. cit., pp. 266-70, having never visited Rajmahal, based his discussion on data in Buchanan-Hamilton and the Bengal *List* of 1896; the two mosques he discusses are, in fact, one—the Jami Mosque.

16. Montgomery Martin (ed.), *History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India: Comprising the Districts of Behar, Shahabad, Bhagalpoor, Goruckpoor, Dinajepoor, Purniya, Rungpoor, and Assam*, Vol. II, London, 1838, p. 70.

17. George Michell (ed.), *Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning*, London 1978, p. 271.

Rajmahal, Jami Mosque, central *mihrab*.

the stucco-faced double-arched mihrabs, modelled closely on north-Indian ones, for example, on the mosque of Habash Khan in Rohtas, Raja Man Singh's headquarters in Bihar before he was appointed governor of Bengal. Today all exterior facing is stripped from this greatly ruined mosque, but a drawing of the early nineteenth century by Buchanan-Hamilton indicates that the central barrel vault was concealed by a high rectangular *pistaq*, and the exterior east facade was faced with rectangular bands of contrasting material, possibly stone.[18] Indeed, recessed panels for this inlay are still visible. Never before had such a large mosque (77 × 64.5 m)[19] been constructed in a provincial capital by Mughal authorities. Raja Man Singh, a Hindu, may have had a special motive for building a mosque of such scale. Since its exterior resembled that of the mosque at Fatehpur Sikri, in spite of the more familiar Bengali barrel-vaulted central corridor plan, this mosque may have served as a symbol of imperial Mughal presence, doubtless effective since the rebels, themselves Mughals, would have recognized the allusion to the capital's mosque.

Sometime after 1609 the capital was shifted from Rajmahal to Dhaka by Islam Khan, a Mughal governor under Jahangir. A change in the river's course and serious threats

18. Martin, op. cit., p. 70.

19. Kuraishi, op. cit., pp. 219.

Rohtas, Mosque of Habash Khan, central *mihrab*.

to Mughal authority by river pirates appear to have been the reason for the shift. Little, if anything, remains of early seventeenth century Dhaka, called Jahangirnagar. This is perhaps a reflection of imperial patronage at the centre, for Jahangir, unlike either Akbar or Shah Jahan, was not a keen patron of architecture. However, two dated monuments of note are found outside Dhaka. One is the mosque at Atiya dated to 1609, probably the last rectangular mosque with a single-domed square prayer chamber and domed east verandah. Richly embellished with terracotta motifs, this mosque was constructed in the pre-Mughal style and is an indication that in areas away from administrative centres there was little influence of the north-Indian architectural tradition.[20] The second example is the Khondokar Tola mosque at Sherpur, built by Sadr Jahan in 1632. Though erected during the opening years of Shah Jahan's reign, the influence of his architecture had not yet reached Bengal. This single-aisled mosque belongs to the Mughal tradition, but in detail it is clearly inspired by the nearby earlier Kherua mosque, and it has little to do with the more refined style that appears a decade or so later in Rajmahal and Dhaka.

20. Dani, op. cit., pp. 230-1.

After the initial years of Shah Jahan's reign an architectural efflorescence comes to Bengal, and the style reflects

the trends of Agra and Delhi. The majority of these structures are in Rajmahal, the capital of Bengal again from 1639-59, but none of them is dated. In Dhaka, however, several dated monuments are extant from this period. These monuments include an Idgah constructed in 1640 and the Bara Katra (1644), both built by Abul Qasim, the administrator of Dhaka, as well as the Lalbagh Fort mosque, built in 1649. In addition, several river forts, datable to sometime during the seventeenth century, are still extant, but it is difficult to determine their dates.

Of the dated monuments constructed during the period when Dhaka was not the capital but a major administrative centre, the Bara Katra traditionally is considered the most spectacular; however, today little remains of its former splendour. The Idgah, while dated, is architecturally unpretentious. The most important of all these buildings is the Lalbagh Fort mosque, situated inside the fort. It is traditionally considered contemporary with the fort (*c.* 1678-84). However, evidence indicates the mosque was constructed in 1649. Its fluted domes are a later restoration. A proper understanding of this mosque's date is critical to an understanding of the uninscribed mosques in the capital, Rajmahal.

The confusion surrounding the mosque's date can be traced to Cunningham, who read the date of an inscription over the mosque's central mihrab as A.H. 1095/A.D. 1683.[21] He transposed the two last digits of the date and also stated that the inscription was on the nearby Tomb of Bibi Pari. Aulad Hasan, writing in 1904, claimed that the mosque was uninscribed,[22] and all other writers have followed him,[23] until Ashfaque, in 1970, published the inscription's text with the date of A.H. 1059/A.D. 1649.[24] Today the date on this inscription is partially obscured by paint, but Ashfaque's reading appears to be correct. There is a second inscription over the interior of the east central entrance into the mosque. Ashfaque has correctly published the body of the text, but P. Hasan and A. Quader have noticed the name Maulvi Qader Dad Khan and the date A.H. 1194 under a coat of paint.[25] The date A.H. 1194/A.D. 1780 must refer to the restoration of the domes, for fluted domes do not appear in Bengali architecture before the Qadam Sharif mosque in Murshidabad, also dated to 1780.[26] Maulvi Qader Dad Khan thus must have been responsible for the restoration.

A date of 1649 for the mosque's facade and interior is corroborated by stylistic evidence. The faceted recessed arches, here in the central entrance, are seen on the nearly contemporary Bara Katra of 1644. The contemporary mosques in Rajmahal, datable to Shah Shuja's period of gover-

21. Alexander Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India Report*, Vol. XV, p. 131.
22. S. Aulad Hasan, *Notes on the Antiquities of Dacca*, Calcutta, 1904, p. 11.
23. See Dani, op. cit., p. 198; S.M. Hasan, *Muslim Monuments in Bangladesh*, 2nd ed., Dacca, 1980, pp. 54-5.
24. S.M. Ashfaque, *Lalbagh Fort: Monuments and Museum*, Karachi, 1970, pp. 9-11.

25. Perween Hasan and Abdul Quader merit full credit for carefully examining the Lalbagh Fort's inscriptions on my behalf.
26. The text of this inscription remains unpublished, as do those of several other mosques in Murshidabad and Calcutta, for example the Mosque of Mian Halal (1801), the Qadam Sharif Mosque (1780), the Mosque at Roshnibagh (1743), the Chowk Mosque (1767), the Mosque of Farhat Allah (1821), Ghulam Muhammad's Mosque (1835; 1843) and Shahbani Begum's Mosque (1840). This material is forthcoming in a publication by this authour and S. M. Yunus Jaffery.

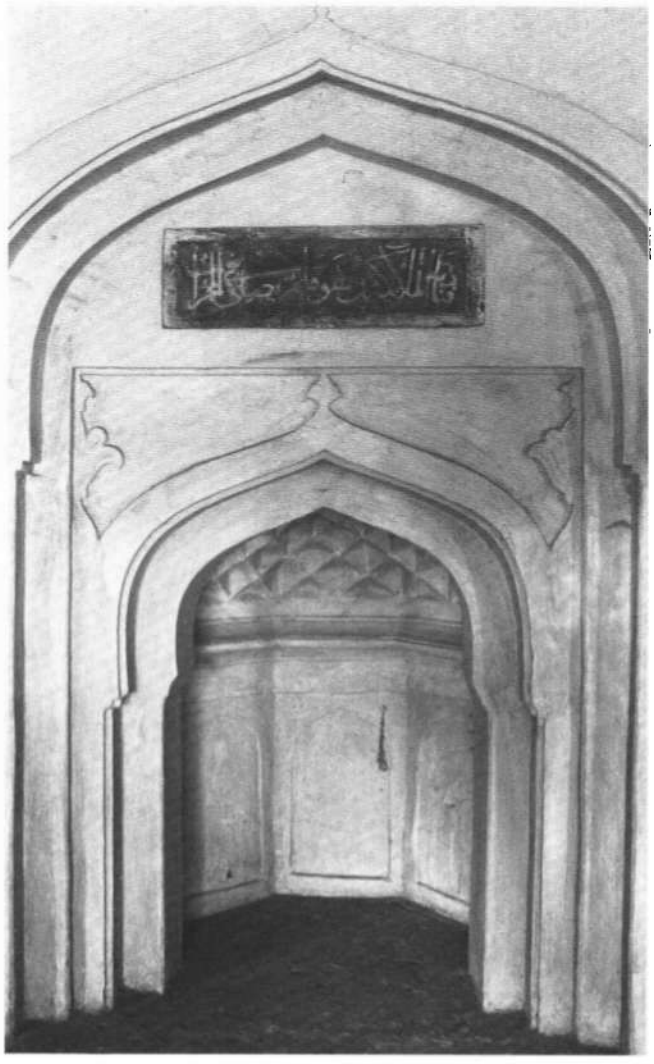
norship (1639-59), such as the Sirsi mosque and the so-called Akbari mosque, have faceted recessed arches above the entrances. Features arguing against the traditional late-seventeenth-century date for the Lalbagh Fort mosque are the mihrabs, which do not have engaged colonettes, normal on late-seventeenth-century mosques in Dhaka. In addition, this mosque's façade lacks the numerous engaged columns seen on the exteriors of the late-seventeenth-century Bengali mosques, for example on the mosque of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz (1679) and the slightly later mosque of Muhammad Khan Mirza (1704), both in Dhaka.

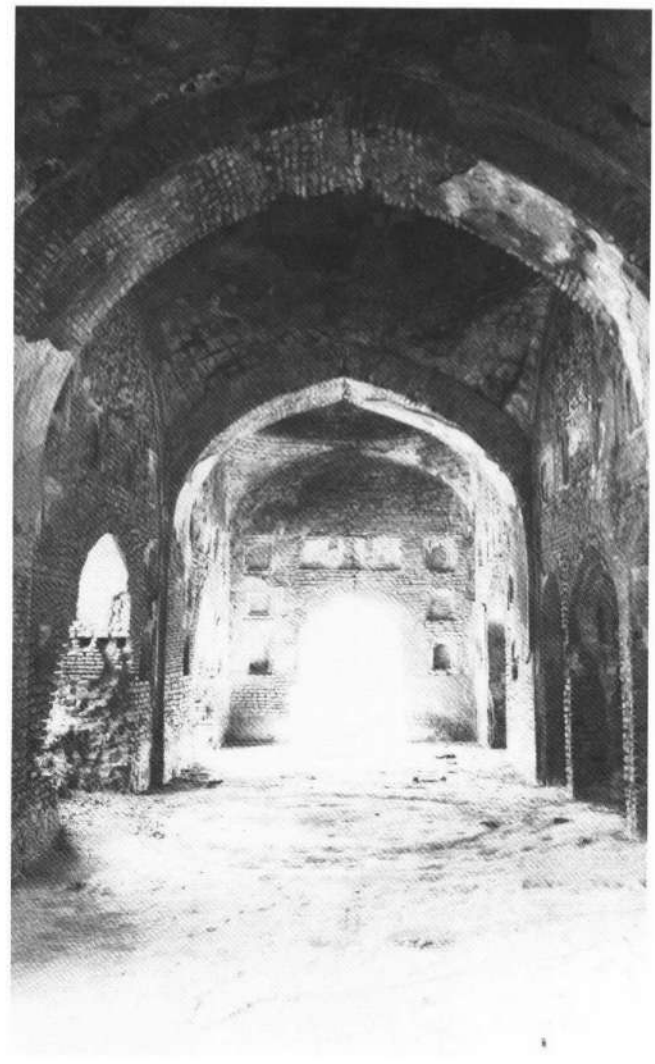
Shah Shuja, son of Shah Jahan, served as governor of Bengal from 1639 to 1659; he shifted the capital from Dhaka back to Rajmahal. Like his father, Shah Shuja appears to have been a keen patron of architecture, though not one monument extant is inscribed to this period. Nevertheless, the majority of mosques as well as the residential structures in Rajmahal are datable to his period of governorship. The palace, undoubtedly a product of Shah Shuja's patronage, is today almost entirely ruined. Although only a single portion survives, today called the Sangi Dalan, the complex was described by Buchanan-Hamilton in the early nineteenth century; he also provided a sketch plan showing the general layout.[27] This drawing indicates that the complex was arranged in a symmetrical fashion emulating the axial arrangement of Shah Jahan's more famous Agra Fort. The Sangi Dalan has polished basalt pillars and faceted plaster work in the lateral arches, reminiscent of that in the Lalbagh Fort mosque (1649). The exterior form, with its curved roof over the central north side, recalls the flanking side chambers at the Khas Mahal in Shah Jahan's renovations to the Agra Fort in *c.* 1637.[28] Similar in appearance, the Sangi Dalan and Agra Khas Mahal overlook rivers, while the related Diwan-i Khas of the Lalbagh Fort overlooks a tank. The association of this building form with water thus seems to be a common Mughal feature, whose more specific function or symbolism has yet to be determined.

Although not included in Buchanan-Hamilton's plan of the palace, the magnificently proportioned so-called Akbari Mosque is situated so close to the Sangi Dalan that it must have been part of the palace complex and thus patronized by Shah Shuja. Such features as the faceted soffits of the entrance arches and recessed faceted entrance arches indicate that this mosque belongs to Shah Shuja's period of governorship. Other mosques in Rajmahal bear similar features and thus appear to be contemporary with the so-called Akbari Mosque. These include the Sirsi Mosque, the Raushan

27. Martin, op. cit., p. 71.

28. Muhammad Ashraf Husain, *An Historical Guide to the Agra Fort*, Delhi, 1937, plate IV.





Patna, Mirza Masum's Mosque, central *mihrab*.

Rajmahal, Raushan Mosque, interior.

Mosque, and the Mahagan Toli Mosque, none dated. They also bear stylistic affinities with the contemporary Lalbagh Fort Mosque of Dhaka (1649) and seventeenth-century mosques in the bordering province of Bihar. Among features shared in common by the Rajmahal structures and seventeenth-century mosques of Dhaka and Bihar are faceted plaster work in the mihrabs and on the entrance arches of the Lalbagh Fort Mosque and the mihrabs of the 1614 mosque in Patna of Mirza Masum, a noble under the command of Islam Khan, then governor of Bengal. In addition, the faceted plaster, resembling nets, on the interior pendentives of the Raushan Mosque in Rajmahal resembles that of Raja Bahroze's Mosque in nearby Kharagpur (1656). Since Shah Shuja and Raja Bahroze had close contact,[29] similarities in their architecture are not surprising. Other similar features include the four corner turrets, a long-established Bengali form, and engaged columns flanking the central entrance arch.

29. Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *Corpus of Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bihar*, Patna, 1973, pp. 256-7.

Besides the works in Rajmahal, Shah Shuja is credited with constructing three structures in Gaur. Although Gaur had ceased to be politically important, a celebrated saint who was Shah Shuja's spiritual mentor, Shah Nimat Allah, had settled there. A tomb and mosque in Gaur are identified as belonging to this saint, and one gate is said to have been constructed by Shah Shuja. The tomb appears to be modelled on the ground floor of Itimad ud-Daulah's tomb in Agra;[30] the mosque is the single-aisled three-domed type so popular in Rajmahal during this time. The proportionately small entrance arches lend a weighty quality to the mosque, reminiscent of the older Gaur style. While the mosque's exterior has no faceted plaster work, it does appear in the central mihrab and on pendentives of the interior,[31] recalling the Raushan Mosque in Rajmahal, datable to the mid-seventeenth century. Shah Shuja also constructed the Lukochori Darwaza, a three-storeyed gateway rendered entirely in the imperial Mughal manner, as a monumental south entrance to the Qadam Rasul, which enshrines a stone footprint said to be that of the Prophet. Shah Shuja's patronage at Gaur thus supported religious establishments in a location that, by now, had lost all secular importance.

30. John D. Hoag, *Islamic Architecture*, New York, 1977, figure 499.

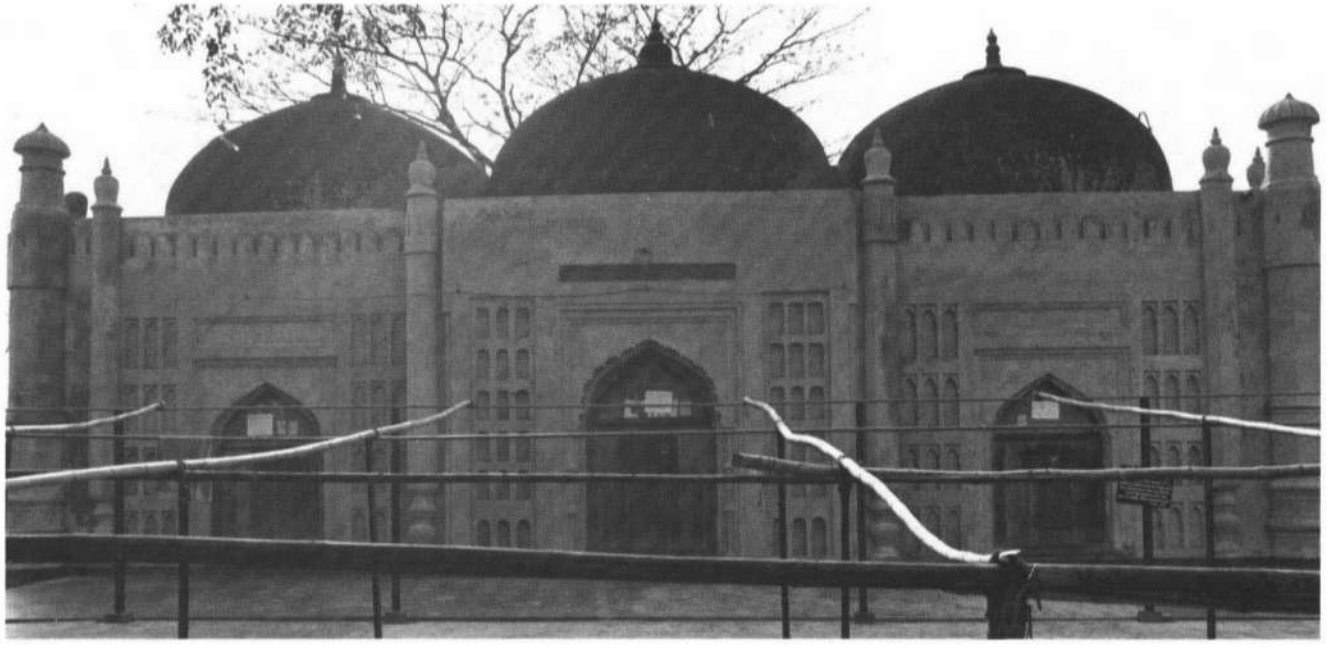
31. Dani, op. cit., plate LVIII, figure 85.

In 1660 the capital was once again returned to Dhaka, which remained the headquarters until Murshid Quli Khan shifted it to Murshidabad in 1703. The most famous monument of this period is undoubtedly the Lalbagh Fort. This complex consists of the mosque, earlier than the present-day fort and thus already discussed, the Tomb of Bibi Pari, a Diwan-i Khas, a tank, a walled enclosure and gates. While uninscribed, it is said to have been built under the aegis of Shaista Khan and Azim al-Shan between 1678 and 1684.[32] These structures, as well as the axial layout of the monuments, adhere well to the imperial Mughal tradition, but it is rare, if not unique, to have a tomb placed so close to a Diwan-i Khas. Bibi Pari's Tomb as modelled on the Tomb of Nimat Allah in Gaur, which in turn is modelled on the Tomb of Itimad ud-Daulah; the appearance of the Diwan-i Khas closely follows that of the Sangi Dalan in Rajmahal as well as the Khas Mahal in the Agra Fort. The fort was evidently unfinished, for the ample unused space would have easily accommodated other structures, and yielded a more complete appearance, like that of the Rajmahal palace.

32. Ashfaque, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

A number of notable mosques in Dhaka date to this period, some of them unmodified in spite of their continued use to the present day. The Satgumbad Mosque is uninscribed but may have been built by Shaista Khan;[33] the mosque of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz dates to 1679; and the

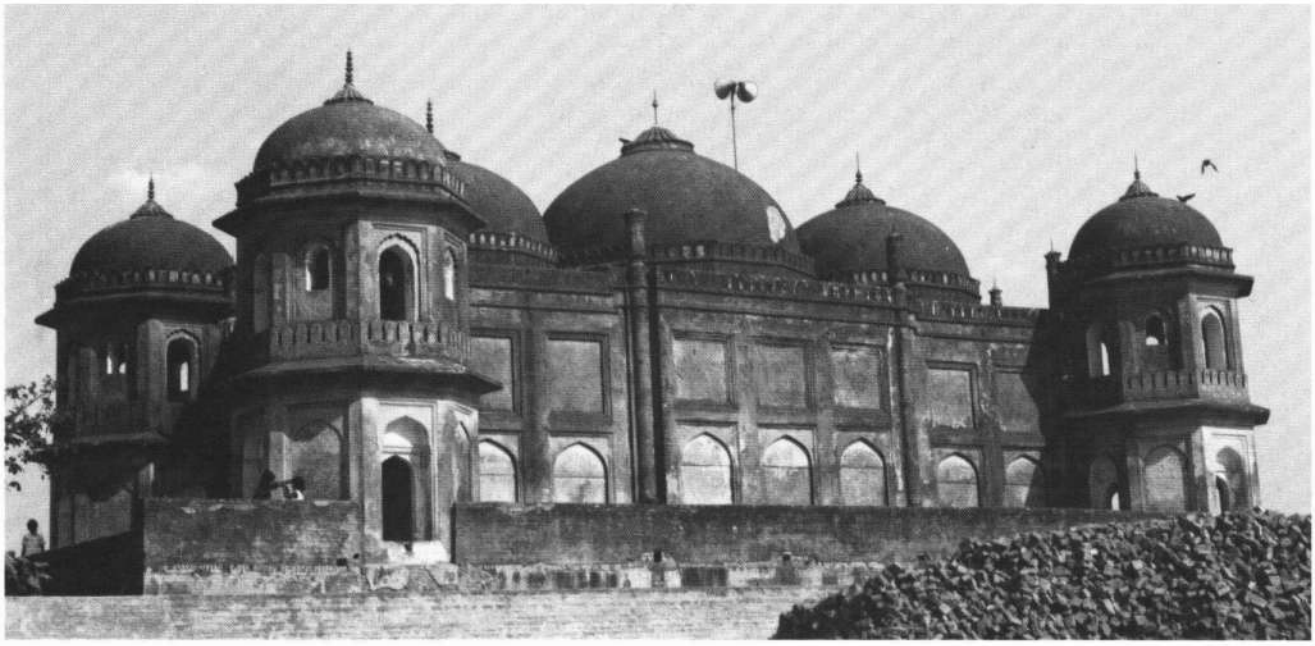
33. Dani, op. cit., p. 200.



Dhaka Mosque of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz, east facade.

mosque of Khan Muhammad Mirza is dated 1704. These three mosques illustrate the articulation of both interior and exterior surfaces, which is considerably more extensive during this period than earlier, for example on the Lalbagh Fort Mosque of 1649. No doubt the surface articulation is much more extensive in the imperial architecture of this period in Agra, Lahore and Delhi, for the mosques of eastern India in general are conservative. Moreover, the material used for the Bengali structures is inevitably plaster veneer over a brick core, not the stone facing used for the best imperial Mughal mosques in other parts of India. The increased articulation of surfaces can be seen on several parts of the building: for example, the projecting corner turrets of the Satgumbad Mosque, vastly larger than those of earlier mosques and now functioning as virtual rooms. Earlier mosques have only two engaged columns on the east façade, while there are four on the Haji Khwaja Shahbaz Mosque and six on the Khan Muhammad Mirza Mosque dated less than forty years later. Other innovations of the period include cusped entrance arches on the north and south as well as the east façades, and mihrabs with cusped arches supported by engaged colonettes with bulbous bases: for example, the central mihrab in Khan Muhammad Mirza's Mosque. Most elaborate of all is the interior of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz's Mosque, which has not only mihrabs with cusped arches on slender colonettes with bulbous bases but also cusped lateral arches resting on double engaged stone columns, thus recalling the refined interiors of Shah Jahan's Khas Mahal in the Agra Fort.[34]

34. Husain, op. cit., plate IV.



Dhaka, Satgumbad Mosque from southwest.

Dhaka, Mosque of Khan Muhammad Mirza, central *mihrab*.

During this period, which may be considered the high-point of Bengali Mughal architecture, the most refined monument is not in Dhaka but in Burdwan. The tomb complex of Khwaja Anwar-i Shahid, a noble treacherously murdered in 1698 while serving the Bengal governor, Sultan Azim al-Shan, Aurangzeb's grandson,[35] includes a splendid gateway, tank, mosque and tomb within a walled enclosure. It probably resulted from imperial patronage. The three-bayed mosque's highly articulated interior is replete with cusped niches. Such ornateness is unprecedented on any seventeenth- or early-eighteenth-century Bengali mosque, and it is probably derived from the decoration of such imperial architecture as Aurangzeb's Badshahi Mosque (1674) in Lahore.[36] The interior of this Burdwan mosque probably served as a basis for later eighteenth-century architecture at Murshidabad, for example the Chowk Mosque built by Muni Begum in 1767. The tomb, however, is the real *tour de force*. Its format, unique in India, consists of a square single-domed chamber with a rectangular structure on the east and west sides crowned by *do-chala* roofs. The tomb's plastered facades are covered with cusped medallions and niches as well as finely incised geometric patterns. This ornamentation recalls that of a tomb in the Khusrau Bagh in Allahabad, datable to the late seventeenth century.[37]

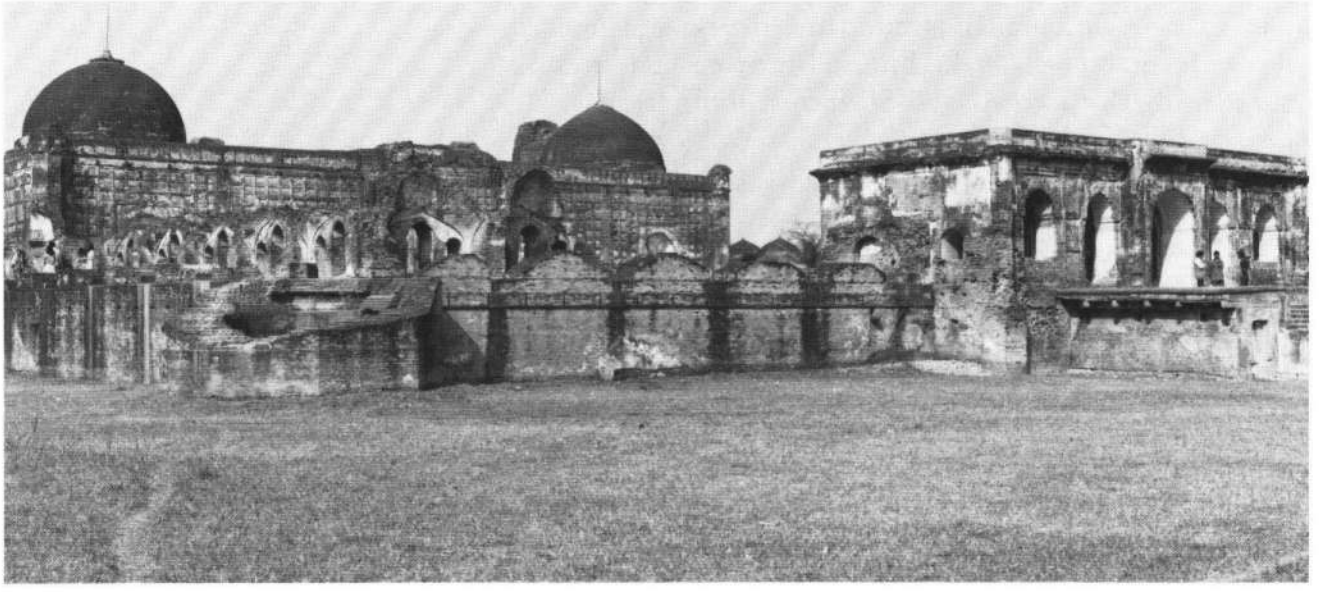
In 1703 Murshid Quli Khan shifted the Bengal capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad, formerly called Makhsusabad, and by 1717 he had established himself as the independent ruler of Bengal. Murshid Quli Khan ostensibly remained loyal to the imperial court in Delhi by annually remitting tribute; however, his founding of a new capital named after himself, as Rajmahal (Akbarnagar) and Dhaka (Jahangirnagar) had been named for ruling Mughal monarchs, clearly demonstrated his independence. Murshid Quli Khan's first architectural project in this new city was the Katra Mosque (1724), which served as a Jami mosque. The mosque, constructed in the typical Mughal Bengal idiom, is a single-aisled edifice originally surmounted by five domes. However, the numerous niches of the facade and the weighty quality suggested by the proportionately small entrance arches recall the architectural tradition of pre-Mughal Bengal. The structure thus stands in contrast to the more refined and elegant buildings developed during the previous era in Dhaka, Rajmahal and Burdwan. The Katra Mosque's break with the Mughal style may be viewed as an architectural assertion of Bengal's independence.

Surrounding the mosque on all four sides is a series of domed cloistered chambers locally called a *katra* or market. However, earlier travellers, such as the well-known artist

35. Abdul Wali, 'The Antiquities of Burdwan', *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XIII, 1917, p. 187.

36. M. Abdullah Chaghatai, *The Badshahi Masjid: History and Architecture*, Lahore, 1972, plate 7.

37. Mildred Archer, *Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786-1794*, London, 1980, figure 68. This tomb is otherwise unillustrated.



Murshidabad, Katra Mosque from southeast, showing entrance housing Murshid Quli Khan's grave.

William Hodges, describe this as a splendid theological school or *madrasa*, a view corroborated by others.[38] The placement of *madrasas* in mosques was a long-established practice; space was specifically allotted for these schools within the plinths of later seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century mosques of Dhaka: for example, the Mosque of Kar Talab Khan, reputedly constructed by Murshid Quli Khan, and the Mosque of Khan Muhammad Mirza.[39] Historical chronicles recall Murshid Quli Khan's zeal in propagating the faith.[40] It is stated he maintained 2,000 readers of the Koran and an enormous supporting staff: they were probably housed in the domed cloisters surrounding the Katra Mosque.

In accordance with his wishes, Murshid Quli Khan was buried under the entrance to his mosque. According to Ghulam Husain in the *Riyaz*, he had his grave placed in such proximity to the mosque so his soul might be blessed forever.[41] O'Malley concurs, noting that his burial place literally follows the dictates of an inscription over the mosque's east façade that reads, 'The triumph of Muhammad of Arabia is the glory of heaven and earth. One who be not the dust of his doorstep, dust be upon his head.'[42] In addition, burial in a mosque's entrance recalls Sikander Shah's grave, traditionally said to be under the entrance to the Adina Mosque's *takht*,[43] perhaps another association on the part of Murshid Quli Khan with the independent rulers of Bengal. Following the example of Murshid Quli Khan, his wife and daughter were buried under the entrance of their mosques, the Mosque of Nusari Banu and the mosque of Azim al-Nisa Begum, respectively.

38. L. S. S. O'Malley, *Murshidabad*, vol. 32 of *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Calcutta, 1914, p. 214, and P. C. Majumdar, *The Masnud of Murshidabad*, Murshidabad, 1905, p. 171.
39. Syed Muhammad Taifoor, *Glimpses of Old Dacca*, 2nd ed., Dacca, 1956, p. 228.
40. Jadu-Nath Sarkar, *The History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Dacca, 1948, pp. 420-1.
41. Ghulam Husain Salim, *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, trans. by Abdus Salam, reprint edition, Delhi, 1975, p. 284.
42. O'Malley, *Murshidabad*, p. 214.
43. Dani, op. cit., pp. 71-2.

Murshid Quli Khan's son-in-law and successor, Shuja al-Din, is buried at Roshnibagh, across the river from the Katra Mosque, in a simple flat-roofed tomb. The mosque situated in this tomb compound is of special interest. According to an inscription over the east facade's central bay, the patron was Mahabat Jung, who built this mosque in 1743, a date determined by the numerical value of the words in the last hemistitch.[44] Mahabat Jung was one of the titles of Nawab Aliverdi Khan, who by murdering Shuja al-Din's son, Nawab Serferaz, took the throne for himself. According to nearly contemporary texts, Aliverdi Khan exerted much effort to remove the stigma of this act. Historical texts report that to absolve his guilt he distributed much money, gave presents and behaved well.[45] The construction of this mosque in the tomb compound of his victim's father appears to have been one of Aliverdi Khan's attempts to exonerate himself.

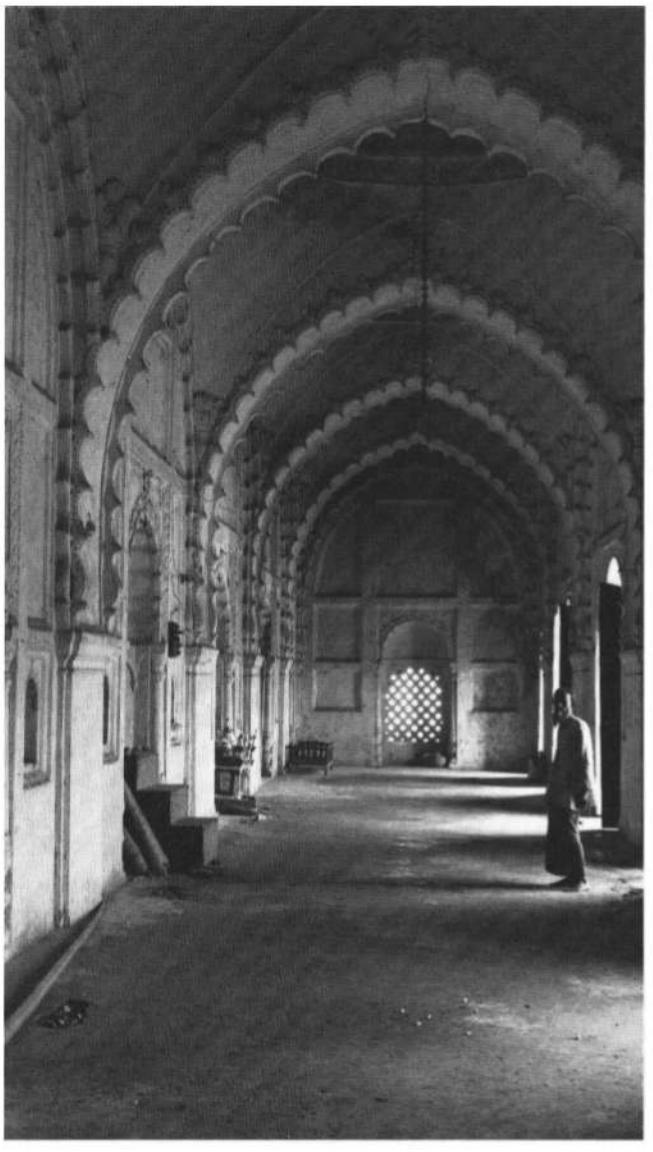
Aliverdi Khan's Mosque in Shuja al-Din's Tomb compound at Roshnibagh is part of the return to delicately proportioned architecture popular in seventeenth-century Rajmahal and Dhaka but it is more refined than the mosques in the earlier capitals. Emphasizing verticality, the slender engaged turrets and columns with niched and bulbous finials on the east and west facade rise high above the roof. The dome and flanking *char-chala* vaults have slender pointed finials, also emphasizing the mosque's verticality. Introducing a new motif that became common on many Murshidabad mosques, this mosque has decorative plaster *do-chala* and *char-chala* vaults on the exterior walls. Although structural *do-chala* and *char-chala* vault forms are Bengali in origin, it seems likely that the adaptation of these structural forms to a plaster decorative motif returned to Bengal via north-Indian architecture.[46]

Still more elaborate than Aliverdi Khan's Mosque at Shuja al-Din's Tomb is the Chowk Mosque built in 1767 by Muni Begum, the influential wife of Nawab Mir Jafar.[47] Floral arabesques in thickly applied plaster ornament the cusped entrance arches as well as the recessed niches and rectangular divisions on the mosque's exterior and interior. Although influenced by the decor on the Tomb of Khwaja Anwar-i Shahid in Burdwan (*c.* 1698), the ornamentation on Muni Begum's mosque is more elaborate. Later this kind of decoration becomes still more ornate on Murshidabad mosques—for example, on Mian Halal's Mosque (1801), the Gulab Mosque (*c.* 1800) and the Qadam Sharif Mosque (1780). On many of these mosques dating after the Chowk Mosque, naturalistically depicted animals and vegetation are added to the repertoire of motifs depicted in plaster. For

44. See note 26.

Murshidabad, Mosque in Nawab Shuja al-Din's tomb complex at Roshnibagh. North bay of east façade.

45. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 14.
46. This point needs investigation. Dani, op. cit., pp. 181-2, points out that the structural *do-chala* roof, although derived from indigenous Bengali architecture, is seen first outside of Bengal in the Mughal period; thus it seems probable that *do-chala* and *char-chala* vaults in plaster were also first used as decorative motifs outside of Bengal.
47. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 130.



Murshidabad, Chowk Mosque, interior from south.

Murshidabad, Mosque of Mian Halal, interior north wall.

example, peacocks as well as remarkably realistic flowers appear on Mian Halal's Mosque and the Gulab Bagh Mosque. This follows a general Indian trend at this time.[48]

Ribbed domes with constricted necks are frequently seen on mosques of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The earliest dated building on which they appear is the Qadam Sharif Mosque of 1780. The renovation of the Lalbagh Fort Mosque in Dhaka, whose domes are of this type, also dates to 1780. However, two mosques in Murshidabad with ribbed domes on constricted necks are traditionally dated somewhat earlier; that is, to the time of Siraj ud-Daulah (1756-57): the Zarad Mosque and the mosque in the Khushbagh Tomb Complex.[49] However, they should probably be assigned a date later in the eighteenth century.

48. For example, the Tomb of Munir ud-Daulah in Patna, dated 1759.

49. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 128. While the Khusbagh mosque is ascribed to no particular patron, Siraj ud-Daulah would appear most likely, since he was Aliverdi Khan's immediate successor. However, stylistic evidence suggests otherwise. See R. N. Ray, *Bengal Nawabs*, Calcutta, text II, reverse.

Other mosques with ribbed bulbous domes on constricted necks include Mian Halal's Mosque and the Mosque of Nusari Banu (1881).[50] Domes of this sort are seen earlier in the Deccan and Delhi, for example the Sunahri Mosque (1751), but this feature was late in reaching Bengal.

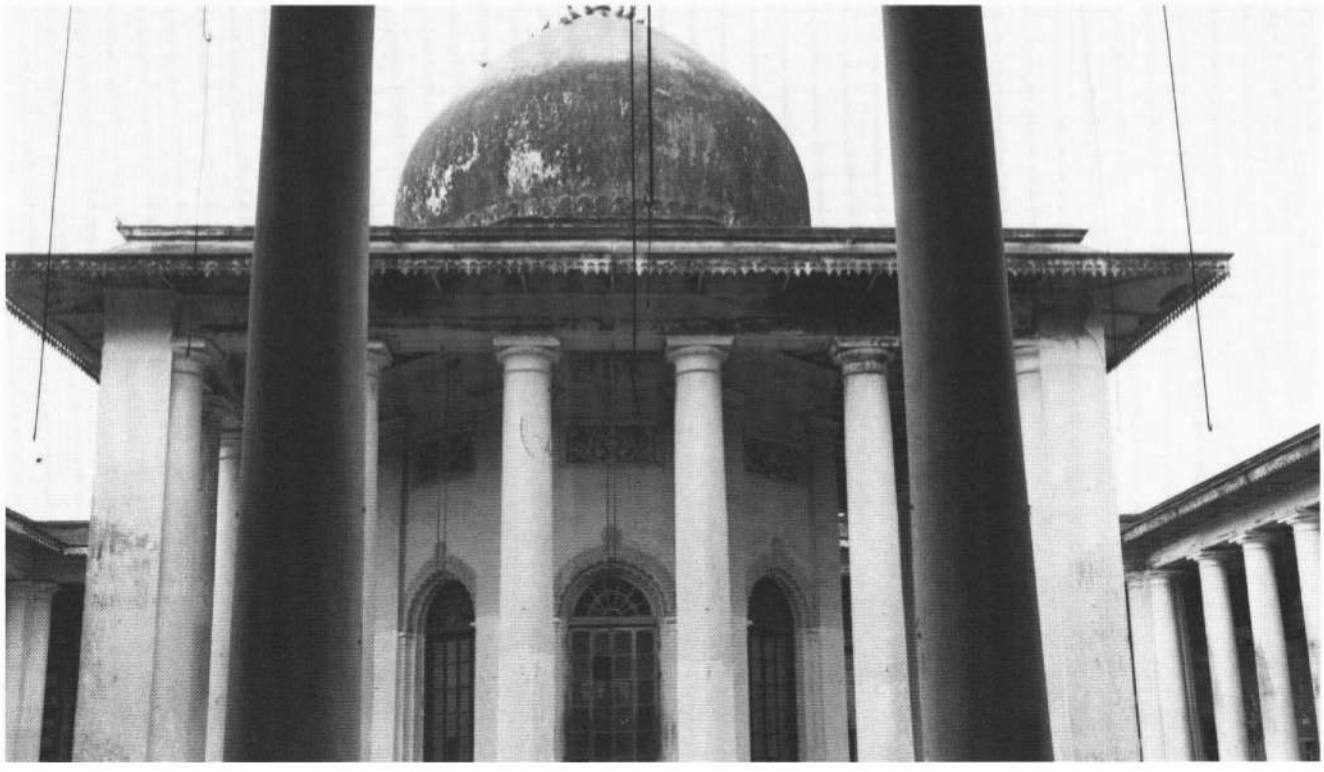
Nusari Banu's mosque is surmounted by constricted ribbed domes, but the mosque's façade is more austere than the façade of Mian Halal's Mosque, which is probably the last extremely ornate mosque in Murshidabad. A short while later, for example on Farhat Allah Khan's Mosque (1821), extraneous ornamentation of any sort is avoided. Is this more restrained appearance due to the influence of European architecture in India? It was certainly a force felt in the Palace at Murshidabad (1829-37) and the vast Imambara, also part of the great Palace complex. Or is the restrained appearance a reflection of the insolvency faced by the old Bengal nobility after the British takeover?

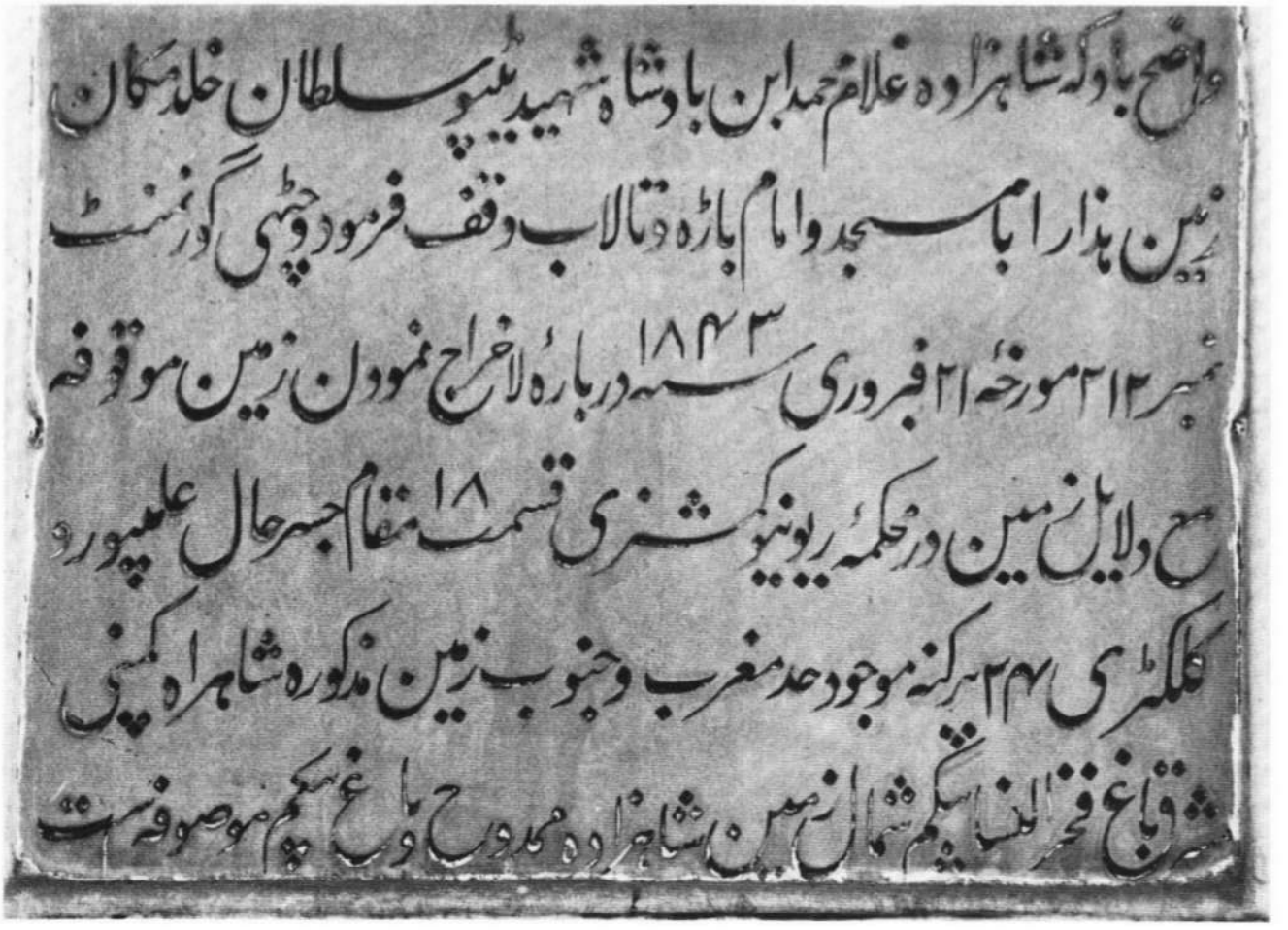
Murshidabad, situated only 200 km north of Calcutta, the capital of British India, was not unaffected by an increasing British influence upon art and culture. The Nawab's Palace (1829-37), for example, was designed by a European in the European tradition,[51] and other princely houses built European-style palaces—for example, the Bibipur-Ki-Kothi constructed by Asaf ud-Daulah in

50. See Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 135-6, for a transcription of the inscription's text; however, the date has been incorrectly given. Sajida S. Alvi determined the date of A.H. 1299/A.D. 1881 from the chronogram, which belongs to the *tamiya* or puzzle type. See also note 26.

51. Sten Nilsson, *European Architecture in India, 1750-1850*, London, 1968, pp. 110-1.

Murshidabad, Medina inside Imambara, from south.





Calcutta, Mosque of Ghulam Muhammad. *Waqf farman* inscribed on west exterior wall.

Lucknow before his death in 1803.[52] The great Imambara, part of the Murshidabad Palace complex, was also influenced by European architecture, although to a lesser degree than the palace itself. These structures built by Nawab Humayun Jah may be viewed as reflections of official British contact, for the mosques constructed by private persons show only minor traces of European influence. While the European-inspired fan motif is used subtly in at least two Murshidabad mosques, Muni Begum's Chowk Mosque and Shah Nisar Ali's Mosque (1778),[53] bolder European features such as the columns of the classical orders appear nowhere but in structures built on the Palace grounds, for example in the Medina inside the great Imambara. Moreover, the Mosque of Nusari Banu, designed in part by Sadiq Ali, who built the European-influenced Imambara, is constructed strictly within the traditional mosque style of Murshidabad and thus appears much older than it is.

Mosques revealing a decided European influence first appear in Calcutta. Among these are several constructed by descendants of Tipu Sultan, all dated between 1835 and 1842. They stand in pointed contrast to the contemporary

52. Ubbas Alli, *The Lucknow Album*, Calcutta, 1874, plate 3.

53. *Annual Report on India Epigraphy*, 1955-56, D. 50.

mosques of nearby Murshidabad. Resembling the bungalows used by the British for residences, they feature shuttered doors, fan windows, Tuscan columns, classical entablatures and rounded arches. European influence is noticeable even in the inscriptions of these three mosques; for example, the *waqf farman* inscribed on Ghulam Muhammad's Mosque uses the Christian rather than Muslim system of dating, and several English words, such as 'government' and 'collectorship', are written in Persian script. However, the plan of these mosques recalls the double-aisled multidomed mosques, not seen in Bengal since the Qutb Shahi Mosque in Pandua (1582). Since Tipu Sultan and his descendants were from Mysore, it is difficult to imagine that they had any interest in reviving a building type associated with the independent Sultans of Bengal or were even aware of that tradition. Nor does it seem likely that the double-aisled plan was popular during Tipu Sultan's reign in Mysore. More probably, the plan was revived by a Bengali architect.

The mosques of Tipu Sultan's descendants contrast vividly with the enormous and distinctively urban Nakhoda Mosque, constructed nearly a hundred years later in Calcutta. Built in 1942, the multistoreyed stone-faced Nakhoda Mosque dominates its urban setting. Although the overall form is unique to this mosque, some features may be traced to Mughal sources, and the recollection was not accidental. Constructed during a period when the Muslim League and the idea of Muslim nationalism were popular among India's minority Islamic population, these features of the mosque's style evoke the glories of India's Islamic past and the age of Muslim political and cultural domination. Ironically, the Nakhoda Mosque, the most famous twentieth-century mosque in India, unlike all other mosques discussed here, has no features belonging to indigenous Bengali traditions.

Hindu-Muslim artistic continuities

David McCutchion

The conquest of Bengal by the uprooted Central Asian Turks broke the brahmanical hold on life and released new creative forces in a society fixed in stereotyped ways. But the initial impact was disruptive: temples were dismantled for building materials, and innumerable images were thrown into rivers and tanks. With intolerance of idolatry on the one side and social exclusiveness on the other, coexistence would appear to have been impossible; but of course when people settle down to live together they work out a compromise. Short of compulsion there was no chance of converting the upper-caste Hindus, with their pride and age-old culture, and in any case their co-operation was necessary as soon as the Bengal Sultans decided on independence from Delhi: more than 500 years later, when the British took over the administration of Bengal, they found that the majority of the *zamindars* were still Hindu. The strongest binding force that grew during the pre-Mughal period developed from what can only be described as the emergence of Bengal as a nation—with a distinctive language, architecture and literature. We even find Muslim Sultans and governors patronizing the translation into Bengali of Hindu scriptures like the *Shri-Krishna Vijaya* or the *Mahabharata*. At the popular level the force of local traditions and natural environment was so strong as to absorb many a Hindu or animistic element (worship of Pirs, or even of Dharmaraja and Sitala), and to call for movements of purification like the nineteenth-century Faraidi movement. In any case, Islam itself had given birth to the mystical Sufi movement, so different from the normal practical worldliness of Islam, and indeed offering a point of

Unless otherwise indicated all photographs are by the author.

affinity with the Hindu *bhakti* tradition. The Sufis of Bengal went so far as to absorb Hindu cosmological and tantric elements, as in the writings of Shaikh Zahid and Saiyid Sultan. By the same process of assimilation, Islamic art, from unpromisingly austere beginnings, developed into one of the great artistic achievements of the world.

Building traditions

The success of Islamic art was a result of its genius for adapting local traditions, initially Romano-Christian, but subsequently those of any country where it became established. And the results were nowhere happier than in those countries that had the oldest and most developed artistic traditions—Persia and India. The Persian love of flowers was far stronger than the Islamic tendency to geometrical abstraction, so that the mosques of Isfahan and Shiraz are covered with curling stems and roses. Persian and Indian manuscript illustrations are full of human figures: the Prophet is even represented in Persian art, and I have heard of a mosque with human sculptured figures. The Indian impulse to profusion is noticeable for instance in the thirteenth-century Tomb of Iltutmish at the Qutb in Delhi, or the extension of the original great screen of the Quwwat-al-Islam Mosque. Many of the early Islamic monuments of India were partially built from the dismantled sculptured stones of Hindu temples, with the human figures chiselled out but the animal and floral designs remaining. The use of Hindu pillars, with their most un-Islamically faceted and burgeoning surfaces, was especially prevalent, but later when the Muslims started to cut their own pillars they cut them to smooth planes though still following the essential Hindu form. Such was the admiration of the Islamic conquerors for Hindu or Jaina art that in Gujarat, for instance, they removed entire trabeate domes from temples and reconstructed them over the prayer halls of the new mosques; for a generation or so, Islamic art followed the old Hindu trabeate system before accepting wholeheartedly the true arch-and-dome construction developed to such practical efficiency and aesthetic appeal in the Islamic Middle East. This was no doubt largely due to the need to retrain Hindu craftsmen, who would naturally distrust the new methods, but as late as 1684 the Tomb of Bibi Pari in Dhaka has trabeate ceilings throughout, 400 years after the domed ceiling had become standard practice in Bengal.

The mosque and monumental tomb, gateway and serai employed entirely new forms of architecture introduced by the Muslims into Bengal. The enormous Adina Mosque,

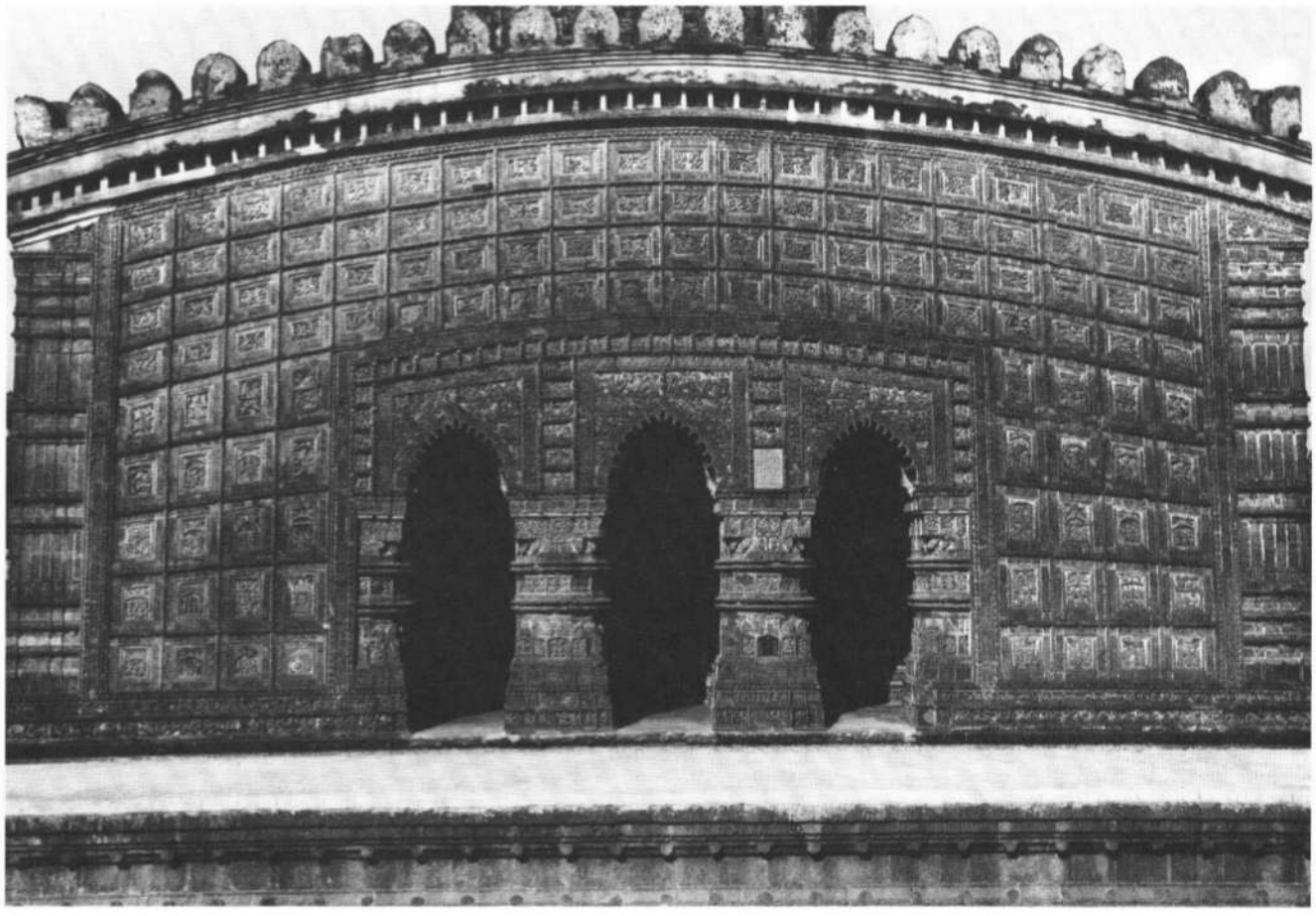
constructed by Sikander Shah at Pandua and finished in A.D. 1375, was a direct import from the Middle East—inspired by the Great Mosque of Damascus perhaps, or those at Samarra. But the usual Bengali mosque, as it developed about this time, was a much more modest structure, usually square with a single large dome, or rectangular with a set of smaller domes, entirely dispensing with the vast colonnaded enclosure of the Adina Mosque. In many respects these mosques and mausoleums of the Sultanate period in Bengal were the starting point of what subsequently developed as a new provincial tradition of Hindu architecture, which began to flourish in the sixteenth century as part of what Dinesh Chandra Sen has called the 'Pauranic Renaissance'. The major innovation brought in by the Muslims was the true arch and dome, which was assisted by the use of lime mortar. Previously, the Hindus had laid stone directly on stone, or large bricks in mud, relying on weight to keep them in position. In the Muslim period the size of the brick radically diminishes, and the great majority of late medieval Hindu temples are provided with voussoir arches and domical ceilings—although, unlike in other parts of India, the Bengal temple never adopted the dome as an external feature. Only a few of the tall *deuls,* as at Baidyapur or Amadpur, continue the old corbelling system for the tower, although the standard transition from square chamber to round dome is a corbelled pendentive. Almost invariably, Hindu temples built after the arrival of the Muslims, including those with corbelled towers, have a pointed archway over the entrance, usually with cusps. The pointed arch is a general feature of Islamic architecture not only in Bengal, but all over India. The very characteristic cusping—either open or blind—is also a common Islamic feature. It is first employed in the early Delhi monuments such as the Tomb of Iltutmish A.D. 1235 and may be traced back to the Middle East: the triangular arch with multiple cusps, as on the Darasbari Mosque at Gaur, was a feature of western Seljuq art in Iraq, while the blind cusps of the Adina Mosque mihrab tympana are exactly parallelled in Persia by, for instance, those on the tenth-century portal of the Jorjir Mosque of Isfahan, or earlier still on the fallen Taq-i-Kisra of Ctesiphon, built during the reign of Shapur I (A.D. 241-72) and, according to Creswell, the earliest example of a cusped arch. But parallels may also be found in pre-Muslim Hindu art: the broad shallow cusping of the archways of the screen at Ajmer (*c.* A.D. 1205) may be referred either to the tradition represented by similar cusping in the windows of the ninth-century Great Mosque at Samarra, or to similar extension of the trefoil arch in Hindu

art. The Adina Mosque employs actual Hindu niches of this type for some of its mihrabs, and imitates the form in brick as decoration on the outher walls. Further parallels may be seen in the cusped archways of eleventh- and twelfth-century Solanki architecture (Surya Temple at Modhera, Rudraloy at Siddhapur), or in the imitation of rafter ends carved in stone round the horseshoe-shaped archways above the entrances to Buddhist *chaitya* caves in western India.

Muslim rule not only introduced into Bengali architecture specifically Islamic features such as the dome and pointed arch, but also crystallized certain local tendencies in a new tradition that was as much Bengali as Islamic. The foremost of these was the curved cornice, taken from the village hut. This was first employed—so far as we can tell from buildings still standing—in the Eklakhi Tomb at Pandua in the early fifteenth century, although the curve is as yet very slight. This building may be said to inaugurate the new tradition of Bengali architecture, for it contains the broad indication of so much that was to follow. In the first place the Hindu emphasis on height (*rekha deul*) is replaced by a low massiveness, perhaps dictated by climatic conditions (soggy earth), which are also said to have determined the curved roof edge (the better to throw off the rain). Certainly Bengal mosques are much lower than those of western India, and the curved cornice is not a local feature elsewhere; it was in fact carried across to Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat and elsewhere in the Mughal period. The Eklakhi Tomb is a square chamber surmounded by a dome—the basic form of the later Hindu temple of *chala* or *ratna* design: in the case of a *chala* temple the dome is simply built over to the shape of the roof of the village *char-chala* hut. Both Brown and Dani consider that the patterning of the walls of the Eklakhi Tomb is also determined by the hut structure of bamboo and wattle panels. This building has a single entrance on all four sides with a pointed brick arch above an inserted Hindu stone doorframe, but subsequently mosques were more commonly provided with three entrances or more, which are usually separated by a section of wall, and occasionally by a type of pillar that again is a characteristic feature of later Bengal temples. Pillars of this type are found nowhere else in India, according to Brown, and are found for the first time supporting the king's gallery (*badshah-ka-takht*) in the Adina Mosque. They are evidently a Hindu type of pillar, differing from the more typical kinds of Hindu pillars in other parts of India by being broader, more stumpy and more faceted. After their occasional use by Muslims (who needed taller, equally Hindu, pillars to support their multiple domes), they became an in-

Gaur, Qadam Rasul from south-east.

variable feature of any temple with more than one entrance archway from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and lent themselves readily to complex ornamentation. When these various features are combined—rectangular chamber low rather than high, curved cornice, triple archway on characteristic pillars, central dome or tower—the similarity between a Muslim structure such as the Qadam Rasul (1530) in Gaur, which houses the Prophet's footprint (cf. *Vishnupada, Buddhapada*) or a Hindu temple such as that of Madana Mohan (1694) at Bishnupur in Bankura District is striking. A typical Hindu development of this form is to add towers (*ratna*) at corners (*nava-ratna, satera-ratna, pan-chavimshati-ratna*). This too is a common Islamic practice: in a sense the Taj Mahal is a *pancha-ratna,* and many an Islamic tomb has *chatris* repeated at different levels, as at Sasaram. Not that Islam has any exclusive claim to be the originator of this arrangement, which corresponds more to a natural disposition of the human sense of order: it is anticipated in the Hindu *panchaysatana* set of four smaller shrines round a larger central one or the Burmese practice of placing towers at the corners of successive roofs. It is noteworthy that the façade of the Madana Mohan temple is already higher than that of the Qadam Rasul: subsequently the Hindu emphasis on height will return, for the temple requires only a single cell—unlike the prayer hall of a mosque—so that by duplicating the temple on the roof as a tower (*at-chala*) and lengthening all the components, some *at-chala* temples as at Dohajari in Khulna District aspire to become *rekha deuls*.



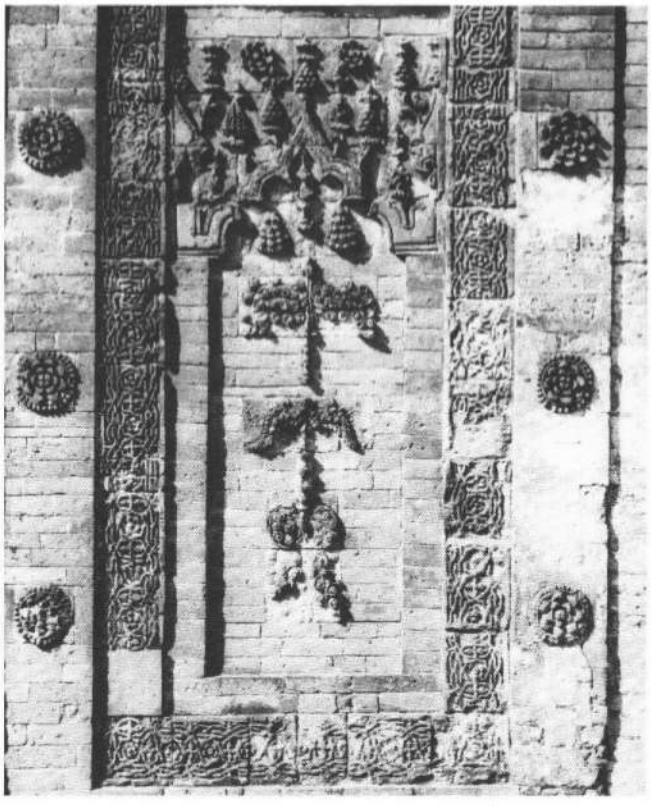
Bishnupur (Bankura District), Radha-Madhava Temple, 1737.

Fischer has shown that the typical internal arrangement of a late medieval Bengal temple such as that of Vasudeva (1679) at Bansberia in Hooghly District—central domed square chamber surrounded by four barrel-vaulted verandahs with domes at the intersections—may be traced back through centuries of Islamic pratice to the late Sasanian period. At the same time a model could be found nearer home in the Bengal village hut with a verandah at the front and sides (though of course without the vaulting and domes). We do not know for certain whether the hut style of temple was built in Bengal before the Muslim period, for if any were built none have survived. But in view of the large numbers of stone images discovered from the Pala-Sena period and the comparatively little evidence of ambitious temples, it seems likely that many of these images were enshrined in simple huts of mud (as is still the practice today) and, consequently, that temples were also built in imitation of these huts in more permanent materials. Such indeed was the origin of all Indian temple architecture, when not imitated from Greek models or from caves; and the well-known Draupadi *ratha* of Mahabalipuram illustrates the simplest hut style in stone from the eighth century. But the

typical Hindu temple departed so far from its domestic origins, especially by the addition of the *shikhara*, for the model to be no longer recognizable. Only in Bengal in the late medieval period is the hut style so prevalent and so distinctive. As we have seen, the Eklakhi Tomb originated this style in one form leading to the *ratna*, *char-chala* and *at-chala* types. But the most distinctive hut style is the *do-chala*, more familiarly known as the *bangla* type: this is an elongated chamber with a humped roof and open gable ends. A good example of this is in Gaur: the Tomb of Fath Khan, who died between 1657 and 1660. It is found associated with other late seventeenth-century Muslim buildings, such as those forming the gateway to the Mosque of Muhammad Shah at Egarasindhur, or as an appendage to the Mosque of Kartalab Khan in Dhaka. These may be instances of the Muslims receiving a structural form from the Hindu revival, for Hindu examples of this type (single hut temples at Bardhankuti in Rangpur District, Katyayani Temple at Madhabpasa in Barisal District, *jorbangla* temple at Guptipara in Hooghly District) seem to antedate any extant Muslim example. Manmohan Chakravarti mentions an old *jorbangla* temple of the first quarter of the sixteenth century that was reported to have existed at Bhabanipur, 58 km north-east of Natore, before it fell down in the earthquake of 1885. In the seventeenth century, as we shall see, there were other decorative influences from the Hindu revival on to Muslim architecture. But the elongated *char-chala* with curved cornice (not so very different from the *bangla* roof) had already been used for the series of central domes on the Chota Sona Mosque at Gaur during the reign of Hussain Shah (1493–1519) and even earlier at Bagerhat; all these examples have internal ribbing in imitation of bamboo structure. So we see that although no mosque ever adopted the typical Hindu *rekha* or *pirha* towers of the Pala period, nor any temple the exterior form of the Islamic dome, both drew freely on local architectural tradition, so that in spite of widely differing functions, temple and mosque achieve a certain affinity of design.

Decoration

These affinities are equally apparent in the matter of decoration, though here again in spite of fundamental divergencies. The dominant feature of Hindu decoration is the profusion of living forms, especially the human figure banned by Islam. The first impression on looking at the decoration on the mosques, tombs and gateways of Pandua and Gaur



Bagha, Jami Mosque, wall niche.

Pandua, Eklakhi Tomb, wall niche.

is of the difference from Hindu decoration: the lines are crisper, the modelling flatter, the forms decorous rather than surging, the flowers less naturalistic, the patterning more regular; in short, the tendency to geometrical abstraction is strong. In the detail, too, many an Islamic interlocking or basket-weave motif may be discerned, many a repeated pattern of some design based on the cross, square, or circle. But in spite of the geometrical tendency, the artists of Bengal never developed a taste for the labyrinthine straight-line patterns typical of so much Middle Eastern Islamic art, preferring throughout the gracefully twisting stems or hanging fronds also cherished by the Persians.

Closer study reveals that many details were taken from the previous Hindu art. After all, whole doorframes carved with Hindu designs were incorporated into the new buildings at Pandua and Gaur and elsewhere, so it is not surprising that these designs should be imitated. A typical example is the hanging-beads design, with intervening tassels or bells, such as occurs not only on Hindu lintel friezes, but on columns and round the hips of Pala gods: this is found in a slightly coarsened form on both the Adina Mosque and Eklakhi Tomb at Pandua. Scrollwork or successive loops with floral filling are also common in Pala art, and carried over on to Muslim buildings. The most prominent feature of Pala decoration is its rich foliated scrollwork, curling like

Pandua, Eklakhi Tomb, wall detail.

fire or tumbling like water, as rampant and burgeoning as jungle vegetation: this too may be found on early buildings like the Adina Mosque, but subsequently tends to disappear, being too rich and unrestrained. In the tympana of the Adina mihrabs may be seen the typical Pala tall triangle filled with foliation, which Dani traces back to the Buddhist stupas. The open lotus in profile, exactly as carved on Hindu pillars from Dinajpur of Gaur, is among the many small motifs carved in the series of 'shields' or 'crenellations', so typical a feature of Islamic frieze decoration. Sometimes these are separated by tiny pilasters as on Hindu lintels depicting the *navagraha* (nine 'planets') or *dashavatara* (ten incarnations of Vishnu). Such a list of decorative details copied from earlier Hindu art could be greatly extended—the wavy stem, the lotus and diamond, the lotus petal frieze, the trefoil, the rosette, the finial, the festoon, the twisted rope. Nor was previous Hindu art lacking in geometrical abstraction: chequered squares, for instance, are found in terracotta at Paharpur, Bangarh, and Mahasthan, or the diamond criss-cross. Many of these designs have no exclusive claim to be either Hindu or Muslim: the foliated scroll, so typically Gupta, is equally Graeco-Roman or Scythian. The Muslims may have brought the 'Classical' or 'Sasanian' palmette with them, or they could have found it on Pala sculpture. Floral scrolls very similar to some Pala work may be seen in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, after which they become a common feature of Islamic decoration. The interlocking swastika design which is found on both mosques and later temples in Bengal, or for that matter on the sixth-century Buddhist Dhamekh stupa at Sarnath, is familiarly Greek. Abstract designs are so universal and variously suggestive that even so typically Islamic a design as that above the central mihrab of the Adina Mosque can be shown to have strong Hindu affinities. So too the flourish of the *makara* tail can be reduced to a simple indented circle.

Although we know so little about the styles of architecture in the pre-Muslim period and our knowledge of its art motifs is only fragmentary, it may be safely asserted that there is a greater continuity between Muslim and later Hindu art than between earlier Hindu and Muslim art. Initially Bengali Muslim art arose in hostility to the earlier Hindu art, whereas later Hindu art arose out of comparative tolerance. Apart from this, authors like Gurusaday Datta have viewed Pala-Sena art as an aristocratic outside imposition on the native folk genius, which had flourished in the unsophisticated ninth-century art of Paharpur and reasserted itself when Islam broke the hieratic brahmanical hegemony,

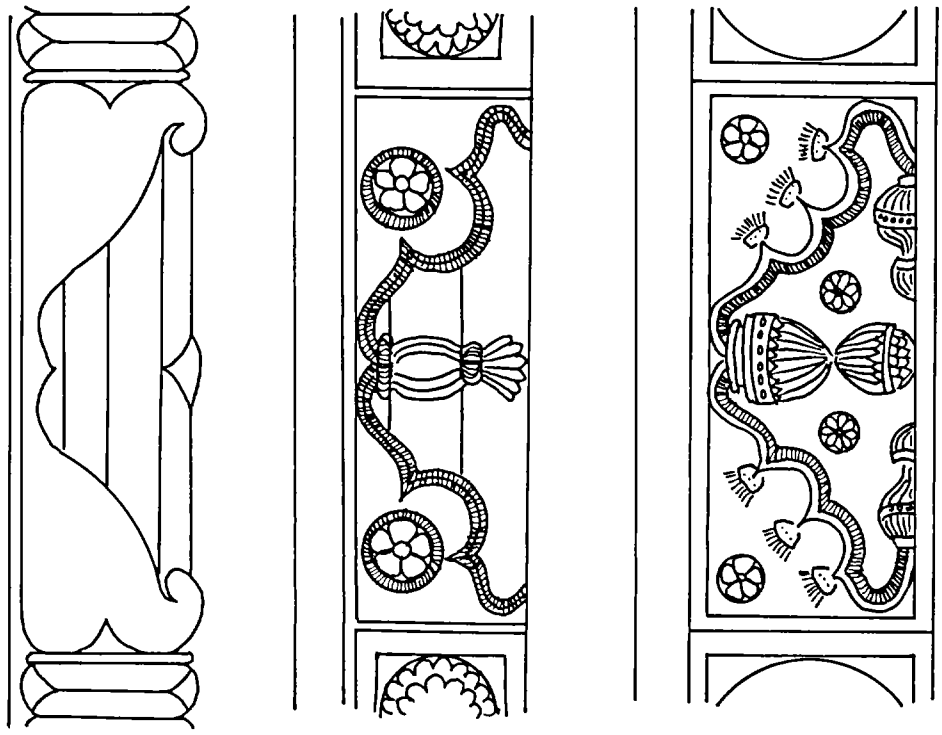
continuing on through the Hindu revival under Vaishnava inspiration; Dani compares the 'liveliness and spirit' of the Adina terracottas to those of Paharpur and Mainamati. Certainly the Muslims may be said to have revived the art of terracotta as architectural decoration, which does not appear to have continued beyond the tenth century at Paharpur, and is not found on later Pala-Sena temples, of which those still standing are decorated with stucco. But the layout and style of Muslim and later Hindu terracottas are quite different from those of Paharpur. Whereas on the early Buddhist sites the terracotta plaques are 60 cm square, more or less, laid end to end in rows along the circumambulatory walls with little accompanying strip decoration, the later terracottas are usually no more than a few centimetres across and arranged in elaborate patterns either above the archways or so as to cover the entire façade. It was the Muslims who initiated the finely chiselled work so characteristic of fifteenth-century mosques and seventeenth-century temples, introduced a great variety of strip motifs later taken up by the Hindus to fill the spaces between their figure panels, and established the basic features of façade decoration.

The focus of this decoration is the single or triple entrance and especially the space above the pointed arch. This was given a rectangular frame with lotus medallions in either spandrel, surrounded by floral designs. The lotuses on either side of the pointed arch are an early feature of Islamic architecture in the Middle East, and were introduced into India at Delhi and Ajmer from the very beginning of Muslim rule. Down the sides of each spandrel runs an arabesque that is also essentially Islamic in shape, being derived from the pointed trefoil or 'halberd' motif derived from the palmette, extended and cut down the centre; but antecedents for the resultant line with sharply curved indentation could also be found in shapes deriving from the *chaitya* motif on medieval Hindu temples. This arabesque is also often surmounted by a Hindu finial, similarly split down the middle, and together with the pair of lotuses—which occasionally become *rasamdalas*—is a regular feature of later Hindu terracotta decoration above the archway. The corbelled entrances to earlier Hindu temples had been generally framed with stone (often richly carved), a practice never revived. But a Hindu antecedent for the later temple entrance may be found in the image niche, which was taken over by the Muslims both for their mihrabs and as a decorative motif on the exterior walls. As already pointed out, the cusped arch had been partially anticipated by the rounded or pointed trefoil form of the image niche, which as in the

well-known example from Khari in the Sundarbans (eleventh century, Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta), was provided with pilasters. The peculiar shaped pilasters of the niche reliefs on the outer walls of the Eklakhi Tomb may be a remote echo of the bulging pilasters of the Khari type. The niche reliefs on the outer wall of the Adina Mosque generally do not have pilasters, but on one they are of the typical Hindu design as found again later on the façades of such mosques as those at Rampal or Shahzadpur. This decorative niche subsequently reappears with its typical Muslim embellishments on the four walls of the Ichai Ghoser *deul* in Burdwan District, probably built in the seventeenth century. More standard practice is its use as a mihrab throughout the pre-Mughal period. All nineteen mihrabs in the Bari Mosque at Chota Pandua—which may well be the earliest mosque still standing in unaltered condition, however ruined, in Bengal—have Hindu-type pilasters imitated in brick with the typical strings of beads and hanging bells as on the many old Hindu stone pillars lying fallen within the same building; the cusps are never more than five, and one at least is a typical Hindu rounded trefoil. In the corners, at the springing points of the arch, the Hindus would place a *makara*, goose, or peacock with foliated tail *(makara-torana, hamsa-torana)*. The Muslims replaced this, as we have seen, by an arabesque (at its simplest a split trefoil), and a lotus rising on a stem (like those of Surya, the Sun God) later separated. Subsequently, this type of pilastered niche became the model for the entrance to many a Hindu temple with a single archway.

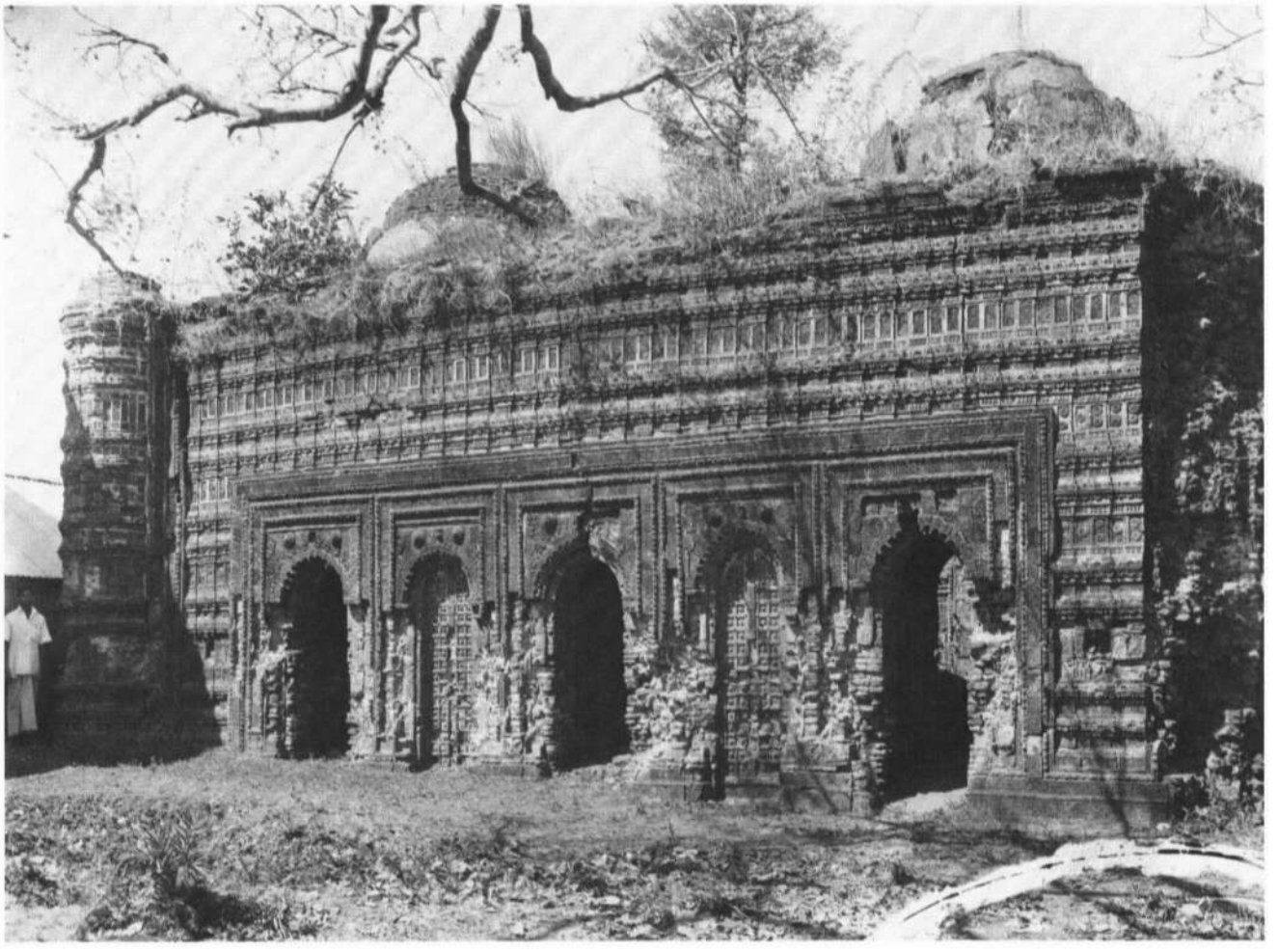
In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the decorative features of mosques and temples overlap to a greater extent than before or after. Certain new features on the late pre-Mughal mosques seem to have been incorporated from the early temples of the Hindu revival, which began about the time of Shri Chaitanya (1486-1534).

About the middle of the sixteenth century, as at Kusumba, the mihrab was developed by the addition of two outer parallel bands of decoration from the base up and across the top: this increases still further the similarity with the Hindu entrance. About the same time a number of motifs from the earlier Hindu period make their reappearance. One of the most distinctive was a kind of stylized bow, which used to figure on the old stone doorframes. It was generally plain, but in examples from Bangarh is filled with foliation. When it recurs round the later mihrabs or Hindu doorframe, it is much embellished by the addition of lotuses, tassels and further cusps, and also by the foliated filling. Sometimes it receives a lion head at either end.



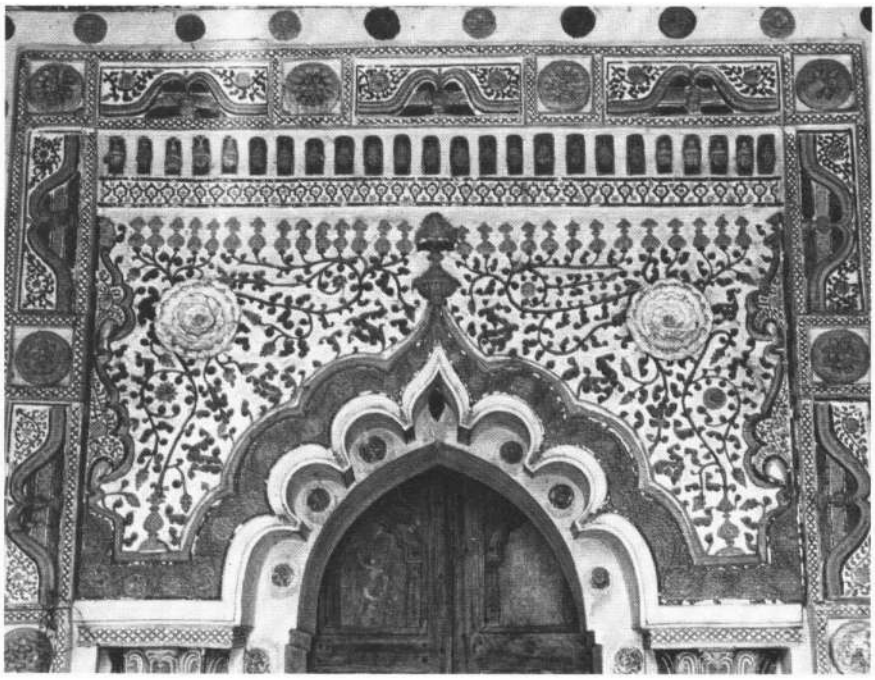
Evolution of the panel with cusps and lotus decoration: A - pre-Muslim example (Burdwan District); B - Kusumba mosque, 1558; C - Bansberia (Hooghly District), Vasudeva Temple, 1679.

Another revived motif, also a kind of foliation, is a tight whorled flourish, like an unfurling tuft, which on the Kusumba mihrab springs from the outer indentations of the cusps into the spandrels. It is reminiscent of the foliation which filled the empty spaces on the frames *(prabhavalis)* of Sena images. It recurs, springing from the outer cusp indentations, on the sixteenth-century mosque at Kalna, the mosque at Tribeni that was renovated in the sixteenth century, and others of uncertain but late date at Haroa (Twenty-four Parganas District) and Rajnagar (Birbhum District), and on such temples as at Baidyapur (Burdwan District, 1578), Rainagar (Jessore District, 1588), Ujani (Faridpur District), and on the *jor-bangla* temple at Guptipara (Hooghly District) said to have been built in the early seventeenth century. It is found in embryo on earlier mosques, as at Kheraul (1495), or as part of the hanging designs at Natunhat or Kulut, while on subsequent temples it is replaced by the springing lion. One of the striking differences between mosque and later Hindu decoration is the transformation of the twining Muslim floral designs into something, strangely enough, more abstract or schematized—tight scrolls with foliage reduced to tiny commas. This development too we find in the outer band of the Kusumba mihrab.

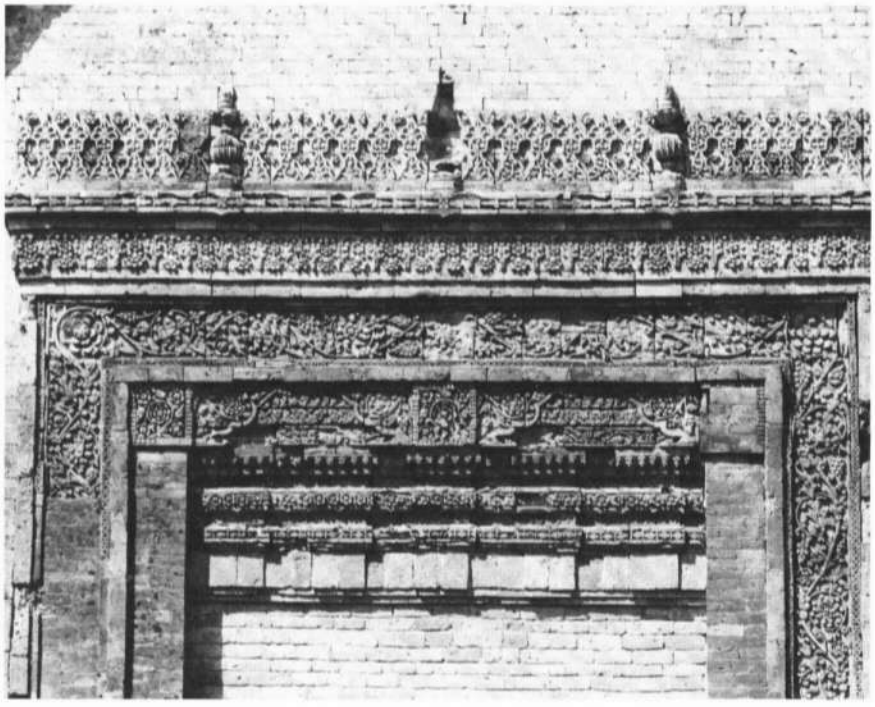


Rajnagar (Birbhum District), Moti Chura Mosque. (By courtesy of the Archaeological Survey of India.)

On certain buildings of this intervening period the similarity of decorative motifs is very extensive. Obviously mosques are never decorated with human or animal figures, but some of these early temples also have very little figurework. The Guptipara *jor-bangla* temple has no figures at all, and all the motifs are as found on contemporary mosques. The Baidyapur *deul* has a narrow *Ramayana* frieze high on the side and introduces a couple of elephants above the northern archway, but otherwise, like the Kodla *math* in Khulna District, it has predominantly Muslim banded decoration. A set of motifs was developed which are common to mosques and temples of this period. This may be seen in profusion on such late terracotta-decorated mosques as those at Rajnagar in Birbhum District or Atiya (1609), or on temples such as those at Bhusana Gopalpur or Nanikhir in Faridpuri District, which have facades entirely decorated with floral panels of the type found on sixteenth-century mosques. The temple of Radha-Ballabha at Krishnanagar in Hooghly District provides a very good example of these affinities. The facade is entirely decorated with repeated



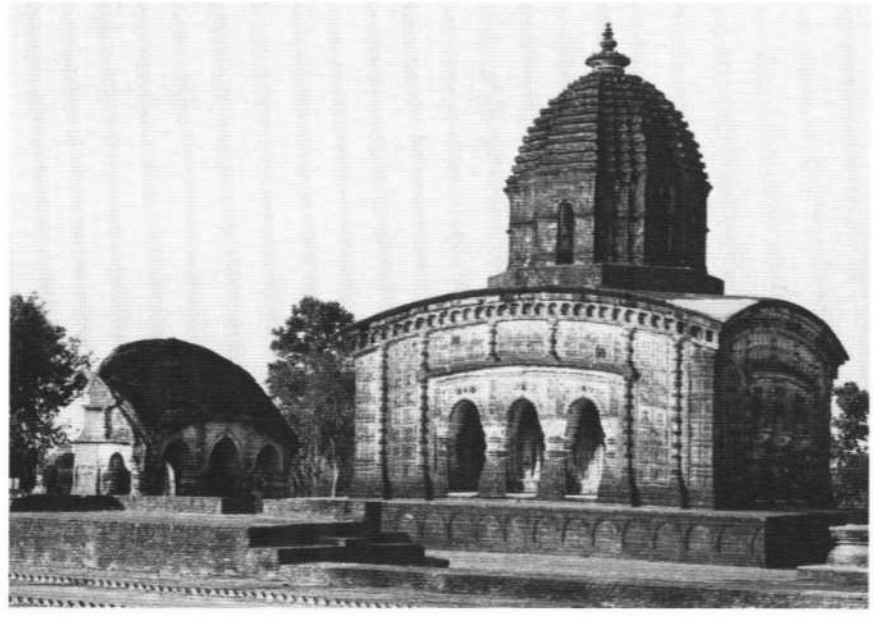
Krishnanagar, Radha-Ballabha Temple, arched entrance detail.



Gaur, Tantipara mosque, wall detail.

oblong panels containing lotus wheel in the centre and cusped segment at the top and bottom; a variant series at each inner end of the front porch has heart-shaped centre and crescent moon above. These are typically Islamic designs, as on the mosques at Kheraul, Bajua, Natunhat, Rajnagar, Atiya and Egarasindhur, dating from the late fifteenth to mid-seventeenth century. Other temples on which they occur are at Baghnapara (Burdwan District, 1616), Bainchigram (Hooghly District, 1682) and Nanikhir.

Bishnupur (Bankura District), Madana-Mohana Temple, 1694.



Equally typical of mosque decoration is the panelling on the façade inside the porch of the Radha-Ballabha temple at Krishnanagar: these consist of the flat niche motif with cusped pointed arch, lotuses in the spandrels, a hanging design in the centre, and the remaining spaces filled with flowers and tendrils. This was first sketched on the outer wall of the Adina Mosque at Pandua, developed its richest form on the Tantipara Mosque at Gaur, and became stereotyped in duplicate series by the sixteenth century as on the Qadam Rasul or Jahaniyan Mosque facades. The inner doorframe to the shrine at Krishnanagar closely follows the model represented by the Kusumba mihrab, which with minor variations recurs on many a Hindu temple of the seventeenth century (e.g. at Baghnapara, Bainchigram, Bishnupur, Bansberia). At Krishnanagar the space above the archway is also filled with loose Islamic tendrils (and springing tufts), not the typically Hindu tight scrollwork. Altogether this temple has hardly any figure decoration, and in addition to the main panels discussed above, all the incidental motifs are as found on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century mosques. A number of early temples, as at Gokarna (Murshidabad District, 1580), Rainagar (Jessore District, 1588) or Taras (Pabna District, 1635), combine typical mosque decoration with mythological figures. That extensive figure decoration was already the practice by the sixteenth century, not necessarily in association with typical mosque designs, is indicated by the Rasika Raya temple of Haripurgarh in Mayurbhanj District, presumed to have been built in 1575. Here already the typical Hindu scheme is fully worked out—double frieze of *Krishnalila* and social

scenes along the base; gods, dancers and so forth up the sides and along the top; unfortunately the archway panels have long since fallen, but only a few decades later, at Ghurisa (Birbhum District, 1633), they depict the full panorama of *Lankayuddha*. This would suggest that one set of craftsmen at least, working on temples from the sixteenth century, were comparatively free from mosque influences.

During the Mughal period a new style of mosque decoration came into force: deeper panelling and plaster-finish terracotta was abandoned. From the seventeenth century on, except in a few isolated cases mainly in Mymensingh District, the artists in terracotta were exclusively employed on temples, and the distinctively mosque style of terracotta decoration disappeared. In the late terracotta-decorated mosque (1652) at Egarasindhur, or even earlier at Atiya (1609), we find the mihrabs looking even more like temple entrances than at Kusumba (1558). So too at Rajnagar in Birbhum District the Moti Chura Mosque combines traditional mosque decoration with features like the tight scrollwork above the arches or the dumbell motif associated with temples. But even when the Hindu terracottas had fully developed their own particular styles and arrangements—predominantly featuring mythological figures—they still retained many a design (mainly the strip patterns) developed during the earlier Muslim period, in much the same way, as has been shown, that Muslim art retained earlier designs. As may be expected, these are more in evidence during the seventeenth than during the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. At Naldanga, for instance, typically Islamic interlocking or geometrical designs persist, similar to those on the Atiya mosque. Simpler interlocking designs, generally floral, are common right through the eighteenth century and on into the nineteenth. Other 'filling' or 'separating' patterns retained from mosque decoration (often continuing through right from the earlier Hindu period) include the diamond and circle, twisted rope, lotus petal frieze (often interlocking), tassel or finial frieze, rows of hanging flower heads or buds, intersegmenting circles, foliated wavy line, criss-cross and chequer, beading, serrating and so forth. These often occur in the series of narrow bands above the archway panels, a decorative feature developed at Gaur. The pointed trefoil, or 'halberd', a favourite Middle Eastern motif to which attention has already been drawn as originating the spandrel arabesque, also continues on the temples as a design in its own right—large along the eaves or small along the base. The lotus, so specifically Hindu an emblem, is much more common as a decorative feature

during and after the Muslim period than before, and developed a variety of open 'rosette' forms as wall decoration common to mosques and temples, including the large 'wheel' variety popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Muslim battlements also reappear along the roofs of *ratna* temples, as at Kantanagar (Dinajpur District).

As the eighteenth century advanced, a coarsening of temple decoration took place. There was a return to realistic foliation, not delicate and graceful as at Gaur, but thick and cursory, which gradually pushed out the tight, almost abstract scrollwork developed by the Hindus at the beginning of the revival. A new style of floral decoration emerged: realistic, but in balanced swathes or tufts, as in Mughal art. Such designs—along the bottom or the façade, above the archways, on the columns, or at the edges of the façade–may be quite complex and include birds or animals. Here the influence was not from the mosques, which were strictly plain, but from other media such as miniature painting. Sometimes whole temples were decorated in this fashion, as at Mandalay (Hooghly District, 1758) or Gobarhati (Murshidabad District, 1772), thus eliminating figures once again as in the period of transition from mosques to temples. An associated development often featuring the same designs was the increasing use of stucco. This was nothing new, for stucco had been used on laterite in Bankura and Midnapore Districts from the very beginning of the revival, and on the evidence of the excavations at Berachampa (Twenty-four Paraganas District) had been customary for temple decoration in Bengal since the late Gupta period. The finest stuccowork in Bengal is on the tall massive brick *deuls* at Jatar in the Sundarbans, Satdeulia in Burdwan District, or Boram (Deulghat) in Purulia District. These temples are generally dated to the Pala-Sena period, although their decoration may in some cases have been renovated later. The evidence tends to suggest a flourishing and highly developed art of stucco decoration at the time when the Muslims first came to Bengal, and this raises the interesting question why they never used stucco on their mosques (so traditional a practice in Syria, Iraq and Persia), but preferred to revive terracotta. Certainly terracotta is more attractive, and later Hindu replacement of terracotta by stucco on brick is part of a steady degeneration.

Meanwhile the nineteenth century saw a new development in terracotta art: the assimilation of European influences. This still further reduced the earlier Muslim residue, but tended to confirm the Mughal motifs, themselves originally inspired from European herbaries. This is a period of cultural confusion and eclecticism. A temple may be built

(there is an example in Dubrajpur in Birbhum District) with the entire façade covered with geometrical or geometricized floral designs, but we can no longer talk of a specific Islamic influence. The modern period has arrived when patrons and artists choose whatever catches their fancy. In Birbhum and Mushidabad Districts there was a nineteenth-century revival of the specifically Hindu *rekha* design. But at the same time both mosques and temples came increasingly under the influence of European methods of construction, so that by the beginning of the twentieth century their distinctive traditions were essentially dead. Gradually ornamentation decreased until both mosques and temples shared the same cemented-smooth and colour-washed appearance. Only the dome and *Shikhara* incongruously remain as tokens of identity.

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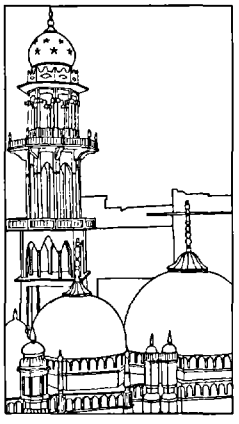
A note on Louis Kahn's mosque at Banglanagar

Attilio Petruccioli



Jami Mosque, Patuatuli, Minar, Dhaka, 1964.

Obviously, the problem of the traditional role of the architect in the construction of the new environment of *Homo islamicus* is greater than the boundaries of Bangladesh; indeed, it involves the whole of the Islamic world. Paths of research take different directions: the Bangladesh architect Muzharul Islam tends to redefine the disciplinary role of architecture in the context of limited resources, as in Bangladesh. He endeavours to create the basis of a national architecture, and his point of departure is strictly non-affiliated:

Our discussion has largely involved the mosque which is probably the most important building in all Muslim communities everywhere. But the question remains ... what can be transferred to a contemporary building in order to make it a mosque? Are there symbols to make a hospital, a Muslim hospital, or a college, a Muslim college?[1]

Stressing a continual cultural reference, meaning the quality of space and not an *a priori* adoption of symbols, Muzharul Islam continues:

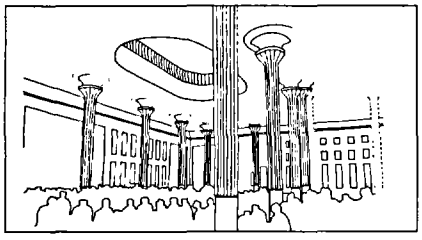
But understanding our culture is completely different from actually copying symbols or transferring certain things from one age to the present ... The common thing may not be a simple symbol. It may be a basic principle. Basic principles are what created places like Fatehpur Sikri.[2]

On the other hand, a widespread cultural tendency in all Islamic countries tends automatically to find the answer to its questions in symbolic and semantic terms—often of importation from somewhere else—and types of traditional

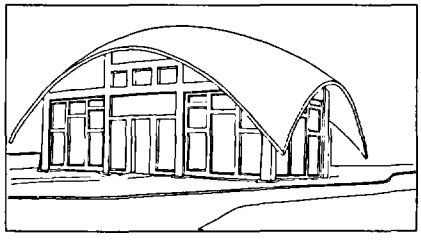
1. *Architecture as Symbol and Self-Identity* (Proceedings of Seminar Four of The Aga Khan Award for Architecture held at Fez, 9 to 12 October 1979), Philadelphia, 1980, p. 83.

2. Ibid., p. 84.

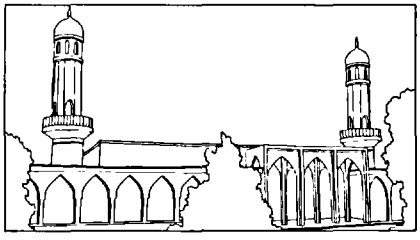
Photographs and drawings by the author.



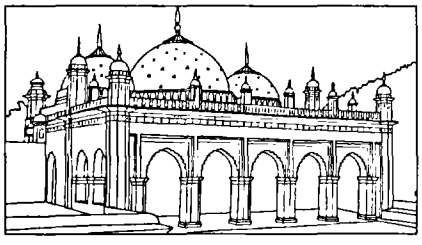
Bayt al-Mukarram Mosque, Dhaka, interior 1960.



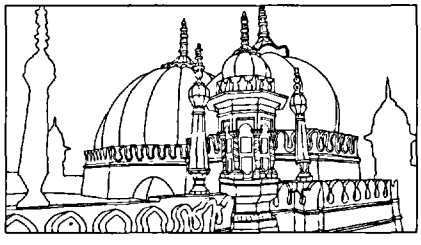
Educational Extension Centre Mosque, Dhaka, 1965.



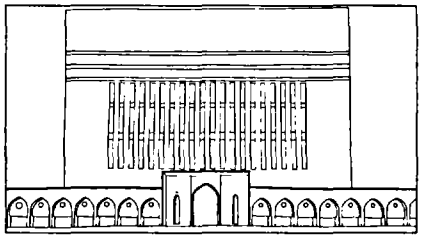
University Mosque, Dhaka, 1966.



Star Mosque, Armanitola, Dhaka eighteenth century, renovated in 1926.



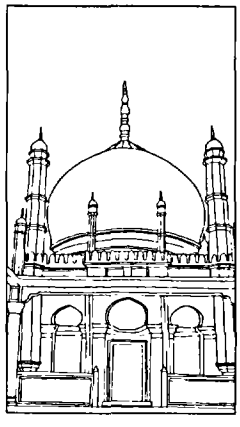
Koshaituli Mosque, 1919.



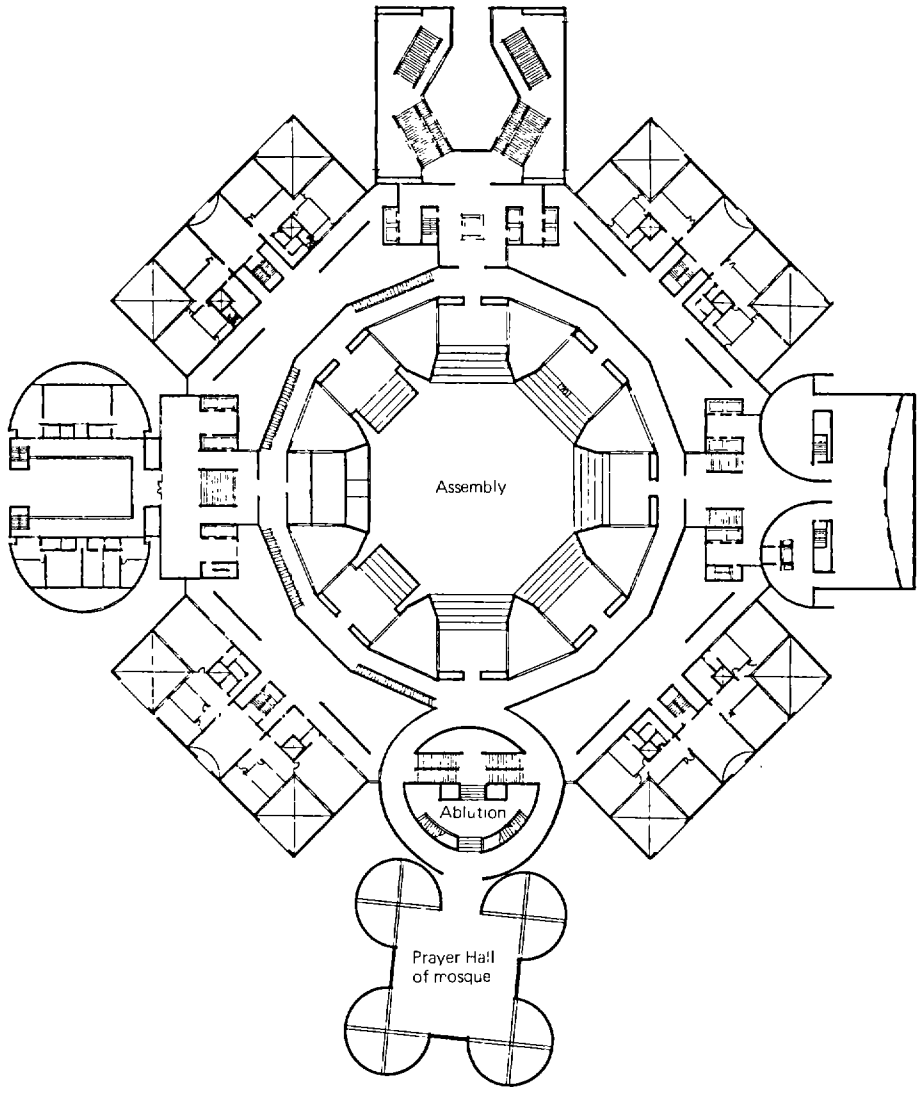
Bayt al-Mukarram Mosque, 1960.

buildings. Examples are the notion that credits the house to the Arabian court and identifies the columned hall of Mediterranean origin as 'Islamic'. Though I believe that no definitive answer will be found, it may be possible to come close to an answer by a series of approximations. In this sense any architectural contribution that is seen as even partially relevant for the construction of the theoretical answer must be examined.

To the north of Dhaka is a huge flood plain where, over the last twenty years, one of the most significant projects in the Islamic world has been constructed. This is Banglanagar, the capital building of Bangladesh, designed by the American architect Louis I. Kahn. The emblematic value of this huge complex can be seen in the fact that it renders contradictory its symbols, meanings and values. On the one hand, there is hope in democracy, the image of progress and the symbol of the unity of the entire nation; on the other hand, the symbol of grandeur of a foreign political presence with prohibitive costs. But if the overall complex suffers as a result of this ambiguity, the process of the designing of the mosque within the Assembly is an exemplary solution to our initial quest. The project is rather well known and has experienced many variations owing to the complexity of the theme, the diversity of the commissioners' requests, and the events of 1971. In the thinking



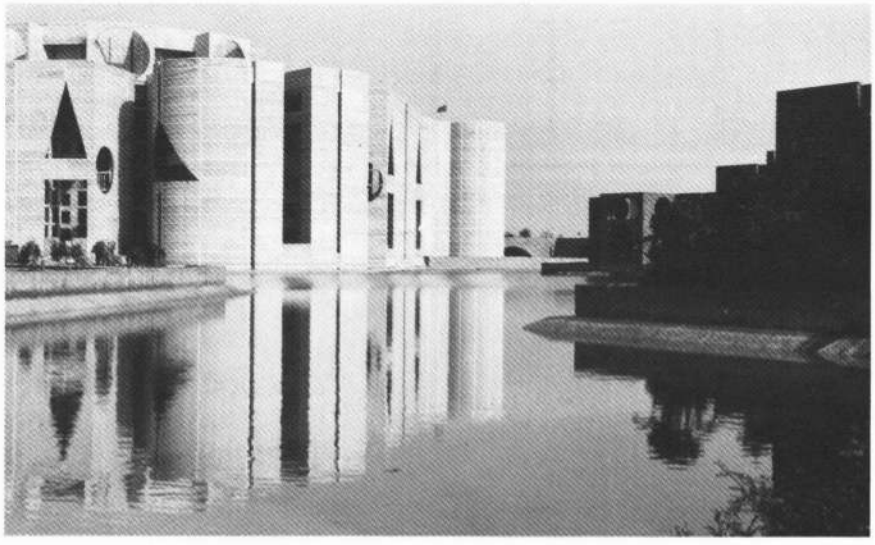
Fakir Bari Mosque, Mirpur, Dhaka, 1967.



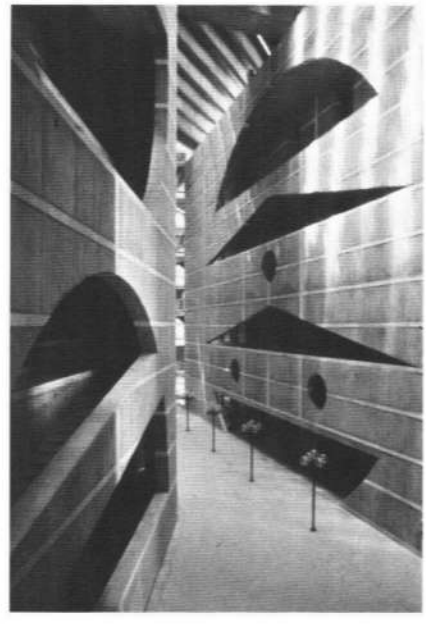
Banglanagar, Dhaka, Plan of Assembly Building showing Prayer Hall.

process there remains, however, one stable point: the counterposition of the Citadel of the Assembly and the Citadel of the Institutions. In the first are the Assembly, Court, mosque and houses of the parliamentarians and civil servants; in the second are the hospital, athletic installations and various ministries. Everything is rigorously ordered about a north-south axis.

It should be noted that when the Government of Pakistan decided to go ahead with the construction of the new capital, Louis Kahn, although acquainted with the new towns of the 1950s, was more or less oriented towards the design of the new citadel. In fact, the construction of a new capital as a self-celebration of a new dynasty is a recurrent episode in the Islamic history of the subcontinent. Moreover, the architectural expression most appropriate for the residence of an Islamic court is the citadel, and here we refer to citadels like those in the plains of Delhi, culminating in seventeenth-century Shahjahanabad. Building a citadel

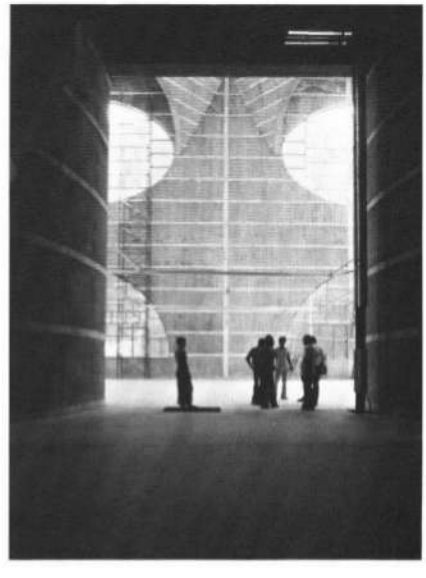


Exterior of Prayer Hall, Banglanagar.

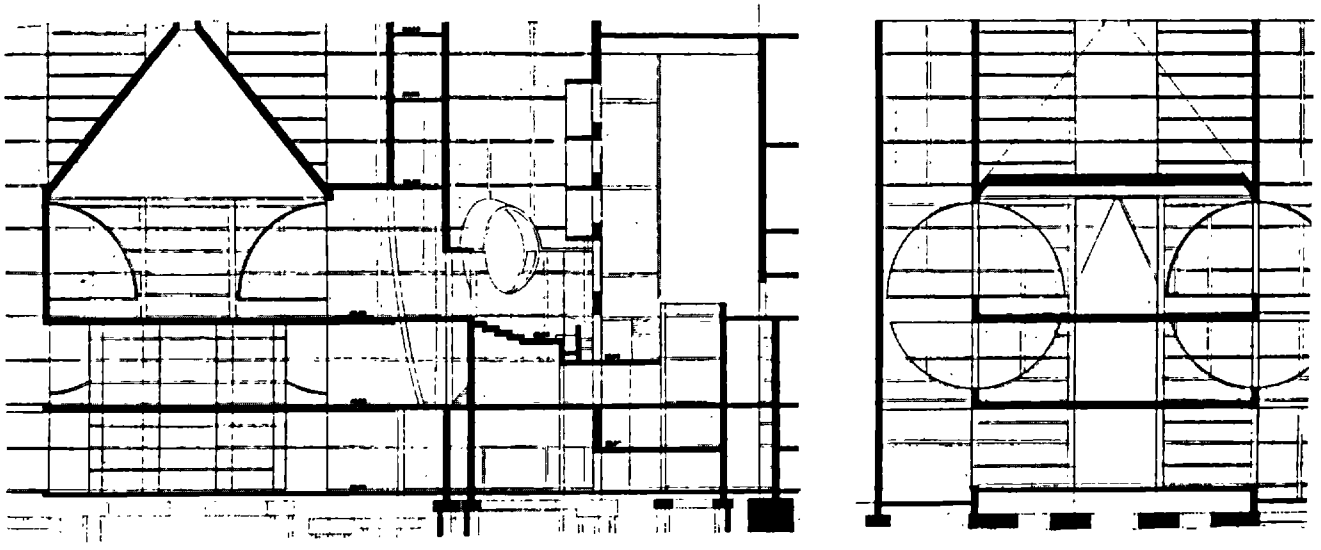


Monumental 'corridor' between Assembly and Prayer Hall, Banglanagar.

was also a common custom of colonial powers at the beginning of the present century, and it is a pity that the brief period that Dhaka experienced as a regional capital under British rule produced no architectural project comparable to the New Delhi of Sir Edwin Lutyens. The analogy of Banglanagar to these earlier citadels may be seen in ideological terms. In fact, the closed structure of concentric courts bounded by walls 10 m high (Shahjahanabad) was opposed by Kahn, who proposed here an open and articulated scheme. In the different versions of the project, he demonstrated a profound understanding of Mughal architecture, particularly of the play between the sequence of spaces with open courts and the linking elements that are volumetric, multiplied by reflections in the pools of water. But more than formal analogies, the most coherent intervention was the mosque. In the preliminary scheme, Kahn designed a hypostyle central room with a flat roof on nine columns surrounded by a high wall with four minarets at the corners. Here he used a borrowed form that was useful for its evocative character. But the building could not answer to the deep religious sense he wanted to give it because it was located against the wall of the Assembly. A deeper examination of the relationship between the Assembly and the mosque, and the recognition that the liturgy of the mosque did not require it to be associated with traditional Arab, Turkish or Persian architectural schemes, led to a second solution free of any traditional reference. This second version for the mosque questioned the value of the four minarets and the mosque now became a large cavernous space, like the inside of a pyramid, culminating in a minaret; also, the mosque was no longer integrated with the Assembly. Kahn viewed the Assembly as essentially:



Entry into Prayer Hall, Banglanagar.



Longitudinal section of Prayer Hall, Banglanagar.

a place of transcendence for political people. In a house of legislation, you are dealing with circumstantial conditions. The assembly establishes or modifies the institutions of man. So I could see the thing right from the start as the citadel of the assembly and the citadel of the institutions of man, which were opposite, and I symbolized the institutions of man. I made the entrance to the Assembly a mosque. I was setting the nature of it, because I noticed that the people prayed five times a day. In the program there was a note which said that there should be a prayer room of 3,000 square feet, and a closet to hold rugs; that was the program. I made them a mosque which was 30,000 square feet and the prayer rugs were always on the floor. And that became the entrance, that is to say, the mosque became the entrance. When I presented this to the authorities, they accepted it right away.[3]

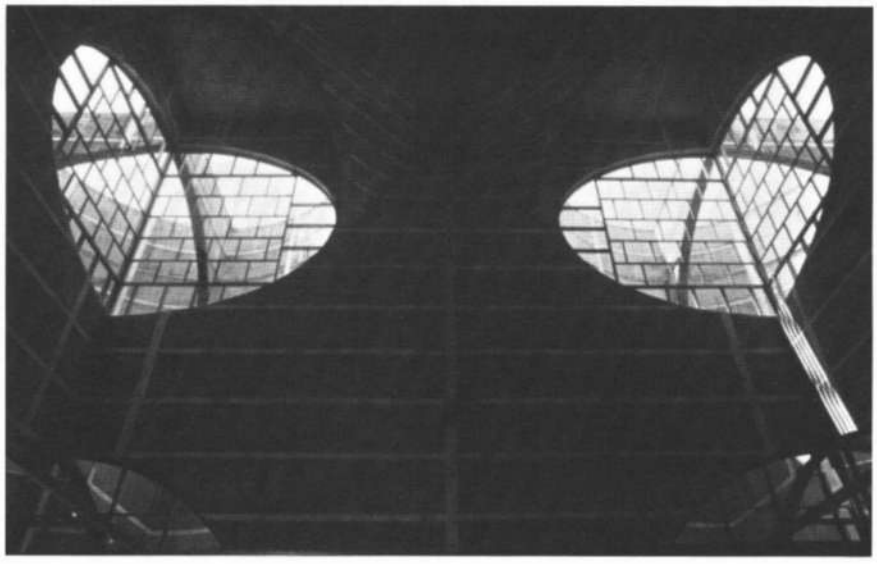
3. 'The Development by Louis I. Kahn of the Design for the Second Capital of Pakistan at Dacca', *Journal of the School of Design*, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, Vol. XIV, No. 3, 1964.

The deeply religious mind of Kahn brought him to the realization that the divine essence was pure light. (This is in line with the traditional religious precept that forbids the representation of images other than the written word.) The search for divine light became the final design:

I have introduced a light-giving element to the interior of the plan. Consider, if you see a series of columns you can say that the choice of columns is a choice in light. The columns as solids frame the space of light. Now think of it just in reverse, and think that the columns are hollow and much bigger, and that their walls can themselves give light, then the voids are rooms, and the column is the maker of light and can take on complex shapes and be the supporter of spaces and give light to spaces.[4]

4. Ibid.

Thus we are at the opposite extreme from the search for a typological, stylistic or mechanical solution for the mosque. Compared to Kahn's pure and stereometric inspiration, the



'Columns of light', Prayer Hall, Banglanagar.

ambiguous Bayt al-Mukarram mosque, for example, constructed in Dhaka a few years ago, searches in vain for majesty of image through the use of a large staircase that is only a dimensional dilation of the architectural element. Certainly no one can deny that the Bayt al-Mukarram mosque is the biggest building in Dhaka. Kahn's aim, of course, was not to build a gigantic Islamic edifice but rather a place that was an expression of religious spirit and assembled collectivity. Considered in this way, the mosque reacquires its original meaning. For Kahn it was the human values that this institution expressed, and to give form to these values was his overall aim:

> So, seeing the value of this complex of buildings around the Assembly, its meaning brought me to the realization that the acts of the Assembly lead to the foundation of the institutions of man. The institution stems from the inspiration to live. This inspiration remains meekly expressed in our institutions today. The three great inspirations are the inspiration to learn, the inspiration to meet, and the inspiration for well-being. They all serve, really, the will to be, to express. This is, you might say, the reason for living. All the institutions of man, whether they serve man's interest in medicine, or chemistry, or mechanics, or architecture, are all ultimately answerable to this desire in man to find out what forces him to be, and what means made it possible for him to be.[5]

5. Ibid.

Following in the spirit of Kahn, I would like to suggest that the huge Assembly and the adjacent mosque built on water were inspired not so much by monuments like the Tomb of Sher Shah at Sasaram as, by the typical Bengali village, which during the rainy season emerges isolated out of the waters like an island.

Glossary of technical terms

arabesque: stylized foliation
at-chala: double *char-chala* temple form
badshah-ka-takht: ruler's throne or gallery
bangla: Bengali hut
barrel vault: part-circular roof
bauli: well
chaitya: horseshoe-shaped window or arch
chajja: overhanging eave on brackets
char-chala (chau-chala): Bengali roof form with crossed curved ridges and curved eaves, on a square or rectangular plan
chatri: open rooftop kiosk
chilla-khana: meditation chamber
colonette: slender ornamental column
corbelled: projecting horizontal masonry courses
crenelation: rooftop parapet
cusped arch: arch with part-circular indentations or lobes
dargah: tomb complex
darwaza: gateway
deul: towered temple sanctuary
do-chala: Bengali roof form with single curved ridge, curved side eaves and gabled ends, usually on a rectangular plan
ek-bangla: same as *do-chala*
engaged column: attached to wall
garbha-griha: temple sanctuary
guldasta: slender ornamental minaret, often flanking a portal in pairs
hammam: bath
haram: women's quarters
idgah: qibla wall for prayers during Id festival
imambara: religious structure used for Muharram festival
iwan: vaulted hall opening on to a courtyard
jali: pierced screen, often of stone
jor-bangla: double *do-chala* hut form
kanjuras: battlements, usually as a parapet or ornamental frieze
karbala: building where the *tazia* is buried
katra: warehouse or market
madrasa: theological school
mandapa: columned temple hall
maqsura: screen around mihrab and *mimbar*
medina: part of an *imambara*
mihrab: prayer niche indicating direction towards Mecca
minar: minaret
mimbar: pulpit
pancha-ratna: five-pinnacled temple
panchayatana: five-part arrangement
pendentive: triangular-shaped dome support
pilaster: slender column forming part of a wall
pistaq: monumental entrance portal
qibla: wall of prayer hall facing Mecca (in India, west)
ratha: chariot, or monolithic temple at Mahabalipuram
ratna: miniature tower of a Bengali temple
rekha: towered temple sanctuary
riwaq: colonnade around mosque courtyard
sahn: mosque courtyard
serai: hostelry providing accommodation for travellers and animals, and storage
shikhara: curved temple tower
spandrel: space between arch and rectangular frame
squinch: corner arch supporting dome
stupa: solid hemispherical Buddhist structure
tahkhana: substructure
takht: raised and screened platform within a mosque, either for ladies of the court or for the ruler and immediate entourage
tazia: model of Husain's coffin carried in procession during Muharram festival
terracotta: baked brick, often used as external relief ornamentation
trabeation: post-and-beam construction
voussoir: cut masonry piece forming part of an arch
zenana: women's quarters

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David McCutchion died in Calcutta in 1972; his pioneering documentation work in both Bengals has provided the basis for much subsequent research.

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