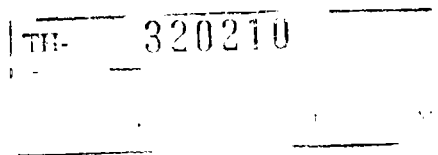


**SONARGAON :  
ITS HISTORY AND MONUMENTS  
(1338—1608 A. D.)**

**HABIBA KHATUN  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC HISTORY AND CULTURE  
UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA**



**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA  
FOR OBTAINING THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
1987**

CONTENTS

Preface		i - vi
Acknowledgements		vii
Abstract		viii - x
Abbreviations		xi - xii
List of Illustrations		xii - xvi
Chapter I	Survey of Sources	1 - 10
Chapter II	Geographical Background	11 - 28
Chapter III	Early References and the History of Sonargaon upto 1338 A.D.	29 - 38
Chapter IV	Sonargaon during the Sultanate Period:	
	a. From 1338 to the end of the Husain Shahi dynasty.	39 - 71
	b. Under the Afgan Rule	71 - 72
	c. The Rule of Isa Khan	73 - 82
Chapter V	Architectural Background of the Monuments of Sonargaon.	83 - 97
Chapter VI	Selected Monuments and their descriptions :	
	Religious Edifices.	98 - 189
Chapter VII	Buildings of Miscellaneous order	190 - 200
Chapter VIII	Ornamentation of the Monuments	201 - 209
Chapter IX	Minor Arts	210 - 217
Chapter X	Summary and Conclusion	218 - 245
Appendix	A Comparative Dynastic Chronology of the Rulers of Bengal and India.	246 - 249
Bibliography		250 - 258

Illustrations : Figures; Maps of (1) Ancient Bengal (2) Conjectural territory of Sonargaon with monuments, conjectural city sites of (3) Sonargaon and (4) Khalifatabad; Plates.

PREFACE

Ever since its conquest by Ikhtiaruddin Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji in 1204 A.D., Bengal continued to remain under the Muslim rule for over five centuries and a half. Although the remnants of the great antiquities of the period lie scattered all over the region, the principal architectural monuments concentrate in and around the capital cities of Gaur and Pandua within the modern Malda district of West Bengal in India. While studying the monuments certain revealing facts having bearing on the history and monuments of Sonargaon hitherto unnoticed by scholars emerged. The gap struck to be crucial and thus it needed being filled up and we offered to limit our scope of study on 'Sonargaon, Its History and Monuments' (1338-1608 A.D.).

Historical references and travellers' accounts have variously mentioned Sonargaon, such as iklim, port and capital city. But a fragmentary work on the capital city and port have so far been done, though, it is only 15 miles away from the modern Dhaka city. As such a detailed study of Sonargaon is overdue. Moreover, in the study of the architectural development in medieval Bengal the monuments of Sonargaon have been given little importance. So a detailed study of the monuments of Sonargaon is considered essential in order to place them in proper perspective. Thus the present study of the history and monuments of Sonargaon has been undertaken on the basis of field work and spot study with upto-date epigraphic records. It is an effort to identify the jurisdiction of the iklim Sonargaon, to trace the origin of its nomenclature and to discuss its history and monuments.

In history Sonargaon is mentioned with Sultan Balban's invasion of Bengal. In earlier days the area was referred to as 'Vang' and 'Sak-nat', where

Rai Lakshmansen took refuge after being dislodged from Gaur (Lakhnauti) by Muhammad Bakhtiar Khalji<sup>1</sup>. The place is usually identified with Vikrampur in south eastern Bengal. Vikrampur was one of the capitals of the Senas. Its importance also goes back to the days of the Varmana rulers (11th century) and when the Palas were ruling in Varendra<sup>2</sup>. In later part of the 13th century Sonargaon was the capital of Rai Danuj who became ruler of Vikrampur after the fall of the Senas. This ruler had helped Balban against Tughril. Tughril established Qila-i-Tughril in the vicinity of Sonargaon.<sup>3</sup>

After the fall of Tughril, Rai Danuj was no more heard in the history of Sonargaon. It became the capital of 'Vang' or eastern Bengal under the Muslims. Saint Abu Tawwama settled at Sonargaon and died there in 1300 A.D. The Muslim rulers expanded their eastern territory or iklim having the base at Sonargaon, towards northeast to include Sylhet in 1303 A.D. It was probably conquered from Gaur Govinda of Deva family, a descendant of Dai Danuj. The first Muslim coin came out from Sonargaon in 1310 A.D. Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon was the mint of Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah, the first independent Muslim ruler of Sonargaon. His jurisdiction extended beyond the river Sitalakhya towards south west.

Sultan Ilyas Shah united Sonargaon, Lakhnauti and Satgaon under Shah-i-Bangala. Sonargaon continued to be the capital of south eastern part or iklim Sonargaon of Sultant-i-Bangala.<sup>4</sup> Centering around this capital city on the bank of the old Brahmaputra river, the cultural centre and port city developed on the east and south west side respectively. It flourished greatly under Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. Isa Khan was the last prominent ruler of Sonargaon.<sup>5</sup>

1. Minhaj-i-Siraj, Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, in III, Vol. II, P. 74; A. Karim, Banglar Itihash, (Dhaka, 1977), P. 2.
2. HB, Vol. I, 2nd edition (Dhaka University, 1961), P. 160.
3. HB, Vol. II, 3rd edition (Dhaka University, 1976), P. 59.
4. A.H. Dani, MAB (Dhaka, 1961), P. 59.
5. R. Fitch, Travels in India, (1583-1619) (Calcutta, 1968), PP. 9-29; Mirza Nathan, Baharistan-i-Gaibi, Eng. tran. by Borah, (Gauhati, 1936), P.103.



Sonargaon figured prominently on the Maps of Van Den Broecke and Rennell, prepared in the 17th and 18th century. With the passage of time its very name has been so completely forgotten that to-day there is no longer a village in the area bearing the name Sonargaon. Of course, Sonargaon is a newly constituted upazila of Narayanganj district ( $23^{\circ}40'$  N  $90^{\circ}36'$  E), where the ruins of the old city occupy an important landmark in Mograpara union of Baidyer Bazar Police Station. The area is bounded on the west by the Sitalakhya river and on the east by the river Meghna. The old Brahmaputra river flows between these two rivers. Historic monuments like the Galdi Mosque (1519), the Mograpara Mosque (1484), the Bandar Mosque (1482) the stone-tomb of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah are lying in the area. They identify it as a place of antiquity. But the capital city steadily declined with the establishment of the Mughal capital at Dhaka in 1608 A.D.

Today there are very few surviving monuments in south east Bengal that once comprised iklim Sonargaon, its capital city and port area. But why and how has the iklim lost its importance and become obliterated? In the following pages an attempt has been made to identify various factors leading to its desolation and abandonment. At the same time we have tried to bring into relief the glory of Sonargaon as an important political, cultural and commercial centre in the Sultani period (1338-1608 A.D.).

#### Methodology :

The approach of the present study is basically narrative (for history) and descriptive, analytical and interpretative in nature (for monuments). The historical study of Sonargaon is based on literary sources while the study of monuments of Sonargaon is based on architectural data collected from field study or exploration of (i) extant monuments or (ii) ruined monuments,

(iii) published and unpublished epigraphic records and available literary sources. Among these the field study or exploration constitute our primary source of data while the literary sources form the secondary sources of our study.

As an essential pre-requisite to the field study at first we have collected all references available at the Department of Archaeology and Museums and in other literary sources and after-wards visited the sites and monuments. All relevant epigraphic records, old place names, and topographic features associated with these monuments were also studied. In course of our field study new monuments and sites were also discovered. On the basis of these primary data we tried to trace out various plans and drawings of selected monuments available at different places and note down their chief architectural and decorative features along with photography. Regarding the date of erection of monuments, the materials used in construction, mainly the bricks, were collected and compared with other monuments of the area. Local sayings or legends associated with the monuments were also collected and varified in the light of established historical facts. While studying these monuments, stylistic characteritics and decorative elements were given due importance.

The study is confined to the history of Sonargaon where only a very limited number of monuments survive, some of which are noticed for the first time, whereas, others are little known to scholars. The monuments have been classified according to their architectural peculiarities and placed in their broader perspective of the architectural development in Bengal. A large number of monuments have perished with the frequent fluctuation of rivers in this deltaic area. This vital destructive factor, therefore, <sup>have</sup> been dealt with in some details in order to understand the cause of obliteration of many of our noble monuments which stood on their yielding banks. We have also endeavoured to dispel a common misconception that the territorial jurisdiction of medieval Sonargaon was confined within a few miles of the present site.

While studying the history and monuments of Sonargaon we had to frequently refer to contemporary monuments in Gaur and Pandua unavoidably for fuller understanding of the larger context under which these were erected. Modern Bangladesh is a product of history which has been created by various socio-political factors over past hundred years. The political geography of Bengal has been like the ever shifting rivers of the Delta, either in a fragmented state or in a state of expansion, responding to political developments. However, the fundamental unity of the cultural life of Bengal seems to have continued unaffected for centuries together. Basic uniformity and regionality are recognizable in monuments and artistic works of the entire area. As such for a fuller understanding of the historical and architectural development during the period under study, we had to occasionally, step beyond our political frontier in west Bengal.

Some statements about the study :

During the study, some historical facts and architectural characteristics have emerged which were hitherto very little emphasised; for instance :

1) Identification of the capital city-site, cultural and port area of Sonargaon within the iklim of the same. The iklim was bounded by the Jamuna, the Gorai, the Modhumati, the Bhairab rivers on the west, while the Meghna, the territory of Tippera defined its eastern boundary. The north was bounded by the kingdom of Kamrupa and Kamta while it stretched to the Bay of Bengal on the south. In other words, the territory comprised of the former districts of Sylhet, Mymensingh, Dhaka, Faridpur, Bakherganj and south eastern part of Khulna or Bagerhat.

- 2) Identification of Khan al Azam Khan Jahan or Ulugh Khan Jahan of Bagerhat, who so long remained a tantalizing figure in history has been established. We have tried to piece together some dependable information from various sources in order to reconstruct his career and achievements.
- 3) Identification of the stone-tombs of Sonargaon.
- 4) Conjectural reconstruction of a fortified residence and township in Sonargaon.

In this dissertation certain technicalities have been simplified. In transliteration which always present difficulties for Muslim proper names EI has been followed except "J for Z and Q for C" Titles of many positions, past and present have been translated into English equivalent in order not to confuse the reader with strange and unfamiliar combination of letters. For easy identification the non-English words have been underlined and Bengali words bear diacritical marks. For proper appreciation of the monuments they have been arranged chronologically. As for dates Christian calendar has been used. Dates for equivalent Hijri year IB, IV., has been followed and uniformly used.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to my teacher and guide Professor Muhammad Sirajul Islam, Department of Islamic History and Culture, Dhaka University and now a Member of the Public Service Commission, Bangladesh, who was kind enough to supervise my work. He is an eminent scholar in this sub-continent in the field of Islamic Architecture. I am also thankful to Professor Muhammad Abdul Bari, Chairman, University Grants Commission, Bangladesh who awarded me a Junior Research Fellowship without which it would not have been possible for me to undertake this costly study.

I have no adequate language to express my gratitude to Dr. Nazimuddin Ahmed, retired Director of Archaeology and Museums, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh for his untiring guidance and keen interest throughout the study period. He cheerfully extended his help in going through the text and offered valuable advice for modifications where needed.

I must express my sincere gratitude to Professor A.B.M. Hussain, Department of Islamic History and Culture, Rajshahi University and Professor Sajjad Hussain, Ex-Vice-Chancellor, Dhaka University who were kind enough to go through the text with great patience. Their valuable suggestions have considerably improved the write up of the thesis.

I am also indebted to Professor Abdul Momin Chowdhury, Department of History and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Dhaka University and to Dr. Shamsul Alam, Director of Archaeology and Museums in Bangladesh for their ungrudging assistance in various ways throughout the undertaking. At the same time I hasten to express my deep gratitude to the Department of Archaeology and Museums for its willing help in providing necessary ground plans and photographs for illustration in the text.

Finally, I am beholden to my colleagues in the Department of Islamic History and Culture for their spontaneous support and advice throughout this research work.

ABSTRACT

The title of the thesis is "Sonargaon, Its History And Monuments (1338-1608 A.D.)". Sonargaon rose to great eminence as the capital and port city of South East Bengal and as a prosperous centre of commerce, art and culture during the Pre-Mughal period. But it steadily sank into obscurity with the establishment of Dhaka as the Mughal capital of Bengal.

The object of the present study is to locate the early Muslim settlements at Sonargaon and its subsequent expansion, on the basis of monuments and epigraphic records of the period. An effort has been made here to throw some fresh light on the nebulous history of Sonargaon which once was a great seat of Islamic Culture in the South-Eastern part of Bengal. With this object in view we have tried to locate, describe, analyse, and evaluate the architectural remains of Sonargaon. The description has been illustrated with maps and diagrams.

The study has been divided into following chapters :

Chapter - I : Survey of Sources :

A short account of major source materials have been introduced in this chapter.

Chapter - II: Geographical Background :

The chapter deals with the geography and identification of Sonargaon. In this chapter an effort has been made to trace the origin of its name on the basis of all available literary and epigraphic records pertaining to the city with particular reference to the narratives of various foreign travellers, notably Mahuan, Ibn Batutah and Ralph Fitch. The work is supplemented with maps and drawings. The toponymy of the city site has also been studied.

Chapter - III : Early References of the History of Sonargaon upto 1338 A.D.:

It deals with the political history of Bengal with reference to Sonargaon during the early phase of the Muslim conquest.

Chapter - IV : Sonargaon during the Sultanate Period :

- a. From 1338 A.D. to the end of the the Husain Shahi dynasty.
- b. Sonargaon under the Afghan rule.
- c. The rule of Isa Khan.

Chapter - V : Architectural Background of the Monuments of Sonargaon :

This chapter deals with the background of Muslim architecture in Bengal, its initial experiments largely influenced by the earlier Hindu-Buddhist tradition and later, its gradual development into a distinctive regional style but basically inspired by the improved building art of the Muslim world or the Central and Western Asia.

Chapter - VI : Religious edifices :

Here an attempt has been made to classify and describe the religious monuments of Sonargaon into two groups : Mosques and Mausolea . Mosques have been grouped again under sub-heading of single domed and multi-domed with varandas etc. Their relationship with similar monuments in other parts of Bengal in particular, and outside Bengal in general, has been studied in proper perspective. Some of the monuments have been illustrated with ground plans, drawings and photographs wherever necessary. Tombs have been studied individually.

Chapter - VII : Buildings of Miscellaneous order :

River forts, fortified residence and conjectural city-sites have been discussed in this chapter.

Chapter - VIII : Ornamentation of the Monuments :

This chapter deals with the decorative art which embellished the monuments with terracotta, stone curvings and glazed tiles.

Chapter - IX : Sonargaon as a centre of artistic activities :

Minor arts of the period have been discussed in this chapter.

Chapter - X : Summary and Conclusion :

This chapter sums up the result of investigation and findings already studied in the preceeding chapters. A chronological table and a selected bibliography has been appended at the end of the work.

Maps of ancient Bengal, Conjectural territory of Sonargaon and its cities have been added.

The thesis has been illustrated with a number of photographs and ground plans of monuments where necessary.



ABBREVIATIONS

- ASR - Archaeological Survey of India, Report of a Tour in Bengal and Bihar, Volume-XV.
- ERF - Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
- CHI - Cambridge History of India.
- EI - Encyclopaedia of Islam.
- HI - Elliot and Downson's the History of India as told by its own Historians.
- HB - The History of Bengal.
- IC - Islamic Culture.
- JBRS - Journal of Bihar Research Society.
- JASB - Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
- JVRM - Journal of the Varendra Research Museum.
- JASP - Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan.
- SPA - A. Survey of Persian Art.
- SA - Shilpakala Academy.
- FIG - Figure.
- AIN - Ain-i-Akbari.
- SHMB - Social History of the Muslims in Bengal.
- CORPUS - Corpus of the Muslim Coins of Bengal.
- SOCIAL HISTORY- Social and Cultural History of Bengal.
- DACCA - Dacca, A Record of its Changing Fortune.
- TAJQIRA- Tajqiratul Aulia-i-Hind.
- HISTORY- AND ANTIQUITY The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India, Vol. II.

IP - Itihash Patrika, Itihash Parishad.

DP - Dhaka Visvavidyalaya Patrika.

IB - Incriptions of Bengal.

BANGLAR  
ITIHASHER  
DUSHO

BACHAR - Banglar Itihasher Dusho Bachar, Swadhin Sultander Anal.

REAZ - Reazus Salatin.

List of Illustrations :

- Figure 1 : Ground plan of the mosque of Binat Bibi (reconstructed).
- Figure 2 : Ground plan of the Singer mosque.
- Figure 3 : Ground plan and half elevation plan of the mosque of Bibi Begni.
- Figure 4 : Ground plan and front elevation plan of the mosque of Ronjibpur.
- Figure 5 : Ground plan and front elevation plan of the mosque of Chumakhol.
- Figure 6 : Ground plan and half elevation plan of the mosque of Zindapur.
- Figure 7 : Ground plan and half elevation plan of the mosque attached to the tomb of Khan Jahan.
- Figure 8 : Ground plan of the Yusufganj mosque.
- Figure 9 : Ground plan of the mosque of Khondokarbag.
- Figure 10 : Ground plan of the Mograpara mosque.
- Figure 11 : Ground plan of the mosque of Baba Salih at Bandar (reconstructed).
- Figure 12 : Ground plan of the mosque of Goadi.
- Figure 13 : Ground plan of the Mai Shahaba mosque.
- Figure 14 : Ground plan of the Masjidbari mosque.
- Figure 15 : Ground plan of the Hajiganj mosque.
- Figure 16 : Ground plan of the Jangalbari mosque.
- Figure 17 : Ground plan of the Astagram mosque.
- Figure 18 : Ground plan of the Mohzompur mosque.
- Figure 19 : Ground plan of the Reza Khoda mosque.
- Figure 20 : Ground plan of the Baba Adam mosque.
- Figure 21 : Ground plan of the Nine domed mosque.
- Figure 22 : Ground plan of the mosque of Satoir.
- Figure 23 : Ground plan of the mosque of Qasba.
- Figure 24 : Ground plan of the mosque of Kuliarchar.
- Figure 25 : Ground plan of the Shait Gumbaz mosque.
- Figure 26 : Ground plan and half elevation of the tomb of Khan Jahan. ✓
- Maps** : **1, 2, 3, 4**

Plate : I. Patterns in carved bricks.

- a. Screen pattern in the mihrab of Zindapir mosque.
- b. Screen pattern in the ruined Kasba mosque.
- c. Baluster pattern in the window around the wall of the tomb of Khan Jahan.

Plate : II. Gradual development of bell and chain and chain and lamp motif.

- a. Chain and lamp pattern in the mosque of Adina.
- b. Chain and (Shika) hanging pattern in the tomb of Sonargaon.
- c. Bell and chain in the mihrab of the Shait Gumbaz mosque.
- d. Bell and pendant in the mihrabs of the mosques of Bibi Begni, Shait Gumbaz, Mohzompur, Baba Adam and others.
- e. Stylised bell and chain in the mosque of Mahi Santosh.
- f. Stylised chain and floral disc. in the mihrabs of Mohzompur, Chhota Sona mosques.
- g. Stylised pendant in the Dakkil Darwaza.
- h. Stylised bell and chain in floral form in the mosque of Lotton.

Plate : III. Geometrical patterns in bands around corner towers and plinths of mosques.

Plate : IV. Geometrical pattern in bands around corner towers of mosques like Bibi Begni, Ronvijoypur, Baba Adam, Goidal etc.

Plate : V. Terracotta motifs in different mosques of Sonargaon.

- a. b.c.d. in the mosque of Astagram.
- e.f.h.p.o. in the Shait Gumbaz mosque.
- g.k.m. in tomb of Peril, Tomb of Butshekin, mosque of Bacharam Dewry.
- i.j.l.n.q in Satgachia mosque.

Plate : VI. Different designs in Carved bricks.

- a. in the mosque of Zindapir.
- b.c. in the mosques of Bibi Begni, Ronvijoypur and Nine domed mosque.
- e.f.g. in the Shait Gumbaz mosque.
- c.g. in the mosques of Baba Adam and Goidal.

Plate : VI.a

- a. design in plinth of the mosque of Baba Adam.
- b. design in plinth of the mosque of Mograpara and Gorar masjid.

Plate : VII.

- a. General view of the mosque of Binat Bibi.
- b. Facade of the Singer mosque.

Plate : VIII.

- a. Facade of the mosque of Bibi Begni.
- b. Mihrab of the mosque of Bibi Begni.

Plate : IX.

- a. Side view of the Chunakhola mosque.
- b. General view of the mosque of Goaldi.

Plate : X.

- a. Design of the dome of the mosque of Ronvijoypur (before conservation).
- b. General view of the Ronvijoypur mosque.

Plate : XI.

- a. General view of the mosque of Bangshipur.
- b. Facade of the Astagram mosque.

Plate : XII.

- a. General view of the mosque of Baba Adam.
- b. General view of the mosque of Masjidkur.
- c. Pendentive in the mosque of Hajiganj.

Plate : XIII.

- a. General view of the Nine domed mosque.
- b. General view of the Jangalbari mosque.

Plate : XIV.

- a. Gateway to the Shait Gumbaz mosque.
- b. Interior view of the Shait Gumbaz mosque.

Plate : XV.

- a. General view of the Shait Gumbaz mosque.
- b. Roof of the Shait Gumbaz mosque.

Plate : XVI.

- a. General view of the mosque of Shankar Pasha.
- b. Dewan dighi in the fort of Katrabhu.

Plate : XVII.

- a. General view of the tomb of Sonargaon. ✓
- b. General view of the Dargah of Mirpur.

Plate : XVIII.

- a. General view of Khan Jahan's tomb. ✓
- b. Inscriptions on the tomb of Khan Jahan.

Plate : XIX.

- a. Inscriptions on the tomb of Khan Jahan.
- b. Glazed tile on the floor of the tomb of Khan Jahan.

Plate : XX.

- a. A view of the ruined site of the fort of Egarsindhur.
- b. Carved brick design in the mosque of Kasba.

Plate : XXI.

- a. Design of traditional Muslim in the Folk Art Museum, Sonargaon. (Reproduced from the Islamic Art Heritage of Bangladesh).
- b. Traditional design in modern Jamdani (by the courtesy of BSIC).

CHAPTER - I

SURVEY OF SOURCES

For the survey of source materials, a large number of published and unpublished materials have been marshalled in this work for the study of history and monuments of Sonargaon during the period under study. A summary of important source materials related to the field are reviewed below :

The fame of Sonargaon, the capital of south-eastern Bengal<sup>1</sup> during the Middle Ages is legendary. In those days its opulence attracted attention of scholars, merchants, administrators and travellers of distant countries. But although it is only 15 miles away from the modern city of Dhaka, the reconstruction of its history, both political and cultural, has never been attempted seriously. Work like Suvarnagramer Itihash by Swarup Chandra Ray, Dhakar Itihash by Jatindra Mohan Roy, Vikrampurur Itihash by H.M. Chakrabarti are commendable efforts but largely mixed up with legends. Even scholars like James Wise studied its history as a capital-city and identified some of its monuments only. Of course, its history under the Muslim rule has been studied in more details than its previous period.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. The History of Bengal, Vol. II Dacca University, 3rd impression (Dacca 1976) P. 528.

2. The following works deserve to be mentioned : (a) Charles Stewart : History of Bengal (London, 1813), (b) Contribution of Blochmann in JASB (1873-75), (c) R.D. Benerjee : Bangalar Itihash, Vol. II (Calcutta, 1917), (d) Contributions of Stapleton (in JASB from 1910-1922).

These works are based on brief references embodied in the Chronicles of the court of Delhi Sultans and the data collected from a study of inscriptions, coins, and other archaeological evidences.<sup>3</sup>

There are, however, sufficient materials in these chronicles as well as in the contemporary literature and research publications of modern time, both in English and in Bengali. With the help of these materials a study of the history and monuments of Sonargaon can be reconstructed. These materials may be grouped under the following categories :

- I. Persian and Arabic works, written outside Bengal and translated into English and Bengali.
- II. Writings of modern scholars on Bengal, both in English and in Bengali.
- III. Hagiological literature.
- IV. Accounts of the foreign travellers.
- V. Writings on architectural history, inscriptions and coins on Bengal.

I. Persian and Arabic works, written outside Bengal and translated into English and Bengali :

a) Chronicles :

Chronicles of the Muslim period originally written in Persian, have been compiled and translated with infinite care and patience and published in a series of volumes by Elliot & Dowson under the title "History of India as told by its own Historians." Tabaqat-i-Nasiri of Abu Omar Minhaj al-Din Uthman bin Siraj al-Din al-Juzjani, is available in volume II of the

3.(c) M.A. Rahim, Social & cultural History of Bengal, 2. Volumes (Karachi 1963).  
(f) A. Karim, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (Dhaka, 1959).  
(g) A.H. Dani, Muslim Architecture in Bengal (Dhaka 1961). (h) M.R. Tarafdar, Husain Shahi Bengal. (Dhaka 1965). (i) A. Husain, Antiquities of Dhaka (Dhaka 1931). (j) Nazimuddin Ahmed, Discover the Monuments of Bangladesh (Dhaka 1984) (k) A.K.M. Zakaria, Bangladesher Pratna Sampad (Dhaka 1984) (l) Bangla Shahityer Itihasa, vol. 1 (Dhaka 1987) edited by Anisuzzaman.



work. Though the Tabaqat is a general history of Islam, the author devotes a section on Bengal. The author visited Bengal during the governorship of Malik Izz al-Din Tughral Tughan Khan. He received patronage from the said Malik, joined the war against the king of Orissa and acted as a mediator between his patron and Malik Tamar Khan Qiran, Governor of Oudh, when they were quarrelling over the possession of Lakhnauti. Though the book does not furnish account of the period under study in great details it does contain important reference to the area of Sonargaon. From his description we learn that with the invasion of the Turks in early thirteenth century, the Senas of Lakhnauti left the capital and came to 'Vang' and 'Sak-nat'.<sup>4</sup> Minhaj's account is very important in reconstructing the establishment and expansion of the Muslim rule in Bengal. He mentions that the south western part of 'Vang' was conquered long before its south eastern part. According to him Tughril Tughan Khan lost 'Vang' and 'Rarh' while he was busy in his expedition against Narasinha, the Orissa ruler. This implies that 'Vang' was recaptured by the Deva rulers of Orissa.<sup>5</sup> The expedition against south eastern part of 'Vang' was carried out by Malik Izzu-din in later date but without any result.

The earliest reference of Bangala and 'Sonargaon' is available in the *Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi* of Ziauddin Barni. The translated version of the work is available in the third volume of the *History of India*, edited by Elliot & Dowson. Sonargaon is mentioned in connection with the expedition of the Delhi Sultan Balban against Mughisuddin Tughril, the deputy governor of Lakhnauti.

---

4. Vikrampur is still a prominent place near Dhaka on the bank of the Dhaleswari, and Sonargaon is its adjascent area. After the fall of the Senas, Rai Danaj became the ruler of Vikrampur and his capital was at Sonargaon. Prior to Rai Danuj, Visvarupa Sen was the ruler of 'Vang' with his capital at 'Vikrampur'. His territory was invaded by Sultan Iwaz Khalji of Lakhnauti in 1227 A.D. This reference of 'Vang' clearly indicates south eastern Bangla.

5. Abdul Karim, *Banglar Itibash* (Dhaka, 1977), p. 26.

According to Barni, Tughril extended the Muslim territory upto Sonargaon and established a fort known as 'Narkila' in the vicinity of Sonargaon, where he kept his treasure within the fortified area.<sup>6</sup> Barni used Bangala in place of 'Vang' of Minhaj. Blochman has identified 'Narkila' with 'the important Feringi stronghold of Loricol, about 25 miles due south of Dacca and about 10 miles south west of Rajbari .

The third volume of Elliot includes accounts of Shams-i-Siraj 'Afif's Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi. Though, Afif never visited Bengal, his collected information is helpful for the reconstruction of the history of Sonargaon. At that time Sonargaon became one of the administrative units of Lakhnauti. Afif referred Ilyas Shah as Haji. He called him Shahi Bangala and Shah-i-Bangalian. His description of the location of the fort of 'Ekdala' and the reason of Feroz Tughlaq's second invasion may lead to new findings.

Some more translations of chronicles are (a) Futuh-us-Salatin of Isami and (b) Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi of Sarhindi. The first one was translated by Aga Mahdi Husain and the second one by K.K. Basu. Isami's reference to Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's invasion of 'Vang' and his fight with Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah of Sonargaon is noteworthy as he is the only source of information of Sultan Bahadur's return from Lakhnauti to 'Ghiyaspur' in 'Vang'. The place has been identified by modern scholars at Madhupur. Sarhindi's references of Fakhruddin as a ruler of Sonargaon is corroborated in the accounts of Ibn Batutah who visited Sonargaon in 1345 A.D. All these translated chronicles mentioned above, if studied in the light of modern researches, may help reconstruct the history of Sonargaon upto the period of the Afghan rule.

---

6. H.S., II, P. 57.

For the study of the Afghan rule and the period of Isa Khan, the translated volumes of Abul Fadl's Akbarnama in Jarret's volume II, Beveridges volume II and III, Mirza Nathan's Baharistan-i-Ghaibi in Borah's translation are of immense value. The names of some important places and revenue divisions mentioned in the book can no doubt be traced even to our period. Besides, the later chronicles like (a) Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh of Badauni, translated by Rankin and (b) Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi of Abul Kasim Firishta (2nd volume) translated by Briggs are useful for the reconstruction of the history of Sonargaon. Another important chronicle which has a chapter on Bengal is Abdulla Muhammad bin 'Umar al-Makki's Zafar al Walih-bi-Muzaffar wa Ali-hi (An arabic History of Gujrat). An excellent translation of it by E. Denison Ross is available in English (Vol.II). Some extracts of this translation are also available in Sukhamoy Mukhopadhyaya's book in Bengali, entitled Bangalar Itihaser Dusho Bachar : Svadhin Sultander Amal. The latest event recorded in this book is the accession of Emperor Akbar in 1556 . Though not a contemporary writer, he has utilised some earlier sources and mentions a rare information regarding Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah of Bengal.

Other works :

The Qiran-us-Sadain of Amir Khusrau, the court poet of Balban, occupies a unique place in the Persian literature of India. Its translation is available in Elliot's volume III. His references to Bughra Khan of Bengal helps a great deal in reconstructing the history of Sonargaon.

Another important work on biographical dictionary of famous persons among the Muslims of the 15th century has been written by a contemporary scholar, named Abd-al-Rahman al Sakhawi.<sup>7</sup> It consists of several volumes :

---

7. A. Karim , Social History of the Muslims in Bengal, (Dacca, 1959), P. 3.

Volume II has been translated by M. Ishaque. Sukhomoy Mukhopadhyaya has translated it in Bengali in which he refers to a mission sent by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah and the creation of a madrasah there which was run by his endowments. He further informs that Yahya was one his Khan Jahans who died in 1414. These rare information are very useful for following the course of events of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah's reign. The reference of the death of one Khan Jahan of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah may lead to the identification of his chief Wazir ~~of~~ Khan Jahan.

## II. Writings of modern Scholars :

Riaz-us-Salatin by Ghulam Husain Selim provides the earliest source materials on the Muslim history of Bengal. The work has been translated in English and Bengali with elaborate notes. This is the only chronological history of Bengal written in Persian at the instance of George Udney in the year 1788 A.D. Although it contains some mistakes in dates, the work is extremely valuable for the study of the history and monuments of Sonargaon. The witer informs that Sultan Sikandar Shah of Pandua died in a battle against his son at Sonagarh near Sonargaon on the bank of the Ganges near Jafraganj. Tradition ascribes one tomb of the area to Sultan Sikander Shah. Gulam Husain also refers to the erection of a tomb and Jalali tank by Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah at Gaur. All these information, if studied carefully, may bring new facts to light.

The History of Bengal volume I and II although published by the Dhaka University about half a century back ~~are~~ by for the most authentic compilation of the History of Bengal. All available sources have been extensively utilised in these volumes by the editors. Besides these English work, the

Bengali books like Banglar Itihash (Sultani Amal) by Dr. Abdul Karim and Banglar Itihashe Dusho Baclar by Sukhomoy Mukropalhya, Banglar Itihash volume II by R.D. Banarjee, Bangla Shahityer Itihasa .ed. by Anisuzzaman are also valuable sources of information and critical study of the period.

### III. Hagiological Literature :

A contemporary biographical writing namely Manajile al Asfiya of Shah Shuayb deals with Shaykh Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri, where casual reference to Sharf al Din Tawwamah, the teacher of Maneri, has been made.<sup>8</sup> Another biography namely Sheikh Shubhadya dealing with the life of Sheikh Jalal-uddin Tabrezi in Bengal seems to be a spurious work and need not be used in the present study.<sup>9</sup> Another biography namely Suhail-i-Yaman of Nasir al-Din Haidar, available in English translation,<sup>10</sup> deals with the life of Shah Jalal of Sylhet. This is also helpful for the study of Sonargaon. In addition some letters written by Sheikh Nur Qutb Alam of Bengal to his desciple Sheikh Hushamuddin Manikpuri also incidentally refer to Sonargaon.<sup>11</sup> Similarly the letters of Mir Sayyid Ashraf Simnani and Maulana Muzaffar Shams Balkhi are valuable source materials.<sup>12</sup> One letter of Sayyid Ashraf Simnani was addressed to Sheikh Nur Qutb Alam of Bengal which refers to the condition of the Muslim saints of the time.

"Mowlana Muzaffar Balkhi wrote a number of letters to Sultan Ghiyas-uddin Azam Shah, son of Sikandar Shah. They deal with various subjects like qualification of a king, the attitude of a Muslim ruler towards the non-Muslims, requesting the Sultan to arrange for shipping space in Chittagong

8. Muhammad Enamul Haq, A History of the Sufism in Bengal, (Dhaka, 1970), P.211.

9. Sukumar Sen, Bengali Translation, D.U. Library.

10. Newal Kishore edition, Lucknow, 1880.

11. H. Ashkari, Bengal, Past and Present, Vol. LXVII, No.130, 1948, PP. 38-39.

12. H. Ashkari, JRS, Part-II, 1956, PP. 1-19.

Port for the followers of the Mawlana who were out on pilgrimage to the holy cities. As such these letters throw important light on the Socio-political condition of the country".<sup>13</sup>

Beside the hagiological literature, a large number of traditions are current in different parts of the country about various Sufis and Sultans. Though traditions in general are undependable source materials for history, they sometimes corroborate other evidences.

#### IV. Accounts of foreign travellers :

Among the travellers' accounts, following may be mentioned :

Ibn Batutah, Mahuan, Ralph Fitch, James Taylor.

The First traveller who came to Bangal during the period under review was a Moorish named Ibn Batutah.<sup>14</sup> He did not live here for a long time but his accounts of Sonargaon is very interesting for our present study especially regarding the prevailing socio-economic condition of Bengal. He gives a list of commodities he found in the markets and their price which are revealing. He sailed for Java from the port of Sonargaon. The famous Chinese traveller Mahuan visited Bengal during the period under study.<sup>15</sup> His accounts provide interesting details of the court of the Sultan at Sonargaon and many amusing details of customs, dress and amusement of the people. Of the European writers Nicolo Conti (Venetian)<sup>16</sup> Barbosa (Portuguese)<sup>17</sup> Ralph Fitch (English Merchant)<sup>18</sup> James Taylor<sup>19</sup> have left valuable accounts on the condition of Sonargaon.

13. A. Karim, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (Dacca 1959), P. 14.

14. Harinath Dey, Ibn Batutah's Accounts of Bengal (Calcutta, 1978), P. 18.

15. W.W. Rockhill, Notes on Relation & Trade of Bengal and China in the Pathan Period, Part II, P. 437; Bangladesh Itihas, 2nd edition (Dhaka 1981), P. 243.

16. Samuel Purchas, His Pilgrimes, Vol. XI, (Glasgow, 1906), P. 398.

17. S.Mukhopadhyay, Banglar Itihaser Diso Panchhar (Calcutta, 1980), P. 343.

18. R. Fitch Travels in India, (Calcutta, 1968), P. 19-29.

19. James Taylor. The Topography and Statistics of Dacca, Part I and II (Calcutta, 1840).

V. Writing on architectural history, inscriptions and coins on Bengal :

Among recent books on monuments both in English and in Bengali mention may be made of General Cunningham, James Wise, Blochman, Aulad Husain, Abid Ali, A.H. Dani, S.M. Hasan, Nazimuddin Ahmad and A.B.M. Hussain's contributions. Cunningham gives a very short account of the monuments of Sonargaon in his ASR volume IX, but his special reproduction of Calligraphy in terracotta particularly aroused great curiosity among the later scholars.

James wise deals with the monuments of the city area of Sonargaon; some of which do not exist to-day.

Prof. Dani's "Muslim Architectures in Bengal" is undoubtedly a commendable work in the field of Bengal architecture. Although there are shortcomings in the book (such as in the description of the Tenga mosque in Jessore which although is a five-domed mosque has been erroneously described as a three domed mosque) this is still held as an important source book for any further work on Muslim architecture in Bengal. His book on Dacca also furnishes some names of monuments of Sonargaon. Nazimuddin's "Discover the Monuments of Bangladesh" is another recent source book.

For the location of the monuments and period of their construction, the Inscriptions of Bengal, Volume IV by Mvi. Shamsuddin Ahmad, is extremely important. The monuments of the period under study have been studied mainly on the basis of exploration, spot study and collections in the National Museum of Bangladesh. The Archaeological Report of the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Bangladesh, recent publications on the monuments of Muslim Bengal in various journals, periodicals, catalogues, census and

statistical reports and Gazetteers have also been consulted as sources for our study besides some unpublished thesis on related field. The maps of ancient India, medieval and modern Bengal, prepared by Van Den Broucke, De Barros, Rennell etc. have immensely helped in following the fluctuation of various river courses, in different times in the area. Location of old historical cities and strategic positions have been identified from the An Atlas of the Muslim Empire written by Irfan Habib in 1982. Latest publications of Oleg Grabar, Papadopoulo, Burkhart, Aptullah Kuran also furnished sources of references. For the study of coins N.K. Battashali's and Abdul Karim's books have been profitably consulted. As no research work exclusively on Sonargaon was carried out in the past, it had to be compiled from different sources of history and monuments of Bengal.



CHAPTER - II

GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction :

Human activities are greatly influenced by his environment and natural peculiarities around him. As such history and geography are closely related to each other.<sup>1</sup> Often geography plays a dominant role in dictating the distribution of settlement pattern and moulding the socio-cultural life of its people. Therefore, for the study of history and monuments of Sonargaon, the famous capital city of south eastern Bengal<sup>2</sup> under the independent Muslim rulers of the country, the study of its geography is essential.

Sonargaon was an administrative unit (iklim) of the Sultanate of Bangala. The name Bangala seems to have originated in the medieval period to denote a land comprising different geographical regions corresponding to different political units. The combined units came to be known as Bangalah under the Sultani period and Subah Bangala under the Mughals. It became Bengal to the English and continued to be known so till the pre-partition date in 1947 A.D. Now its south eastern part is Bangladesh and the other part is West Bengal in India.

Physical Geography and Natural Division of Bengal :

The vast alluvial plain of Bengal covers an area of about 80,000 square miles.<sup>3</sup> According to Abul Fadl it was bounded on the east and north by the

1. A. Karim, Banglar Itihash (Dhaka 1977), P. 1.
2. H B., Vol.II (Dhaka University, 3rd impression, 1976), P. 528.
3. Ain-i-Akbari trans. Jarret, Vol.II, P.116 Ref. in Rahim's Social History of Bengal, Vol. 1, P. 2.

mountains of Tippera, on the south by the sea and on the west by the Subah of Bihar ( $27^{\circ}9'$  to  $20^{\circ}50'$  North and  $86^{\circ}36'$  to  $92^{\circ}30'$  East).<sup>4</sup> Although the entire area of Bengal is dominantly deltaic, there is a great physiographic variety within the general pattern of the plains, sub-dividing it on natural basis. In ancient times these physical varieties helped the growth of political and commercial settlement patterns of the country, approximately, corresponding to these natural divisions.

In general we recognize four major formation or physical varieties of the delta. Firstly the outliers of the tertiary ranges of the Himalayas which extends its several spurs into the districts of Sylhet, Comilla and Chittagong constitute the oldest geological formation. Secondly, the older alluvium or the quasi lateritic Zone of the north, originating during the Pleistocene Age. This Zone, corresponding to the ancient Varendra and the Madhupur highland forest is now a desiccated terraced land and sparsely populated but was formerly the focus of earliest civilization. In and around Dhaka the older alluvium is overlaid by the new silt deposit as the former declines towards the south. ✓ The third or the Central Zone is the youngest silt deposit, formed along the periphery of the older alluvium in and around Dhaka Savar-Vikrampur-Sonargaon belt. On its further east is the trans-Meghna region, corresponding approximately to the ancient 'Samatata' Kingdom. The fourth Zone embraces a land between the Bhagirathi-Hoogly and the low outcrop of the solid rock of the Peninsular India and is composed of shelf of lateritic old alluvium, popularly known as "Rarh". It is flanked by a network of rivers, draining the Peninsular Plateaus, such as the Ajai, Damodar, Rupnarayan and Kasai rivers. In its south the Medinipur lowland is partly deltaic which merges into the ~~littoral~~ on south.

---

4. History of Bengal, Vol. I (Dhaka University, 1963), 2nd impression, P. 1.

Following the major natural divisions of the delta generally, the main political divisions appear to have grown up in the early history of Bengal. The northern region, approximately corresponding to the modern Rajshahi Division, enclosed between the Padma and the Brahmaputra, was the most important ancient political division, then known as "Pundravardhana" of which Varendra, Kotivarsa and Panchanagari were famous districts. This is a vast plain cut up by numerous old river courses and is often liable to disastrous floods, particularly along the Tista basin. The region east of the Jamuna-Padma line form a vast lowlands, the Meghna-Surma valley-between the Shillong Plateau and the parallel tertiary hill ranges which extends from the east of Comilla to beyond the frontier of Burma. The country along the Padma and the lower Meghna, backed by the Madhupur highland forest, is an undulating older alluvial terrace.<sup>5</sup>

Along the Bay of Bengal in the south the district of Chittagong and the eastern part of Noakhali is an alluvial Cone, narrowing towards the coast and backed up by the ranges of low tertiary hills. This alluvial Cone has been built up by four parallel streams, the Karnaphuli, the Sangu, the Mathamuhuri and the Feni - the most important of which is the Karnaphuli river at the mouth of which stands the port city of Chittagong.

The vast landmass between the Padma, the lower reaches of the Brahmaputra and the estuary of the Meghna, formed the Central division, known to Pliny and Ptolemy as the territory of the 'Gangaridai' and later in Middle ages, was loosely designated as 'Vanga' Bangala etc. Beyond the Meghna on the

---

5. O.H.K. Spate, India and Pakistan, a General and Regional Geography, Second Edition (London, 1957), P. 525.

east, roughly corresponding to the present Chittagong Division, stretched the famous ancient kingdom of 'Samatata'. It is often difficult to ascertain whether the kingdoms of 'Harikela' and 'Samatata' were later included within 'Vanga'. With the rise of 'Gauda' during Sasanka's reign, initially around Murshidabad and Malda district, it seems that both 'Rarh' and 'Varendra' were included within its expanding orbit.

In the formation of the physiographic variety and political division important rivers of the delta and their tributaries played a vital role. The old literature on the hydrographic pattern in Bengal is vast and often confused.

Of course among the rivers of Bengal the Ganges is the most outstanding one. It "enters the province of Bengal at the point where the low-lying Rajmahal Hills almost touch its waters. The narrow passes of Telighari and Sikrigully formed excellent strategic points in Bengal's first line of defence. It is not, therefore, a mere accident that far famed capital cities like Gauda-Lakhnauti, Pandua, Tanda and Rajmahal should have grown up in the neighbourhood of this salient... The present course of the Ganges, after it has swept in a curve round the spurs and slopes of the Rajmahal Hills, is very different from what it was before the sixteenth century. In those days it flowed further north and east and the city of Gauda was probably on its right bank. There has been more than one shifting towards the south and west before the Ganges reached its present course, and dry beds of some of its old channels can still be traced."<sup>6</sup>

About 25 miles to the south of ancient Gauda the Ganges divides itself into two branches, the Bhagirathi running almost due south, and the Padma flowing in a south-easterly direction. Today the enormous volume of water of the

---

6. HB., Vol. I, P. 3.

Ganges is carried mainly by the Padma while the Bhagirathi has shrunk to a mere stream. This is the most important factor in the history of the delta. The channel of the Bhagirathi, was somewhat different from what it is today. Originally three rivulets fell into it, after it had broken off from the parent river, as now, but at Tribeni it branched off into three streams; the Sarasvati, the Jamuna, and the Bhagirathi proper. The port of Tamruk or Tamralipti stood on the bank of the Sarasvati, but it lost its importance on account of the silting up of the mouth of the Sarasvati sometimes in the eighth century A.D.

Its place was eventually taken up by Saptagram or Satgaon, higher up the river, which figures as the Muslim capital of south western Bengal in the fourteenth century A.D. Later on Satgaon was ruined and first Hoogly and then Calcutta took its place.

"The course of the Padma has also changed during last four or five centuries. It is difficult to trace accurately its various channels, but the probability is that at first it flowed past Rampur Boalia (Rajshahi town) through the Chalan Bil, the Dhaleswari, and the Buriganga rivers past Dacca into the Meghna estuary"<sup>7</sup>. The name Buriganga reminds that the Ganges had once her course through this river. Sripur which was eighteen miles north of Sonargaon was situated on the bank of the Ganges. The English traveller Ralph Fitch, who visited Bengal in 1586 A.D. wrote that he went from Sripur to Pegu, passing down the Ganges, and the island of Sandvip and the Porto Grande (Chittagong). It appears from the writings of Fitch that afterwards the eastern course of the Padma passing by Dacca and Sripur decayed and became unfit for navigation for

---

7. HB I, P. 4.

big ships'. Long before Ralph Fitch, Ibn Batutah the famous Moorish traveller reached Sonargaon by the river Brahmaputra, about 18 miles north of Sripur up the joint streams of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra and sailed for Java. But by the difference of two hundred years the river bed became silted up and the port shifted to Sripur. Later on the change of the river course engulfed Sripur and there was no port for big ships. In the upstreams of the same river its place as an inland river port was taken up first by Bandar and finally by Narayanganj. The combined courses of the Jamuna and the Dhaleswari (Padma) that met the Buriganga and the Sitalakhya near Fatullah met the combined flow of the Brahmaputra and the Meghna near Chandpur and spilled into the sea near Sandvip and Chittagong.

Another branch of the Padma took a different course near Faridpur. It united with <sup>the</sup> Jamuna near Goalundo and its downward course divided into many branches in Bakherganj and Khulna before discharging into the sea. Now the Madhumati, the Haringhata, the Ichhamati, the Dhaleswari, the Buriganga, the Jalangi, the Gorai, the Chandana, the Kumar, the Bhairab and the Arial Khan are a few of the tributes and distributaries of the Padma. Some of them are now almost silted up and dead. On the bank of the Bhairab the city established by Khan Jahan flourished in the fifteenth century A.D. The eastward <sup>of</sup> shift/the Ganges from the main outlet along the western margin, - the Bhagirathi-Hoogly to ~~its~~ its present main course, the Padma-Meghna with its intermediate streams, is the most important factor in the history of the delta. Whether this eastward shift is due to silting at the heads of successive spillways or to the tectonic change are still a highly debatable question. "More recently the

most striking event has been the diversion of the Tista into the Brahmaputra about 1787. This led to a relative decline in the old Brahmaputra course, east of Dacca, already ponded back by the water brought from the Surma valley by the Meghna. The main Tista-Brahmaputra outlet was by the Jamuna and the immense volume of water and silt brought down to the Padma near Goalundo, backed up the Ganges waters and opened up the Gorai in 1764, a mere creek in 1863".<sup>8</sup> "However, it seems clear that the Bhagirathi or one of its many branches like the Hoogly, Sarasvati, Adi-Ganga, was the most important distributory in the 17th century, but has been silting at least since 1770 when the Damodar shifted its mouth 80 miles to the south. The lower reaches of this line, the Hoogly proper, retains their vitality being fed by such streams from the Peninsula such as the Damodar and the Rupnarayan".<sup>9</sup>

The next important river of Bengal is the Brahmaputra. It has also changed its course several times except in its upper course upto the western bank of the Garo which passes through the mountainous region. Its present main branch is known as Jamuna (Tista-Brahmaputra) which meets the Padma near Goalundo at Faridpur. Flowing by the south-west of the Garo-hills and entering central Bengal, it passed through the northern region of the Mymensing district skirting Dewangonj and Jamalpur to its south and Sherpur to the north. Further downward it passed by Madhupur and made its way through the middle of the Mymensing district and eastern part of the Dhaka district. Passing via Langalband in the south-west of Sonargaon it fell into the Menikhali and then met with the Dhaleswari. Before passing by Langalband it has thrown off a branch called Sitalakhya. The Sitalakhya being originated from the Banar, a branch of the old Brahmaputra at Madhupur, ran almost parellel to the main course,

---

8. Spate, India and Pakistan(London, 1957), P. 527.

9. Ibid.

and passing by Narayanganj met the Dhaleswari a little to the west of its junction with main stream of the Brahmaputra. "This course of the Brahmaputra was already deserted in the eighteenth century when it flowed further east and joined the Meghna near Bhairab-bazar."<sup>10</sup> But still the religious sanctity is attached to the older course of the Brahmaputra near Langalband and Panchamighat. Several branches of the old Brahmaputra can still be traced in some part of Mymensing. They are the Geyara Sunda, the Caora or Kaora, the Arial Khan, the Dhanun, the Dhallaya and others. Besides, there are other branches of the Brahmaputra and the Sitalakhya that traverse the entire south eastern Bengal. These are the Turag, the Balu, the Bangsi etc.

The Meghna is another important river of south east Bengal. It rises from the Khashia-Jainta hills. "Her upper course is known by the name of Surma. Running through the district of Sylhet and eastern boundary of Netrokona and Kishoregonj she unites with the Brahmaputra near Bhairabbazar and past Chandpur, falls into the sea near Sandvip. The lower stream from Bhairabbazar to the sea is known as the Meghna . } Of the numerous rivers of northern Bengal that flowed into the Ganges or Brahmaputra, the Kratoya was one of the big rivers of early times. Rising from the Himalayas near the Bhutan border, it flowed through Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Bogra and Pabna districts and joined the Padma-Dhaleswari river (near Jafra ganj). Her upper course was known as Tista".<sup>11</sup> On the bank of the Kratoya stood the ancient city of Pundravardhana, at present identified with the ruins of Mahasthan.

10. HB., Volume I, P. 5; Karim, Banglar Itihash, P.5.

11. HB., Volume I, P. 6.



It would appear from what has been described above that great changes have been taking place in course of some five hundred years. The frequent changes in the course of rivers have been responsible for the ruins of many old places at different times by washing them off completely or by making them unhealthy and inaccessible. Reference has already been made of the ruination of Tamralipti, and the shifting of inland port from Saptagram to Calcutta and Sonargaon-Sripur to Bandar and so on. It is believed that the shifting of the beds of the kosi river (branch of the Ganges) gave rise to the swamps and floods that contributed to the ruin of the city of Gauda. The capricious Padma has swept away many cities and villages within living memory. The destruction of the city of Sripur and abandonment of the city of Sonargaon and Khalifatabad were all due to changes in the river course and deposit of silts. Coastal regions might have been depopulated by ravages of nature and the depredation of marauding pirates such as the Maghs and the Portuguese in the 17th century A.D.

The map of De Baross, (1550 A.D.), Van Den Broucke (1660 A.D.) and Rennell (1788 A.D.) show that the original course of the Brahmaputra was differently named as the Caor, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna in different times. Sonargaon is shown on the bank of these rivers. The old course of the Brahmaputra met the Menikhali on the south but to-day the combined course have lost its flow. The present map of Bangladesh shows the branches of the old Brahmaputra like the Geyara Sunda, the Arial Khan and the Caora or Kaora rivers flowing through the large tract of original Dhaka district. The sacred river bed of the old Brahmaputra can still be identified at Langalband near Sonargaon. This flow might be the old course of the sacred river Haldini of the Purana that flowed through the country of the Suvarnabhushitas . Again in Broucke's map the Sitalakhya

is shown to meet old Ganges at Fatullah in a sweeping curve. In Rennell's map the Sitalakhya has been shown emerging directly from the Banar and meeting the Buriganga at the confluence of the Dhaleswari river.<sup>12</sup>

The references of Sonargaon in the maps mentioned above find support in historical accounts and narratives of travellers of different periods. Sonargaon was mentioned first by Ziauddin Barni as the principality of Rai Danuj. After the fall of the Senas at Vikrampura Rai Danuj appeared in history with his capital at Sonargaon.<sup>13</sup> Sonargaon is still the adjacent area of Vikrampura. The famous fourteenth century Moorish traveller Ibn Batutah visited Sonargaon during the reign of Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah. He landed at Sodkawan or Chittagong port and went to Sylhet to visit the saint Shah Jalal. He returned and reached the port of Sonargaon by river.<sup>14</sup> Most probably this was the great river Meghna in Rennell's map of 1778 A.D. Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah was the ruler of Sonargaon in 1338 A.D. According to an inscription he built a gateway at the present site of Dhaka.<sup>15</sup> This indicates that his jurisdiction probably was extended to Dhaka also. The Chinese traveller Mahuan visited Bengal in the 15th century A.D.<sup>16</sup> He mentioned Sonargaon as an inland river port that could be approached from the sea port of Chittagong. Sonargaon was 500 li in distance from Chittagong (nearly 167 miles). But the present distance between Sonargaon and Chittagong is 250 miles.<sup>17</sup> This indicates that the river courses were different from what it is to day. The English traveller Ralph Fitch visited Sonargaon in the later half of the 16th century. At that time Sonargaon was not a flourishing city but it was full of poor huts.

12. A. Karim, Banglar Itihash, P. 3.

13. HB., Vol. II, P. 526.

14. A. Karim, Banglar Itihash, P. 5.

15. Mvi.Shamsuddin Ahmed, Inscriptions of Bengal, Vol.IV(Raj, 1961), P. 121.

16. W.W. Rockhills, Travels, (London, 1837), P. 427.

17. A. Karim, Ibid, P. 2.

Keeping in view the natural boundary of South Eastern Bengal we may assume that the region of 'Vang' or Sonargaon constituted varied physical characteristics. The areas of Sylhet, Madhupur and Bhawal were higher than the 'haor' and swampy areas of the 'Bhati'. Its extensive southern area formed by the river silts was also known as Navayvakasika or newly arisen land during the Gupta period. It was traversed by such mighty rivers as the Brahmaputra and the Padma and their numerous branches and tributaries. This fluvial land could produce cheap and abundant agricultural products to support a relatively dense population. During monsoon its congenial weather helped in producing finest thread for cotton fabrics, known as Muslin during the Middle Ages.

Historical references of the early Muslim period indicate that 'Vanga' and 'Samatata' were the habitat of the Senas in South East Bengal.<sup>18</sup> Their capital was at Rampal in Vikrampura near Dhaka. Lakhman Sen the Sena ruler, took shelter in 'Darya' on the bank of the Sitalakhya after his dislodgement from Lakhnauti. The Sitalakhya is a branch of the old Brahmaputra river near Sonargaon.<sup>19</sup> Sultan Balban of Delhi reached the vicinity of Sonargaon in 1282 A.D. He subjugated the ruler of Arsah-i-Bangla and asked his son to complete the conquest of Iklim-i-Bangala (Sonargaon region).<sup>20</sup>

In ancient days, the natural regions or geographical divisions or 'Janapadas' of Bengal, separated by rivers were known by the name of 'Komas' or 'Janas' (Tribe). For instance, Pundravardhana came to be known after the 'Pundras', and 'Varendra' after the 'Varendris'. The river Karatoya was its

18. A. Karim, Ibid, P. 2.

19. A. Karim, Ibid, P. 2.

20. HB., Vol. II, P. 71.

eastern boundary whereas the Ganges defined its western limit. Ancient 'Varendra' comprised a large area of Murshidabad and Malda districts of today. Such important medieval cities as Pandua, Lakhnauti, Tanda and Rajmahal developed in the same region.

The Janapada of 'Suhma' or 'Rarh' on the western part of the Bhagirathi also came to be known so by the 'Janas' named 'Suhma'. Later it came to be known as 'Rarh'. The region extended upto the sea on the south and Tamralipti was its important port city. In later days it was divided into two parts, viz. 'uttar Rarh' and 'Dakhhin Rarh'. During the Muslim period, Saptagram was an important centre and capital of south-west Bengal. Even today, Tribeni, Chhota Pandua are other places of importance. The famous port-city of Tamralipti has been identified with the present day Tamluk along the Rupnarayan river in the Medinipur district of West Bengal. It seems to have flourished between the first and the twelfth centuries A.D., but most probably lost its commercial and political importance due to the adverse change in the coastal area on which it stood. In 1298 A.D. the Muslims occupied it and established at Satgaon-Tribeni an important administrative unit. It was an important city in south west Bengal during Sultan Ilyas Shah and it formed a 'Sarkar' of Subah Bangala during the Mughal emperor Akbar. But during the later part of the 17th century it lost its importance and Hoogly became the most important port city in the area, later known by the Portuguse as Porto-Piquen. In all likelihood the drying up of the Sarasvati river in the 15th century on whose bank it stood was responsible for the decline of Satgaon.

'Samatata' was the name of another 'Janapada' that constituted a major part of modern Comilla and Noakhali districts. It must have extended beyond the west bank of the Meghna under the Senas. Saknat or Samatata was referred to by Minhaj in the 13th century in connection with the flight of Lakhsman Sena, who took refuge in 'Darya' on the bank of the Sitalakhya.<sup>21</sup> Under the Guptas notable centres of Samatata were Mainamati, Deveka, Karti-pura, Pattikera etc. Daveka was probably the place of Dapeka under the Mughals.

The location of Harikela is uncertain. Most probably it extended over the areas of modern Sylhet and Chittagong districts. Sylhet became a part of Sonargaon territory under the Muslim rule in the 14th century.

The most famous Janapada of Bengal was 'Vanga'; it came to be known after the 'Vangas,' 'Vanga' and 'Vangal', most probably constituted the area between the Jamuna (original Brahmaputra) and the Meghna and extended upto the Bay of Bengal. The indented coasted belt of the Bay was then, as it is still, covered mostly under heavy mangrove forest. In 12th century Vikrampura was the most important centre of administration in 'Vanga'. Its place was taken over by Sonargaon during the Muslim period in the 13th century. Under the Gupta rulers Suvarnavithi Navayakasika was a part of an unnamed 'bhukti' probably of 'Vanga' of which 'Vikrampura bhaga' was an important section.<sup>22</sup>

If we accept the view of D.C. Sirkar that 'Vang' included the eastern part of the Sundarban, extending upto the Brahmaputra river on north of the Mymensing district, it would appear that the Brahmaputra defined the north-eastern boundary of 'Vanga'.<sup>23</sup>

21. A. Karim, Banglar Itihash, (Dhaka, 1977), P. 2.

22. ~~J.N. Gupta~~, Vikrampur Itihash (Calcutta, 1316), P. 192.

23. Bangla Shahityer Itihasha, Ist Volume, edited by Anisuzzaman, (Dhaka, 1987), P. 20.

The Pala rulers of Bengal divided their empire into several units. Rarh was divided into two parts and a part of 'Vanga' was called 'Upa Vanga'. It included south-western part of Bakerganj and some parts of Dhaka.<sup>24</sup> At that time 'Nigama' was a term that denoted commercial centre having fortified residence of the governor. As such the 'nigama' of Suvar could be named as Suvarnigama of Suvar<sup>25</sup> which eventually came to be known as Survarnagrama. Though the jurisdiction of the principality is yet uncertain the centre of commerce may be placed somewhere on the bank of a great river, probably the Brahmaputra. Here one thing should be borne in mind that before the rule of the Palas, the 'Uparika' or Governor of the Suvarnabithi Navayvaka, lived in a commercial centre or market town. His fortified residence must have been on the bank of some great river.

As the above two regional units are near to one another and present similar physical conditions, they can be identified with 'Suvarnagrama',<sup>26</sup> an inland river port town. 'Suvarnagrama' is a Sanskrit word and synonym to 'Sonargaon', a Bengali word. It was an inland river port during the Muslim period. Historians are generally in agreement that the earlier name of Sonargaon was Suvarnagram.<sup>27</sup> Even Firishta, the Muslim historian, mentioned 'Sonargam' in place of Sonargaon of Barni. In the light of the above facts, it seems unavoidable to conclude that the physical boundary of 'Vang' which constituted south-eastern part of Bengal was really the region of Sonargaon during the Muslim period.

---

24. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Banglar Itihaser duso Bachar, 3rd edn., 1980, P. 115.

25. M. Hasan, Pre-Mughal Monuments of Bengal, 1979 (Dacca, 1979), P. 326.

26. A copper plate of the Senas have been found at Ashrafpur, near Sonargaon bearing the name 'Suvarnagram'. A.K.M. Zakaria, Bangladesher Pratna Sampad (Dhaka, 1985), PP. 414-415.

27. S.C. Roy, Suvarnagramer Itihasa, (Dacca, 1910), P.1.

Thus, Sonargaon of the period under study was a vast tract of land, known as iklim-i-Bangla or Sonargaon including a port town bearing the same name. The place was more famous as the capital city and cultural centre of south eastern Bengal. In view of the changing pattern of rivers discussed above, the position of the capital and the port in the 14th century seems to have been located on the eastern bank of the Sitalakhya and on the west bank of the Brahmaputra. But with the extension of Muslim rule in this area the site of the capital probably was shifted to the east bank of the Brahmaputra and on the north of the Menikhali. The city might have been on the west bank near the confluence of the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna.

The supposition if studied in the light of the topography of the area, would lead to certain new inferences. These are as follows :

- I) On the western bank of the Brahmaputra river the vestiges of some early Muslim habitation sites are likely to exist in the villages with such significant names as Kasba, Qusyr Amra etc.
- II) Similarly important ruins of the Sultanate period are likely to exist on the eastern bank of the river Brahmaputra at such villages as 'Sultan Bhita-Azampur', 'Jalalpur-Hazratpur', etc. It is likely, therefore, that the ruins of the medieval city of Sonargaon were scattered in these areas on the banks of the Brahmaputra near Mograpara. The walled city of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah was probably located at the present site of 'Sultan Bhita-Azampur', while the port city was on the south west which later came to be known as Bandar. Ibn Batutah reached the port city by the river Brahmaputra and the Meghna which connected Sylhet, Mymensing and Sonargaon in 1345 A.D.

But the mint town of Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon was shifted to Mu'zamabad. The shifting of its location most probably was dictated by the shifting of the river course. In spite of these changes the cultural centre of Sonargaon remained unchanged from its inception. Thus the iklim (Sonargaon) extended over a large area in south-eastern Bengal. It was separated from north and west Bengal by the Jamuna river. Its eastern boundary was marked by the Meghna upto the sea on the south. The kingdoms of Kamrupa and Assam were situated to the north. Sylhet and Bagerhat, the two frontier areas of the iklim were located on its extreme north-east and south-west border respectively. The capital of the iklim was at an area marked as Sonargaon in Rennell's Map. The port was on the south western outskirts, that is, at the confluence of the rivers.

From the 15th century onward Sonargaon steadily declined with the shifting of the capital to Pandua and also due to the drying up of the Brahmaputra and engulfment of river banks by the Meghna. With the passage of time new towns and colonies grew up in different areas of the iklim. Bandar became the residence of one Malik or governor where a palace and a township were built. "Dhahakha" came to be known as special town where a Qazi held his court in late 15th century. This town was probably situated on the west bank of the Sitalakhya river.<sup>28</sup>

From this time onward Sonargaon was no more heard of as the residence of the administrator. The port city of Sonargaon situated at Bandar, however, retained its importance even when the capital of East Bengal was shifted else-

---

28. H. Khatun, Dhaka Vishwa Vidyalaya patrika, June, 1985, P. 154.



where. Khizipur on the west bank of the Sitalakhya was probably the residence of Isa Khan<sup>29</sup> and which continued to be so until the Viceroyalty of Mir Jumla or until the time when the Lalbagh fort of Dhaka was established.

From these inferences it may be presumed that the original city stood on either bank of the river, extending over an area of one and a half miles on each side. The Galdi mosque was on the northern periphery of the city. An artificial lake was formed near Baidyar Bazar on the bank of the Meghna which extended upto the Sitalakhya and connected the Brahmaputra near Langalband. The port area extended upto Sonakanda-Sripur.

The capital was separated from the port by the Brahmaputra and the Menikhali rivers. Each part of the city was linked by natural creeks and artificial lakes. The northern Jalalpur area was connected with the capital city by the jalalpur bridge (also known as Painam bridge). Besides the natural protection provided by rivers, the city of Sonargaon was surrounded by moats on three sides and the fourth side was defended by the Brahmaputra. The Menikhali river provided a natural protection from the south. Immediately on the north of the Menikhali river there was the first moat. In this place, near the village of Shah Chillapur, a tomb, probably built by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah still testifies to its antiquity. The remains of the fort, Jami mosque, tomb, pond, 'Khankah' etc. were located on the northern bank of the same moat, but across the first moat and the tomb area the second moat was towards the north. The palace area was within this second moat. Today the entire area is littered with old ruins. The abandoned bed of the Brahmaputra was the ancient river route

---

29. Khizirpur was the residence of Sonabibi, wife of Isa Khan. It was also the residence of Rahmat Banu Begum, the princess of Assam, Captured by Mir Jumla. She was married to Prince Azam Khan, Begum L. Habibullah, Sachitra Bangladesh, Victory Day issue, (Dhaka 1980), PP. 31-35.

that connected south-east Bengal and Assam. Even today the same river conveys one from Bhairab to Astagram, Laor, Kasba, etc. - the north-eastern most part of Bangladesh.

At the end we may draw some general conclusions in the light of the above short geographical study. In the predominantly deltaic land of Bengal undoubtedly the prosperity or decline of major 'Janapadas' depended largely on the fluctuation of river courses, besides the political necessities. The several centuries old ancient port city of Tamralipti in Medinipur lost its prosperity because of the shifting of the main course of the Ganges. Later Saptagram occupied the place of Tamralipti but it also declined with the decline of <sup>the</sup> Sarasvati river. Likewise, the old proud capital city Lakhnauti-Gaur-Pandua and the most ancient capital city of Pundranagar also declined with the shifting of the course of the Ganges and the Karatoya. The famous medieval cities of Vikrampur and Sonargaon are now largely engulfed in the shifting bed of the Meghna river.

It is also noticeable that because of the geographical factors the facilities of communication or its absence in good old days determined the relationship of one 'Janapad' with the other. The factors of communication helped diffusing cultural relations between settlements, whereas its absence fostered individual growth of culture . These factors explain why the Muslims easily extended their rule in the north and south-west Bengal at the initial stage whereas they had to wait for another century to extend their territory to the south-east and the eastern Bengal.

CHAPTER - III

EARLY REFERENCES AND HISTORY OF SONARGAON UPTO 1338 A.D.\*

Ikhtiaruddin Muhammad Bakhtiar Khalji conquered Bengal in 1204 A.D.<sup>1</sup> But his conquest was confined to north-west Bengal only. After his death his generals expanded the Muslim rule in stages in different directions. Although the exact date of the conquest of east Bengal is not precisely known, it is possible to infer from Minhaj's account that Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji compelled the Hindu rulers of east Bengal to acknowledge his suzerainty<sup>2</sup> and that he appointed Muslim Qazis to the territory of east Bengal.<sup>3</sup> The territory was brought under direct control during the reign of Ghiyasuddin Balban, who appointed Amin Khan as the Governor of Lakhnauti and Tughril Khan as the "Naib of Amin Khan". This was, for the first time, that a deputy governor was appointed in Lakhnauti, who (Tughril) extended the Muslim arms towards south-east Bengal and established several "enterprises" and the famous Qila-i-Tughril in the vicinity of Sonargaon.<sup>4</sup>

He waged war against the Hindu territories of neighbouring areas and collected immense treasure, which he retained for himself in his fortified fort

\* This period is out of the scope of the present study. For full understanding of the history of Sonargaon, this is included in the thesis.

1. Parameshwari Lal Gupta, "The Date of Bakhtiar Khalji's occupation of Gauda", JVRM (Rajshahi, 1975), P. 29.
2. HI., II, P.324; referred by A.Karim, Banglar Itihash, (Dhaka, 1977), P. 97.
3. James Taylor, Topography of Dhaka, Vol. I, (London, 1840), P. 102. Territory means a tract of land of unidentified boundaries, a region. The then East Bengal was divided into several districts and these were confided to Qazis, P. 67.
4. H B., Volume-II, (Dhaka University, 1976), P. 58.

of 'Narkila' instead of sending it to Delhi.<sup>5</sup> Most probably at this time, he revolted against Amin Khan, ousted him from Lakhnauti and proclaimed himself independent with the title of Sultan Mughisuddin Tughril. He gained support of his subjects and the saints of his domain by lavish distribution of a part of his newly acquired wealth in charity.

Balban sent two expeditions from Delhi in succession against Tughril without any success. So the infuriated Sultan took the field in person against the rebel. This strenuous expedition entailed three years; one was occupied with Balban's elaborate preparations and the other two with the actual campaigns in Bengal.<sup>6</sup>

"Such a large army was never assembled before or after under the banner of any Muslim Emperor of Delhi except for Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq's project of the conquest of Khorasan. His preparations were on a scale sufficient to crush the whole province of Bengal under the sheer weight of numbers".<sup>7</sup> Tughril got himself prepared with a fleet of war boats, kept constant vigilance on the movements of the Sultan's army and escaped to a safer place, as he knew it well that he would not be able to withstand the Sultan.<sup>8</sup>

---

5. Ibid, P. 58.

Qilai Tughril itself indicates its identity as the fort of Tughril (Barni). The name of the fort has been mentioned as Narkila by Firishta; Rennell identified "the place with the important Feringi stronghold of Loricol, about 25 miles due south of Dhaka and about 10 miles south west of Rajbari". But we know that the fort of Tughril was protected by jungle, river and swampy area, where there was a stone reservoir. Such environmental similarity was available near Sonargaon and on the bank of modern Nalkhali stream. The demolished Mughal fort of 'Depeka' stood on the bank of the stream that once connected the Buriganga, the Sitalakhya and the Brahmaputra rivers. It may be presumed, therefore, that the existence of the Narkila of Tughril might be in the area and it influenced the naming of the stream. With the passage of time, the stream perhaps has come to be known as Nalkhali. Loricol is a modern stronghold and therefore, its existence during the days of Tughril is unlikely. As such Loricol may not be identical with Narkila.

6. HI, Volume III, P. 107; Akbaruddin, Banglar Itihash-Bengali tr. of Riyaz-us-Salatin (Dhaka, 1980), P. 41.

7. HI., Ibid, P. 110.

8. Yanya bin Ahmed, Tarikh-i-Mubarakshahi, Eng. trns., by K.K. Bose (Gaekwad, 1932), P. 63.

At the advancement of Balban's army towards Lakhnauti during the rainy season (1280 A.D.), Tughril along with his men evacuated the city and "took the road to Jainagar and halted at a dry place, one day's journey from Lakhnauti.<sup>9</sup> Balban halted at Lakhnauti for the time being and made arrangements for regular communication between him and the war camps. Despite heavy rains he began to pursue Tughril, but since Tughril was very vigilant about the movement of the Sultan's army, he at once started for his fortified Qila of Tughril or Narkila in the neighbourhood of Sonargaon and took shelter there.<sup>10</sup>

On hearing the news of his flight towards Sonargaon again, Balban pursued Tughril and reached the principality of Rai Danuj in the vicinity of Sonargaon. He could not reach the Qila of Tughril as it was highly protected by the rivers, jungles and swamps.

Rai Danuj the then ruler of Sonargaon was, about this time anxious to expand his rule around his kingdom. Probably he was afraid of Tughril's permanent settlement in the neighbourhood of Sonargaon. Balban's advance towards Sonargaon and seeking Rai Danuj's help against the common enemy Tughril, therefore, gave the Rai a chance to thwart the expansion of the Muslim territory at the cost of his own. Both Balban and the Rai entered into an agreement that Balban would hunt Tughril on land while the Rai would guard the river routes, so that Tughril could not escape anywhere.

This agreement being concluded, Tughril found it impossible to escape towards sea or the Ganges. He then decided to evacuate his fort with all his treasures and men and to hide in a tent, so that Balban's advance army, scattered

---

9. HB., Vol.II, P. 63; HI, Vol. III, P. 85.

10. HB., Vol.II, P. 59.

in different directions, might not get hold of his men if they reached the fort. Moreover, he was afraid of facing the determined Sultan and his vast army.

On hearing the news of Tughril's evacuation of his Narkila fort and his possible escape towards Jajnapur, Balban at once started for Jajnapur in pursuit of Tughril and proceeded about 70 to 80 kos, but in vain. His advance party, scouting in small groups, all on a sudden, found a group of corn dealers, returning from Tughril's hideout close by. They immediately rushed to Tughril's camp with drawn swords shouting for him while his (Tughril's) army, horses and cattle were relaxing in an unguarded moment. Tughril tried to escape by crossing a river, but was caught and beheaded (1281 A.D.).

In the words of Barni, "Tughril was encamped at less than half a kos distance near a stone built reservoir and intended next day to enter the territory of Jajnapur".<sup>11</sup> Badauni stated that Tughril fled to a jungle towards the river with an intention to cross the same and escape to Jajnapur.<sup>12</sup> All these statements indicated that Tughril's hideout was at a place not far from habitations. The locality had a reservoir and was on the bank of a river, protected by jungle, not far from Jajnapur. This facilitated Tughril's easy escape. He could reach Jajnapur through the Sitalakhya, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna, all of which were connected by the river Menikhali. Jajnapur is sometimes confused with Orissa and at the same time with Tippera. But an inscription of Sultan Husain Shah clearly mentions Rukn Khan as the conqueror of Kamta, Kamru, Jajnapur and Urisha.<sup>13</sup> This is a clear indication that Jajnapur was a different place than Orissa. Moreover, Barni clearly mentions that Tughril intended to

11. HI., Vol. III, P. 177.

12. Ranking, Muntakhab Tawarikh, Eng. Tr. (Badauni), P. 186.

13. S. Ahmed, IB., Volume IV, P. 25.

enter Jainagar on the following day. He was halting near his Narkila fort and intended to flee next day. If Jainagar was the name of Tippera, as stated above, and his (Tughril's) fort located on the bank of the Sitalakhya, it was easy for Tughril to reach (Tippera) the place by crossing the river courses of the Brahmaputra and the Maghna; Tughril probably followed this route.

The Narkila fort of Tughril near Sonargaon was probably located on the bank of the Sitalakhya river. It was protected by marshy area of 'Areal beel' on the south and the 'Bhawal Jungle' on the north. A stone-reservoir enabled the settlers to draw water for their daily necessity. In spite of these natural barriers Balban reached this area. Most probably the site was used in later days by the Mughals.<sup>14</sup>

Bughra Khan was appointed governor of Lakhnauti by Balban where he declared independence and arrogated the title of Sultan Nasiruddin Bughra Khan (680-689/1281-1290 A.D.). He was advised by his stern father Balban to conquer Diyar-i-Bangla and establish his authority firmly. He also referred to his ruthlessness in subduing Iklim-i-Lakhnauti and Arsha-i-Bangala.

---

14. The site of the 'Dapeka Kella' is still littered with ancient ruins, presently known as Dapa at Fatullah located on the bank of the Nalkhali creek and protected by the Sitalakhya, the Balu and the Buriganga rivers. It is only eight miles west of Sonargaon. Till late it was protected by Jungles on the north and by a swampy area on the south. The river route was inaccessible from the south, except through the normal route of the Ganges. In this fort there was a masonry built reservoir, which was partly filled in 1982 A.D.

Most probably, this was the site of the 'Narkila' of Tughril. The creek flowing along the site still bears the name Nalkhali. It was variously known as 'Futeccella' or 'Fathqila'. At present the same locality is known as Fatullah. This place of Dapa Kella, might be the original site of Narkila on the bank of Nalkhali. From this site it was easy to escape to Jainagar through the Sitalakhya and the Menikhali rivers.

This 'Arsa-i-Bangla was Sonargaon. Later on Sonargaon was referred to as iklim-i-Bangla, during Bughra Khan's reign when it was under a deputy governor. This was one of the four governorships of the independent Sultanate of Bengal having its own natural boundaries.<sup>15</sup> Next ruler Sultan Rukunuddin Kaikaus maintained peace within his territory. "Sonargaon region was in the process of conquest and annexation during this time". After his death, Sultan Shamsuddin Firuz Shah (1301-1322 A.D.) extended the area of iklim-i-Bangla or Sonargaon towards north.<sup>16</sup>

This is perhaps a significant milestone in the history of Bengal because it was during this period that the Muslim rule was extended for the first time into modern Mymensingh, Kishoreganj and Sylhet districts. The Muslims began their operations "from their new base at Sonargaon"<sup>17</sup> The date of the first conquest of 'Arsa' - Sylhet by Sikandar Ghazi during the reign of Shamsuddin Firoz Dehlavi in 1303 A.D. is available in an inscription of the period of Sultan Husain Shah. This stone tablet was inscribed by the order of Rukn Khan, the conqueror of Hasht Gamarian<sup>18</sup> in connection with the construction of a building built in 918 A.H./1512 A.D. in honour of the exalted Sheikhul Mashaikn Sheikh Jalal 'Muzarred', son of Muhammad.

The reverse side of the same inscription was used in 996 A.H./1588 A.D. by Masnad-i-Ali Fath Khan to commemorate the erection of a mosque. The stone tablet is a black basalt, measuring 27" x 13" x 1½" whose find spot is still unknown but Mvi. Shamsuddin Ahmed mentioned it as Sylhet. The same inscription is now lying in the National Museum, Dhaka.

15. HB., Volume II, P. 59-72.

16. HB., Vol. II, PP. 59-72. "iklim-i-Bangla" is very appropriate to the area of Vanga, and Sonargaon was within this area.

17. HB., Vol. II, PP. 59-72.

18. S.Ahmad, IB., volume-IV, (Rajshahi, 1960), P. 24.



An inscription tablet originally fixed on the Qutb mosque at Astagram in the Kishoreganj district, bordering Sylhet, is now missing. It appears from the discussion noted above that the conqueror of "Hasht Gamarian" was Rukn Khan. Close similarity of the two names i.e., 'Hasht Gamarian' and Astagram' and their relative meanings (8 villages) may be noted. The Persian word Hasht Gamarian meaning eight villages in cluster, is also significant.

The Qutb mosque of Astagram is a fine specimen of Bengal architecture. It is located on a high ground surrounded by a low lying "Haor" (Lake) area of present Kishoreganj, originally bordering Sylhet on the confluence of seven rivers.<sup>19</sup> On the basis of its architectural style it can be placed in the period of late 16th century.

It may be interesting to note that the aforementioned stone tablet, now preserved in the Dhaka Museum, exactly fits in the place of the missing one in the Qutb mosque. The blank place measures 27" x 13" x 1½". If it belongs to the same Astagram mosque, it may be presumed that the tablet was in the same locality where an early building was constructed by Rukn Khan, the general and wazir of Alauddin Husain Shah in 1512 A.D.<sup>20</sup> This inscription bears three dates: one relates to the conquest of Sylhet in 1303, the second relates to the date of the construction of a building in commemoration of the conquest of Astagram in 1512 and the third relates to the date of construction of a mosque in 996 A.H./1588 A.D.

---

19. These rivers are locally called as Kalni, Dhanu, Geyrautra, Dhaleswari, Meghna, Kaora and Bangla.

20. S. Ahmed, IB., Volume-IV, (Rajshahi, 1960), P. 59.

This inscription is very important because, it records that the conquest of Sylhet was completed in 1512 A.D. and we know that it was under 'iklim' Mu'zamabad, also known as Mahmudabad.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Orissa or Urisha and Jajnagar are separately recorded in the same inscription which exactly corroborates with the description of Barni's Tarikh-i-Ferojshahi where he clearly makes a distinction between the two places.

At that time Bengal was governed by Sultan Shamsuddin Ferozshah's four sons; Bihar was ruled by Hatim Khan, Satgaon and Lakhnauti by Shihabuddin Bugdah and Jalaluddin Mahmud Shah, while Sonargaon by Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah.<sup>22</sup>

Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah was the ablest of Feroz Shah's sons; the name of the others being Jalaluddin Mahmud, Shihabuddin Bugda and Nasiruddin Ibrahim. He along with his brothers minted coins from Lakhnauti in the year 704, 707 (Jalaluddin) 717 and 718 A.H. (Shahabuddin). Ghiyasuddin himself minted coins from Sonargaon in 717 A.H. and from Ghiyaspur in 722 A.H. while his father minted coins from Sonargaon and Bang. His brothers did not mint coins from Sonargaon and Bang which in fact clearly establishes his authority over Sonargaon during the life time of his father. Here it is noticeable that Bang and Sonargaon were different mint towns in Iklim Sonargaon. Bang was approachable by a different route than Sonargaon. The description of the battle between Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq and Bahadur Shah as narrated by Isami clearly indicates that Bang was in a different place than Sonargaon city.<sup>23</sup>

---

21. IB., Vol. IV, P. 169 and P. 121.

22. III., Vol. II, PP. 83-85.

23. HB., Vol. II, P. 63. In order to reach this mint he had to cross the river Jamuna and enter the high tract of land along the river Banar. His Ghiyashpur fort was located on the bank of this river near its confluence with the Sitalakhya.

Thus, Bang, comprising the northern part of the Dhaka district, enclosed by the rivers Jamuna on the west, the Sitalakhya on the east and the Brahmaputra on the north, was the mint area of Shamsuddin Firoz Shah. It has been mentioned as Ghiyashpur in the coins of Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah which indicates that Bang was conquered by Shamsuddin Feroz Shah and that the town of Ghiyashpur was established by his son Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah. Ghiyashpur is located on the bank of a river in Tangail District. It was formerly under the principality of 'Dallagram' during the Hindu period.<sup>24</sup>

Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah, during the lifetime of his father, was probably the deputy governor of Lakhnauti and was in charge of iklim Sonargaon like that of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. Both Bang and Sonargaon were under this iklim and his seat of government was at Bang (Ghiyashpur). He tried to escape there, when he was driven out of 'Lakhnauti by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in 1324 A.D. and eventually was imprisoned and taken to Delhi.

Lakhnauti was divided into three administrative units: Lakhnauti, Satgaon and Sonargaon. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq of Delhi died in 1328 A.D. and Muhammad bin Tughlaq succeeded him. He redistributed the governorships of Bengal. Kadar Khan was appointed governor of Lakhnauti and Yuzuddin Yahya alias Azam Malik was appointed governor of Satgaon, while Ghiyasuddin Bahadur was made governor of Sonargaon along with Baharam Khan. All these appointments clearly demonstrate that Sonargaon was given relatively more importance than other regions. Baharam Khan was relieved of <sup>his</sup> earlier but greater responsibility (of both Satgaon and Sonargaon) and was appointed as the Sultan's representative only for Sonargaon

24. A. Bhattacharya, Historical Geography of Bengal, (Cal. 1978), P. 92. From this name it can be inferred that before the Muslims there were districts with names 1) Suvarnagram, 2) Dallagram, 3) Astagram, 4) Navyagram in Sonargaon territory.

with Bahadur as a vassal.<sup>25</sup> It is interesting to note that although Ghiyasuddin was the Deputy Governor of Sonargaon while Baharam Khan was the governor, the coins were minted in the name of Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah and not in the name of Baharam Khan. It is also equally curious that although for a certain period Nasiruddin Ibrahim minted coins from Lakhnauti, bearing the title of Sultanul Muazzam, Bahadur Shah minted his coins with the title of Sultanul Azam.<sup>26</sup> Of course, both of them minted coins in the name of the Delhi Sultan. It indicates that Bahadur was invested with more power than Baharam Khan and that he was more favoured by the Sultan than Nasiruddin Ibrahim.

Bahadur Shah was a born rebel and was destined to die as a rebel.<sup>27</sup> He took possession of Lakhnauti but he had to pay for it and was imprisoned. Later, he was allowed to rule Sonargaon under Delhi sultanate with some conditions imposed on him. But he did not fulfil the conditions of his freedom.<sup>28</sup> Within two years of his freedom he proclaimed independence again. Very soon he was defeated and flayed alive in 728 H/1328 A.D.

Baharam Khan continued his rule at Sonargaon till his death in 738 H/1338 A.D. His armour bearer Fakruddin, popularly known as Fakhra, assumed the governorship of Sonargaon,<sup>29</sup> pending the appointment of a new governor by the Delhi Sultan.

---

25. IB., Vol. II, P. 87.

26. IB., Vol. II, P. 88-90.

27. IB., Vol. II, P. 88.

28. A. Karim, Banglar Itihash, (Dhaka, 1977), P. 180; referred from Ibn Batutah's account. He did not send his son to Delhi court.

29. IB., Vol. II, P. 90.

CHAPTER - IV

SONARGAON DURING THE SULTANATE PERIOD

- a. From 1338 A.D. to the end of the Husain Shahi dynasty.

The success of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah compelled Qadar Khan, governor of Lakhnauti along with Yahya Khan of Satgaon and Feroz Khan son of Nusrat Khan, Amir of Kara to march against Fakhruddin. Being defeated and expelled from Sonargaon Fakhruddin perhaps fled and hid himself in a jungle in Madhupur and waited for an opportune moment.<sup>1</sup>

Qadar Khan being victorious, remained at Sonargaon and accumulated huge treasure.<sup>2</sup> With the onset of the rainy season Fakhruddin came out of his hiding place in the jungle and Qadar Khan's army joined hands with him. Qadar Khan (740/1340) was killed by his army, whereupon Fakhruddin became the independent ruler of Sonargaon. This unexpected turn of fortune made Fakhruddin ambitious and he sent one Mukhlis to occupy Lakhnauti.<sup>3</sup> But Mukhlis was killed by Ali Mubarak, the loyal Paymaster of Qadar Khan who proclaimed independence and took the title of Alauddin Ali Shah.

During the days of political chaos (1338-1343 A.D.) Bahram Khan (alias Tatar Khan) was replaced by Fakhruddin at Sonargaon and Qadar Khan was replaced by Alauddin Ali Shah at Lakhnauti in quick succession in somewhat the same way as Haji Ilyas occupied the governorship of Satgaon.

---

1. A. Karim, Banglar Itihash (Dhaka, 1977), P. 182.  
2. HB., II, P. 92.  
3. Ibid., P. 91.

The governor of Satgaon was Yahya, who along with Qadar Khan invaded Sonargaon, but nothing is known about him after that event. The next ruler of Sonargaon was Haji Ilyas. Haji Ilyas initially was serving in the court of Ali Mubarak and entered into contest for the throne but failed and fled to south Bengal.<sup>4</sup> After three years he again appeared at Lakhnauti, killed Alauddin Ali Shah and proclaimed independence in 743/1342 A.D. This is attested by an inscription found in Calcutta.<sup>5</sup> It also establishes his presence in South Bengal.

Fakhruddin was a warrior. During the lifetime of Bahram Khan he was his right hand man. With his help Bahram Khan conquered Comilla and Chittagong.<sup>6</sup> After the death of Qadar Khan Fakhruddin extended his territory further. He tried to extend his territory towards Lakhnauti but Ali Shah effectively resisted this attempt.

It is known from Ibn Batutah's account that during the winter season Ali Shah used to attack eastern Bengal and during the rainy season Fakhruddin used to invade north Bengal. Ali Shah's rule was terminated in 743 A.H./1342 A.D. by Haji Ilyas although Fakhruddin continued his rule in Sonargaon for few years more. He strengthened his power on the eastern bank of the Meghna and constructed a connecting road from Chandpur to Chittagong<sup>7</sup> which extended even upto Sylhet. There is still the existence of a road through Brahmanbaria to Sylhet which is known as 'Fakhra Bangai' road. He also constructed a number of mosques and other edifices in Chittagong.<sup>8</sup>

4. HB., Vol. II, P. 97-99.

5. S. Ahmed, IB., Vol. IV, (Raj., 1960), P. 31-33.

6. HB., II, P. 99; Karim, Ibid, P. 189.

7. A. Karim, Banglar Itihash, (Dhaka, 1977), P. 188.

8. Ibid. P. 188.

Fakhruddin minted coins from Sonargaon; his capital is mentioned as "Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon". But most of his architectural remains are found at Chittagong. It is also learnt that he ruled from both Sadkawan and Sonargaon.<sup>9</sup> He appointed Sayda as the deputy ruler of Sadkawan or Chittagong.<sup>10</sup>

When Fakhruddin was away from Sonargaon and Sadkawan fighting against Alauddin Ali Shah, Sayda the fakir ruler of Sadkawan rebelled, proceeded upto Sonargaon and killed Fakhruddin's son. Very soon Fakhruddin came back but Shayda was killed.<sup>11</sup> Fakhruddin ruled for 11 years (1338 to 1349 A.D.) and died in 750 A.H./1349 A.D. His power was extended over the entire south eastern Bengal. An inscription of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah (1442-1459) originally fixed on an old mosque in the Dhaka City, recorded a gateway located at the frontier of iklim Mubarakabad.<sup>12</sup> Stapleton is of opinion that Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah concealed himself in and around Dhaka (Bang) when he was ousted by Qadar Khan. Most probably he erected the gateway on the border of his kingdom at the south western part of Dhaka near Faridpur. At the time of its renovation the border area was probably beyond the Padma.

After the death of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah, his son Ikhtiaruddin Ghazi Shah became the ruler of Sonargaon in 750 A.H. His coins were issued from Sonargaon mint. He was ousted by Hajji Ilyas of Lakhnauti in 753 A.H.<sup>13</sup>

---

9. Ibid, P. 190.

10. Ibid, PP.193-196.

11. A. Karim, Ibid, P. 196; HB., II, P. 102 referred from Ibn Batutah's Account.

12. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 62.

13. HB., II, P. 96.

Ilyas Shah

A new chapter was opened in the history of Bengal with the accession of Ilyas Shah to the throne of Pandua. He extended his kingdom considerably by conquering Orissa, Tirhut and Nepal.<sup>14</sup> The greatest event of his reign was his conquest of Sonargaon in 753/1352 A.D.<sup>15</sup> and consolidation of his rule in Lakhnauti, Satgaon and Sonargaon.

Feroz Shah Tughlaq of Delhi invaded Bengal in 1353 A.D. Ilyas got prepared and shut himself up in his hurriedly raised mud fort of Ekdala. Feroz Shah wrested Tirhut and Orissa and proceeded towards Bengal. A battle was fought outside the fort area in which Ilyas suffered heavy losses and was forced to withdraw inside the Ekdala fort.

The Delhi sultan, thereupon, besieged the fort for several months when skirmishes went on but without being able to get hold of this stronghold. Feroz Shah, thereupon, withdrew to his capital with apparently a face-saving treaty. This virtually acknowledged Ilyas Shah's sovereignty in Bengal.<sup>16</sup> The Delhi Sultan however, took immense war booty and 47 elephants from Bengal to his capital.<sup>17</sup> Our knowledge about Ilyas Shah's administration at Sonargaon is shadowy. But the historians of the imperial court in Delhi furnish us with some important information regarding this ruler.

Shams-Shiraj-i-Afif entitled him Sultan-i-Bangala or Shah-i-Bangalian.<sup>18</sup> This is very significant because he was the first Muslim ruler who combined 'Varendra', 'Rarh' and 'Bang' within his Sultanat-i-Bangala. Before his rule,

14. A. Karim, Banglar Itihash, P. 203.

15. A. Karim, Corpus, PP. 31-32.

16. HB., II, P. 109.

17. HB., II, P. 109.

18. Dani, Muslim Architecture in Bengal (Dhaka, 1962), P. 54;  
HI II, PP. 114-118; A. Karim : Banglar Itihash, (Dhaka, 1977), P. 201.



Bengal was known as the kingdom of Lakhnauti or Gaur. Barni narrates that he had a Hindu general and adviser known as Shahadev<sup>19</sup> and that he married a Hindu lady.<sup>20</sup> These are indications of his liberal attitude towards the Hindus. Although he married a Hindu lady he was a great patron of eminent Muslim saints and their establishments within his kingdom. Sheikh Raja Biyabani, Sheikh Alaul Huq, Akhi Sirajuddin were among his closest friends. His yearning to pay a visit to Nizamuddin Aulia of Delhi is well known. As a pious Muslim he performed 'hajj' at the holy city of Makkah.<sup>21</sup> He minted coins from Ferozabad, Satgaon, Sonargaon and Shahr-i-Nau<sup>22</sup> and assumed the title of Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah. It is however difficult to understand why such a pious ruler was nicknamed 'Bhangara' meaning a 'Bhang-eater' or who was addicted to a narcotic, popularly known as Bhang.<sup>23</sup>

While explaining this unusual appellation Dr. Dani opined that the term originally might have been 'Bangala' which in course of time was corrupted into 'Bhangara'.<sup>24</sup> Jadunath Sarkar on the other hand thought that 'holding a rival court at the eastern limit of the north Indian Plains, Ilyas was an eyesore to the Delhi historians, who stigmatised him as a 'Bhangi' and as a leper.<sup>25</sup> But it appears more likely that it is a pure Bengali word which implies to a ruler of united Bengal.

### Sikandar Shah

Ilyas Shah died in 759 A.H./1358 A.D. and his son Sikandar, assuming the title of Abul Mujahid Sikandar Shah ascended the throne of Pandua.<sup>26</sup> The most important event of his reign was the battle of Ekdala with Feroz Shah

19. A. Karim, Ibid, P. 223.

20. N.S. Khan, Islamic Review, Vol. LIV, No.3 (Hyderabad, 1985), P. 168.

21. He is known by the title Haji. This indicates that he visited Makkah and Medina.

22. A. Karim, Corpus (Dhaka, 1960), P. 48-50.

23. HB., II, P. 110.

24. Dani, Essays presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar (Hoshiarpur, 1958), PP.50-56; A.Karim, Banglar Itihash, (Dhaka, 1977), P. 201.

25. HB., II, P. 110.

26. A. Karim, Ibid, P. 224.

Tughlaq of Delhi, who invaded Bengal for the second time on the pretext of restoring the rule of Fakhruddin's family at Sonargaon. Zafar Khan, the son-in-law of Fakhruddin implored Feroz Shah Tughlaq to reinstate him at Sonargaon. The Delhi Sultan with a vast army invaded Bengal in 1359 A.D.<sup>27</sup> Sikandar at first withdrew to Sonargaon and later entrenched himself at Ekdala<sup>28</sup> which was besieged by the emperor. Following the policy of his father Sikandar avoided pitched battle and shut himself up in the fort of Ekdala with his full force. After a prolonged engagement in which neither side gained decisive advantage a treaty was concluded and Feroz Shah returned to Delhi with huge booty.

As Zafar Khan refused to stay at Sonargaon, he was taken to Delhi and appointed as a Deputy Wazir there.

During Sikandar's rule Sonargaon mint town was replaced by Mu'zamabad, a nearby village about eight miles north east of Jalalpur. At Mu'zamabad, Katrabhu was the fortified residence of Isa Khan upto 1584 A.D. On the evidences of coins it may be inferred that Sikandar Shah renamed Sonargaon as Mu'zamabad, after his own honorific title 'Sultanul Muazzam'. The earliest coin issued from Mu'zamabad was in 759/1358 A.D. while the last series came out in 907 A.H./1507 A.D. Mu'zamabad was the name of the 'Iklim' and the name also occurs on coins and inscriptions.<sup>29</sup>

Ghiyasuddin

During the lifetime of Sikandar Shah his son / ruled Sonargaon for nearly 20 years (772-792) and minted (788-790 A.D.) coins in his own name. He himself ruled in north and west Bengal and conquered a part of Kamrup and struck coins from Ferozabad, Mu'zamabad, Shahr-i-nau, Satgaon and Chaulistan.

27. HB., II, P. 112.

28. HI., Volume II, P. 226; HB., II, P. 112.

29. S. Ahmad, IB., Volume-IV, P. 122.

Sikandar was a great builder. His most ambitious architectural creation was the Adina Mosque at Pandua. He built a mosque and a canopied tomb in honour of Maulana Ata of Devkot in Dinajpur. The inscription on the tomb records that it was erected during the reign of Sikandar Shah and the stone was engraved by Ghiyath, the golden hand<sup>30</sup> in the year 765 A.H./1363 A.D. The style of writing is "Naskh of plain type and incised in a very elegant Tulth characters". It consists of Persian prose and Arabic verse.

His another important architectural work was the tomb of Sheikh Akhi Sirajuddin. It stands on a high land near the north west corner of the Sagar Dighi in Sadullahpur near Maldah. It is a square brick building covered with a dome and ornamented with floral motifs in stucco. Cunningham ascribes the inscribed terracotta plaque, now preserved in the Calcutta Museum bearing the name of Ghiyas, to this monument.<sup>31</sup> But the use of the name 'Muhammadabad' in the plaque creates confusion in ascribing it to this tomb.

Sultan Sikandar's relation with his son Ghiyasuddin became embittered in his old age whom he suspected of disloyalty. This eventually led the Sultan to invade Sonargaon. But in the battle of Goalpara near Jafraganj near the junction of the Ganges and a branch of Jamuna rivers he was defeated and killed.<sup>32</sup> With a heavy heart Ghiyasuddin arranged for his burial, proceeded to Pandua and ascended the throne of Bengal in 1390 A.D.

---

30. S. Ahmad, *Ibid*, PP. 34-35.

31. Cunningham, *ASI*, XV, P. 211.

32. James Wise, 'Notes on Sonargaon', *JASB* (Calcutta, 1873), P. 263; Goalpara is a controversial place. According to Blochman this place is in Pandua. On the basis of the description of Buchanan, Stapleton "identified it with Bangarh. Westmacott tried to identify it with Chatra in Maldah. Hasan said that "Chatra was, sometimes, identified with Goalpara". But Golan Hussain Selim mentioned that Sultan Ghiyasuddin marched with a large army from Sonargaon and encamped at Sonagarh; from the otherside, the father also

Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah

Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, the rebel son of Sultan Sikandar Shah began his career as an independent ruler of Sonargaon in 772 A.H./1370 A.D.<sup>33</sup> He probably established his capital city on the east bank of the Brahmaputra.<sup>34</sup> The earlier Sultans had their administrative centre probably on the east bank of the Sitalakhya, at a village known as Kasba\* and the residence was called Qusyr Amra\*. The mint town was known as Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon, the remains of which still survive in the name of Jalalpur.

---

with a powerful army advanced. On the battlefield of Goalpara next day both sides, after marshalling their forces prepared to fight. A Salam, the translator of the Riaz, says that the place name of Sonagarh has not been identified, but it must have been close to Sonargaon. James Wise remarked that Goalpara was near Jafraganj in Dhaka district. Significantly there is one mauza named Sonagarh in Jafrabad area of the Dhaka district near the junction of the old Ganges and a branch of the Jamuna. But there is no existence of Goalpara village nearby.

33. Cunningham, ASI, XV, P. 72; IB., Volume IV, P. 41.

34. Chapter II .

- \* Kasba - ordinarily means an interior part of a country; a town; it also implies a fortified castle in charge of a commander with his forces. The town in which a castle stood in early days was considered to be a chief town of a district or a pargana or mahal, which was the smallest subdivision of a district. It was often the centre of defence and also the governor's residence. The Kasba developed in the Maghribs in the 12th century A.D. EI, volume IV, (New edition, 1978), P. 684.
- \* Qusyr Amra - a Qasr or Qusayr or Kasr - a place or castle or mansion of an Amir or provincial ruler. It is also a pavilion in which sense it is synonymous with the Turkish Kushk. The word occurs in the Quran three times. Once in the singular and twice in the plural (Kusur) and is applied twice to castles on earth and once to the abodes of the faithful in Paradise. It is a common word for the palace of king or of a governor in the chief city of a province having artificial reservoir, hamman, caravansarai. It is usually surrounded by large enclosure of bricks having semi cylindrical buttresses built alternately inside and outside the wall, e.g., Kasri Khudjar or the palace of the Khadjars near Tehran, Kasr Kabir in Morocco and Al-Kasr at Saghir in Morocco; Kasr-i-Shirin in Persian Kurdistan and Kusyr Amra in Jordan. EI, Volume-IV (New edition, 1978), P. 728.

Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah probably established his capital city within the natural protection of rivers. It was protected by the Brahmaputra on the west, the Pankhiraj, the Arial Khan and the Gayra Sunda on the north, and the Meghna and the Menikhali on the east and the south. Within such natural protection there were also moats that surrounded the capital.

On the east bank of the Brahmaputra and on the north of the Menikhali, there was the site of the palace area. It is now known as Bhita Azampur, a part of which is known as Sultan Bhita or the residence of the Sultan. The gate of this palace area was on the west known as Sharan Duar or memorial gateway. A natural Khal or creek protected this area on the north. This side was connected with the original capital city and mint town Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon by the Jalalpur bridge. This bridge was on the creek that flowed from Baidyer Bazar and surrounded the city area of Azampur on three sides, the fourth side being protected by the Brahmaputra. Most probably the present Painam bridge is on the original site of the Jalalpur bridge.\*

---

\* 'Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon' was one of the mint town of early Sultans of Bengal. it was known as Sonargaon mint town, where the residence of the representatives of the Sultans of Pandua or Gaur was located. At present there are villages with such names as Hazratpur and Jalalpur on the north western part of the Jalalpur bridge presently known as Painam bridge. A Khal also flows from jalalpur via Hazratpur upto the present Painam village. So it seems probable that the combined names of these two villages at Sonargaon was the area of 'Hazrat Jalal sonargaon; Originally the Pankhiraj Khal divided the city area from the area on the north.

Painam village became prominent during the British period, where a cloth trading centre grew up under the influential Zamindars. The painam bridge came to be known by the trade centre Painam and thereafter Jalalpur lost its importance.

The fort was located on the southern side of the palace area. The second moat separated the Jami mosque, the madrasa and the big pond from the palace area. These were on the north of the Menikhali river. The palace area of the capital could be approached by water route from any side. Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, the builder of the capital city of Sonargaon became very popular for his piety, love of art and poetry. The famous Muslim Faqih Alaul Huq graced his court. He was the teacher of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah and father of Azam Khan and Nur Qutb Alam. Nur Qutb Alam also rose to eminence as a famous saint of Bengal in the 15th century.\* His brother Azam Khan was a commander of the troops and later a Wazir or Khan Jahan<sup>35</sup> probably of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah.<sup>36</sup> There were two Khan jahans \* in the court of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, namely (i) Yahya

- 
- \* Qadi Ahmad, son of Alaul, mentioned in the Birbhum inscription ( S. Ahmad IB-IV, P. 71) of Barbak Shah was the most celebrated Moulana of Dhaka. In memory of this great saint, a mosque was built at Birbhum in 1463 A.D. Alaul Huq and his son Nur Qutb Alam became famous in Bengal as saints in 14th and 15th centuries. Alam's elder brother was Azam Khan who also bore the title of Khan Jahan in the court of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah of Pandua. Ahmed of the inscription was the son of Alaul. Can he be identified with Ahmed of the Pandua inscription?
35. Martin, History & Antiquity, Volume II, P. 624; referred from the manuscript procured from Dinajpur by F. Buchhanon Hamilton (Calcutta, 1809), P. 22; A. Karim, Ibid, P. 501; S. Mukhopadhyaya, Banglar Itihasher Duso Bactar (Calcutta, 1980), 3rd edition, P. 38 and 66.
36. Tadhkiratul Awliya-i-Hind, Part II, P. 32, Muhammad Enamul Haq, Allistory of Sufism in Bengal, (Dhaka, 1975), P. 172; S. Mukhopadhyaya, Ibid, P. 38.
- \* Khan al Azam ulugh Mukhlis Khan, Khan Jahan, Ulugh Muazzam Dinar Khan, Ulugh Khan jahan and Khwaja Jahan etc. were the titles of wazirs and chief wazirs under Sultan Sikandar Shah, Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad shah and Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah respectively. As one Khan jahan of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam shah was Yahya who died in 1411 A.D. and another Khan jahan was Azam Khan. The Khan-al-Azam Khan Jahan of Bagerhat inscription is the only probable person who can be identified the chief wazir or Khan al Azam Khan Jahan of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. He is thus the same person as the wazir of Pandua, brother of Nur Qutb Alam and son of Alaul Haq. He died in 1459 A.D. Khan al Azam Khan Jahan and Ulugh Khan imply similar meaning, i.e. chief wazir. The Ghagra inscription of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah has a reference of one Ulugh Khan (Jahan) who can be identified with Ulugh Khan Jahan of Bagerhat inscription of the same Sultan.

son of Arab Shah and (ii) Azam Khan son of Alaul Haq. Khan Jahan was the title of wazirs of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. Yahya died in 814 A.H./1411 A.D. Nothing is known about the fate of Azam Khan. This Azam Khan had a chance to be in the court of the Tughlaq Sultans of Delhi.<sup>37</sup> However, with the help of this Khan Jahan, Ghiyasuddin probably retained the southern part of Bengal under his control. Probably in this area of Bengal under Ilyas Shah and Sikander Shah was located the mint town named Shahr-i-nau.

Literally Shahr-i-nau means a new town. Bagerhat area is in south Bengal and a newly habitated area under Ilyas Shah. As such, the new town that grew up could well be called the Shahr-i-nau. After two decades

---

37. Akhbar al Akhyar, referred to by Dr. Sukhumoy Mukhopadhyaya/<sup>in</sup> Banglar Itihas Duso Bachar (Calcutta, 1980) P. 66; H. Blochman, Geography and History of Bengal, JASB, (Calcutta, 1873) Part I, No. 3, P. 262. Regarding Azam Khan's presence in the Delhi court it is less probable that he was a Khan Jahan of Sultan Feroz Shah Tughlaq. His father Sheikh Alaul Haq reached Bengal sometimes in 743 A.H. Azam Khan was a commander of troops and a Khan Jahan of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. Khan Jahan Yahya died in 1411 A.D. and nothing is known about the other (Sukhamoy, PP. 73-75). If it is assumed that the second Khan Jahan was the Chief wazir entitled Khan al Azam Khan Jahan who died in 1459 A.D. at Bagerhat, it is too early for him to have become Khan Jahan within the period of 1351-1388 A.D. when Khan Jahan Maqbul (died in 774 A.H./1372 A.D.) and his son Joonah Shah became Khan Jahan in the Tughlaq court. Rather it is possible that he visited the Delhi court as a delegate of the Bengal Sultan when he became acquainted with the Tughlaqian architectural style of Delhi (IB., II, P. 109). Of course, one Khan Jahan of the Delhi court left Delhi in 1388 A.D. and his destination is not known. (HI, Volume II, Afif, P. 304; Firishta, P. 264).

this Shahr-i-nau was probably renamed as Jannatabad\* by Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. This name was reused by Sultan Barbak Shah after a lapse of 50 years. Within this period, the area appears to have cut itself adrift from the control of the Gaur Sultans. However, after Ghiyasuddin, Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah established his mint town at Fathabad which was on the border area of Bagerhat. Subsequently Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah came to power and he was ruling that remote area without using Shahr-i-nau as his mint town. When Barbak Shah succeeded to the throne, Jannatabad again came into prominence as a mint town. The inscriptional records of Bagerhat in south Bengal provide us a date of the demise of one Khan al Azam Khan Jahan in 863 A.H./1459 A.D. In the inscriptions this Khan Jahan has been mentioned in different way such as Khan al Azam Khan Jahan and Ulugh Khan Jahan both meaning the same. It appears that he settled in South Bengal, sometimes in the early 15th century and lived there until his death in 1459 A.D. He ruled this area without owing any formal allegiance to any Sultan, but seems to have never issued coins in his own name. As there is no mention of the Sultan's name in this inscription, it is generally thought that he owed no allegiance to any body. It is difficult to explain why he did not issue coins in his own name while owing allegiance to no sovereign ruler of his time.

---

\* Literally Shahr-i-nau means a new habitation area. The place is not yet identified. Historical reference testify that Sultan Ilyas Shah established himself in south Bengal for the first time in 743 A.H. That part was known as 'Navya Vikasika' or newly arisen delta area. If he had established a town there it is likely that it came to be known as 'Shahr-i-nau'. Most probably the present Bagerhat area was inhabited before 1449 A.D. and as such, the mint town established by Ilyas Shah could rightly be called 'Shahr-i-nau'. This mint was used by Sultan Sikandar Shah also. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah used the mint Jannatabad. This Jannatabad may be identified with its earlier name of shahr-i-nau, which was reused by Barbak Shah. His control over that area is evident from the inscription of Masjidbari Mosque dated 1465 A.D. Moreover, after the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, Sultan Jalaluddin established his mint 'Fathabad' near Faridpur on the opposite bank of the river Kumar, a branch of the bordering Bagerhat. In the same area another mint known Khalifatabad appears to have flourished in the 16th century (A. Karim, Corpus, P. 118).



As to the identity of this Khan Jahan Satish Chandra Mitra<sup>37a</sup> held the view that Sultan Mahmud Tughlaq, the grandson of Firoj Shah Tughlaq of Delhi had a wazir named Malik Sarwar, a eunuch, holding the title of Khwaja Jahan. He established a semi-independent kingdom at Jaunpur in 1394 A.D. According to Prof. Mitra, Khwaja Jahan was a powerful ruler who earned the lofty title of 'Malik-us Sharq' or the Lord of the East from Sultan Mahmud Shah of Delhi. Being a eunuch and childless he adopted one Ibrahim as his son and abdicated his throne in his favour in his old age and proceeded to the east to propagate Islam. Eventually he came to Bagerhat with his large followers and established a township. He even built a mosque at Dhaka, where an inscription identifies him as Khwaja Jahan, which he built during the reign of Mahmud Shah, the Tughlaq Sultan of Delhi. Prof. Mitra, therefore, identified Malik Sarwar Khwaja Jahan with Khan Jahan of Bagerhat. The glory of the rare and noble example of prince Gautama's Great Renunciation of the World for the salvation of mankind, misplaced on Khwaja Jahan of Jaunpur is too good to be true. It is a good fiction but bad history. As a matter of fact Malik Sarwar Khwaja Jahan of Jaunpur died in 1399 A.D. and was succeeded by his adopted son Malik Qaranful and later by Ibrahim Shah in 1402 A.D. Ibrahim was the younger brother of Qaranful. In this connection, the findings of the following eminent historians are pertinent to the point.

According to Ishwari Prasad,<sup>37b</sup> "Khwaja Jahan, whose real name was Sarwar, was a eunuch, who had attained to high position by sheer dint of merit. The title of Khwaja Jahan was conferred upon him in 1389, and he was

---

37a. S.C. Mitra, Jessore-Khulnar Itihash, (Calcutta, 1983, 3rd edition), PP. 311-318.

37b. Ishwari Prasad, A Short History of Muslim Rule in India, (Allahabad, 1939), P. 141.

elevated to the rank of Wazir". Later on he received from Mahmud Tughlaq of Delhi in 1394 the title of 'Malik-us-Sharq' or the Lord of the East, and the administration of the area from Kanauj to Bihar was entrusted to him. He even declared himself independent and assumed the title of 'Atabak-i-Azam'.

Sir Wolseley Haig<sup>37c</sup> observes, "The eunuch Malik Sarwar Khvaja Jahan, having, as minister, placed on the throne of Delhi, in March 1393, Nasir-uddin Mahmud, son of Muhammad and grandson of Feruz Tughlaq, and suppressed the Hindu rebellions in the Gangetic Doab and Oudh, threw off his allegiance to Delhi, and established himself at Jaunpur. He extended his authority not only over Oudh, but also over the Gangetic Doab as far west as Koil and, on the east, into Tirhut and Bihar. His advance in this direction alarmed the king of Bengal, who propitiated him with tribute of elephants, due under the treaty with Feruz Tughlaq, to the king of Delhi, who was no longer strong enough to assert his claim to the tribute or to resent its diversion to Jaunpur.

Khvaja Jahan sent no aid to Delhi when it was attacked by Timur, and it is not recorded that he paid any attention to the invaders. He died in 1399, leaving his dominions intact to his adopted son, Malik Qaranful, who adopted royal style of Mubarak Shah and struck coin and caused the khutba to be recited in his name .... He died suddenly in 1402, and was succeeded by his younger brother who ascended the throne under the title of Shamsuddin Ibrahim Shah".

On the basis of all these sources Satis Chandra Mitra's view does not stand.

---

37c. The Cambridge History of India, Volume III, Edited by Sir Wolseley Haig, (Delhi, 1958), P. 251.

Now the apparent anomaly may be explained in the following way : Khan al Azam Khan Jahan of Sultan Ghiyasuddin's court at Pandua was the elder brother of Nur Qutb Alam of Pandua. Ghiyasuddin was killed by Raja Ganesh and Saituddin was installed on the throne of Pandua by the Raja. The role of Nur Qutb Alam was obscure in this regard. We find his name associated with contemporary politics only when Raja Ganesh himself took the leadership and became the ruler of Bengal. As long as Saifuddin Hamza Shah, Shamsuddin Bayezid Shah and Alauddin were ruling the country he was silent. The saint might even not have been in favour of Ghiyasuddin's rule. From Muzaffer Shams Balkhi's<sup>38</sup> letter it appears that Ghiyasuddin was a liberal Muslim ruler for which some Hindu nobles taking advantage of his liberality became very powerful in his court. This growing influence of the Hindus was detected by the Muslim saints of the time. They warned the Sultan to be aware of the idolators, who might try to usurp power. Nur Qutb Alam might be one of these saints who also enjoyed the confidence of the Sultan. Sheikh Nur Qutb Alam was more saintly than his brother Azam Khan. Once he was rebuked by Azam Khan for his orthodoxy.<sup>39</sup> As Azam Khan was more worldly than his brother Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah probably preferred him to Sheikh Nur Qutb Alam. The sultan appointed Azam Khan as his chief wazir, entitled Khan al Azam Khan Jahan. When the Sultan was killed by Raja Ganesh, Azam Khan felt insecure to stay at Pandua anymore and therefore, quietly left the place. But Nur Qutb Alam, on the otherhand, continued to remain in Pandua as he had no cause to apprehend danger from the killer of Sultan Ghiyasuddin. On the contrary the dominating influence of his saintly personality was apt to create fear in and command respect, from the Raja who once, as will be seen, fell on the feet of the Sheikh in utter helplessness.

38. H. Ashkari, Correspondence of the two 14th century Saints (Proceedings of the 19th session of Indian history Congress, 1956), P. 206-224; S. Mukhopadhyaya, Banglar Itihaser Duso Bachhar, P. 20.

39. M. Enamul Haq. A History of Sufiism in Bengal(Dhaka, 1971), P. 175; Sukhamoy Mukhopadhyaya, Ibid, P. 66.

Sheikh Nur Qutb Alam, however, was silent till the Raja attempted to usurp the throne for himself, but when he did make such an attempt the Sheikh invited the Sharqi ruler of Jaunpur to invade Bengal and punish the Raja. As the usurper submitted to the Sheikh, he interceded with the Sharqi ruler whereupon he turned back to Jaunpur. The Raja's son Jadu was converted to Islam and renamed Jalaluddin in fulfilment of his stipulation with the saint who eventually ruled the country under the guidance of the Sheikh. It would appear, therefore, that the dominating influence of the Sheikh on the royal court was instrumental in installing Jalaluddin to the throne of Pandua. His rule extended upto the border of Bagerhat. What happened to Khan al Azam Khan Jahan, the brother of this powerful Sheikh, meanwhile, is not precisely known.

Most probably he then residing at Bagerhat, was not disturbed by Jalaluddin due to his respect for Nur Qutb Alam as he was the brother of his religious leader. Khan Jahan himself was also a reputed saint, a social and political leader who carved out principality in south Bengal. He ruled an extensive jungle territory in the south undisturbed without apparently owing allegiance to anyone except to the scions of the house of Ilyas Shah. But although he did not owe allegiance formally to Jalaluddin he tacitly did so, which is apparent from his abstinence in minting coin in his own name or arrogating to himself any sovereign title - the two prerogatives of an independent king. This means that he was quite conscious of the peculiar situation. If he minted coin, he would have to court trouble and as such, he preferred to avoid conflict with the Sultan.

We know that Khan al Azam Khan Jahan was at Pandua when Ghiyasuddin Azam was killed by Raja Ganesh.<sup>40</sup> Due to the sudden death of the Sultan anarchy and confusion broke out in Pandua. Muslim nobles and Hindu courtiers equally took part in the prevailing political turmoil. Probably to avoid the political anarchy at the capital Khan Jahan fled to southern Bengal in 1411 A.D. and established himself at Bagerhat. But at the same time he discreetly avoided attracting attention of any quarter. He tried to live peacefully and as such he did not

Khan Jahan was followed by other saints and faqirs who also left the court and supported the cause of the family of Ilyas Shah. Thus a township grew up in south Bengal in early 15th century which remained beyond the control of the house of Raja Ganesh. Later on Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah was installed on the throne of Gaur and the interrupted house of Ilyas was restored. Khan Jahan became the Ulugh Khan Jahan of the new Sultan. The last title is evident from the inscriptions of Ghagra and Bagerhat dated 1456 and 1459 respectively. Ulugh Khan Jahan died in 1459. Although it is generally believed that the unclaimed marshy forest land of the dreaded Sundarbans was not colonized before the time of Khan Jahan, the probable existence of the mint town of Shahr-i-nau or Jannatabad proves that this part was inhabited earlier. This also gets support by a recent report where it is stated, "it is possible that this area had been settled previously, but at the time Khan Jahan arrived the region had completely reverted to Jungles".<sup>41</sup> Thus the hypothesis that Ilyas Shah, Sikandar Shah and Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah ruled over South Bengal, appears to be true. It is most likely that the area lapsed into dense forest during the period of turmoil at Gaur and again came to prominence in late 15th century after the ascendancy of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah in 1441 A.D.

The early life of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and his whereabouts is not known. Jalaluddin's son Ahmad Shah was killed by his nobles Sadi Khan and Nasir Khan.<sup>42</sup>

---

40. Salam, Riazus Salatin, 85; Sukhamoy, Banglar Itihaser Duso Bachar, (Calcutta, 1980), P. 74.

41. Unesco Report, (Paris, 1983), P. 75.

42. S. Mukhapadhyaya, Banglar Itihasa Duso Bachar, (Calcutta, 1980), P.2. The Qasba mosque of Gauranadi is said to have been built by Sabi Khan. Dr. Dani mentions him as Mughal thandar; but the architectural features

Nasir Khan in his turn was killed and one Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, belonging to the house of Ilyas Shah, was brought from an obscure area and installed on the throne of Gaur.<sup>43</sup> After ascending the throne of Gaur he took the title of 'Khalifatullah bil Hujjatul Burhan'. This title was assumed by him only to forestall any claim from the family of Jalaluddin Muhammad. This clearly indicates that he was aware of the title of Khalifatullah used by Jalaluddin. This awareness was most probably, due to his constant touch with Khan Jahan and his presence in his court at Bagerhat. Khan Jahan was an ardent supporter of the house of Ilyas Shah, as he was in the court of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. As such he was not a supporter of Jalaluddin and his family. Firishta relates that Nasiruddin was a descendant of Ilyas Shah.<sup>44</sup> During the rule of Raja Ganesh and his family he faded out in history and engaged himself in agricultural pursuits.

Bagerhat was mainly an agricultural area. If Khan Jahan of Bagerhat would have been the master of the area, it was possible for Mahmud Shah to be with him and engage himself in agricultural farming. Nasiruddin Mahmud's association with Khan Jahan made him aware of the political development in Gaur.

---

of the mosque clearly show its pre-Mughal origin. This mosque belongs to the group of Bagerhat monuments. One Sadi Khan<sup>was</sup> probably a supporter of the house of Ilyas Shah. He established Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah on the throne of Gaur. If he was a follower of Khan Jahan of Bagerhat, with whom Mahmud Shah lived, he might have settled in the new habitation area of Bakerganj in the 15th century. This Sadi Khan's name could very well have been Corrupted in course of time as 'Sadi Khan' by the local people.

43. S. Mukhapadhyaya, Banglar Itihaser Duso Bachar (Calcutta, 1980), P. 3 referred from Firishta; A. Karim, Ibid, P. 312.

44. Ibid, P. 3.

It may be inferred, therefore, that Khan Jahan of Ghiyasuddin's court was the same person as that of the Bagerhat inscription. Azam Khan, entitled Khan al Azam Khan Jahan, the elder brother of Nur Qutb Alam of Pandua was undoubtedly a dynamic figure.

The inscriptional records of Dhaka (863/1459) and that of Mymensingh (856/1452) belonging to the period of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah refer to Khawaja Jahan and Ulugh Khan Jahan. These two titles, if attributed to Ulugh Khan Jahan and Khan al Azam Khan Jahan of Bagerhat inscription, we may conclude that Ulugh Khan Jahan was Wazir of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah. These inscriptions implicitly indicate that Khan Jahan owed allegiance to Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and that is why no coin was issued by him. Azam Khan, being Khan al Azam Khan Jahan of Ghiyasuddin's court, courted self exile during the usurpers rule and afterwards again served under Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah in the same capacity with title of Ulugh Khan Jahan. Moreover, in his early life he was in the Tughlaq Sultan's court at Delhi. Bagerhat inscription mentions his name with the words, "Entakalul Eid al Zaifal Muhtadh" which clearly indicates his old age. This supports the local tradition that he died at an extreme old age of 150 years.<sup>45</sup> If he lived even over 100 years it was possible for him to be in Delhi, Sonargaon, Pandua and Bagerhat. Finally he settled (at Bagerhat) and died in 1459 A.D.

Khan al Azam Khan Jahan and Ulugh Khan Jahan (Azam Khan) was the son of saint Alaul Hoque. He is believed to have originated from Turkish

---

45. S. Ahmed; IB, Vol. IV, Rajshahi 1960, P. 65.

stock.<sup>46</sup> He had no children but reared up Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah. Thus Khan al Azam Khan Jahan of Sultan Ghiyasuddin's court and Khan al Azam Jahan and Ulugh Khan Jahan of Bagerhat inscriptions seems to be the same person. The mystery surrounding this great man may largely be lifted if the inscription, believed to be fixed in the mortuary chamber of the present tomb, could be deciphered and published. The inscriptional records of Dhaka and Ghagra may also throw additional light on it.

As an independent ruler of Sonargaon Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah minted coins from Sonargaon and Satgaon in his own name. He became renowned within the country and abroad and sent emissaries to China and Makkah and corresponded with the great Persian poet Hafiz. This made his father proud of him but for the treachery of his step-mother, Sikander became envious of his son which eventually prompted Ghiyasuddin to revolt against his father. Both the armies met at Goalpara on the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna near Sonargaon. A severe battle was fought and Sikander Shah was mortally wounded and killed in the battle field. Anguish gripped Ghiyasuddin at this tragic incident. However, with the unexpected turn of event he immediately proceeded to Pandua and ascended the throne after entrusting the formalities of burial to his trusted nobles and family members. His absence from Sonargaon for unavoidable circumstances indicate unambiguously that the act of burial of Sikandar Shah took place at

46. Some authors maintain that Khan Jahan of Bagerhat was of a Turkish stock (Report of UNESCO, 1983) as they thought the title to be his name. But actually this was his title and his name was Azam Khan. His father Alaul Huq hailed from the Quaraishi tribe of Makkah and belonged to the branch of Khalid bin Walid. (Blochman, JASB, XL 11, 1873, P. 261). As such, Khan al Azam Khan Jahan of Bagerhat was not of a Turkish stock. Moreover most of the Muslim of that time were referred by local people as Turushka, implying Muslim. Jalaluddin Mahmud Shah was referred by a poet as a converted Turushka or Muslim. It does not mean the Turkish origin (S. Mukhapadhyaya, PP. 116-117 footnote, 'Sangit Siromoni'). Of course 'Ulugh' is a Turkish word and it was regarded as the highest title of a wazir.



Sonargaon and not at Pandua. But where was Sikandar buried? According to Rigzus Salatin, Sikandar was buried in a chamber located at the back of the Adina mosque. But the structure seems to be an afterthought and not a tomb. After the construction of the mosque, the chamber of the upper storey was built for the Sultan. This chamber, resting on a raised platform, was probably meant for the Sultan's temporary resting place or for brief official business before he addressed the public in the mosque. It may also have been built for easy access to its top from the back of an elephant. There was no grave inside the structure.

After the extraordinary circumstance under which Sikandar died at Sonargaon, Ghiyasuddin hurried to Pandua for consolidation of his authority and wait for an opportune moment for carrying the deadbody from Sonargaon to Pandua. But Ghiyasuddin had no time even for the burial of his father and therefore, left the function of burial at Sonargaon in the hands of his nobles and family members. Besides, the attributed tomb of Ghiyasuddin at Sonargaon is built with materials specially <sup>quarried</sup> from distant Rajmahal hill for the purpose. It is built of high quality black basalt, not quarried from Assam, Tipera or Chhota Nagpur hill but specially imported from Rajmahal. Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah was the ruler of the area and since he built the tomb, it goes by his name. If this presumption is accepted that Sikandar was buried at Sonargaon, the question arises where Ghiyasuddin is lying buried?

As there is no inscription either at Sonargaon or <sup>at</sup> Pandua, the question remains open. In our quest to locate the possible place of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah's tomb we may analyse the circumstance under which he breathed his last at Pandua.

Ghiyasuddin was killed by Raja Ganesh at Pandua. As he died an unnatural death it is unlikely that his body was carried to Sonargaon for burial by the usurper or by Saifuddin Hamza Shah, the new ruler. Saifuddin was placed on the throne by the Raja. Under the circumstances, the possibility cannot be ruled out that he was laid to rest in some *unidentified* place at Pandua.

Circumstances, therefore, do not suggest at all the possibility of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah's burial at Sonargaon. On the contrary it is most likely that he was buried at Pandua. The Eklakhi tomb of Pandua is generally attributed to Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah where he lies buried.<sup>47</sup> Since that tomb bears no inscription, the attribution needs examination.

Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah was a great builder and was a great lover of art and calligraphy. His calligraphic specimen was even found in terracotta bricks. He probably established the port city of Pandua, renamed it Muhammada-bad,<sup>48</sup> and adorned it with mosques and other public buildings. One of the mosques in the mahalla of Sheikh Mohan in Pandua or old Malda was built by one of his high official named Malik Mohan. The name of this man was found in a terracotta inscription preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Again Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah had a general who was his Khan Jahan at Pandua. This Khan Jahan was also a great builder, who erected a large number of monuments in South Bengal bearing the architectural features of the Eklakhi Mausoleum.

- 
47. Riazus Salatin, Eng. tr. P. 118; Dani, MAB, P. 48-85, maintains the view that Sultan Jalaluddin is lying buried in the Eklakhi mausoleum built by him.
48. H. Khatun, Muhammadabad, Itihash Patrika(Itihash Parishad, Dhaka, 1987),P.113.

The Eklakhi is characterised by its curvilinear cornice, huge dome resting on a low collar, octagonal corner towers and profuse terracotta decoration. Except elaborate terracotta decorative scheme, the other distinguishing features of the Eklakhi tomb were emulated by Khan Jahan in South Bengal.

If the Eklakhi was built during the life-time of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, its idea could be carried by Khan Jahan to South Bengal. Then it is also probable that Ghiyasuddin is buried in the Eklakhi mausoleum which he himself had built during his lifetime.

We know that the Eklakhi mausoleum is the finest specimen of the blending of Hindu-Muslim art tradition of Bengal. The promotion of a cordial relationship between the two communities necessary for such a fusion was absent during Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah as he was a convert Muslim who persecuted the Hindus; Under his intolerant rule peaceful co-existence and working together were less probable than that of the earlier period.

On the contrary Ghiyasuddin had a large number of Muslim nobles and Hindu courtiers who lived in peaceful harmony in the country. As such it was more probable that under him the Eklakhi was built. Again, after the burial of his father at Sonargaon, a befitting tomb was needed for himself. The above arguments however, altogether preclude the possibility of Jalaluddin being entombed in the Eklakhi tomb. Though Riazus Salatin ascribes a tomb with a big tower at Pandua to Jalaluddin, the tomb has not been specified there. Moreover, the architectural remains of Gaur on the bank of the Jalali tank identify some graves to Jalaluddin and others. Can these be regarded as the ruins of the tomb of Jalaluddin? This contention may be solved by fresh evidence in future.

Though the calligraphic writings in terracotta mentioned above is out of scope of the present study it bears some relevance to this issue. "The terracotta plaques (4 in number) were brought from Gaur, each 7 inches in height and 6 inches broad giving the name Ghiyasuddin". Though the date is indistinct of which only 700 could be deciphered, the place name in it has been mentioned as Muhammadabad. The style of writing is Naskh and the language is Arabic. Following is the reading of the plaques :

1. The Prophet, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, has said .....
2. In the reign of Ghiyathud Duniya Abu Muzaffar.
3. The exalted, the generous, the humble slave Malik Mohan on the 2nd.
4. Of the month of Muharram, in the year seven hundred ..... Muhammadabad.

Cunningham is of opinion that the number of bricks were more in number and were yet to be traced for its full meaning.

The name Muhammadabad recorded in the inscription is significant as a mint town of Jalaluddin Fateh Shah (1481-86). Regarding its identification, it was argued that as there was one Muhammadpur in Jessore, and a pargana with the name Muhammad Shahi also in Jessore-Khulna-Khalifatabad area<sup>49</sup> Muhammadabad might have been located somewhere there.

But the plaques bearing the name of Muhammadabad were found at Gaur. The period was sometime between 700 and 799 A.H. As Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah was the only ruler with this name ruling in Pandua, the period could be fixed in between 772 to 799 A.H.

---

49. Dani, MAB (Dhaka, 1962), P. 206.

Though the writings did not mention any type of monument on which these were fixed, but the inscription at the beginning of the first brick indicates that it belonged either to a mosque or to a tomb at Muhammadabad. It implies that Muhammadabad was somewhere in Gaur. The monument from which the terracotta plaques were taken was built by Malik Mohan under Ghiyasuddin. But who was Mohan ?

There is one Sheikh Mohan or Sank Mohan or Sak Mohan mahallah in old Malda.<sup>49a</sup> The town of old Malda or Pandua being situated on the eastern bank of the Mahananda, opposite to its junction with the Kalindi, which was formerly an important feeder stream of the Ganges, it commanded a very important position. It is about 13 miles north of the citadel of Gaur and 4 miles from the Civil Station of English Bazar. The houses are mostly built of bricks quarried from the surrounding ruins which clearly indicate the former extent of the old town which probably rose to prosperity as a port city of the Muslim capital at Pandua. The town must have been in a flourishing condition as early as in the first quarter of the 15th century. It was a Caravansarai under Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah.

It seems that it flourished under Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah under whom Malik Mohan was an officer. If Sheikh Mohan or Shan Mohan after whom the mahalla was named, was Malik Mohan of Ghiyasuddin's court, he was the builder of the monument sometime between 722 and 799 A.H. as both the names indicate the same personality. As the find spot of the inscription was Gaur and the person mentioned in it was a famous Malik and builder of a monument bearing the name of Ghiyasuddin, this was the probable place of Muhammadabad.

---

49a. S. Ahmed, IB, P. 121.

At the same place of Malda there was a mosque built by Sheikh Faqir Muhammad son of Sheikh Baba, the enclosure of which was built during the reign of Sultan Yusuf Shah in 1465 A.D.

From the above discussion, it may be presumed that the terracotta plaques of the Calcutta Museum were procured from old Malda which was a prosperous city under Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, the ruler of Pandua in the late 14th century or early 15th century A.D. The mosque was built by Sheikh Mohan during the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin. Even today the people of Malda town cherish the old name.

After the death of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah<sup>50</sup> Saifuddin Hamza Shah (1409-1410), Shihabuddin Bayezid Shah (1411-1413) and Alauddin Feroz Shah (1413-14)<sup>51</sup> ruled at Gaur and had their seat of government at Mu'zamabad. But the architectural activities were mostly confined to Gaur only.

Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah :

Raja Ganesh also had his court at Gaur. His son Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah's supremacy over Dhaka and Faridpur is evident from his mosque at Mandra (29)<sup>52</sup> in Manikganj on the bank of the Ganges and his mint town at Fatehabad. His mint town has been identified with the southern part of Faridpur.<sup>53</sup> Jalaluddin is credited with the erection of a mosque, a reservoir, the Jalali tank and a caravansarai at Gaur.<sup>54</sup>

There is a tank, known as Jalali tank at Gaur on the bank of which and behind the Qadam Rasul there are graves attributed to Jalaluddin and others. Although it is extremely difficult to precisely identify the location of Sultan Jalaluddin's grave but the tradition of the locality and its existence on the bank of the Jalali tank are very significant.

50. Riazus Salatin, Bengali trans, P. 122.

51. HB., volume II, P. 116.

52. S. Ahmad IB., volume IV, P. 45.

53. Survey Report of 1857, Survey of Bangladesh, Dhaka.

54. Riazus Salatin, Beng.tr., 118; IB., II, P. 125.

Ahmad Shah :

On the death of Jalaluddin (835 A.H./1431 A.D.) his son Ahmad Shah ascended the throne of Gaur. He ruled only for three years. The six-domed mosque of Mohzompur is attributed to him by Rahman Ali Taish<sup>55</sup> and Stapleton.<sup>56</sup> The mosque was built by the side of the tomb of Baba Shah Langar.<sup>57</sup> Ahmad Shah was killed by Sadi Khan and Nasir Khan in about 1442 A.D.<sup>58</sup> the two noblemen of his court who installed Nasiruddin Mahmud, a descendant of Ilyas Shah to the throne of Gaur. This indicates that the nobles were supporters of the House of Ilyas Shah.<sup>59</sup>

Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah :

On his accession to the throne Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah assumed the title of "Khalifa tullah bil Hujjatul Burhan". This was most probably adopted in protest to Jalaluddin Muhammad's assuming the title of "Khalifatullah". by adding 'Hujjatul Burhan' he in fact asserted his own legal inheritance.

Nasiruddin Mahmud lived in obscurity for many years when he engaged himself in cultivation.<sup>60</sup> Most probably he was with Khan Jahan of Bagerhat and lived there under his guidance. The eastern administrative centre of the new Sultan was at Mu'zamabad which he probably renamed after his own name as

---

55. R.A. Taish, Tawarikh-i-Dhaka, (Dhaka, 1910) P. 218.

56. A. Hossain, Notes on Antiquities of Dhaka, (Dhaka, 1910) P.55.  
But architectural style and decoration fit it to the late 16th century A.D. The ruler is named Masnad Shahi Ahmad Shah. Isa Khan is also mentioned in his cannon as Masnad Shahi, Isa Khan.

57. S. Mukhopadhyaya, Banglar Itihaser Duso Bachar, (Calcutta, 1980) P. 176; Perween Hasan, Eight Sultanate Mosques of Dhaka, UNESCO Publication, Paris, 1984, P. 185.

58. HB., II, Ibid, P. 129.

59. Ibid footnote, P. 130.

60. John Briggs, Translation of Firishta's Gulshan-i-Ibrahim's volume II, P.579 referred by S. Mukhopadhyaya, Banglar Itihaser Duso Bachar, P.3; HB., II, P. 130.

Mahmudabad.<sup>61</sup> The mosque of Chagra in the newly extended territory of Mahmudabad on the north was a Jami mosque. This is located within five miles of Pakundia in Kishoreganj where later the fort of Isa Khan at Egarasindhur stood. The original mosque has disappeared and the present mosque stands on its ruins. As the inscription<sup>62</sup> refers it to be a Jami mosque it is likely that it was a big mosque.<sup>63</sup> This place was as important as Dhamrai, suitable for a naval base.

Although South Bengal was within the jurisdiction of the Sultan of Bengal, it was not directly ruled by the ruler of Gaur until the death of Ahmad Shah.\*

Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah was a great builder. He renovated the gateway of Mubarakabad<sup>64</sup> and reconstructed the mosque at Churihatta.<sup>65</sup> His mosques at Barisal, Faridpur, Dhaka and Mymensingh clearly indicate his sovereignty over a vast area. During his rule his Wazir Ulugh Khan Jahan of Bagerhat also built a large number of mosques, public buildings and dug many sweet water tanks.<sup>66</sup> He died in 1459 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Barbak Shah.

61. S. Ahmed, *Ibid*, P. 121; The name of Iklīm Mu'zamabad is in the inscription along with Mahmudabad. No ruler other than Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud is mentioned with Mahmud in history of Bengal until the date of the inscription. Normally historical places were named after the name of the Sultan or Malik. As such it is likely that the Iklīm Mu'zamabad was renamed Mahmudabad by Sultan Mahmud Shah. There is a village Muhamadabad (Mahmudi) within mauza Mu'zamabad on the north of Mogradpara and Mohzompur. Mauza Muzamabad was probably the site of Mu'zamabad or Mahmudabad, the administrative centre of the Iklīm.

62. S. Ahmad, *Ibid*, P. 54.

63. *Ibid*, P. 54. It was probably a three domed mosque.

\* It was ruled from Pandua under Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. Then it remained virtually independent under Jalaluddin and Shamsuddin Ahmad Shah but was brought under the Sultan of Gaur again during the reign of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah.

64. S. Ahmad, *Ibid*, P. 62.

65. *Ibid*, P. 62.

66. *IB.*, *Ibid*, P. 132. If the frontier town of Iklīm Mubarakabad extended upto Bagerhat in 1459, it was included within Iklīm Mu'zamabad of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, i.e. the region of Sonargaon. Sir Jadunath Sarkar agrees with this view when he says, "The 'Iqlīm Mubarakabad' in whose frontier town (Hadd) the local governor repaired a gate in 1459, is probably to be located in the "Sarkar Bazuha" of the AIN east of the Brahmaputra, where in Sylhet the Muslim hold, established early in the 14th century, appears to have been continuous".



Barbak Shah :

Barbak Shah enforced his authority(1459-1474 A.D.) over Gaur, Satgaon and Sonargaon. Like his father he was also a great builder.

The most interesting inscription<sup>67</sup> of his time from a monument at Birbhum gives us the earliest reference to Dhaka. Dhaka is mentioned as a 'special town' whose collector was Tarbiat Khan. The town existed in 1460 A.D.. when it was probably ruled by a Qazi who was the son of a certain Qazi Ahmad, son of Sheikh Alaul. Thus the Qazi of Dhaka in 1460 was the grandson of Sheikh Alaul Haq; Ahmad was the name of Nur Qutb Alam.<sup>68</sup>

Sheikh Nur Qutb Alam is generally renowned as a saint only but this inscription proves that he was also a Qazi and his son was the Qazi of Dhaka under Sultan Barbak Shah.

Yusuf Shah :

Yusuf Shah(1474-1481 A.D.), son of Barbak Shah was also a famous ruler of Gaur. His eastern administrative centre was at Mu'zamabad. An inscription of an unidentified mosque near Dhaka built in 885 A.H./1480 A.D. records the name of the builder as Khakan Muazzam.<sup>69</sup> The inscription on an old mosque at Yusufganj near Dhaka is now missing. It is likely that the village and the mosque were named after him. His other mosque in this part of Bengal, is at Sylhet.<sup>70</sup>

Jalaluddin Fateh Shah :

Yusuf Shah was succeeded by Sikandar but he was killed by Jalaluddin Feteah Shah(1481-87) brother of Barbak Shah and son of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah.<sup>71</sup> His architectural activities in Sonargaon clearly testify to his control over the territory.

67. S. Ahmad, Ibid, P. 71.

68. The inscription of the tomb of Alaul Haq, dated 1572 gives the name. S. Ahmad, Ibid, P. 253.

One Baba Salih of Bandar was a high official of this area.\* The Sultan and built a number of mosques at Bandar, Mograpara, Dhamrai/Rampal. The Hajiganj mosque and the fort at Narayanganj overlooking the Sitalakhya was in existence during the Sultani period. The existence of Bandar fort, Hajiganj fort and Dhamrai naval base indicate that Dhaka was a protected town in the late fifteenth century.<sup>72</sup>

Sultan Jalaluddin Fateh Shah's rule was followed by a short period of six years tyrannical rule of the Habshi palace guards. The name of the Abyssinian rulers are Barbak Shah, Saifuddin Feroz, Nasiruddin Mahmud II and Sidi Badar. They played an insignificant role in the eastern and south eastern area of Bengal.

#### Husain Shah :

The Husain Shahi rule was a great relief to the people after a tyrannical period of the Habshi rulers. The enlightened rulers of the Husain Shahi dynasty brought peace and prosperity to the country who apart from patronizing various cultural activities, encouraged building activities within the kingdom. Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah completed the annexation of north-western and north-eastern Mymensingh and Sylhet including Kamrup, Kamta and Assam.

69. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 108.

70. Ibid, P. 109.

71. IIB., II, PP. 136-137.

\* Baba Saleh was the governor of Sonargaon for twenty years beginning from Jalaluddin Fateh Shah to Sultan Husain Shah. It is believed that Baba Adam a renowned saint conquered Rampal and was killed by Ballal Sen at the beginning of the Muslim conquest of Bengal. He is still revered as a holy man in this area. Likewise Baba Langar of Mohzompur, Baba Kashmiri of Atiya were also renowned saints. Their tombs are all located in important outposts of the region. This indicates that saints were known as Baba or great.

72. Chapter VII.

Inscriptional record shows that Sylhet was conquered in 1303 A.D.<sup>73</sup> but it is also evident from an inscription on a mosque in Sylhet built in 1505 by Khalis Khan, the keeper of wardrobe and commander-in-chief that it was within the iklim Mu'zamabad.<sup>74</sup> The north eastern part of Mymensingh i.e. "Hasht Gamarian" or Astagram was conquered in 1512<sup>75</sup> while the north west of Mymensingh was brought under control in 1487 A.D.<sup>76</sup> Traditionally however, it is believed that Garhjaripa was conquered by one Sikandar who established his supremacy here earlier than Sheikh Kamal who came to Sherpur in 1503 A.D. His alleged tomb is still lying on the bank of the Brahmaputra. This tradition however has little historical foundation. A member of the family of Sikandar who died in 1545 might have settled in Garhjaripa and granted jagir land to Sheikh Kamal in 1503 A.D.<sup>77</sup> The nearby mosque alleged to have been erected by him, was named 'Kasba mosque'. The ruined monument was beautifully embellished with intricate terracotta floral scrolls.

An inscription on the Tribeni Mosque of Jafar Khan Ghazi commemorates the erection of a bridge and a mosque during the reign of Husain Shah.<sup>78</sup> The bridge was built by one Ulugh Khan in 912 A.H./1506 A.D. while the mosque was built by Ulugh Majlis-i-Ikhtiar, Rukan-ud-Din Rukn Khan son of Alauddin Sirhat.<sup>79</sup> The date of the inscription is missing. Both Arabic and Persian Language have been used in the text.

Again the inscription of 'Hasht Gamarian' mentions the name of one Rukn Khan, who was with the Sultan while conquering Kamrup, Kamta, Jajnagar and Orissa and was credited with the conquest of 'Hasht Gamarian' or Astagram in 918 A.H./1512 A.D.

73. S. Ahmad, Ibid, P. 25.

74. Ibid, P. 169.

75. Ibid, P. 25.

76. Ibid, P. 134.

77. Ibid, P. 135.

78. S. Ahmad, Ibid, P. 25.

79. S. Ahmad, Ibid, P. 169.

As these two names are of the same period and are associated with the name of Sultan Husain Shah it appears that Rukn Khan was a trusted nobleman in the court of the Sultan who rose to eminence by dint of his talent. His father was Alauddin of Sylhet who traced his heritage to a noble origin of the area.

Husain Shah was a great builder. Some of the notable architectural remains of his time in the eastern and south eastern Bengal may briefly be noted here :

1. The Jami mosque of Harirampur, Manikganj, 1501 A.D.
2. Mosque at Azimnagar, Manikganj built by a Baba Salih in 1504 A.D.
3. Mosque at Bandar, built by Baba Saleh(1505).
4. ✓ Tomb at Bandar, built by Baba Saleh(1506).
5. Mosque at Sonargaon, built by Khawas Khan(1513).
6. Mosque of Goaldi, Baidyer Bazar, built by Hizar Akbar Khan(1519).
7. Mosque at Dhamrai(1516).
8. Tomb of Baba Kashmiri at Atia in Tangail, built in(1507).
9. An unidentified monument of Rukn Khan of 1512 A.D.
10. Mosque of Sylhet built by Khalis Khan.
11. Mosque of Pathrail, attributed to Husain Shah.
12. Shankar Pasha Mosque of Sylhet.

#### Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah :

Husain Shah's son Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah conquered Chittagong and built several monuments there. He was the governor of Khalifatabad and minted coins from there during the lifetime of his father. This is the area of modern Bagerhat which was colonized by Khan Jahan, in early 15th century A.D.<sup>80</sup>

80. A. Karim, Banglar Itihash (Dhaka, 1977) P. 406; Corpus, P. 118.

During his reign, Babur, the founder of Mughal dynasty invaded India in 1526 A.D. As a result the Lodhi Amirs and Afghan nobles ousted from Delhi sought shelter under him. In response he allowed some of the Afghans to settle in Bengal.

Alauddin Feroz Shah and Mahmud Shah :

After the death of Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah his son Alauddin Feroz Shah ascended the throne of Gaur but soon he was killed by his uncle Mahmud Shah in 1533 A.D. Mahmud Shah occupied the throne only for a brief period. The rise of the formidable Afghan Chief Sher Shah Sur ended the Husain Shahi dynasty in 1538 A.D. by defeating its last ruler Mahmud Shah.

b. Sonargaon under the Afghan rule :

Sher Shah was the first Suri ruler of Delhi who appointed Khizir Khan as his governor of the newly conquered province of Bengal.

Khizir Khan married the daughter of Mahmud Shah and showed rebellious attitude. As a result Sher Khan appointed one Qazi as the Amin of Bengal and divided the country into several Jagirs or units<sup>81</sup> each unit being placed under one chief.<sup>82</sup>

This period was one of turmoil and uncertainty. The rise of one Barbak Shah (1442-43) in Mymensing and Sylhet indicates that the entire eastern Bengal was not conquered by Sher Shah.<sup>83</sup> Khizirpur in sonargaon as the name suggests, might have been the administrative headquarters of Khizir Khan.

---

81. HB., II, P. 164; Riazus Salatin, Bengali tr., P. 144; Tarafdar, Husain Shahi Bengal, P. 88.

82. HB., II, P. 177.

83. HB., II, P. 174.

During the lifetime of Islam Shah Sur (1553 A.D.) one Shamsuddin Muhammad Sur was the governor of Bengal. His brother Jalal Shah Sur ruled until 1563. One Sulaiman married his daughter. The family was ousted by Taj Khan Karrani. But Taj Khan died in 1565 and Sulaiman Karrani became the ruler of Bengal. His supremacy over Sonargaon is evident from his coins and inscriptions.<sup>84</sup>

Daud was the last ruler of the Karrani dynasty in Bengal. He was attacked and defeated by the Mughal general Munim Khan in 1575 at the battle of Tukaroi. A contingent of the Mughal army was also sent under Beg Murad to Sonargaon, Faridpur and Barisal.

As the administrative centre was shifted from Sonargaon to Khizirpur in Dhaka in late fifteenth century, Beg Murad was at Dhaka. He constructed two forts on either side of the Dulai Khal at the point where it bifurcated near Sutrapur.<sup>85</sup>

The death of Munim Khan the Mughal General, disheartened the Mughals but with the arrival of Khan-i-Jahan his successor, the imperial Mughal army again defeated Daud at Rajmahal in 1576 and killed him there.<sup>86</sup> This ended the independent Afghan Sultanate in Bengal.

But as soon as Murad Khan left the Shah Bardi at Sonargaon and reached Gaur, the Mughal fleet at Sonargaon was defeated by Isa Khan, the Chief of the 'Bara Bhuiyans' of Bengal.

84. S. Ahmed, IB., IV, (Rajshahi, 1960), P. 250.

85. Mirza Nathan, Baharistan-i-Gaibi, Eng. tr. by Borah (Gauhati, 1936), Part I, P. 116.

86. IB II, P. 194.

c. The rule of Isa Khan and his family

The defeat of the Afghans at Tukharoi was only the dejure annexation of Bengal by the Mughal emperor Akbar, but the actual imposition of imperial peace and orderly Mughal administration in Bengal was still a far cry.<sup>87</sup> At that time, Bengal particularly the eastern part of it, had become a land of adventure and romance. One of such adventurers who came to Bengal was Kalidas Gajdani a Bais Rajput converted to Islam under the name of Sulaiman Khan, who carved out an independent principality in the Bhati region comprising the north-eastern portion of Dhaka and Mymensing districts. His royal pretensions provoked Islam Shah to send Taj and Dariya Khan to suppress him. They tracked him to his inaccessible base and forced him to submit after hard fighting. Sulaiman could not long remain quiet; the fertility and wealth of Bengal again bred ambitious designs in his brain, whereupon Taj and Dariya Khan returned at the head of an army, treacherously murdered him at a private interview, and made an example of him by selling his sons Isa and Ismail to Turani merchants.<sup>88</sup>

Sulaiman married the daughter of Jalal Shah, an Afghan chief and independent ruler of Bengal who died in 1563 A.D. The family was ousted by Taj Khan Karrani in 1564 A.D. The area that Sulaiman ruled was beyond the control of Sur dynasty. As we know that the far-eastern corner of Bengal comprising the stretch of the country between the Brahmaputra and the Surma, known in popular parlance as Bhati, was outside the pale of Sher Shah's authority.

---

87. IB., Vol. II, P. 193.

88. IB., Vol. II, PP.177-178. In those days Iranian merchants in Chittagong port used to buy local boys and sell them as slaves in other countries. They were called Turanian also. One such merchant was Shihabuddin (From accounts of Barbosa).

A chief named Barbak Shah, son of Humayun Shah struck coins in his own name and exercised independent sway. If the find-spots of the coins can be taken as an index to the jurisdiction of his rule, eastern Mymensing and Sylhet were not then included within the ambit of his territory.<sup>89</sup> It seems, therefore, that Sulaiman overtook the territory of Barbak Shah and was dethroned and killed by Taj Khan Karrani. The appearance of his son Isa Khan in history in 1573 A.D. indicates that he was in possession of the domain of his father before the fall of the karrani rulers of Bengal. As soon as the rise of Daud was noised abroad, Isa Khan, Zamindar, who is here heard for the first time, lost no time in engaging him. As a result Shah Bardi left Sonargaon for Gaur.<sup>90</sup>

The petty Zamindars of Sonargaon as elsewhere in Bengal after the memorable battle of Tukharoi in 1576, formed a confederacy under the chief Zamindar Isa Khan. He is popularly known as Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala or Masnad-i-Ali.<sup>91</sup> In Akbar namah he is called Merzban-i-Bhati, i.e. landlord of Bhati.<sup>92</sup> An inscription found in Sylhet and now preserved in the National Museum, Dhaka records the name of one Fath Khan with the title of Masnad-i-Ali, dated 1588 A.D. One Fateh Khan is referred to in the Rajmala as the Zamindar of Taraf, the eastern part of Sylhet.<sup>93</sup> Another inscription of Sonargaon without definite date refer to one Masnad-Shahi Ahmad Shah. We know that one Afghan chief named Barbak Shah son of Humayn Shah ruled in the eastern part of Dhaka and Mymensingh. It is very much likely that these titles were assumed by some Muslim chiefs belonging to the confederacy of Isa Khan.

89. IB., Vol.11, P. 174; IMC., vol.11, P. 38, P.182; Bengal, past and present Vol. XXXV July, 1929, P. 18.

90. N.K. Bhattasali, Bengal Past and Present, Bengal Chief's struggle for independence, XXXVI, 1928, P. 40.

91. Ibid, P. 46. But the cannon preserved in the National Museum, Bangladesh mentions him as Isa Khan, masnad Shahi. This is an indication of his belonging to the house of masnad Shahi, ruling in Sonargaon.

92. Taifur, referred from Akharamana, S.M. Taifur, Glimpses of Old Dhaka, (Dhaka, 1956, 2nd edition), P. 92.

93. Bhattasali, Ibid, P. 46.



The main centre of Isa Khan was at Sarail.<sup>94</sup> Khan-i-Jahan, the Mughal viceroy attacked Sarail and Joanshahi in 1576 A.D. and defeated Isa Khan. Later Isa Khan collected a large army which was reinforced by Majlish Qutub of Astagram (Joanshahi) Majlish Delwar of Baniachang and Anar Manikya of Tippera and drove the Mughal fleet and army from Sarail and took shelter in Egarsindhur. But a fresh Mughal detachment from Dhaka again defeated Isa Khan and demolished the fort of Egarsindhur.

Khan-i-Jahan was succeeded by Muzaffar Khan Turbati. He failed to complete the subjugation of Isa Khan. In the meantime a rebellion broke out in his camp and the viceroy was killed. Mirza Hakim declared himself emperor of Delhi and Baba Qaqshal was announced as the viceroy of Bengal. Masum Khan Kabuli took the post of Wakil or regent plenipotentiary on behalf of the absentee Hakim. Masum Kabuli fixed Chatmohar as his headquarters where an inscription refers him as Sultan-e-Ali.<sup>95</sup> With some unexpected turn of events Mirza Hakim fled to the hills of Kabul and the rebels in Bengal remained active till the arrival of Shahbaz Khan in 1584.

Masum Kabuli eventually allied himself with Isa Khan of Bhati who organised a united resistance against the Mughals with the chief of Bhawal, Joanshahi, Baniachang, Taraf, Bokainagar, Chandpratap, Sarail, Sreepur, Vikrampur, Chatmohar, Khalsi and Fathabad. His fortified residence was at Katrabhu on the east bank of the Sitalakhya river. Isa even strengthened his forts of Egarsindhur, Khizirpur, Qadamrasul and Bandar. On assuming the Governorship of Bengal Shahbaz Khan chased Masum Kabuli who took refuge in Isa Khan's territory.

---

94. IB., Vol.II, P. 43.

95. Taufur, Glimpses of Old Dhaka, (Dhaka, 1956), P. 101.

"Shahbaz Khan followed up his success by entering Isa Khan's entrenched position at Vikrampur. He tried to force Isa Khan to fulfil his promise of surrendering Masum Kabuli whom he was harbouring". "Advancing by way of Khizirpur (one mile north of Narayanganj) the Mughal viceroy took possession of Sonargaon and plundered Katrabhu, the home of Isa Khan "a populous city" and then marching up the Lakhia river to its point of junction with the Brahmaputra, took Egarsindur, and established a fortified base at Tok, opposite Egarsindur and on the western bank of the Brahmaputra. Isa Khan, who had come back from Kuch Bihar, and Masum Kabuli faced him, and there were daily skirmishes on land and water. A weak detachment sent by Shahbaz under Tarsun Khan to make a demonstration against Bajitpur was surprised by the enemy and cut off; Tarsun was captured, wounded and beheaded".<sup>96</sup>

"For seven months Shahbaz Khan lay at Tok, in the bend formed by the Lakhia, the Brahmaputra and the Banar rivers. He sent to Isa Khan demanding either the surrender or the expulsion of Masum Kabuli, but the ruler of Bhati only gained time by delusive promises. Shahbaz Khan's inordinate pride alienated all people, his officers too practised violence; hence the rebellion flamed up again. Then came the floods. One dark night the Afghans cut the embankment of the Brahmaputra in 15 places, so that Shahbaz's camp and batteries were submerged. After a stubborn fight he just managed to beat this attack off. Isa Khan next made a prisoner of Sayyid Husain the imperial thanadar of Dacca and proposed terms through him. Shahbaz Khan fell to Bhawal, half way on the road to Dacca. The negotiations were again broken off and a battle took place on 30th September, 1584, in which Shahbaz on being deserted by his discontented

---

96. HB., Vol.II, PP.203-204.

and envious subordinates was forced to leave Bhawal and retreat towards Tanda, abandoning all his accumulations and many of his men as prisoners".<sup>97</sup>

Isa Khan prudently stayed at home while Masum advanced to Sherpur in Bogra. Akbar on learning the failure of Shahbaz Khan in Bhati, sent strong bailiffs to urge his Bengal and Bihar officers to act in close concert and put Isa Khan down. The combined force of Sadiq Khan and Wazir Khan was sent against Masum Kabuli who was defeated and forced to take flight again in Bhati.

The delay in subjugation of Isa Khan aroused confusion in the mind of emperor Akbar. He rearranged the administration and sent Shahbaz Khan to Bihar and Sadiq Khan to Bengal. Shahbaz left Bengal in anger and Sadiq found the situation very difficult. This situation encouraged Isa Khan to put off his actual submission but "he prudently sent to Akbar the elephants and guns that had fallen to his hands during the late disaster of Shahbaz Khan".<sup>98</sup>

So Shahbaz had to reappear again in Bengal in 1586 when Isa Khan shifted his capital to Sonargaon keeping some of his family members at Katrabhu with Masum Kabuli. Masum Kabuli died there in 1586 A.D. Ralph Fitch visited his capital in that year. In his writings it is stated that "Sonargaon was a town six leagues (i.e. 18 miles) from Sereepore, the chief of these countries was called Isa Can and he was the chief of all other kings." Isa Khan built a fort at Khizirpur.<sup>99</sup> Shahbaz Khan followed a policy of conciliation. Isa Khan also had no longer the heart to fight and made peace by restoring the territory which Sadiq Khan had surrendered to him previously. Meanwhile Usman Khan, nephew of Qutlu Khan Iohani of Orissa, once settled in Fathabad, after plundering Satgaon took shelter in Bhati under Isa Khan. Usman settled himself at Bokainagar in Mymensingh.

---

97. HB., II, PP. 203-204.

98. HB., II, P. 205.

99. R. Fitch, Travels ed. by Riley and also by Foster (London, 1921), PP.99-153.

After the appointment of Man Singh as the viceroy of Mughal Bengal in 1595, Kedar Rai of Bhushna was ousted from his fortified base and, therefore, he also joined Isa Khan. The illness of the viceroy tempted the combined force of the Chiefs of Bhati to attack the camp of the Mughal army. But they had to retreat at the fall of river level as they were only strong in river battles during the rainy season.<sup>100</sup> Very soon Man Singh recovered and sent a vast army and fleet under his son Himmat Singh. His approach drove the chiefs of Bhati to remote jungles and he plundered their territories freely. This success of Himmat Singh was mainly due to the absence of Isa Khan who during this time was out to help his friend Raghudev against the Koch Raja i.e. Lakshmi Narayan. As soon as Isa Khan hastened back to his territory Man Singh attacked Raghudev and forced him to submit. But no sooner Mansingh returned to his capital Raghudev captured some portions of Koch Bihar but was dislodged soon after. Then Man Singh sent his son Durjan Singh against Isa Khan as he went out to help Raghudev against the Mughals. But Isa Khan and his combined force returned to Bhati and surrounded the Mughal force near Katrabhu and slew Durjan Singh and many of his troops and took some prisoners. "Isa Khan however, thought it wiser to make peace; he set the prisoners free, gave up his attack on Lakshmi Narayan and offered submission to the emperor".<sup>101</sup>

100. N.K. Bhattasali, JASB., An inquiry into the Origin of the city of Dacca (1939, article No.18), P. 447 Akbarnama, translated by Beveridge, Vol.III, P. 1063; HB., II, P. 212.

101. HB., Vol. II, P. 212.

In Abbnama, III, "we are told more than once of his making submission and sending presents. But he was never really subdued and his swamps and creeks enabled him to preserve his independence as effectively as the Arawally Hills protected Rana Pratap of Udaipur" (JASB 1904, P.61). Traditionally it is said that Raja Man Singh besieged the fort of Egarsindhur. Isa Khan came out to challenge the Raja in a single combat whereupon the Raja accepted the challenge but at the first encounter he lost his sword. Isa Khan offered his own sword. At this the Raja became so much pleased that he embraced Isa Khan and they became good friends. It is also said that to win over Isa Khan, emperor Akbar had awarded him with 22 parganas in Dacca, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Pabna, Bogra and Tippera districts with the title of Masnad-i-Ala. No evidence, however is available in Akbarnama about this incident but these names are available in local balads and modern gazettes of Mymensingh. (Taifur's Glimpses of Bengal, 2nd edi. P. 91-92. N.K. Bhattasali mentioned Isa Khan with the title of Masnad-i-Ali. But the inscribed cannon in the National Museum Dhaka mentions him as Isa Khan Masnad Shahi).

Isa Khan died in September, 1599 leaving his son Musa to continue the struggle against the Mughals. As Man Singh was absent from Bengal, Usman along with his allies rose in revolt and advanced upto Sherpur-Atia. But the re-arrival of Man Singh drove them back. They retreated with heavy loss. Next year, Man Singh marched to Dhaka and induced Kedar Rai, the Zamindar of Sripur (South Dacca) to promise loyalty to Akbar.<sup>102</sup>

As Usman again rose in revolt and drove the Mughal thanadar of Mymensingh to Bhawal, "Man Singh hurried from Dacca to Bhawal in one day and night and attacked usman on the bank of the Banar river. Many pathans were slain and much booty in the form of boats and artillery obtained by the victorious Rajah. After re-establishing this outpost Man Singh returned to Dacca (about February, 1602) and sent a detachment across the Ichamati against Musa Khan and Kedar Rai and their allies".<sup>103</sup> After a desperate struggle, both of them were forced to retreat to Khizirpur fort. Daud and other Pathans retreated to Sonargaon. In an opportune moment Kedar Rai joined the Maghs with his own powerful fleet and attacked the Mughal outpost at Srinagar near Vikrampur. A great battle was fought in which Kedar Rai was wounded and captured but died before he reached Man Singh. Many Portuguese pirates and Bengali sailors in his service were killed, "After this Man Singh started from his base at Bhawal against the Magh Rajah who fled away to his own country. Back at Bhawal once again, Man Singh turned his military preparation against Usman".<sup>104</sup> After a heavy fighting Usman fled to Sylhet, the area of Bayzid Karrani. There he established himself at 'Uhar'.<sup>105</sup> Some architectural remains of the Afghans still survive in the area. Later on Usman was killed in March, 1612 in the battle of Dawlambapur but his body was

---

102. IB., II, P. 213.

103. IB., Vol. II, P. 214.

104. IB., Vol. II, P. 215.

105. IB., Vol. II, P. 241.

carried to Uhar and buried in a secluded spot between two hills, while a false tomb was prepared in the yard of his palace. Although the site of his grave is locally known as the Big Bungalow, no trace of it survive at the place now.

Musa Khan, the daring leader of the confederacy of the Zamindars of this "fabled land of gold" once against strongly united against the Mughals. He continued his father's policy of hostility, "Only with this difference that while Isa Khan professed lip-deep obedience to the Mughal Emperor Musa Khan cast off such outward professions of loyalty and openly fought for his independence as long as he could".<sup>106</sup> The centre of his authority was on the strategic region of south eastern part of the original Dhaka district where the present Dhaleswari, the Sitalakhya and the Meghna met. His fort of Khizirpur stood on the west bank of the Sitalakhya near the confluence of the original Dulai river. On the east bank of the Sitalakhya stood Katrabhu, his family residence. Another outpost named Qadam Rasul stood on the same side, opposite Narayanganj. Sonargaon was the capital city and was strongly fortified. It also served as an important port. The most important outpost of Musa Khan was at Jatrapur on the south-west of Dhaka along the bank of the Hilsamari, a branch of the original course of the Ichhamati. It commanded the course of the Padma towards Bhati.<sup>107</sup>

The struggle between Musa Khan and the Mughal army intensified with the arrival of Islam Khan the new Subadar of Bengal under Emperor Jahangir. The stubborn Subadar with his admiral Ihtimam Khan set out for an expedition against Musa Khan and his allies, namely Mirza Mumin, son of Masum Kabuli of

---

106. IB., Vol. II, P. 238.

107. Ibid.

Chatmohar, Usman of Bokainagar, Dariya Khan son of Khan Alam Bahbudi and Madhu Ray of Khalsi, Binod Roy the Zamindar of Chandpratap; Majlis Qutub of Fathabad; Raja Satrajit son of Mukunda of Bhushna; Bayezid Karrani of Sylhet; Bahadur Ghazi of Bhawal; Sona Ghazi of Sarail, Pahlowan of Matang and Anwar Khan of Baniachang-both on land and water. In courage and military strength Musa Khan was equal to none among of his confederates. Realizing this the Subadar sent an advance force direct to Dhaka, "Situating close to Musa Khan's capital and other fortified posts, so as to distract the attention of Musa Khan and weaken his defence by compelling him to fight on two fronts at the same time. The Mughal army entrenched themselves on the bank of the Padma near its confluence with Dhaleswari and Ichhamati, probably near Jafraiganj. The army of Musa Khan was then stationed at Jatrapur. The Mughal fleet tried to cross the Ichhamati near Jatrapur but Musa's army stubbornly defended the fort. Musa at one stage had to hasten to Jatrapur and strengthen his defence by the construction of a strong mud fort at Dakchhara".<sup>108</sup> But all his efforts ended in failure. After a month long heavy fighting the Mughal army succeeded in dislodging Musa Khan from his entrenched position where upon he retreated to his capital with a loss of confidence, men and war boats. The Subahdar at last reached Dhaka in 1608 A.D.

The last stronghold of Musa Khan at Sonargaon fell to the Mughals after repeated attempts. Thereafter he fell back on his fortified posts on the eastern bank of the Sitalakhya river. From the north these were : Cheura under the Ghazis, Katrahu under Daud, Demra post under Mahaul Khan, and Qadam Rasul under Abulullah. His capital Sonargaon was under Shamsuddin Bagdadi, while he himself defended Bandar. The outposts of Sripur and Vikrampur remained virtually unprotected and

---

108. Baharistan, Eng.tr. Vol. II, P. 628.

the fort of Khizirpur was evacuated by him earlier. The Mughals used it as their base against all these above mentioned strongholds. Musa had to surrender ultimately in 1611 A.D.<sup>109</sup> With the fall of Musa ended the struggle for independence of Bhati.

---

109. Ibid.



CHAPTER - V

ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE MUSLIM MONUMENTS OF SONARGAON

The Muslims erected their first edifice in the desert of Arabia which was devoid of any architectural merit. Their gradual expansion to territories in all directions of the world enabled them to absorb various architectural styles and designs for their own need. They borrowed freely from countries they overran, possessing higher civilizations, and eventually evolved a uniform architectural style of their own which is generally familiar as Islamic. Adoption and tolerance are the two major behaviours or characteristics of the Muslims in a society in the newly conquered territories. The combined traits found expression in diversified social customs in the community of the Muslims which form the basis of a Pan-Islamic concept. This is unity in diversity. Similar expression is identifiable in Islamic architecture as well.

The Muslims of different regions of the world have evolved different styles and designs of architecture of their own largely determined by the varied climate, geography, indigenous architectural tradition and above all, the available building materials. But inspite of that there is a basic uniformity of certain architectural features common throughout the Islamic World, such as the arch, the dome, the minaret, and the mihrab; these uniform features were fundamentally based on the building traditions of western and central Asia

In the Indian subcontinent the Islamic building tradition initially flowed from Syria and Iraq and through the Seljuks of the Anatolian highlands and later, a strong Persian undertone dominated.

Here again, they used their technical tradition and crystalised the architectural features mentioned above, largely depending on locally available building materials, craftsmen and the climatic conditions of different regions. These regional conditions invariably determined the evolution of regional styles, varying from country to country. This explains why we find various architectural styles in the Punjab, in Gujrat, in Jaunpur and in Bengal.

The Muslims ruled Bengal for more than five centuries during which they bequeathed to the land an impressive series of monuments of various character. This was dictated by the deltaic character of the country. Present Bangladesh is a new political entity created by a long historical process and constitutes the major part of old Bengal. Sonargaon belongs to this part. It is the largest delta in the world and truly a gift of some mightiest rivers such as the Brahmaputra, the Padma and the Meghna which, together with their countless tributaries, sweep across the vast basin in a bewildering network of channels and streams. These rivers, acting as arteries, are largely responsible for shaping the destiny of the land and its people. The gift of the rivers enriches the land and sustains a teeming population virtually without any mechanical aid. Seldom anywhere in Asia has nature bestowed her bounties so generously as in this land. The fertile alluvial plains roll out into a vast sea of lush green crop-fields which stretch for miles after miles to the distant horizon. Its colourful hills in the borderland, cut up by numerous deep gorges, open valleys and hill streams, are densely covered with evergreen virgin forests glowing

with the most gorgeous colours of nature throughout the varying seasons of the year. But the same rivers which enrich the land with their life giving fertility, however, have constantly shifted their course to an unknown elsewhere. It is in this shifting or changing process that many affluent settlements and noble historical monuments have been engulfed. The rivers are, therefore, sources of both joy and sorrow to the people and the land. It has been the factors of climate and geography, more than anything else, that have shaped architecture and the way of life in this remote eastern land.

The land being essentially deltaic in character a rich deposit of soft alluvium is left annually by the receding flood waters of numerous rivers. This soft clay, a cheap but excellent plastic medium, is readily available for abundant manufacture of bricks, <sup>which</sup> explains why the brick has been the chief building material to dominate the traditional architecture of Bengal throughout all ages, to supplement the rarity of stone in the country. Together with this, certain indigenous building materials, abundantly available in this region like timber, bamboo, cane and reed, have greatly influenced the evolution of a distinctive curvature of the roof and its conice or eave which are carried across its facade in a series of parallel curves in the form of a bow. This typical architectural style, indigenous to this land, is evidently derived from a bamboo framework, adopted to throw off heavy monsoon rain. Thatched huts with similar form are still common in most parts of rural Bangladesh. Such features as the sloping roof and curved eave could only be the result of long experience of building in timber and bamboo. Nevertheless this indigenous building style, often translated in masonry form, is invested with a freshness and spontaneity, characteristic of a rural people keenly aware of the elements of a nature affecting their daily life, and is evidently the outcome of an ingenious but practical mind.

While explaining the constructional method of these rural huts, James Fergusson<sup>1</sup> observed "..... that the roofs of the huts in Bengal are formed of two rectangular frames of bambus, perfectly flat and rectangular when formed, but when lifted from the ground and fitted to the substructure they are bent so that the elasticity of the bambu, resisting the flexure, keeps all the fastenings in a state of tension, which makes a singularly firm roof out of very frail materials. To the European eye this curvilinear form always remains unpleasing, to the native eye - Hindu or Muhammadan - it is the most elegant of modern inventions". In whatever way we judge its merit this distinctive form profoundly influenced the architectural elements on the buildings erected in Delhi in the 17th century, and in Lahore and Rajputana in the 18th century.

Brick masonry has relatively greater advantage over the stonework in flexibility, being composed of small units and, therefore, offers greater constructional possibilities. But the early builders found it difficult to bridge gaps of roofs, doorways and other openings which invariably were spanned by the highly unsatisfactory archaic corbelling system. True arch and vault, carried over a series of voussoirs or laying bricks or stones on their edges instead of laying flat, was first introduced in the sub-continent by the Muslims around 1200 A.D. It seems incredible why this improved technique of bridging a gap, invented in Egypt about 5000 years back and extensively employed by the Romans during the first three centuries of the Christian era, did not find its favourable place in the pre-muslim building art in India. Is it because of the innate conservativeness of the indigenous builders or their lack of confidence on the efficacy of the new technique ?

---

1. Fergusson, History of Indian and Eastern Architecture, Volume II, (London, 1876 ), P. 159.

The main stream of civilization and developed pattern of life seem to have remained virtually unaffected in this land by various other material changes, affecting the country in thousands of years. In Bengal the numerous cluster of villages formed the bed-rock of society that largely depended on agriculture and cottage industries. The development of art and architecture in the land have been therefore, profoundly influenced by the rural agricultural society who eked out their living from the soil. The decorative treatment of their edifices with terracotta art is likewise the result of their living style. In response to their political, defensive and administrative necessities, however, various city-centres sprang up either on the bank of important rivers or on prominent high ways, to which flocked the myriads of villagers producing agricultural products and so their wealth played the role of an affluent hinterland. Small or large cities, some of which are referred to in the epigraphic and literacy records, were the seats of government officials, various strata of noblemen, courtiers, industrialists, traders, their minions and a host of industrial labours. Some of the prominent urban centres about which glowing accounts are available before the Muslim conquest are - Kotivarsa (Bangarh) in Dinajpur, Pundranagara in Bogra, the port-city of Tamralipti in Hugli, Lakshmanavati (Gaur) in Maldah, Panchanagari in Dinajpur, Pushkarna, Kripur, Navadwipa, Rampal near Dhaka, Ramavati near Gaur, Karnasuvarna in Murshidabad, Vijoypur in Rajshahi, Saptagrama, Suvarnagrama (Sonargaon) etc.

The cultural and social life of the country essentially revolved round the numerous villages where the greatest bulk of the population lived, including the majority of craftsmen and artists such as the weavers, painters, carpenters, potters, modellers and the like. The rural folks lived a simple life and dwelt in unpretentious mud, bamboo, wooden or thatched huts, fabricated from highly perishable indigenous building materials, which in course

of time have completely disappeared. The wealthier urban people, however, lived a life of pomp and splendour in substantial mansions, who patronized buildings of highly artistic and religious character. It is an established fact of history that in all ages and in all countries the bulk of the population concentrated in rural areas, lived in humbler dwellings of indigenous materials, whereas the buildings in the urban centres and all religious edifices in the country were raised with relatively more substantial materials, often invested with considerable artistic and architectural merits. The artistic and architectural development in any country in most cases, therefore, can only be studied from the surviving remains of the urban architecture and the religious edifices erected in different periods.

The only urban centre so far partially exposed in Bangladesh is the extensive ruins of Mahasthangarh in Bogra district, identified with the Mauryan (3rd century B.C.), the Gupta (5th-6th century A.D.) and the Pala (8th to 11th century) city site of Pundranagara. This spectacular city-ruins sprawl along the western bank of the moribund Karatoya river and, as revealed in excavation was heavily fortified by an oblong irregular rampart, about a mile long and two-third of a mile broad which was further encircled by wide moats. Beyond the fortified area, other ancient ruins fan out within a semi circle of about a five-mile radius. Limited excavation within the citadel revealed thickly packed dwelling houses of mainly three periods along the irregularly oriented streets, characteristic of all oriental ancient cities. But the heavily damaged non-descript building remains, resulting from intensive building and rebuilding activities at the site over fifteen centuries, offered no scope for a complete coherent plan or elevation of any individual building.<sup>2</sup>

---

2. Archaeological Survey Report Bangladesh, (Dhaka, 1978), pp. 33-39.

The political conquerors of Bengal were mostly of Khalji stock hailing from central Asia.<sup>3</sup> The first phase of their rule was a period of conquest and consolidation. It was characterised by rough and ready construction of buildings similar to the process followed in early muslim buildings in and around Delhi and Ajmeer where the materials as well as many other features of Hindu architecture were freely appropriated.

As Bengal was a province under the newly established Muslim Sultanaate of Delhi, its building activity was an extension of the vast Indo-Islamic architecture. Like the Muslim rulers of Delhi, the Muslim new comers in Bengal came with their developed civilisation of Islam and their rich heritage. Many of them settled down here in order to establish a new home for themselves. The carriers of this civilisation who were mostly Turks, were uprooted from their homeland in Central Asia and who were fired with the zeal of missionary spirit for the spread of Islam. These people, namely the Khaljis were strict adherents of the injunctions of the Quran and the Hadith.

When the Muslims came to Bengal as conquerors, they had already passed through a series of experimental stages and acquired a developed technique of the building art then prevalent in Western and Central Asia in the 11th and 12th centuries and synthesised it into a uniform pattern generally known as Islamic. But wherever they went they had to depend largely on the local craftsmen, artists and masons; the regional geography and climate; the social conditions and above all, the easily available building materials. These indigenous conditions, varying from country to country, invariably dictated the evolution of regional styles in architecture. At the initial stage the Muslim

---

3. Fraser Tytler, Afghanistan, (Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1962), P. 22.

victors in Bengal were busy in consolidating their newly acquired territory when, not unlike Delhi and Ajmer, they hurriedly built various types of buildings for their use from the readily appropriated building materials of the earlier Hindu-Buddhist communities. These new buildings were characterized by rough and ready constructions, reflecting the unsettled political condition of the country. It was only with the consolidation of the country and establishment of a peaceful settled government under the independent Sultans, beginning with Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah in 1338, that a definite regional style emerged in Bengal.

./ Bengal during the period from 1204 to 1338 was ruled by the Governors appointed by the Sultans of Delhi, often bearing the title of Malik who owed nominal allegiance to the central Government. No monumental work of this period has come down to us but some modest experimental buildings that still exist anticipate the building art followed later during the independent Sultans of Bengal. Gradually a new style of building construction emerged and the ruling nobility engaged themselves in extensive building activities in their cities at Lakhnauti, Chhota Pandua, Hazrat Pandua, Sonargaon and in other important places. Monumental or modest examples of their architectural remains are still found in various regions wherever they had established themselves.

∫ The second phase of the building art coincides with the Independent Sultanate of Bengal. Haji Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah, a new comer from Delhi established a rule of his own dynasty at Hazrat Pandua. He united the three regions - Lakhnauti, Satgaon and Sonargaon in 753 A.H./1342 A.D.<sup>4</sup>

---

4. HB., Vol. II, P.99.



In the beginning the administrative centres within Varendra region were at Devikot, Pandua and Ghoraghat. Muslim Chroniclers mention that Ikhtiyar Khalji built mosques, 'madrasahs' and a 'damdamah' on the ruins of earlier monuments at Devikot but no trace of any edifice definitely associated with his name has so far been discovered. He was murdered by Ali Mardan Khalji and buried there, although his grave remains yet untraced.<sup>5</sup>

The 'Damdamah' of Ikhtiyar Khalji, commonly known as Devikot is reported to be located on the "eastern bank of the Punarbhava river, 33 miles to the north-east of Pandua, 18 miles to the south-south-west of Dinajpur and 70 miles to the north-north-east of the citadel of Gaur.<sup>6</sup>

The earliest mosque at Pandua was built for Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrezi, sometimes in the early part of the 13th century A.D. It is also on record that a large number of villages, known as 'Bais-Hazari' was acquired by him. He maintained a 'madrasah', a 'langarkhana' and some other charitable endowments. The remains of his 'chilla khana', the mosque, 'langarkhana' and tomb still survive at Pandua, all of which probably were renovated in the 17th century A.D.<sup>7</sup>

The next religious leader of Pandua was Sheikh Alauddin Alaul Haq. His father was a rich man of Pandua, owning extensive landed property. Like other fortune seekers, he also hailed from West Asia and settled in the Punjab.<sup>8</sup> It is not certain whether he had any relationship with Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi of Pandua.

5. HB., Vol. II, PP. 11-14.

6. ASI., Vol. XV, PP. 95-100.

7. Muhammad Enamul Haq, History of Sufism in Bengal, (Dhaka, 1975), PP. 167-168; cited from Sekh Subhadaya.

8. HB., Ibid, Vol. II, P. 113; ASI., Cunningham, P. 95-100.

The architectural activity of Khalji Maliks was not confined to Devikot, it also extended to Lakhnauti, the capital. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji made Lakhnauti a centre of Islamic learning, which city under him became as happy an abode of Islam as the city of Delhi.<sup>9</sup> Most probably the religious leader of the then Pandua was Jalaluddin son of Jamaluddin of Ghazni.<sup>10</sup> Originally the city of Lakhnauti was situated to the south of Ballal Bari, extending from the Phulwari gate on the north to the Kotwali gate, on the south. The river Ganges (Kalindi) defined its western boundary while the river Mahananda bounded it on the east. It was probably defended by a massive mud rampart on east, beginning at the ruined tower of 'Jhar Tala' on its north-eastern corner known as the garh of 'Chandnari' where flowed a rivulet. The whole area was enclosed within an earthen rampart, protected on all sides by a deep ditch about 150 feet wide, except towards the Ganges. Under its Muslim conquerors, Lakhnauti underwent sweeping changes in order to suit the various requirements of a ruling nobility. Iwaz Khalji built more than one jami mosque and a number of 'madrasahs' and the nobles who transferred their residence to the new capital also adorned it with beautiful mansions. He further strengthened the defence of the city by building for his own residence the 'Hisar of Baskot' or Basankat. It was situated midway between the 'phulwari gate' and the kotwali gate' of Gaur. Polygonal in plan, it was encircled by a mud-wall and a ditch. It occupied a fairly large space between the city and the 'Hisar of Basankat', where in later days fought the rival armies.<sup>11</sup>

---

9. HB., Ibid, Vol. II, P. 28.

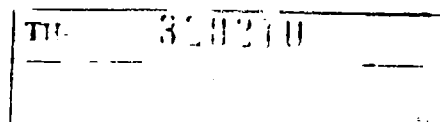
10. HB., Ibid, Vol. II, P. 21.

11. HB., Vol. II, P. 23-24.

The city of Devikot stood on an earlier city known as Bannagar, which stretched along the east bank of the Purnabhaya river. "The most magnificent work planned by 'Iwaz was the construction of a series of dykes with arched bridges to protect the city and its suburb from the annual flood. It also provided facilities for travel as Minhaj-i-Siraj testifies to different parts of the locality, formerly inaccessible during the rains except by boat. The Sultan connected the two frontier cities of Devikot (about 70 miles north-east) and Lakhnor (Nagor, in the Birbhum district, about 85 miles south, south-west) with his new capital by an unusually wide and high embanked Grand Trunk Road. There were also ferries on the Ganges on the Lakhnor side and the Mahananda and Punarbhava on the other. The total length of this highway is said to have been of ten days journey on foot, i.e., about 150 miles. It ran through a tract that previously used to be inundated every year during the rains and "the route filled up with mud swamps and morass". This highway of Iwaz survived the ravages of time and flood until the close of the nineteenth century and "formed two principal lines of communication in the country-being from 80 to 100 feet in breadth and four to five in height". Apart from the strategic and commercial importance of this royal highway, it proved also to be a real blessing to the inhabitants of a considerable part of the Sultan's kingdom as a great cross country bund that saved their home and harvest from flood a yearly calamity even now to our people".<sup>12</sup>

The important outpost of Devikot was located on the northern frontier and was connected with Lakhnauti and Lakhnor by the causeway of 'Iwaz Khalji. To the north of the ancient citadel of Devikot there still exists a walled enclosure about one thousand feet square and to further north, is a second fortified enclosure of about the same size. Both of these are surrounded by

12. IB., Vol. 11, P. 24-25.



massive earthen ramparts and broad ditches. At the north-western corner of the northern enclosure are the ruins of the shrine of Shah Bokhari, perched on the top of a high mound. Iwaz's causeway, passed eastward from this site. By the side of it and on the north bank of the Dhalla Dighi, there stands the shrine of Moulana Shah Ata, a saint of high celebrity. The eastern half of the shrine and its lower portion of the surrounding wall are built in grey granite, while the upper portion is of brick masonry. This enclosure wall has the usual 'mihrab' or prayer niche on the west. Buchanon saw four inscriptions fixed in the walls of this shrine, one of which is dated 697 A.H./1297 A.D. An earlier inscription from Gangarampur, a place only 3 miles south east of Devikot, mentions the erection of a shrine in the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah in 649 A.H./1249 A.D. built by Malik Jalaluddin Jalalul Huq Masud Shah Jani.

The tomb of Shah Ata was domed but now it is in a highly ruinous condition along with its adjacent mosque.

The mosque of Gangrampur within Devikot, was built by Shihabuddin Shihabul Huq Zafar Khan Aitigin in 1297 A.D., while his mosque at Satgaon in Tribeni was built in 1298 A.D.<sup>13</sup> The person supervising the construction of the Gangrampur mosque was an inhabitant of Multan and the builder

of Tribeni mosque was Zafar Khan himself. The madrasah, mosque and tomb of Zafar Khan at Tribeni was built with the spoils of earlier monuments which stood around the place.<sup>14</sup>

The Baraduari mosque and minar of Chhota Pandua, built around 1300 A.D. were constructed of bricks combined with stone pillars supporting their roofs.

13. He is commonly known as Zafar Khan Ghazi of Tribeni (Dani MAB, P.18).

14. S.M. Hasan, Glimpses of Muslim Art and Architecture (Dhaka, 1983), P. 134.

By this time Sonargaon was conquered and a madrasah was established there by the famous saint Sharfuddin Abu Tawwama. No remains of his madrasah today survive above the ground.

It was, however, at Gaur and Pandua, the capital of pre-Mughal Bengal, where the muslim conquerors first began their building activities. A number of cities were built and adorned with palaces, forts, monumental gateways, victory-towers, mosques and mausolea during four centuries of their rule. Curiously, however, it is not at Gaur or Pandua but at Tribeni in Ilughli District where the oldest remains of the Muslim period have survived. These are the tomb and Mosque of Zafar Khan Ghazi (1298-1313), which are largely built out of the materials taken from a Krishna temple which stood close by. The Salik mosque in Basirhat was built originally in 1305, but now extensively renovated, Afterwards the history of building style in Bengal appears to be a blank till the reign of independent Sultan Sikandar Shah (1358-89). He erected the farfamed Adina Mosque in Pandua, his capital, which is undoubtedly the most ambitious structure of its kind ever built in Eastern India. The oblong gigantic monument measures 507'-6" by 285'-6" and is almost as big as the great Mosque of Damascus (built by Al-Walid in 712 A.D.) which measures 530'-0" by 320'-0". Although the Adina Mosque is claimed to be a "Wonder of the World" it is an architectural failure. Its immense open quadrangle is bounded on its four sides by a series of endless identical archways and low squat domes with nothing to relieve the monotony of the building. Even the insignificant, two domed gateway in the west wall for the monarch and a small arched opening for the public in the middle of the east wall, added as an afterthought, only heighten the incongruity of composition. However, the royal gallery in the northern wing carried on massive but dwarf Hindu pillars over 18 bays and its several component parts and the details of decoration on carved stones are admirable.

The Eklakhi tomb in Pandua, believed to have been erected by the proselyte son of Raja Ganesh between 1414 and 1438, is one of the finest specimens of muslim architecture in Bengal. It crystalized certain regional elements of Bengal which eventually became a prototype on which many later mosques and mausolea in eastern India were modelled. Its 75'-0" sided square mortuary chamber has gently curved cornice, octagonal turrets at corners and is covered by a single large dome carried on squinch arches and further supported on stone pillars. The fabric of the brickwork is relieved with black basalt slabs appropriated from Hindu temples and further ornamented with terracotta floral scrolls. On the overhanging cornices polygonal glazed tiles were used for the first time.<sup>15</sup>

The monuments built within first 25 years of the Sultanate of Lakhnauti have not survived while the monuments built under the Mamluk rulers(1226-1297) are not identifiable except some incongruous ruins and inscriptions. Even the monuments at Tribeni, Chhota Pandua and Hazrat Pandua (1298-1398) built within hundred years of their conquest have not survived in original condition. Some of the renovated but half ruined monuments, built on the ruins of ancient monuments with the spoils of earlier ones have come down to us. But the brick built style that began to appear at the beginning of the 15th century, specially at Pandua, has survived the destructive agencies of Nature and Man. The monuments of Bagerhat within the territory of Sonargaon, following the Eklakhi style, began to appear during the independent Sultanate of Bengal. Some of them are still extant.

---

15. Dani, MAB., PP. 83-85.

The advent of the Muslims in Sonargaon in late 13th century was an important landmark in the development of architecture in Bengal. The earliest contact of the Muslims with this region has left no recognisable remains on the surface except the memory of "Narqila" of Tughril, the site of Baba Adam's last resting place and the theological institution of Abu Tawwama (late 13th century A.D.). The cultural influence of Islam in the region was gradual but definite because the conquerers settled here. Besides, the ruling nobility, belonging to various racial stocks of Central and Western Asia such as the Arabs, the Truks, the Afghans, the Persians, the Mughals and the Abyssinians who came to Bengal as conquerors, fortune seekers, traders, missionaries and the like, have left their individual marks in moulding the social and cultural life of this remote deltaic land.

7 | This was the period when the finest monuments of Sonargaon were erected. The earliest and the largest mosque of Bagerhat and the tomb of Khan Jahan belong to this period.

CHAPTER - VI

SELECTED MONUMENTS AND THEIR DESCRIPTIONS

Classification of the Monuments :

Sonargaon region is dotted with innumerable monuments of the Muslim period which may be classified broadly under two major groups :

- a) Religious and
- b) Buildings of miscellaneous order.

Religious edifices comprised of (1) mosques, (2) tombs and (3) idgahs.

Mosques :

Of the religious edifices, mosque occupies the most important place in Islam. On the basis of ground plan, the mosques of Sonargaon may be classified under different major heads, such as :

- i. Single domed;
- ii. Single domed with corridor and
- iii. Multidomed.



i. Single domed style

Most of the single domed mosques are characterised by their square sanctuary covered by a large dome, curvilinear roof, four corner towers, three arched entrances, three mihrabs and massive walls. These are embellished with terracotta decorations or carved stones and often with a combination of both. "The evolution of this type of structure was conditioned by the humid climate which played a vital role in shaping architectural style and design in Bengal".<sup>1</sup> "As Bengal is essentially deltaic in character a rich deposit of soft alluvium is left annually by the receding flood waters of innumerable rivers. This clay, a cheap but excellent plastic medium, is readily available for the abundant manufacture of bricks, which explains why the chief material for most of the monuments of Bangladesh is brick".<sup>2</sup> Thus the mosques are mostly built of, and decorated with bricks.

Some of the notable mosques that belong to this group are :

1. The mosque at Mandra 1427 A.D.
2. The mosque at Narinda 1456 A.D. Fig. 1.
3. The mosque at Churihatta or Naswalla Gulley - 1459 A.D.
4. The Singer mosque at Bagerhat (about 1459 A.D.) Fig. 2.
5. The Bibi Begni's mosque at Bagerhat (about 1459 A.D.) Fig. 3.
6. The Ron Vijoypur mosque at Bagerhat (about 1459 A.D.) Fig. 4.
7. The Chuna Khola mosque at Bagerhat (about 1459 A.D.) Fig. 5.
8. The Zinda Pir mosque, Bagerhat (about 1459 A.D.) Fig. 6.

---

1. S.M. Hasan, Pre-Mughal Monuments of Bengal(Dhaka, 1974), P. 43.

2. N. Ahmed, Discover the Monuments of Bangladesh(Dhaka, 1982), P. 34.

9. The Sona mosque, Bagerhat (about 1459 A.D.)
10. The Bara Ajina mosque, Bagerhat (about 1459 A.D.)
11. The mosque near the tomb of Khan Jahan (about 1459 A.D.) Fig. 7.
12. The mosque at Tejpur 1459 A.D.
13. The mosque at Aniar haor, Sylhet 1463 A.D.
14. The mosque of Peril 1465 A.D.
15. The mosque of Gorai 1467 A.D.
16. The mosque of Yusufganj 1480 A.D. Fig. 8. ✓
17. The mosque of Sylhet, 1474-1480 A.D.
18. The mosque of Khandkar bagh, 1482 A.D. Fig. 9. ✓
19. The mosque of Mograpara, 1484 A.D. Fig. 10. ✓
20. The mosque of Azimnagar, 1504 A.D. /
21. The mosque of Baba Salih, Bandar 1505 A.D. Fig. 11. ✓
22. The mosque of Goadi, 1519 A.D. Fig. 12. ✓
23. The mosque of Bara majlish, 1523 A.D.
24. The mosque of Shariatganj, 16th century. ✓
25. The mosque of Faqirbari, Masumabad. ✓
26. The mosque of Mai Saheba, Sherpur, Mymensingh, Fig. 13.
27. The mosque of Sulaiman Karrani, 1569 A.D., Munshiganj.

In the following description of mosques the Mandra mosque of 1427,<sup>3</sup> the Sona mosque and Bara Ajina mosque of the 15th century have been omitted as no vestige of these mosques are available.

---


3. S. Ahmed, IB IV, P. 44-45; Dhaka National Museum.

1. Mosque of Binat Bibi, 1456 A.D., Dhaka : (plate VII a)

The earliest dated single domed mosque in Dhaka is located at Narinda, built by one Musammat Bakht Binat, daughter of Marhamat. Though the present mosque has been extensively modernized, some of its original features are still traceable. It is situated on the north bank of the Dulai Khal which now has been transformed into a wide metalled road. This area originally marked the north eastern suburb of the Dhaka town under the Mughals. According to Stapleton "Just to the south (of this mosque) runs the Khal which passes Dhaka and marks the former channel of the Buriganga when the river ran into the Lakhya instead of the Dhaleswari". He further stated that beyond this Khal the area was occupied by the Mahallas of Islampur, Patuatuly, Bangla Bazar, Farashganj, Sutrapur, Ekrapur, Rukanpur and Shah Ujayalnagar.<sup>4</sup>

The reference of 'Dahakha Kasba Khas' or the special township of Dhaka recorded in an inscription of 864 A.H./1460 A.D.<sup>5</sup> indicates that the city was in existence with its present name.

"The epigraph of the mosque consists of five lines of writings with a side line containing the date, and records the erection of the mosque in the year 861 A.H./1456 A.D. The language is Arabic and mixed with Persian.<sup>6</sup>

Moulvi Shamsuddin Ahmed is of opinion that the authenticity of this inscription is very much doubtful, because "(a) all the epigraphs of this king are in Arabic, in some cases with an admixture of only a few words of Persian, while the main text of this document is Persian excepting for 'Bismillah'  and the Kalima; (b) unlike other inscriptions

4. S. Ahmed, IB IV, P. 57; Stapleton 'Antiquities of Dacca' JASB 1910, New series, Volume VI, P. 145.

5. H. Khatun, Dhaka Vishaya Vidyalaya Patrika(Dhaka, June), 1985, P. 155.

6. A. Hosain, Antiquities of Dhaka(Dhaka, 1904), P. 28.

the name of the reigning King is omitted here; (c) the date is expressed in this case in figure whereas in all other cases it is recorded in words".

But we know that (a) all inscriptions are admixture of Arabic and Persian and (b) the inscriptions on the grave of Khan Jahan at Bagerhat and that of the mosque of Ghagra bear no name of the reigning Sultan. So, it is not the only instance of omission, (c) as this is an unusual early example of building a mosque by a lady, the recording of date in figures, though unusual, is not impractical. Thus, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the inscription. Undoubtedly it is a very important and earliest muslim inscription of this area which testifies to the existence of Dhaka as a town in pre-Mughal days and the pre-eminence of ladies in the society.

The building is now a congregational mosque and has been extensively renovated and extended in all directions except the north. The original building was only 12'-0" square. The most recent extension has been the addition of two floors above the original one. However, it is still possible to conjecture its original form. "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 octogonal 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".<sup>7</sup>

---

7. Parveen Hasan, Eight Sultanate mosque in Dhaka District, Islamic Heritage of Bengal, Edited by George Michell, UNESCO Research Papers Paris, 1984, P. 181.

"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 this 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".<sup>8</sup>

"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 extension 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".<sup>9</sup>

It seems that originally the mosque was entered through three arched entrances of which the central one was bigger. There were equal number of corresponding mihrabs on the west wall, the central one being bigger than others. The side entrance were two in number, one in each side. The central mihrab was projected on the west, while there were four corner towers. The cornices of the mosque curved gently, above which rose the drumless dome on squinches.

---

8. Ibid, P. 181.

9. Ibid, P. 182.

## 2. The Mosque of Naswala Gully, 1459 A.D.

The second earliest epigraphic record in Dhaka city was found in a dilapidated mosque at Naswala Gully, presently known as Churihatta in the Chowk area. The inscription, now preserved in the Dhaka Museum, refers to the date of 20th Shaban of 863 A.H./25th June, 1459 A.D. The inscribed stone tablet, measuring 4'-6½" by 11½" inches was first noticed by Khan Bahadur Aulad Hussain.<sup>10</sup> A modern mosque, measuring 16' square, has now been built on its ruins.

The inscription of the mosque is very important. It refers to the "renovation of a gate in the days of the Khalifa, Nasirud-Dunya Wad Din Abul Muzaffar Mahmud Shah, the Sultan, may Allah, the Glorious, perpetuate his kingdom, by one addressed with the title of Khwaja Jahan, may Allah, the Merciful protect him from all vicissitudes, in the frontier iklim of Mubarakabad on the 20th Shaban in the year 863 A.H.(25th June, 1459 A.D.); may the blessings of Allah be upon him and all his family".<sup>11</sup>

Iklim Mubarakabad was never mentioned in history of the Sultani period. Under the Mughals, there was a pargana named Mubarak Ujyal in the south west of Dhaka. Stapleton thought that Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah of Sonargaon, while in exile on the west bank of the Sitalakhya river named the iklim as Mubarakabad. Probably the gate was built by him and subsequently renovated by one Khwaja Jahan in June 1459 A.D.<sup>12</sup> In the same year Ulugh Khan Jahan

10. A. Hussain, Ibid, P. 34.

11. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 63.

12. S. Ahmad, Ibid, P. 63-65. Ulugh Khan Jahan was the administrator or Chief Wazir of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah. Mymensingh was within his domain. Ulugh Khan Jahan built a mosque there 1452 A.D. He died at Bagerhat. It means he was there in 1459 A.D. His presence at Bagerhat indicates its inclusion within the iklim.

died at Bagerhat. Traditionally he is also known as Khwaja Jahan. If we presume that the identity of the two persons is same it follows that the iklim extended upto Bagerhat in 1459 A.D. This assumption is partly corroborated by Stapleton, who mentioned the extent of the iklim upto the bank of the Padma (in 1338 A.D.)<sup>13</sup>

As regards Khwaja Jahan referred to in the inscription of Dhaka, Blochman identifies him with Ulugh Khan-i-Jahan, who was buried at Bagerhat on the 25th of October, 1459 A.D.<sup>14</sup> But it seems untenable to Mvi. Shamsuddin Ahmad on the grounds that (a) there is a remarkable difference in the nomenclature of the two persons viz. one is called Khwaja Jahan, while the other Khan Jahan; (b) the presence of Khwaja-i-Jahan at Dacca on the 20th Shaban in 863 A.H./25 June(1459 A.C) as an important officer in the court of Mahmud Shah is vouched for by this epigraph; as such it is unlikely for him to have travelled from Dacca to Bagerhat to reclaim and populate the vast Sundarban area within a span of three months and expire in 863 A.H.(1459 A.C) as noted in the inscriptions fixed in his shrine at Bagerhat.<sup>15</sup> One of the inscriptions of Bagerhat records, "Passed away the feeble slave, the supplicant to the mercy of the Lord of the universe, the lover of the children of chief of Prophets(Muhammad), the sincere to the righteous servants, despiser of the infidels and polytheists, the helper of Islam and the Muslims, Ulugh Khan-i-Jahan, the mercy and forgiveness (of Allah) be upon him from this world to the abode of eternity, on the night of Wednesday, 26th Zilhaja and was interred on Thursday, the 27th of that month, in the year eight hundred and sixty three : 863 A.H.(25th October,1459 A.C.)

13. Stapleton, JASB,1910,New series, Volume VI, P. 145.

14. H. Blochman, Notes on Arabic and Persian Inscriptions, JASB, 1872, Volume XLI, P. 107.

15. S. Ahmed, IB IV, P. 64.

16. S. Ahmed, IB IV, P. 66.

The first argument of Mvi. Ahmed may be refuted on the ground that Ulugh Khan Jahan of the Bagerhat inscription is traditionally known as the Wazir Khwaja-i-Jahan;<sup>17</sup> Ulugh Khan-i-Jahan, Khan al Azam Khan Jahan are all titles ascribed to the same person.

Moreover, the inscription of Ghagra mosque supports the view that the great Wazir of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah was Ulugh Khan-i-Jahan<sup>18</sup> (Please see Ghagra mosque). The inscription on the Ghagra mosque and the mosque of Dhaka bear close similarity in language. The Ghagra mosque begins with words "Allah the Most High has said, and the mosque are for (the worship of) Allah, so do not call anyone with Allah". The Naswala Gully Mosque of Dhaka inscription begins with "Allah the great has said Verily Mosques belong to Allah; so do not call Allah with any one". Both of these mosques were built and renovated during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah. Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah reigned from 1441 A.D. to 1459 A.D. and there was only one Ulugh Khan Jahan under him.<sup>19</sup>

The second objection also does not stand on the plea of age. His presence was not essential for carrying of stone and renovation of the gate. It could easily have been done by others under his order. Moreover south west frontier was not reclaimed and populated by Ulugh Khan Jahan in three months time. It was repopulated by him in course of several years and is proved by recent publication.<sup>20</sup>

As such Blochman's argument stands. It is presumed that the repairer as mentioned in the Dhaka inscription was Wazir of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah who was residing in the south west frontier of the iklim. Locally he was called Khwaja jahan. The great Wazir Ulugh Khan-i-Jahan who was a Khwaja or eunuch did not leave any heir. The epigraphic evidences discussed above thus suggest that Ulugh Khan-i-Jahan, Khwaja Jahan and Khan al-Azam Khan-i-Jahan are, infact, different titles of the same person.

17. A. Jalil, Pir Khanja Ali (Khulna, 1974), PP. 1-16.

18. S. Ahmed, IB IV, P. 54.

19. Legened and inscriptions of Bagerhat, dated 1459 A.D. , S.Ahmed, Ibid, PP. 65-67.



## 3. The Singer Mosque, Bagerhat : (plate VII b)

The Singer Mosque is located about 200 yards south east of the Shait Gumbaz Mosque across a new road connecting Khulna with Perozpur in Barisal. Externally it is a 40'-9" square single domed structure rising to a height of 20'-6" in the centre with 7'-0" thick walls. Four round corner turrets are relieved with five bands of brick mouldings and the cornice on all four sides are gently curved. "On the eastern face there are three arched entrances within rectangular frames, while on the north and south walls, there are single entrances. The central mihrab on the west wall, framed within rectangular brick mouldings, is sparsely embellished with terracotta rosettes and foliate motifs. The corner squinches are plain and brackets supporting them were probably of stone."<sup>21</sup> The floor level is slightly high and the general view of the mosque is vertical and pleasing.

It appears that the area around the monument would originally have been defined by one or more perimeter walls. The evidence of the remains of the former boundary wall is traceable.\* Moreover, a wedge-shaped brick was found embedded exactly at the south-east corner of this enclosure wall. This indicates that small turrets similar to those on the corners of the inner and outer boundary walls of Khan Jahan's tomb were probably part of the wall around the Singer mosque. It is likely that the corner turrets of this mosque originally rose upward like the Khan Jahan's tomb which have been straightened subsequently.

---

21. N. Ahmed, Discover the monuments of Bangladesh (Dhaka, 1984) P. 140.

\* Report of UNDP., Paris, 1983, P. 109.

## 4. Bibi Begni's Mosque, Bagerhat : (plate VIII a.b)

Bibi Begni's Mosque is situated to the west of the Shait Gumbad Masjid across an unusually large tank, known locally as Ghora Dighi. In general appearance the mosque is similar to the Ranvijoypur mosque. It is a massively built mosque with 10'-3" thick walls. There are three arched entrances on the east and single arched opening on the south and north. Corresponding to the three entrances, the west wall is relieved with three ornate mihirabs of which the central one is much larger than those flanking it. The mihirabs are bordered with rectangular mouldings and ornamented with multicusped arches and terracotta floral panels, each of which has a prominent central chain-and-bell motif. There are two arched lamp niches on each of the west, north and south walls. The four round corner turrets are divided by ten brick mouldings.<sup>22</sup> The dome is on corbel pendentives. The horizontal appeal of the mosque is its speciality.

## 5. Ranvijoypur Mosque, Bagerhat (plate X a.b)

Among the single domed square mosques the stupendous mass of Ranvijoypur Mosque, situated about a mile east of Shait Gumbad mosque is singularly impressive. It has the largest dome in Bangladesh, spanning a prayer chamber with 35'-6" sides and supported on 9'-3" thick walls. In plan and general appearance it is similar to the Bibi Begni's Mosque. The plain squinches on each of the four corners transform the square plan into an octagon upon which the large plain dome rests directly on to a low, round collar of brick work.<sup>23</sup>

---

22. N. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 140.

23. N. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 142.

Before conservation by the Department of Archaeology, its dome contained protuberance of bricks around. It is its peculiarity. Externally the mosque measures 47'-3" on each side. Its three two-centered arched openings on the east north and south are within rectangular frames, the upper part of which are decorated with rows of terracotta designs, similar to that of the Rampal mosque. The central arched entrance in each side is higher and broader than others. The central arched entrance of the facade has a 'chauchala' hut-shaped vault bordered on either side with arched frames. The soffit of the vault faithfully emulates the bamboo poles of a rural hut and closely resembles similar features identified on two southern entrance gateways of the tomb of Khan Jahan. The projected central mihrab is highly decorated and flanked by engaged turrets. Engrailed arches relieve the face of this mihrab. The floor level of the mosques of Bibi Begni and Ronvijoypur is almost in level with the surrounding area. From this appearance it seems that the open courtyards now have been filled in upto certain level. But as there is no sign of steps in them, it definitely indicates that the floor level was never too high.

6. Chunakhola Mosque, Bagerhat : *plate IXa.*

Chunakhola mosque is about half a mile north-west of the Bibi Begni's mosque and is picturesquely located on an isolated low land amidst an expanse of flat cultivated field. In plan and elevation this single domed small monument closely resembles the Singer mosque and has similarly suffered heavily at the hands of the inclement weather of this area.<sup>24</sup> Though the mosque is now on an isolated area, but it seems that originally it was built in a populated area. It is a 35'-9" square monument with 7'-6" thick walls and the entrances are framed within rectangular panels.

---

24. N. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 141.

## 7. Zinda Pir Mosque, Bagerhat :

A little to the south of the Nine-domed mosque is the roofless ruined single-domed mosque of Zinda Pir which is surrounded by innumerable masonry graves. The prominently built central grave is ascribed by tradition to be that Zinda Pir, a little known saint. Internally the mosque is 16'-0" square monument with 4'-3" thick walls. Its eastern wall is pierced with three arched entrances, while the north and south have only single opening. The highly damaged single mihrab on the western wall, framed within rectangular bands of mouldings, is tastefully embellished with terracotta scrolls of foliate patterns and the central chain-and-bell motif. There are four octagonal corner turrets, relieved at intervals with bands of mouldings. The dome, which has largely collapsed, is thick with vegetal undergrowth. It is strange that on the nearest area of this mosque, there is a nine-domed Reza Khoda mosque.

## 8. The Mosque near the tomb of Khan Jahan :

This single domed 25'-10" square mosque (internally) near the Khan Jahan's tomb is on the west of the tomb of Pir Ali and identical in plan and elevation to that of the Khan Jahan's tomb. It is entered from the south, east and north. The simple mosque is sparsely decorated with terracotta scrolls. At present an incongruous modern concrete verandah on east has been constructed by the zealous devotees of the area.

9. The Mosque of Anair Haor, Sylhet 868/1460 A.D.<sup>25</sup>

The mosque of Anair Haor was built by Khan Muazzam Khurshid Khan, the chief of the guards of the royal household during the reign of Malik Barbak Shah Sultan on the 5th of Safar 868 A.H./19th October 1460 A.D. The inscrip-

---

25. S. Ahmed, IB, volume IV, (Rajshahi, 1960), P. 77.

tion is very important as it is the earliest extant stone tablet that indicates Muslim occupation of the area in the late 15th century A.D. The style of writing is Tughra and the language is Arabic. An inscription of later date confirms the occupation of the area by the Muslims in 1303 A.D. No trace of the monument survives today.

10. The Mosque of Peril, Harirampur, Manikganj 869 A.H./1465.<sup>26</sup>

Peril is an important market place built by Majlis Khurshid, the Deputy Chief of army of the district. There is an old tomb and a mosque here. The single domed mosque with three entrances on east wall and a mihrab on the west is a modern structure, but the tomb appears to be old. Even in its ruined condition it retains some of its original features, such as the carved bricks and terracotta plaques bearing loop and leafy scrolls, which indicate its origin to the Sultani period. An inscription found from here indicates it to be an outpost along the bank of the Padma during the pre-Mughal period.

11. Mosque of Gorai, Mymensingh, 29th Ramadhan 871/4th May 1467 A.D.<sup>27</sup>

The inscription, found by Mr. Bukhari in a mosque of Gorai, refers to the erection of a mosque by Majlis Ali during the reign of Barbak Shah in 871 A.H./1467 A.D.<sup>28</sup> The language of the inscription is Arabic and the style of writing is Naskh.

The present mosque of Gorai is a single domed square structure with octagonal corner towers. There are three entrances on the east of which the middle one is bigger and slightly projected. The spandrels of arches are decorated with usual terracotta rosettes. The facade is divided into several panels, each being decorated with spiral terracotta designs like that of the

---

26. Ibid, P. 79.

27. S.N. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 84.

28. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 84.

Astagram mosque. The double curved cornice terminate at the four corner towers. The towers rise above the cornice and are covered with squat cupolas. There are three mihrabs on the qibla wall of which the middle one is slightly projected outward and is finely decorated with terracotta designs like that of the Khandkarbag mosque of Baba Salih (1482 A.D.). The side doors on the north and south sides are plainly decorated with horizontal panels and terracotta designs.

The octagonal drum of the dome and the battlemented cresting above the curved cornice have led Dani to identify it to be a Mughal mosque. It has been largely modernized in recent times, but even in its restored condition it is possible to trace certain architectural features which distinguish it to be of the Sultani period. In fact, it displays all other characteristic features of a single domed mosque of the pre-Mughal period to which the above inscription lends support. Moreover, the blank panel of inscription very much fits in size of the inscription tablet found by Bukhari, measuring 2'-9" x 1'-5".<sup>29</sup> There is a striking resemblance of architectural features and form of this mosque with that of the Masjidpara mosque (1669), Sadi Mosque (1652) and Shah Mohammad's mosque (1680), built in later days.

12. Mosque of Tejpur, Tangail, built during the reign of Barbak Shah 863/1459 A.D.

An inscription in the Dhaka National Museum refers to the erection of a mosque during the reign of Barbak Shah in 863 A.H./1459 A.D. As the inscription was procured from Tejpur in Tangail district, it seem likely that there was a Jami Mosque in that area belonging to the Sultanate period. No trace of it is now surviving above the ground.

29. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 84.

30. Dhaka Museum, Accessory No. 70/1350 Dhaka Museum.

The date 863 A.H./1459 A.D. is covered by the period of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah I. But the inscribed name on the stone clearly indicates that Barbak Shah was in power, probably not as Sultan. The word Sultan is not mentioned in it.

13. Mosque of Yusuf Shah 885 A.H./1480 A.D.<sup>31</sup>

Dr. James Wise found an inscribed slab in the neighbourhood of Dhaka town measuring 2'-8½" x 10". The epigraph records the erection of a mosque during the reign of Sultan Shamsuddin Abul Muzaffar Yusuf Shah by Malik ..... Khakan Muazzam in 885 A.H./1480 A.D. In addition, a line from the couplet of the great poet Saadi engraved on it, reads, "Allah's mercy reaches every moment to the soul of men whose pious works continue after him." The style of writing is Naskh and the languages are Arabic and Persian. Though the inscription was found in the neighbourhood of Dhaka town, the mosque has not yet been identified.

In connection with this inscription, a mosque of Yusufganj seems to have relevance. At Yusufganj in Mograpara close to the road side in the neighbourhood of Dhaka there is a renovated mosque. "Both the exterior and the interior have been plastered, whitewashed and painted but not enlarged".<sup>32</sup> The parapet of the mosque has been raised, but still the original curved line of the cornice is visible below that straightened parapet. The three pointed arched entrances and the corresponding mihirabs bear pre-Mughal features. Besides, the dome is very low. There are two arched entrances on the south and north walls. All these arches are framed within recessed rectangles. The corner towers are not visible.

---

31. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 108.

32. Parween Hasan, UNESCO Publication, Paris 1984, P. 189.

The mosque is a 18'-0" square building, roofed over by a dome, carried on squinches and the central mihrab wall is projected at the back. The inscription referred to above may probably be attributed to this mosque.

The name of the locality (Yusufganj) is significant and may indicate that the mosque was built by Sultan Yusufshah, after whom the locality probably came to be known as Yusufganj.

14. Mosque of Sylhet, 789-886/1474-1481

An inscription<sup>33</sup> refers to an undated mosque in Sylhet bearing the name of Sultan Yusuf Shah. It was built by Majlis al Azam al Muazzam Wazir, famous for his piety. All the mosques of Sylhet have so extensively been renovated in recent times by the over zealous local devotees that their original style or design can hardly be recognised. This mosque in question is a single domed structure having three entrances on the east and three mihrahs on the qibla wall. There is one window in each wall on the north and south. The building is virtually devoid of any decoration except resettes in the spandrelles of arches and mihrahs.

15. Mosque at Khondakarbog (Bandar) 1482/886.<sup>34</sup>

Locally known as the Shahi Masjid of Bandar this mosque is situated across the Sitalakhya river in Narayanganj, about 12 miles south-east of Dhaka city.

33. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 112.

\* The name 'Bandar' itself indicates its origin as a river port of the city. For the protection of this port, the Sonakanda fort was built in the Mughal period. Long before that, this was the port city of Sonargaon or Sonarkawan of Ibn Batutah in the 14th century A.D. This mosque was built at the initial period of Sultan Fateh Shah and Baba Salih was a high official of the said Sultan.

34. Parwin, Hasan, Ibid, P. 81; Blochman, contribution to Geography and History J.A.S.B.(Calcutta, 1863), P. 27-28; S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 114.



This is the earliest dated extant mosque of Sonargaon port. The Arabic inscription of the mosque records that it was built by Malik al Muazzam Baba Saleh during the reign of Sultan Abul Muzaffar Fath Shah on the First of Dhul Qa'da A.H. 886/2nd January, 1482.

"The exterior of the mosque, plastered surface, articulation with recessed rectangles, and dome raised on a drum, - is proof of renovation undertaken during the Mughal times. More recently a varendah with a corrugated iron sheet roof has been added in front. The interior of the mosque, however, retains most of its original scheme".<sup>35</sup>

Measuring 19'-0" square internally, this structure is much larger than the other mosque built by the same person in the same locality. There are three arched doorways in the east and each doorway is framed within taller arches outside and inside. Thus a pointed barrel vault is formed in both north and south sides and two rectangular niches on either side of these entrances are found like the Mogradara mosque. The dome is carried on squinches and the arches spring from the tops of stone pilasters, of which there are two in each wall. The three mihirabs on west wall are decorated with fine terracotta foliate motifs. Despite the use of modern plaster and paint, the mihirabs still retain some of their original decorations. The lower section of the central mihirab has three cusped arches with a rectangular motif hanging from a chain that descends down the apex of the arched mihirab. The rectangular motifs are not uniform in design. One contains the 'Shika' (lamp) motif, similar to that of the alleged Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah's tomb while the others contain full bloomed rosettes. There are 'kalahas' (water pitcher) with foliage between the arches of miniature pillars and

---

35. P. Hasan, Ibid, P. 181.

cusped arches with floral discs inside. The two side mihhrabs have lost most of their original decoration and the surface of the hanging rectangular motif are effaced. The spandrels of niched mihhrabs are decorated with big rosettes.

Abid Ali mentioned that the central mihhrab was built of stone but due to the application of modern hand it is difficult to varify his statement. The corner towers, rising above the cornice, are round and are decorated with bands. The cornice is not curved but straightened by the addition of parapet. The wall is 6'-0" thick and the central mihhrab is projected at the back.

The mosque stands on the bank of the Tribeni Creek, now dried up at places. Once it connected the Sitalakhya, the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. At its opening on the east bank of the Sitalakhya river, there is a fort which still stands known as Sonakanda. The Khondkar bag, presently known as Khondkar tola, is about one mile inland from the river side.

16. Mosque of Mograpara 889 A.H./1484 A.D.

Close to the tomb of Sheikh Yusuf at Mograpara, there is a rectangular mosque with an inscription dated 1112 A.H./1700 A.D. As the mosque is near the tomb of Yusuf Shah, James Wise thought it to be his (Yusuf Shah) construction.<sup>37</sup> But a close examination shows that it is a reconstruction of an older building. The original mosque was built in 889 A.H./1484 A.D.<sup>38</sup>

It is an example of renovation of a Sultanate mosque during the Mughal period. "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

---

36. P. Hasan, UNESCO Research Papers I, (Paris, 1984), P. 182.

37. James Wise, Notes on Sonargaon, JASB(Calcutta, 1874), No.I, P. 89.

38. Alexander Cunningham, ASI(Calcutta, 1879-80), Vol. XV, P. 141.

cusping. On the exterior, all sides display the curved cornice over which a parapet has been superimposed. The corner towers have disappeared".<sup>39</sup>

The single domed mosque is locally known as Shahi Jami Mosque of Mograpara. Externally it is a mixture of the Sultani and the Mughal period. "The interior, although plastered, white washed 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 Galdi mosque. The dome is carried on pendentives instead of squinches. The interior of this mosque is unique for another reason. Its internal dimensions are 24'0" x 36'-0"; the space on both sides having been increased by throwing the wide arches on the north and south sides".<sup>40</sup>

The original building was a single domed square structure with stone mihrabs on the west and the dome was supported on stone pilasters. These stone materials are still in use in the mosque. The corner towers have long since disappeared. Due to shortage of space, the mosque could not be extended beyond its present size. That is why no new dome was built. Instead, slightly vaulted roof have been constructed on either side. The stone pillars are carrying the huge dome in the middle while the arch on the north and south carries the vault with the support of the stone pillars. The three entrances of the mosque and the corresponding mihrabs on west wall are very insignificant.

This sort of renovation most probably was common in the late 16th century mosques of Bengal. The other two examples are the Sarail mosque (1602 A.D.) at Brahmanbaria and the Sankarpasa mosque of Shaistaganj in Sylhet.

---

39. P. Hasan, The Islamic Heritage of Bengal, (UNESCO, 1984), P. 183.

40. Ibid.

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. It was considered by the villagers to be a sacred stone. It was believed that whenever someone was robbed of one would apply a coat of lime to the stone and the stolen article would be recovered. "When the list of 1895 was prepared the stone was found inserted in the enclosure wall of the graveyard, opposite the mosque. The lime was scrapped 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, Muharram 889 A.H./1484 A.D., in the reign of Jalaluddin Fateh Shah".<sup>41</sup> The title of the builder of the mosque as mentioned in the inscription is Mugarab-ud-Daulah, Malik Uddin, the royal keeper of the wardrobe outside the palace, the commander and Wazir of the territory of Muzamabad, also known as Mahmudabad and Commander of Thana Laur (in Sylhet). The builder referred to in the inscription, probably was an important and distinguished courtier. After the title of this builder most probably the present place name of Mograpara has come into use.\*

17. Azimnagar Mosque :

Baba Salih is credited with the construction of a mosque at Azimnagar, Manikganj (Harirampur) on the bank of a branch river of Dhaleswari in 910 A.H./1504 A.D., during the reign of Sultan Husain Shah. The inscription is in Arabic and an estampage was taken from the mosque by Blochman who deciphered and published it in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Vol. XLII, 1973, P.284).

---

41. P. Hasan, Ibid, P. 183.

\* In Arabic the word is written as Mukarab; it is pronounced in Persian-Magrab as we pronounce Aqa Riza as Aga Riza. Mrs. Majumdar, Chairman, Urdu and Persian Department, Dhaka University on 2.6.85.  
There is another inscription over the entrance gate of the enclosure wall dated 1112 A.H./1700 A.D., which was most probably inscribed at the time of renovation.

At present there is no inscription on the renovated single domed mosque. Except the massive wall it is altogether a modern structure.

13. The Mosque of Baba Salih at Bandar :

Just like the mosque of Baba Adam at Rampal, the mosque of Baba Salih at Bandar is built by the side of his tomb. It is situated within a mile of the Khandakar tola mosque built by him.

According to its inscription, Baba Salih built the mosque in 911 A.H./1505 A.D., during the reign of Sultan Husain Shah.<sup>42</sup> In this inscription Baba Salih is mentioned as Haji Baba Salih, who visited Mecca and Medina. This Baba Salih is also mentioned in earlier inscription as the governor serving under Jalaluddin Fateh Shah in 886 A.H./1482 A.D.\* It seems that although the Sultans and the dynasty changed, the governor remained the same.

The mosque has been renovated in recent times and enlarged almost beyond recognition. Now it is a three domed mosque with a large varandah in front covered by a flat concrete roof. Originally, the mosque was a single domed square chamber, measuring 12 feet sides internally. At present this chamber has been retained as a central unit, to which northern and southern wings have been added with domes. This was done after removing the upper parts of the walls of 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 the sanctuary beyond the original side walls. Both inside and outside,

---

42. Blochman, Ibid, P. 78; S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 170.

\* The date is doubtful, as part of the inscription has been chipped off. This governor was definitely very powerful and his title was Baba, or a great saint, like Baba Adam who was a Qazi of Rampal.

the walls have been completely transformed by recent renovations, leaving no trace of their original character.<sup>43</sup> Now the mosque is covered by three domes which directly rest on walls. There are four octagonal slender towers at the corners, while the central mihrab is prominently projected outside and decorated with terracottas in panels. At present there is no trace of decoration on walls. Originally there was a pond on the south side of the mosque but now that has been filled up.

19. Goaldi Mosque :(plate IXb)

In a remote village at Goaldi, about four miles to the north-west of Mograpara, there is a mosque, built in 925 A.H./1519 A.D. by Mullah Hizbat Akbar Khan during the reign of Sultan Hussain shah.<sup>44</sup> Before its restoration by the Department of Archaeology and Museums the dome and major portions of the south, east and north walls had fallen, leaving the mihrab wall on the west precariously standing. Before renovation, the original mosque was described by Cunningham and others from which it seems that its interior was 16-6" square and that it was very richly ornamented with carved bricks, depicting various floral patterns, both inside and outside, in the style of buildings at Gaur and Hazrat Pandua. In the back wall there were three semi-octagonal mihrabs and in each of the side wall there was a door with two rectangular side niches. The stone pilasters of prayer niches supported richly pointed arched mihrabs ornamented with deep cusps. The central mihrab was of dark basalt stone beautifully carved and ornamented with arabesque patterns while the two side ones were of brick, boldly cut and gracefully arranged. The dome was carried on squinches, the arches of which sprang from the tops of engaged stone pilasters, two on each wall. The bricks

---

44. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 198.

in the archways. it was stated, had been ground and smoothed by manned labour. The pillars at the doorway were of sandstone.<sup>45</sup>

At present the single domed graceful mosque measures 24'-10" square internally with three entrances on east and one each on its north and south sides. The dome is carried on pendentive the thrust of which carried by the tops engaged stone pilasters, two on each wall. There are three richly carved mihrabs. Of the three mihrabs, the central one is beautifully embellished with carved floral and arabesque relief on black stone, while the side ones are decorated similarly but in brick and fine terracotta work. The motifs contain same design similar to those found in the alleged stone tomb of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah at Sonargaon.

The exterior of the mosque is decorated with rectangular panels that have miniature niches with ornamental hanging motifs. Around the slightly curved two band cornice the most attractive part of the mosque is found. The wall is 5'-6" thick and plastered with lime-surkhi mortar. The round corner towers are decorated with round bands of carved bricks and bear similarity with that of the Bibi Begni's mosque at Bagerhat.\*

20. Nusrat Shahi mosque or Bara Majlis or Sadipur mosque :

In the village of Sadipur about half a mile north-east of Mogradpara there was a low mound at the time of Cunningham's visit to the place in 1879-80 A.D., where there was a loose stone slab bearing an inscription of Nusrat Shah. According to Blochman<sup>46</sup> the inscription contained the usual formula of a mosque building and the name of Nasiruddin Abul Muzaffar Nusrat Shah, the King, son of Hussain Shah the king. It was erected by Malik ul

45. List, P. 216; James Wise, JASB, P. 92; Cunningham ASI, P. 39.

\* The mosque was abandoned by the Muslims about 20 years back, before it was visited by Cunningham in 1879. Local tradition relates that, originally the mosque was used by the Wahabis and after the persecution of the sect by the government in 1850 the Muslims did not use the mosque any more.

46. Blochman, JASB, 1873, Vol. XLI, P. 337.

Umara Wal Wazir, the Chief of the lawyers and teacher of the Hadith, Faqi-ud-Din, son of Ain-ud-Din, known as Bara Malik-ul-Majlis, son of Mukhtarul Majlis, son of Sarwar, in the 929 A.H./1523 A.D.\*

The adjacent village is still known as Bari Majlis. Most probably, this village was the residential area of teachers where the mosque was built for the residents.

Close to it there are two single-domed mosques in the village built in 1704 and 1786 A.D. respectively.

21. The mosque of Shariatganj, Rupganj, Dhaka :

This renovated single-domed mosque exhibits all characteristic features of the Sultani architecture. Very recently a varandah has been added to it on the east and an adjacent room has been built on the north for the Imam.

The inscription of the mosque was thrown away by a local Hindu Zamindar while a dispute was going on. It was rehabilitated by the local Muslims and restored to its present condition in 1938 A.D.

As the nearby masonry tomb is believed to enshrine a saint who came to this place with Shah Langar, it is likely that the mosque was built sometimes in the early 15th century.

22. Faqirbari mosque, Rupganj, Dhaka :

This mosque is in complete ruin and on its ruin a modern mosque has now been built by the local Muslims. However, the antiquity of the mosque is indicated by a big ring well within the compound.

---

\* Bara Majlis is the old name of mahalla of Sadipur.



23. Mai Shaheba's mosque, Sherpur :

In the locality of Sherpur town there is a big single domed square mosque, (16') a well and a tomb within an enclosure of brick wall. The mosque is entered through three arched entrances on the east and each arch is enclosed within two rectangular frames, - one within the other. The doors are dwarf in size. Only the three mihhrabs on the west wall are decorated with terracotta panels on the spandrels. The south and north walls are pierced by arched windows, one in each wall, and these are flanked by rectangular blind niches.

The ring well within the compound is still used for ablution. No inscription is reported from here. Local tradition ascribes this mosque and the tomb to Baroi Bibi, commonly known as Mai Shaheba. Baroi Bibi was the name of the wife of Shah Kamal (1503 A.D.) and as such the mosque probably belongs to the Husain Shahi period.

24. The Mosque of Sulaiman Karrani at Rekabibazar, 976 A.H./1569 A.D.

This mosque stands at Rekabibazar, about three miles from Munshiganj. It is a brick built building, measuring 36'-0" by 34'-0" outside with 4'-0" thick walls and is surmounted with a single dome. There is an inscription on the facade from which it appears that the mosque was first built in the year 976 A.H./1569 A.D., by Malik Abdullah Mian, son of Amin Khan Faqir Mian, during the reign of Hazrat Ala Mian Sulaiman. This Sulaiman may be identified with Sultan Sulaiman Shah Karrani who reigned in Bengal from 974 A.H. to 960 A.H./1564 to 1572 A.D.<sup>47</sup>

---

47. Blochman 'Geography and History of Bengal', JASB, 1873, Part-I, P. 275.

Most of the single domed mosque under discussion are brick built structures. Their massive walls vary in thickness between 4'-0" and 10'-0". The outer surface of brick work on each wall are very fine while the inner faces are not so finely built as we find in the mosque of Khania Dighi at Gaur. The size of bricks vary from 7" x 7" x 1½", 7" x 6½" x 1½", 8" x 7" x 1½" and 6" x 6" x 1½".

Each square mosque is covered with a dome without any drum. Sometimes round low collar of brick works are found as drum. The largest dome in Bangladesh on such a mosque is on the mosque of Ronvijoypur at Bagerhat having a diameter of 35'-6". The smallest one is at Bandar.

Each dome rests on squinches or corbel pendentives. The transformation of the square into octagon is achieved by providing squinches or corbel pendentives in each of the four corner upon which the dome rests. They rest on stone pilasters or brick pilasters of which usually there are two in each wall.

Each mosque is approached by three pointed arched entrances on the east and corresponding number of arched mihirabs decorate the qibla wall. The walls on south and north also contain one arched entrance, flanked by blind arched recesses. The doors are often small and dwarf. The central mihrab is usually projected at the back and is larger than others. The central door is also bigger and higher than others on either side. The Zinda Pir mosque is the only exception where there is only one mihrab in the qibla wall. In most of the renovated mosques, the projected part of the mihirab is flanked by slender minarets on either side. The interior niche of the mihirabs are relatively more decorated than any other part of the mosque. Sometimes carved stone decorations are found in the principal mihirab such as in the Mograpara and the Bandar mosque.

Each arch of these mosques is decorated with rosettes on spandrels. Rectangular frames around the arches and sometimes arabesque designs on the panels of rectangular frames, are also visible, while the ubiquitous curvilinear style of this period characterizes these mosques. Sometimes two to three curved bands run around the mosque while the cornice bands are further decorated with small arched brick mouldings such as those found on the Galdi mosque.

The facade of these mosques are embellished with rectangular and plain vertical recesses, deriving possibly their inspirations from the Eklakhi Mausoleum of Pandua.

The single domed mosques are sparsely embellished with various terracotta motifs including the bell-and-chain, floral scrolls, geometrical designs, loops with niched designs and lamps.

The most ornate part of the mosque is the central mihrab where terracotta panels are used in great abundance. Sometimes carved jars, one above the other, form part of the small pilasters flanking the mihrabs. The projected frame of the mihrabs often depicts petals of flowers. Sunflower embossed on small arched designs make these mihrabs often very attractive. The rectangular frames around the mihrabs are sometimes decorated with arabesque, sinuous creepers and flower motifs. Most of these motifs are drawn from local vegetation and geometrical designs. The technique of terracotta art is wholly indigenous, as they were prevalent in Bengal before the advent of the Muslims and the local craftsmen were accustomed to such type of ornamentation.

The corner towers of these mosques were either round or octagonal, faceted with five or eight bands of mouldings. These mouldings consisted of lozenges, abstract designs, flower petals etc. (Pl. No. III & IV). The curved cornice bands and corner towers imparted a tapering look to the monuments.

It is not clear whether these mosques had walled enclosures with corner towers and an entrance gateway to the east. However, the recent excavation at the Singer mosque by the Archaeology Department has proved that such a formal arrangement did exist in these buildings.

There is no 'mazina' in any of these mosques which appears to be in conformity with the prevalent practice in this distant land.

The Eklakhi Mausoleum of Pandua, (48½' internally and 78½' externally with walls 13' thick) built during 818-36 A.H./1415-32 A.D. is the earliest example of the style of a single domed structure in Bengal. The next example is the Chika building displaying all the characteristics of the Eklakhi of Pandua, measuring 72'-0" internally (walls 14'-9½" thick). This style is followed in the mosques of Sonargaon although here the corner towers are round and octagonal in different mosque instead of being only octagonal.

The Binat Bibi's mosque is the earliest dated surviving example of this type of mosque at Dhaka.

The transitional method of changing the square into round is achieved by providing either squinch or pendentives at the corners.

The style of single domed mosques with three arched entrances, three mihirabs, two side openings, four corner towers, terracotta panels, curvilinear roof, etc. continued to influence the Mughal mosques of the outlying areas during the later period such as those at the Bibi Masjid, Bogra, erected in 1628, the Mosque of Sadi, built in 1652, the Mosque of Shah Muhammad in Mymensingh built in 1680 etc. A large number of single domed mosques are still found at Dhaka and Bagerhat that followed this style.

ii. The Single-domed Square Mosques with Corridor

The single domed square mosque with corridor is another style in Sonargaon but its number is very limited. Its prominent architectural feature is exemplified in the mosque of Masjidbari in Patuakhali district. Only three of this group have come to our notice.

1. The Masjidbari Mosque, Mirzaganj, Patuakhali, 1465 A.D.,(Fig.14)

This single domed mosque with a corridor is the earliest dated example in south Bengal. According to an inscription fixed on the mosque it was built by Khan al Muazzam Ujayal Khan, in the reign of Sultan Barbak Shah in 870 A.H./ 1465 A.D. It was first noticed by J.H. Reily, in 1860 A.D., while clearing a jungle.<sup>48</sup>

The 'chauchala' corridor to the east is entered through three arched doorways and one from each side. Corresponding to the three doorways on east face there are three mihirabs on the west wall of the sanctuary. The usual curvilinear roof and six octagonal corner turrets, each relieved with cornice bands, bear similarity with the group that developed in Sonargaon. The most striking and unusual feature of the mosque is its three windows on south and north side. Normally, Sultani mosques contain only one arched entrance or window on south and north side, flanked by two blind arched recesses within a rectangular frame.

---

48. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 81.

This square mosque measures 21'-7" internally with a 9'-0" deep corridor. Its wall is 6'-7" thick. It is sparsely decorated with terracotta panels, bearing floral motifs. The spandrels of arched entrances and mihirabs contain lotuses in terracotta.

2. The Hajiganj Mosque, Narayanganj, 15th century (Fig.15)(plate XIIc)

This single domed mosque with a three domed corridor and six octagonal towers at six corners is an ancient monument. Its decoration bears close similarity with that of the khondkarbag mosque, built in 1482 A.D.

Measuring about 22' square internally, the prayer chamber is entered through the corridor which is provided with three entrances on the east and two on either side. Corresponding to the number of entrances in the prayer chamber there are three mihirabs in the qibla wall of which the central one is larger and relatively more decorated. The side windows of the north and south are flanked by blind arched recesses while the central mihirab is decorated with projected brick designs, small pilasters, carved bricks, etc. The dome rests on ~~stalactite~~ pendentives and stone pilasters of which, there are two in each wall.

The 9'-0" deep corridor on the east is provided with five door-ways. The small domes are without any drum whatsoever. The walls are 7'-0" thick. The octagonal corner towers are decorated with mouldings and the curved cornice gently slopes away to the corner towers and produces a fine decorative scheme common to the Sultani period. The towers are covered with solid cupolas.

As this undated mosque bears close similarity with the single domed khondkar bag mosque of Bandar, built by Baba Salih in 1482, it seems likely that this mosque also belongs to the same period. James Wise praised the deco-

ration of the mosque very highly<sup>49</sup> but he could not ascertain its date. He thought it to be built by Mirza Nathan. But as the mosque bears all the characteristics of the Sultani architecture, it may be dated to the 15th century.<sup>50</sup> The name of the place is Hajiganj. One Haji Baba Salih was the Malik or governor of this part of Sonargaon including Bandar during the reign of Sultan Jalaluddin Fateh Shah. The Khondkerbag mosque of Bandar bears close similarity with this mosque and as such, it is likely that the mosque was built by the same person and in the same period. From this mosque, the name of the locality might have originated.

3. Shankar Pasha Mosque of Shaistaganj, Sylhet, 16th century (plate xvIIa)

The renovated square mosque of Shankar Pasha, measuring 21'-6" each side, is an exquisitely embellished monument. Originally it was roofed over by a single dome with a corridor on the east. Its original dome collapsed long ago and recently a flat concrete roof has been constructed over the prayer hall.

The eastern side is pierced by three arched doors through the corridor and by two from the south and the north. The mosque chamber itself has three entrances in the east, south and north while three corresponding mihirabs are provided in the qibla wall. Six octagonal corner towers are extended beyond the parapet and faceted at regular intervals with bands of carved bricks. The projected central mihrab is richly embellished with terracotta floral scrolls, now covered under modern painting, and flanked on either side with graceful pilasters. The original curvilinear cornice has now been straightened by battlemented parapets. Likewise the cusped arches have been decorated with

---

49. Wise, JASB, 1874, P. 93.

50. Habiba, Dhaka Visavidyalaya Patrika, 1985, P. 155.

rosettes with foliated designs at the spandrels during recent restoration work.

The façade of the mosque is exquisitely decorated with carved bricks and terracotta design and divided horizontally into two halves. Each half is again divided into several vertical panels. Each broader vertical panel contains an arched entrance within a rectangular frame while each narrow panel contains carved brick designs. The mihhrabs are, by far, the most ornate portions of the monument of which the central one has been given more prominence. Likewise the central door is highly decorated with carved bricks and floral designs bearing creeper, leaf and flower patterns.

Except its surface decoration, the mosque follows the architectural style of the Masjidbari Mosque at Patuakhali. At present the mosque is known as the Bara Masjid of Ushayel.

There are three extant mosques with corridor in Sonargaon. Their architectural style generally follow the small Gopalganj mosque at Dinajpur, built in 1460, during the reign of Sultan Barbak Shah. The earliest of this series is the Masjidbari mosque at Patuakhali. The dimension of this type of mosques is about 22'-0" square internally and their corridors measure about 9'-0" in width. The walls vary between 5'-4" and 6'-7". Similar other important monuments of this series are the Rajbibi, the Chamkatti and the Lattan mosques at Gaur, amongst which the Lattan is the biggest and the finest. These mosques vary in the roofing of their corridors. In the Masjidbari and the Shankar Pasha, the corridors are roofed over by elongated 'chauchala', whereas in the Hajiganj and the Sura mosque the corridors are roofed over by three small semicircular domes. The others like the Chamkatti and the Lattan are roofed over by a combination of round and 'chauchala' domes.



In plan and architectural design, the single domed mosques with corridors exhibit simple and common characteristics. Each one of them are entered from the east through the corridor. The east face contains three entrances while the north and south sides are often pierced with a single door on each side of the corridor. Six corner towers are usual in all these mosques and their cornices are gracefully curved. Three mihhrabs usually decorate their west walls and the domes are carried on stalactite pendentives which rests on a couple of stone pilasters embedded in each wall.

These mosques are usually embellished with various terracotta foliate patterns and floral scrolls in which expanded resette motifs find a prominent place on the spandrels of arches. Amongst these the Shankarpasha mosque is particularly striking for its terracotta art.

The origin of the single domed mosque can be traced from eastern Persia where square domed building appeared in the 295 A.H./907 A.D. at Bukhara.<sup>51</sup> This style is exemplified in the splendid mausoleum of Ismail the Samanid which is embellished with terracotta in panels. The monument also displays a battering of walls that reappeared in the Tughlaqian building of Delhi in the 14th century A.D.<sup>52</sup> This style together with the corridor again appears in the mosque of Khirgird (A.H. 726/A.D. 1325) and yazd in Isfahan.<sup>53</sup> Probably these distant early examples in Central Asia provided inspiration to the builders of the Masjid bari (1465 A.D.), the Hajiganj, the Chamkatti and the Tantipara mosques of Bengal. This style appears to be particularly popular in Sonargaon territory.

51. A. Paul, Islamic Art & Museum, London 1982, P. 365.

52. M. Hasan, Pre-Mughal Mosque Architecture in Bengal, Dacca 1962, P. 145.

53. Ibid.

### iii. The Multidomed Mosque

The multidomed mosques of Sonargaon exhibit various forms. The most noteworthy of them being the three domed oblong type which, though rare, deserves our notice.

#### Three domed type mosques :

##### 1. Mithapukur Mosque of Bagerhat :

This interesting old mosque has recently been extensively renovated by the local people. Only the foundation walls of the 22'-8" x 18'-3" prayer hall survive in their original form, as the entire superstructure has been rebuilt recently by the local devotees.<sup>54</sup>

This is a style that was followed later in other parts of Bengal and, as such, it was a precursor of three-domed style. It, therefore, belies the common belief that the Mughals introduced this style in Bengal for the first time.<sup>55</sup> Though undated, its existence in the pre-Mughal city and amongst pre-Mughal mosques, leads us to fix its date in the late 16th century A.D.

##### 2. Jami Mosque of Dhamrai, 1516 A.D.:

A recent exploration at the Pathantoli village in Dhamari has brought to light a highly ruined building of which only the two damaged walls survive, measuring 22'-0" by 16'-0" with 5'-0" thick wall. It clearly indicates that the ruined structure was not square but rectangular.

---

54. N. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 343.

55. Hasan, Ibid, P. 127, Dani, Ibid, P. 198.

An inscription of Jalaluddin Fateh Shah's period mentions one mosque in the same locality which could not be identified yet. The inscription mentions the erection of one Jami mosque in the same locality. It is likely that this ruined structure is the ruins of the same old Jami mosque. As the measurement of the ruined structure is 22'-0" x 16'-0" it seems that it was a three domed mosque like that of the Mithapukur mosque at Bagerhat. As Dhamrai was an important naval base during the Sultanate period this place might have been a densely populated area for which a Jami mosque was built there.

3. Mosque of Katrabhu<sup>56</sup>:

Within the fortified residential area of Katrabhu in the present village of Musumabad, there is an ancient mound identified with a ruined mosque. The local people testify that the mosque was a three domed one. No vestige of its ruins is now standing above the ground. As the fortified residence was a pre-Mughal structure and was used by Isa Khan, Musnad Shahi; the mosque probably was of Pre-Mughal origin.

---

56. Katrabhu is the name of a Pargana and also a town. The present name of the village is Musumbad. The nearby village on the bank of the Sitalakhya is Mahmudabad, commonly known as "Mahmudi"; the iklim Mu'zamabad or Mahmudabad stretched from the northern boundary of Mymensingh to the sea in the south. Its administrative centre has been identified with Mohzompur, an outpost of Sonargaon city on the bank of the old Brahmaputra. No trace of the city or any residential quarter, has been found at Mohzompur except a mosque and a tomb. On the otherhand the village Musumabad is an old village; Mahmudabad is its nearest neighbouring village where there are old mosques and tombs of the Sultani period. There is a ruined palace of a governor or ruler of the 'iklim' which belongs to the Sultani period. Katrabhu was the earlier capital of Isa Khan.

4. The mosque of Ghagra, Mymensingh, 1452 A.D.:

Ghagra is a place within the Upazila of Gafargaon near Gayeshpur in the district of Mymensingh. Gayeshpur was once a mint town, established by Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah in 1311 A.D. At present there is a flat roofed mosque built on the ruins of an old mosque. Although it is not known whether it was a three domed mosque, an inscription referred to by Mvi. Shamsuddin Ahmed indicates it to be a Jami mosque. The inscription is very significant because it records the name of Ulugh Khan (Jahan), a name that also occurs in the Bagerhat inscription.<sup>57</sup>

5. Kasba Mosque, Sherpur, 16th century : Plate 18, XX .c.

On the south-west border of Gazipur Khamar locality in Sherpur, the ruins of the Kasba Mosque stand. The site is profusely littered with old brick bats, broken terracotta plaques and other cultural materials. Recently a prayer hall has been built on the site with as many as 13 old terracotta plaques embedded on the new wall in upside down position.

Local people testify this mosque to be of three domed type, built by Shah Kamal whose grave is close by. The high ground of the mosque occupies an area of about 300 square feet, situated on the bank of a silted up pond.

---

57. S. Ahmed, IB, IV, P. 55.

6. Mosque of Jangalbari (16th century) / Fig.16) Plate XIIIb

The three domed rectangular mosque of Jangalbari is situated in the interior area of Kishorganj district, on the bank of the river Geyra Sunda. It externally measures 50'-0" x 21'-0". It has recently been extensively renovated but its original decorative motifs are still visible on the spandrels of arches and niches of the mihrabs. The straightened parapet has covered the base of the domes which are of unequal size. Besides, a verandah has been added on the east. There are four corner towers and four slender turrets on either side of the middle door and at the back of the central mihrab. The domes are on corbel pendentives.

Jangalbari was a fortified residence of Isa Khan, the chief of Bara Bhuiyans of Bhati. At present the ruins consist of a dilapidated walled enclosure with some rooms within. Its Darbar-hall still retains some of the original decorations and architectural features of the period. The bricks are of 7" x 6½" x 1½". The paintings on the walls include blue, golden and green colours.

From the above mentioned ruined and highly renovated mosques, the style of three domed mosque can be summed up as follows :

The domed sanctuary is placed at the back of a raised platform having three entrances on the east and three mihrabs on the qibla wall. Usually there are two windows or small arched entrances, one on each wall of the south and the north. The domes are hemispherical in shape and are supported on pendentives. "For it contains neither a true vault nor a true arch, it is all planned on traditional method of overlapping courses, which although technically unscien-

tific, provide an example of a singularly effective and artistic solution". Here "the squinch takes the form of a small vault or half dome with an arch on its outer and diagonal face".<sup>61</sup>

As the domes do not rest on raised drums, their bases are hidden behind the parapets. The central dome is usually larger than the side ones. These mosques were built long before the Mughals introduced their style in Bengal and that the three domed style was introduced in Sonargaon by the independent Sultans in the sixteenth century. Similar pre-Mughal three domed mosques are also found at Gaur in Maldah and Sherpur in Bogra districts.

Under the Mughals this style developed further, as exemplified in the Lalbagh mosque, Dhaka.

On stylistic ground, the Qutb Shahi mosque of Astagram can be placed in this group but its other features display further elaborations.

#### Five domed type mosques :

Five domed mosque style is a special feature in Sonargaon.

#### 1. The Astagram Mosque (five domed) / Fig. 17) Plate XIII

This old mosque stands within a complex of monuments consisting of a five domed mosque, a big pond and five tombs. The five domed mosque, known as the Qutb mosque stands on the west bank of the pond and on the western part of an open countryard; "it measures 36'-0" x 16'-0" internally with 5'-0" thick walls. Its single aisle is divided into three bays by three pointed arched entrances on the east. The mid-bay is bigger and as such, it

---

61. P. Brown, Indian Architecture (Islamic period), (Bombay 1967), P. 15.

contains a larger dome than the side ones. Usually, such a mosque contains one smaller dome on either side, but in this mosque there is a different arrangement. Each side bay is again superficially divided into two parts, each surmounted by a small dome. This arrangement of domes is obtained by dividing the total area into unequal three parts. Each side part is 8'-0" x 16' while the middle part is 16'-0" square. In between the divisions there are margins of 2'-0". The domes are on corbel pendentives.

The outer surface of the mosque is divided into several panels both vertically and horizontally. The panels around the arched entrances of the facade are decorated with terracotta ornamentation of floral motif while the central arched entrance displays a fruit bearing tree motif rising from a vase. Beneath the tree there are some small jars. It seems that the designer intended to depict a familiar country scene in Bengal with a series of juice-pots under a date palm trees. The spandrels of each arch is decorated with roundish terracotta patterns popular with local craftsmen. But the notable terracotta motif of the mosque is its crescent design, which probably is the first of its kind in Bengal. Such a design is also visible on the 10-domed mosque of Kuliarchar, on way to Astagram.

The mihirabs of the mosque are beautifully embellished with terracotta scrolls and the backwall is slightly projected outside in the middle. Four octagonal but slightly slender turrets relieve its four corners. There are four similar tombs on the south side of the mosque. It is interesting to note that the terracotta design decorating the mosque bears close similarity to those of the tombs standing nearby. This indicates that these were built at the same period. The bricks also are of same size. These vary between 6" x 6" x 1" and 7" x 7½" x 1½".

Besides this group of tombs, there is another, located at the back of the mosque, which is larger than others and is attributed to Qutub Shahib after whom the mosque derives its name. The size of bricks are also larger than others. They are 8" x 8" x 1½" and 8½" x 8½" x 1¼".

The date of its construction is usually attributed to late 16th century on the basis of its style and decoration. Incidentally, there is an inscriptional space now vacant on top of the middle entrance of the facade measuring 26½" x 13". The recent discovery of an inscription tablet of same size from the same area, now preserved in the Dhaka Museum, appears to have some bearing on the conquest of that area during the pre-Mughal period. There is a word "Hasht Gamarian" in the inscription which refers to the construction of a building by Rukn Khan in 1512 A.D. who conquered it. The Bengali version of the word is 'Astagram'.<sup>62</sup> This indicates that Astagram was conquered in 1512 A.D. The same inscription tablet was again inscribed in later date on its reverse side. It has been tentatively deciphered and dated to 998 A.H./1588 A.D. It records the construction of a mosque by one Masnad Ali Fateh Khan.

At present Astagram is situated on the easternmost border of Mymensingh, Kishoreganj and western part of Sylhet (Habiganj). Sylhet was conquered in 1303 A.D. as recorded in the same inscription where 'Hashtgamarian' is written. In the map of 1895<sup>63</sup> Astagram is shown within Sylhet district.

There is a ruined tomb on the northern bank of the pond, the bricks of which are although of the same size as that of the mosque, belong to an earlier ruined monuments.

---

62. Habiba, . Dhaka Vishyavidyalaya Patrika (Dhaka, 1985), P. 155.

63. List of Ancient Monuments in Bengal, 1985, P. 214.



Stapleton has not mentioned the find spot of the inscription but Mvi. Shamsuddin Ahmad records that it must have been found in Sylhet when Astagram was within the jurisdiction of the same district in 1895 A.D.

From the above discussion it is clear that Astagram was conquered by Rukn Khan in 1512 A.D. and he erected a building, bearing an inscription tablet. Later on, the famous saint Qutb, most probably was buried in the same spot. By the side of his tomb Masnad Ali Fateh Khan built the mosque and probably reused the earlier inscription tablet.

## 2. The five domed mosque of Dhaka :

By the side of the busy road of Becharam Dewry, there is a five domed mosque, measuring 44'-0" x 20'-0" externally with 5' thick walls. The mosque is within an enclosed courtyard with the sanctuary on the west. Its extended area is largely covered by graves including the tomb of Baba Kashmiri.

At present, the mosque has been enlarged both on the south and east. The renovated mosque contains an inscription on its latest enlarged part, bearing the date 1291 A.H./1875 A.D. Even in its renovated condition it retains some pre-Mughal architectural features, such as the curved cornice, the octagonal corner towers, slightly projected mihrab, five domes directly resting on the walls etc. The cornice has been changed and decorated with carved parapet. This part along with the later addition of slender turrets, have imparted to it a Mughal look in the style. Its central mihrab still bears some original decoration on its projected part, such as, a terracotta resette on the spandrel of the central mihrab traceable beneath the modern coloured wash. It is provided with three pointed mihrabs in the qibla wall and one door on each side of the north and south.

Architecturally it belongs to early 17th century and bears close affinity to the Astagram mosque (1588 A.D.).

3. Bangshipur Shahi Masjid, Satkhira : Plate 7a

This mosque, enclosed within a boundary wall, is situated in Shyamnagar Upazila of Satkhira District. It is a single aisled rectangular mosque roofed over by five domes and measures 36'-0" x 33'-0" with a height of about 36'-0". The five arched openings on the east wall correspond to the five mihhrabs in the qibla wall. The mihhrabs are projected at the back and each one is surmounted by a small arched recess. It is a peculiar feature rarely noticed anywhere. The central doorway is larger (about 7'-3") than the others. Similarly the central mihhrab is relatively larger than others and is provided with an extra mincub by its right side. All the mihhrabs are embellished with terracotta panels depicting the usual chain-and-bell and other abstract motifs, somewhat similar to that of the Gorar mosque at Jessore. The north and south walls, each 6'-0" thick, contain one arched doorway. Its low domes rest on lateral arches and pendentives. Dr. Dani identified this mosque as a three domed one but actually it was roofed over with 5 domes.<sup>64</sup>

The five-domed mosques represent a peculiar form that is only found in Sonargaon region. This type of monument began to appear during the later part of the 15th century A.D.

Although the treatment of doorways and mihhrabs remained the same, variation is found in the construction of the dome. In this type of mosques the use of stone pillars were avoided, lateral arches and pendentives were used in construction while their surface decoration mostly consisted of terracotta in panels.

---

64. Dani, Ibid, P. 250; Alamgir, Report of the Archaeology Department, 1985, P. 3.

Six domed type mosques :

Six domed type of mosque is another characteristic of the architecture of Sonargaon.

The Majumpur or Mohzompur Mosque, the Razakhoda Mosque and the Rampal Mosque belong to this group.

1. Mohzompur Mosque (Fig. 18) :

Mohzompur is a village about 17 miles north-east of Dhaka city, five miles north-east of Mograpara, and on the south of Katrabh under moauza Musunabad. The village stands on a high land surrounded by a marshy low lying area of Sonargaon. The Mohzompur mosque is enclosed within a courtyard with an entrance on the north and the sanctuary on the west. A ring well and the tomb of Shah Langer are located on its east side, while other unidentified graves are on the south. Very recently, a minar has been built on the north-east corner. Outside the enclosure wall on east, there is an ancient graveyard which contains a vaulted grave.

The six domed mosque of Mohzompur has been renovated and enlarged with an addition of a flat roofed varandah on the east. The cornice has been straightened and domes rebuilt. The original corner towers of the eastern wall are traceable inside the extended varandah.

Although the western corner towers have been renovated, the projected mihrab on the back wall has retained some of its original features, bearing floral terracotta art in a niched panel.

The mosque measures 30' x 22' internally and the walls are five feet thick. Three arched entrances on the east correspond to the three mihrabs on the qibla wall. The central mihrab is entirely built of black basalt, carved with hanging chain and floral motif. Its upper part is slightly projected and decorated with leafy terracotta designs, while its lower adjoining areas are highly embellished with brick mini-pillars, trefoil cusped arches and lotuses on the spandrels. The shafts of the pillars bear carved relief with the usual motif of bells hanging from chains. But the two side mihrabs are of bricks, decorated with stylised hanging patters. The north mihrab is at present being used as a closet.

There are engaged stone pillars in each wall each of which has a square base, octagonal shaft and square capital. The free standing octagonal stone pillars which carry the roof contain circular bases, but their capitals are of different style. The small domes rest on lateral arches and pendentives.

The mosque is divided into two aisles and three bays by two pillars. This arrangement has produced three doors on the east, two in each side of the north and south and six domes over the roof. This is usual in the mosque architecture of Bengal.

The mosque is not at all impressive and its decorative (brick size 7" x 7" x 1½") features surviving on its corner towers, back wall and mihrabs are noteworthy. The vaulted grave of the nearby graveyard indicates its antiquity of the pre-Mughal period.<sup>65</sup>

---

65. M.S. Islam, Personal visit, 1980.

Its inscription stone, from which the mosque was dated, fell and broke into such small pieces that it became virtually undecipherable. The ruling king was named Masnad Shahi Ahmad Shah. The names of the other two persons, Feroz Khan and Ali Musi Sultan, are also recorded in the epigraph. As Sultan Shamsuddin Ahmad Shah, son of Jalaluddin was the only Sultan of Bengal with this name the mosque is usually assigned to him.<sup>66</sup> This Sultan had a very short reign of only three years from 836 A.H./1432 to 839 A.H./1436 A.D.

As the decorative treatment of the terracotta designs do not evince a refined taste of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty or the Husain Shahi period, the scholars are skeptic about its dating. Although the usual octagonal corner towers, terracotta designs, dwarf pointed arched entrance and the use of different types of stone pillars indicate pre-Mughal origin, its decorative treatment tends to put it in the declining period of the Sultani architecture.

It is curious to note that the decorative features and treatment of terracotta designs bear similarity with that of the Qutub Shahi Mosque of Astagram dated 1588 A.D. Even the builders name bears some similarity. The Astagram Mosque was built by Masnad Ali Fateh Khan while the Minzampur mosque was built by Masnad Shahi Ahmad Shah. The title of both the names suggest an Afghan origin adopted by the local chiefs like Isa Khan Masnad Shahi. Following the above indications, it appears more likely that the mosque was built in the late 16th century.

---

66. Taish, Tawarikhi Dhaka, 1910, P. 125; Hasan, Ibid, P. 58. Sukhamaye Mukhopadhyaya, Ibid, P. 336.

This dating will raise a controversy as the place has been identified by Blochman<sup>67</sup> with the site of Mu'zamabad, the mint-town of the independent Sultans of Bengal. He justified his identification on the basis of the six domed mosque of ~~Mhazapur~~ However, following points may be borne in mind while fixing its date :

- (a) Majumpur was situated on a strategically important site on the bank of the Brahmaputra river like the outposts of Peril and Dhamrai,<sup>68</sup> where local officers like Siqder or Deputy ruler resided and which was the abode of many Saints and Fakirs. This is indicated by the existence of the tomb of Shah Langar at ~~Mhazapur~~ and by the location of an ancient graveyard.
- (b) As usual, in later days the mosque was built by one Masnad Shahi Ahmad Shah by the side of the tomb. It was embellished by local craftsmen.
- (c) Majumpur or Mahjompur was never named as Moazzampur as assumed by Blochman. Mu'zamabad, the original name of the mint town was therefore, not identical with either Moazzampur or ~~Mhazapur~~. As such Mu'zamabad must be looked for elsewhere. The mosque of ~~Mhazapur~~ most probably was founded in the late 16th century and not by Sultan Shamsuddin Ahmad Shah, son of Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah (1432-1436), as generally assumed. However, there is no doubt that it was a place of some historical importance.

## 2. Reza Khoda Mosque, Bagerhat (Fig. 19)

On the south-west of the 9-domed mosque and within a hundred yards of the Zindapir, mosque to the west, across a village pathway, there is a ruined building known to-day as the Reza Khada mosque. Originally it might have been known as Reza Khan's mosque. Only some portions of the walls are still standing. It was a mosque roofed over with six domes which were carried

67. Blochman, Contribution to Geography, JASB, 1873, P. 365.

68. S. Ahmed, IB, IV, P. 80.

on stone columns, the remains of which are still scattered around. There are three tall arched entrances to the east and two on each of north and south. Corresponding to the number of entrances on the east there are three beautifully decorated mihirabs on the western wall, which still exist. Each mihirab is flanked by richly decorated octagonal brick pilasters and their niches are multi-cusped with spear-head decorations. Terracotta perforated jalis were formerly inserted for ventilation at intervals in the thick walls. The four octagonal corner towers seems also to have been decorated with bands of terracotta mouldings, which have now virtually disappeared. The mosque measures 54'0" x 40'8" externally with 5'9" thick walls. The height of the eastern entrance is about 15'- 6". Lime plaster was used in the ceiling.

The perforated jali design may help us in dating the mosque. Similar jali design is found in the original boundary wall of the tomb of Khan Jahan, built in 1459 A.D. Khan Jahan introduced some special architectural features in Bengal. The present mosque contains most of those features. Most of the Khan Jahan's mosques are undated. His earliest dated monument, most probably, was built in 1452 A.D. during the reign of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah.<sup>69</sup> As most of the monuments erected during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah are undated, we may presume that Khan Jahan built monuments in between 1442 to 1459 A.D. As such the construction of the mosque under discussion may also be placed in the same period. Incidentally this is the first six domed monument of Sonargaon. The octagonal corner towers bear similarity with those of nearest Zinda Pir mosque and 10 domed Ronvijoypur mosque. Its nomenclature suggests it to be a Shia mosque.

---

69. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 55.

3. Mosque at Rampal (Fig. 20) Plate III

This mosque is locally known as the mosque of Baba Adam Shahid, located by the side of the tomb of that famous saint. Regarding this saint local tradition relates that he was a very powerful 'Darvesh' who came to that part of the country with an army during the reign of Ballal Sena. "Having encamped his army near Abdullapur, a village about 3 miles north-east of Rampal, he caused some pieces of cow's flesh to be thrown within the fortress walls of the Hindu Prince. Such popular story is associated with many other muslim saints of the country such as that of the Shah Sultan Balkhi Maheswar of Mahasthan. The story further relates that Ballal Sena being furious at the desecration of his palace sent messengers to find out the persons responsible for such audacious act. One of the messengers shortly returned and informed him that a foreign army was at hand and that the leader was then praying within a few miles of the palace. Ballal Sena at once galloped to the spot, found Baba Adam still praying and with one blow, cut off his head".<sup>70</sup>

Although the story relates to the Sena period (13th century) the inscription tablet of the mosque definitely places it to a later date. It records that "the Jami Mosque was built by the great Malik al Muazzam Malik Kafur, at the time of the king Jalal-ud-duniya wa-ud-din F'ateh Shah the king, son of Mahmud Shah, the king in the middle of the month of Rajab 888 A.H./ August 1483".<sup>71</sup>

---

70. Dani, MAB, P. 154.

71. S. Ahmed, IB, IV, P. 118.



Measuring 43'8" x 33'0" externally the mosque is entered from the eastern side by three pointed arched doorways, set within recessed rectangles. Each rectangle is separated by offset panels, showing above, small niches with hanging motifs in terracotta. Further up there are horizontal mouldings. Similar designs are also visible at the corners above the ground level upto a height of three feet. The curved cornice bands are finely decorated with small niches in rows.

As a whole, the mosque is very sparsely decorated. Nevertheless it is a very important building as it reflects some fine features of the buildings at Pandua and Bagerhat. The offset and recesses on the facade, the terracotta designs with hanging motifs, horizontal moulding patterns, cornice bands and octagonal corner towers all are indicative of a mature style. The use of small domes in clustet is a Tughlaqian influence carried here from Bagerhat.

The sanctuary is divided into two aisles and three bays by two free standing stone pillars inside. These are square at the base, octagonal above, sixteen sided on top and terminate in square capitals. The arrangement of columns provided three entrances on the east and two on either side of the north and south.

But there is no opening here on either side. There are only blind arched recesses with rectangular niches. This is an uncommon feature of the mosque. "There are engaged pilasters on the walls with stone impostes above, from which the arches of the pendentives spring." The mosque is surmounted by six domes.

There are three brick mihhrabs on the western wall corresponding to the three eastern entrances of the mosque. The central mihhrab is projected outside which, at the back side, contains a niched panel decorated with terracotta motifs similar to that of the Majumpur mosque. The concave interior of the mihhrab is very finely decorated with small motifs of terracottas.

Its upper part is decorated with leaf, jali and floral design, carved in brick, and beneath that line, there are brick pilasters on either side of the concaved mihhrabs. Their shafts contain bell-and-chain motif together with beads hanging down from the apex. Other mihhrabs are very simple.

There is a three-stepped stone pulpit in the mosque. But its originality is doubtful.

From architectural point of view its importance cannot be over emphasised. This is the second dated extant mosque in this remote part of Bengal whose builder was the Governor or Malik of the area.

The facade of the mosque bears similarity with the Eklakhi mausoleum, the Chunakinola and the 9-domed mosques of Bagerhat whereas its mihhrabs and roof resemble the partly ruined mosque of Reza Khoda at Bagerhat. The style of six domed mosque, introduced at Reza Khoda appears to have been carried over to Rampal, Tribeni and Gaur in later days. Reza Khoda mosque though undated, probably belongs to a period between 1442 and 1459 A.D. and is the first mosque of this style. The style was carried over to Rampal in 1483 A.D. and from Rampal, the style was introduced to the mosque of Jalaluddin at Satgaon, near Mogra in 1539 A.D. Next six domed mosque was the Jhan Jhaniya mosque of Gaur dated 1535 A.D. At Sailkupa in Jessore, there is an undated

six-domed mosque, but probably that was erected during the Humayun Shahi period. The largest six-domed mosque in Bengal is located in Nagaon district, built in 1558 A.D. Architecturally the Kusumba mosque resembles the style of the Rampal mosque but its embellishment is, by far, the finest in this group. The last mosque in this series most probably, is the mosque of Mojumpur.

The use of six domes, probably derived its origin from the clustered multidome of the Khirki mosque near Delhi built in 1375 A.D. Both Reza Khoda and the 9-domed mosques belong to the same period.

Nine domed type mosques :

The nine-domed style is a special group of mosques in Sonargaon.

1. The nameless nine-domed mosque at Bagerhat (Fig.21)

It is located on the south western bank of the Thakur Dighi; the mausoleum of Khan Jahan stands on the northern bank of the same.

This elegant square mosque<sup>is</sup> built on a low plinth and enclosed within a modern boundary wall. It is 49'9" on each side<sup>72</sup> with 7'7" thick wall. The mosque is entered through three pointed arched doorways on each side of the east, south and north. There are three mihirabs in the qibla wall.

The facade is divided vertically into several rectangles and shallow arched recesses in panels. Within each rectangular recess there is one arched doorway. At the top of each rectangle there are horizontal tiers of brick lines producing moulding designs, similar to the designs used in Rampal and Chunakhola mosques. As usual, the spandrels of arches are decorated with large full blown lotuses, most of which have now disappeared. The use of panel and recesses produce the light and shade in the facade and breaks the monotony of the plain wall.

The sanctuary is divided into three aisles and three bays by four free standing stone columns. This arrangement has produced three openings in three sides and three corresponding mihirabs in the qibla wall. The columns are octagonal at the base and sixteen sided at the top. Similar stone columns are engaged in each wall and their presence are discernible from the square imposts that they carry. The arches that carry the domes rise directly from these stone columns. The roof is carried on lateral arches and pendentives and is covered by 9 domes.

72. Report of the Archaeology Department (Mr. Alamgir), 1983.

The four round corner towers are decorated with eight bands of brick mouldings. Amongst the three mihrabs the multicusped central mihrab is larger than others and each one of these is framed within a rectangle, the top of which is decorated with projected carved bricks. From the apex of each mihrab familiar chain and pendant motif hangs.

The use of clustered dome was introduced first in the so-called tomb chamber of Sikander Shah in Pandua, built in 1375. Similar domes were used in the Khirki mosque at Jahanpanah near Delhi in 1375 A.D. Still earlier however, the mosque of Zafar Khan Gazi at Tribeni, built in 1298 was found to be roofed over by a cluster of 10 domes. The mosque under discussion probably was built by Khan Jahan in mid-15th century. The nine domed style was introduced in Balkh in about 12th century A.D. and it was reused in Turkey in the 15th century A.D.

2. Masjidkur Mosque, Khulna : Plate XIIb

The nine-domed square mosque at village Amadi situated on the bank of the river Kobadak is an important monument of the south-western part of Sonargaon territory. The place and the mosque is known as Masjidkur or "dug up mosque".<sup>73</sup> It is said that while clearing jungle at this place for cultivation, the cultivator came upon an old mosque close to the river bank and therefore it was called Masjidkur.

The mosque measures 54' on each side externally with 7' thick walls. The sanctuary is provided with three low dwarf pointed arched entrances in each side except the qibla wall, where there are three mihrabs. The usual offset and recesses in the wall produce an effect of light and shade. Each

---

73. District Gazetteer, Khulna, Calcutta, 1908, P. 188.

arched doorway, originally decorated with terracotta floral motifs on its spandrels is framed within rectangular panels. In between the rectangles there is a narrow vertical panel similar to that of the 9-domed mosque at Bagerhat. The curved cornice bands and corner round towers invest the monument with an attractive appearance. The unplastered mosque with plain wall surface bear close affinity to the monuments of Khan Jahan.

The sanctuary is divided into 3 aisles and 3 bays by four free standing stone pillars, composed of two pieces; the lower part being octagonal and the upper 16-sided. These pillars together with those embedded in each wall, carry the nine domes above.

The most striking feature of the mosque is its slightly wider space at the middle. The central doorway, the central mihrab, the middle row of domes are slightly bigger than others. The mihrabs are tastefully decorated with terracotta scrolls as usual.

The mosque is protected by the river Kobadak on one side and by ditches on three other sides. The reason for such defensive measure is uncertain. Mr. Zakaria is of opinion that this was a treasury house, and as such it was protected on all sides. But its isolated situation precludes such possibility. On the contrary its existence on the border of Sonargaon territory leads one to presume that it was an outpost of the legendary generals like Bura Khan and Fateh Khan who were posted to guard this turbulent frontier. Their attributed graves on the banks of the river support the assumption.

### 3. Mosque of Satoir, Faridpur (Fig. 22)

The old mosque of Satoir is situated in a village of the same name about 18 miles south-west of Rajbari. It is a square building measuring 61'6"

each way externally with about 7'9" thick walls. There are three arched door openings in each wall and three mihrabs on the qibla wall. Four octagonal corner towers do not rise above the cornice level. The cornice is gracefully curved and decorated with tiny niches in terracotta motifs.

This three aisled mosque is divided into three bays by four free standing stone pillars. They together with the massive walls carry the small domes above in cluster. Traces of the original decorations are still visible on the building inspite of extensive repair and renovation undertaken recently. On stylistic ground the mosque may be placed to the late 15th century and grouped along with the Masjidkur and the Qasba mosques.

#### 4. Qasba Mosque, Bakerganj (Fig. 23) :

Kasba or Qasba usually means an urban habitation. The 9-domed old mosque is now situated in a village named Qasba. At present there is no sign of urban habitation around the place but the name and position of the mosque on the bank of a tributary of the old Ganges signifies its importance. In the medieval days even if it was not a flourishing town, it was most probably a thriving business centre that grew up in the 15th century. It is interesting to note that the mosque stands on the bank of the same stream that used to flow from Fatehabad in the 15th century. The mosque of Pathrail, the famous 10-domed mosque at Bhangra upazila, stands on the upstream of the same rivulet, while the Qasba mosque stands on its lower reach. The same stream at its upper reaches was formerly connected with the Bhairab, on the bank of which stands the Bagerhat group of monuments. The monuments in between the old stream of the Ganges, the Kabadak and the Bhairab, bear close similarity and are mostly undated.

The massively built square 9-domed Qasba mosque is similar to those of Masjidkur and the 9-domed mosque at Bagerhat. Its eastern wall is pierced by three arched doorways and corresponding to it the qibla wall is relieved with three mihrabs. The only variation here is its single opening in each<sup>74</sup> of the north and south sides.

Architecturally the mosque is a plain one like others of this group with curved cornice, round corner towers, rectangular recesses and sparsely adorned with terracotta floral designs. The arrangement of three aisles and bays in the sanctuary has been made by four stone pillars.

This undated mosque may be placed to the same period as that of the Nine-domed Mosque at Bagerhat as it displays all the features of that mosque. Local legend ascribes it to one Sabi Khan whose identity is uncertain. One Sadi Khan, a courtier of Sultan Shamsuddin Ahmad Shah (1436 A.D.) who helped in reinstating the second Ilyas Shahi dynasty on the throne of Gaur, might be one of the disciples of Khan Jahan. It is not unlikely that Sabi Khan the builder of the Qasba mosque and Sadi Khan the courtier of Sultan Shamsuddin are the same person.

The study of 9-domed mosque series reveals some interesting facts. All the mosques are square and undated and are more or less equal in size. The Satoir mosque is about 59' feet each side, the Masjidkur mosque is about 54 feet and the Qasba is about 56 feet in each side except the Bagerhat mosque which is about 50'. All are situated in and around the south-western part of Sonargaon territory. Except the nine domed structure at the back of the Adina mosque at Pandua, there is no nine domed mosque in Bengal other than these mosques under study. So the development of this style in this region is significant.

---

74. Recent visit by the researcher.



The sanctuary of this type of mosque is divided into three aisles and bays by four stone pillars which together with their massive walls carry the multi-domed roof above. These are entered through three low pointed arched entrances, the spandrels of which are decorated with embossed terracotta floral motifs. The mosques are mostly plain except the use of offsets and recesses. The rectangular panel that usually frames each archways is decorated at the top with horizontally placed brick designs in three rows, a features which is also common to six-domed mosques of Rampal and 10-domed mosque of Pathrail. The decoration on the mihrab usually consists of the chain-and-bell or pendant motif. Except the Qasba mosque, all other mosques of the series have three entrances on each side.

The multi domed style in Bengal appears to have been first introduced in the Mosque of Zafar Khan Gazi at Tribeni (1298 A.D.). Later nine domes were used in the adjacent monument of the Adina Mosque at Pandua in 1375 A.D.

The use of curved cornice, offsets and recesses on wall, low arched door and battered walls were introduced in the Eklakhi monument of Pandua. But the use of round towers at the corners, plain surface with sparse use of terracotta and massive structure were characteristic features of the Shait Gumbaz mosque in Bagerhat. These features together with 9-domes in clusters appeared in the Tughlaqian style of Delhi as illustrated in the Khirki mosque about a century back.<sup>75</sup>

Thus this nine domed mosque style appears to have been first introduced by Khan Jahan sometimes in the middle of the 15th century in Sonargaon territory. The use of this "cup shaped dome" most probably was of local origin. This shape appears to have derived its origin from the large earthen jar,<sup>76</sup> commonly known as "chaaree" if placed upside down.<sup>77</sup>

75. P. Paul, Islam & Muslim art, (London, 1980), P. 246.

76. Percy Brown, Ibid, P. 24.

77. H. Khatun, Itihash Patrica (Dhaka, 1975), P. 85.

These mosques admit light only through its small doorways and as such the interior is relatively dark.

The style of three aisled division of the sanctuary was probably borrowed from the Jami Mosque of Damascus built in 712 A.D. This style was introduced in Bengal as early as in 1300 A.D.<sup>78</sup> in the Bara Masjid of Chaota Pandua. Similar arrangements were found in the Zanana Gallery of Adina Masjid (1375), the mosque of Darasbari (1479 A.D.), the mosque of Gunmant (1484 A.D.), the mosque of Chhota Sona (1493-1519 A.D.), the mosque of Bara Sona (1525-26 A.D.) and the Shahzadpur mosque (15th century). The three bay division began in Bengal in the so-called "adjoining Ladies Vestibule"<sup>79</sup> of the Adina Mosque. It was continued in the Nine domed Mosque of Sonargaon territory. The use of nine domes in cluster was introduced in Turkey in the Mosque of Ulu Jami and it was carried over to Delhi by Ferozian masons in the 14th century A.D.

The use of nine domes together with "chauchalas" of Shait Gumbaz at Bagerhat introduced a building style which is also found at the Darasbari mosque in Gaur (Rajshahi). Flanking the central bay on either side of the later mosque there were (original) nine domes in clusters, carried on stone pillars, all of which have disappeared now. The mosque was built in 1479 A.D., during the reign of Sultan Yusuf Shah. This is probably the site of the earliest Madrasah in Bengal.

---

78. Hasan, Ibid, P. 100.

79. Hasan, Ibid, P. 100.

Ten domed mosques :

Ten domed series of mosques constitute an important group under the multi-domed mosque style.

## 1. The Mosque of Ronvijoypur at Bagerhat :

The undated rectangular mosque at Ronvijoypur in Bagerhat, measuring 70' x 27'-5" is a doubled aisled building, divided into five bays by four free standing brick pillars. This arrangement of aisles and bays has produced five entrances on the east, five mihhrabs in the qibla wall and two doors on either side of the north and south walls. Thus ten square bays have been formed which are surmounted by ten low domes directly resting on the walls.

Although originally it had all the characteristic features of the period, such as the octagonal corner towers, curvilinear roof terracotta floral motifs on spandrels of arches, now they have been divested of these features by recent restoration works. The cornice has been straightened, corner towers rebuilt and the mihhrabs and arches have all been white washed. The mihhrabs are too dwarf in size. The last one on the northern side is a bit higher than others. The massive brick piers, <sup>and</sup> the decoration on the mihhrabs are unimpressive.

## 2. The Pathrail Mosque :

The Pathrail mosque, commonly known as the mosque of Majlis Aulia, was built in Faridpur on the bank of the dried up bed of Kaliganga, a branch of the Gorai, that formerly flowed to the south. It is significant that at the lower reaches of the same river near ~~Bakerganj~~ , stands the nine domed Qasba mosque. Another stream joins the same river near Pathrail and their combined flow meet the Bhairab in its downward course, on the bank of which stands the Bagerhat group of monuments.

In all respect, the Pathrail mosque resembles the Rouvijoypur mosque, except that it is slightly large. It measures 84'-0" x 40'-6" externally (internally 70' x 27'-3") with 7' thick wall. Two inscriptions have been found in the mosque but have not been deciphered. Dr. Dani ascribed it to the Husain Shahi period. On stylistic ground, it appears to belong to the late 15th century.

The massive brick pillars, small mihhrabs with chain and floral designs and squat flanking pillars of mihhrabs are all similar to the Rouvijoypur mosque at Bagerhat.

### 3. Mosque of Kuliarchar, Kishoreganj (Fig. 24)

The Kuliarchar mosque in Kishoreganj is another beautiful mosque of the Sultani period. This undated rectangular mosque, measuring 60' x 20' is roofed over by ten small "inverted cup" - shaped domes. This highly renovated monument has been enlarged on its eastern side by a covered flat roof. At present there is an ablution tank on the north. Its corner octagonal towers with cupolas rise slightly above the cornice band. The curved cornice gracefully slopes to the corner towers. The eastern facade is pierced with five arched entrances, each bordered within a rectangular frame and two pointed arched doorways on north and south.

The sanctuary is divided into two aisles and five bays by four free standing brick pillars. The western inner face is relieved by five mihhrabs, the central one of which is decorated with terracotta scrolls similarly to the Astagram mosque. A distinctive element of its decoration is the inclusion of a crescent motif which is still traceable beneath its modern white wash.

This design indicates its origin to the later part of the 16th century when the Astagram mosque was built. The extended area of the mosque indicates that originally, it was built on the western part of a courtyard on an elevated land but later the open courtyard seems to have been partly covered.

The ten domed type of mosque in Bengal, introduced first in Tribeni was followed in Sonargaon territory much earlier than in Gaur. The earliest of this series is the mosque of Zafar Khan Gazi at Tribeni. Next to this in chronological sequence is the Ronvijoypur mosque which was built probably in the middle of the 15th century during the lifetime of Khan Jahan. The Pathrail mosque also seems to have been erected about the same period.

Among the ten domed Mosque in Bengal, the Tantipara Mosque in Gaur (1480), the Bagha (1523) mosque in Rajshahi and the Qutub Shah (1582) Mosque in Pandua follow one another chronologically. The ten domed Kuliarchar mosque was a product of late 16th century A.D.

From the above discussion it seems clear that the adoption of five domes in a row is the result of successive experiments in evolving increased number of domes. The ten domed style was achieved by placing both five domes in a row and two rows together.\* In other words, internally the sanctuary was divided into two aisles and five bays. Their style was further elaborated by multiplying the number of domes. The elaboration of this style and the proliferation of squat domes above, reached its climax at the Shait Gumbaz Masjid in Bagerhat which is the largest and the most imposing edifice of its kind in Bangladesh.

---

\* Five domes in a row was built in Bangshipur mosque, originally known as Tenga mosque.

The development of multidomed style in Sonargaon reached its climax in the Shait Gumbaz Masjid. It is a unique religious edifice in the history of Muslim architecture.

1. ✓ The Shait Gumbaz Masjid (Fig. 25) Plate IVa, p. 126.

The Shait Gumbaz Masjid in Bagerhat is the largest surviving monument of its kind in Bangladesh. The south eastern part of the Sonargaon territory, presently known as Bagerhat, was formerly known as Khalifatabad in the 16th century, where in 1516 A.D., a mint town of Nusrat Shah existed. Long before this date, a simple but dignified mausoleum of Khan Jahan was built here in 1459 A.D. He is commonly known in the local legend as 'Khanjali' or 'Khwaja Jahan'. The mosque under discussion in particular and many other monuments of the locality are ascribed to him.

At present there is no inscription in the mosque but on the basis of its style and decoration, it has been differently dated by various authors. Percy Brown considers its date as 1440; Dani places it to the period of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah I; Hasan dates it to 1450 A.D.; Satish Chandra Mitra places it to the period of 1439-59; while Nazimuddin identifies it with the period in between 1442-1459 A.D.

Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah I, ascended the throne of Gaur after the death of Sultan Shamsuddin Ahmad Shah. Ahmad Shah was assassinated in 1436 by his nobles and this was followed by court intrigue for several years. The first coin of Mahmud Shah was issued in 1441 A.D. The earliest inscription of this Sultan bears the date of 847 A.H./1443 A.D.<sup>80</sup> He ruled until 1459 A.D., and Khan Jahan died in the same year. As such the authors, mentioned above, tried to locate the period within the reigning years of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah.

---

80. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 126.

But Khan Jahan, probably was residing at Bagerhat since 1411 A.D. Possibly he went there after the death of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah with the experience of the architectural styles of Tribeni, Pandua and of the imperial court of the Tughlaqs in Delhi. As a result, the monuments of Bagerhat bear close affinity to the monuments of those places. As such the monuments of the south-western part of the territory of Sonargaon can be placed in between the period of 1411 and 1459 A.D. This was the result of experience gathered from varied type of monuments in those places which led eventually to the creation of this magnificent and largest brick mosque of Bangladesh. This supposition finds support in the words of Mr. Zakaria that for the construction of such a large number of monuments Khan Jahan must have spent at least 40 years. For the erection of this gigantic mosque alone, 10 to 15 years might have been needed.<sup>81</sup>

"Among the many surviving monuments of the Khan jahani style and undoubtedly the most magnificent and largest brick mosque in Bangladesh, is the Shait Gumbaz. The translation of the name is highly misleading as 'Shait Gumbaz Masjid' means the mosque with 60 domes. In reality it is roofed over with 77 small domes including seven 'chauchala' Bengali domes in the central row."<sup>82</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that there are sixty columns inside. Locally they are called 'Khamba'. In Turkish language 'Kumbas' means 'Gumbaz' or domes. Most probably, these two words 'Kumbas' and 'Khamba' created the confusion and the meaning of Kumbas prevailed. Dr. Islam is of opinion that the name should have been 'Shait Khamba Masjid' rather than 'Shait Gumbuz or 'Kumbas Masjid'. This is

---

81. Zakaria, Bangladesher Pratna Sampad (Dhaka, 1984), P. 343 & 307.

82. N. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 138.

more appropriate and meaningful<sup>\*</sup>. The vast prayer hall of the gignatic Jami Masjid with a dimension of 160' x 108' externally (142' 3" x 90' 6" internally) presents a sombre atmosphere inside. Though there are eleven arched doorways on the east and seven on each of the north and south sides for ventilation and light the interior is relatively dark. The nearly bare massive walls are slightly battered and about 9' 0" thick.

The sanctuary is divided into seven aisles and eleven bays by a 'forest of sixty' columns or 'Khamba'. These are slender and carved stone columns of varied designs. Six columns in ten rows have been placed at right angle with the qibla wall. The columns together with side walls produce 70 squares and 7 rectangles which are surmounted by seventy seven domes including 7 'chauchalas' in the middle row. The middle row is broader than others. The central door measures about 9' 7" board while the side ones vary between 5' 10" and 6' 2" only. The middle bay divides the mosque into two halves, each being covered by 35 domes in cluster<sup>\*</sup>. When such two units are combined by a row of seven

- \* The Shait Gumbuz Masjid is also known as the 'Khanjali Masjid'. This name 'Khanjali' is also used in identifying his tomb, as 'Khanjali Mazar'. This sort of identification of a mosque or mazar either in the name of the builder or the locality is usual. Normally people classify mosque according to the number of domes or pillars provided in them. Local people identify it by local names or by the name of the builders, such as the Fakir Bari Masjid at Bagerhat is known as 9 domed mosque, Shait Gombuz Masjid, probably also was similarly named after the number of pillars supporting its domes. As such it is a misnomer. Moreover, Khan Jahan built more than one mosque, all of which could not be named after him. So it is appropriate to call it 'Shait Khamba Masjid' of Bagerhat.
- \* The Satgachia Mosque near Barobazar in Jessore, as appears from its surviving part, was a 35 - domed mosque (now ruined). There were 5 aisles and 7 bays, thus forming internally 5 apartments each covered by a dome. Though the mosque is almost ruined and still largely covered under a mound its partly excavated portion displays a wealth of terracotta decorations on the mihrabs in graceful designs. In the absence of any inscription or any dependable record it can not be definitely dated but from its surviving style and motifs of decorations on terracotta it may be tentatively dated to the 16th century.



'chauchala vaults over the middle bay, it produces the seventy domed mosque excluding the 'chauchalas'. If the 'chauchalas'<sup>83</sup> are added with the domes, the total number comes to seventy seven. Over the centre of the eastern facade there is a triangular pediment or do-chala form of the cornice from which the eaves gracefully curves slightly downward on either side and terminate at the round corner towers. Dani also observed that "the pediment is a unique decoration and may have been derived from the gable ends of the do-chala hut roof of Bengal". This decoration has produced a pleasing appearance in the otherwise bare wall.

The 'chauchala' design of the middle bay is unlike any in Bengal or elsewhere. The bay, which is wider and a bit higher than other bays, has been divided into seven small rectangles. Each rectangle is roofed over by a special type of four segmented roof style or 'chauchalas'. Each 'chauchala' has coverings on four sides, curved upto a certain point and then covered by a flat covering. Its ceiling is exactly like any 'chauchala hut' ceiling in Bengal. Only difference is that this has been copied in brick architecture to cover a rectangular space as against an ordinary dome which is constructed over a square. The 'chauchala' dome may be regarded as a four segmented vault design. The slender columns within the sanctuary are placed at a distance of about 12' from each other except the central one where the distance is 16' 6". There are four brick columns having stone imposts above\*.

The eleven pointed-arched entrance on east correspond to the ten mihrabs and a postern door on the qibla wall. The central mihrab has been constructed of carved stones with multicusped arched alcove and flanked on either side with decorated terracotta pilasters and the spandrels are embellished with

---

83. Hasan, Mosque Architecture of Pre-Mughal Bengal; (Dhaka, 1979), P. 153; referred from Dani.

\* This is a peculiarity. The middle 2 row of columns are higher than others.

expanded lotuses. Through the centre of the mihrab a carved chain hangs with a square motif at the end. The side mihrabs are all made of bricks and decorated similarly. Next to the central mihrab on the north the postern door is a peculiarity of the mosque. This innovation of opening a doorway on the qibla wall was introduced in Bengal in the great Adina Masjid of Sikander Shah and repeated in the Shait Gumbaz and the Satgachhia mosque. The use of this sort of postern door is also found in some of the medieval congregational mosques in India, Kufa, Basra and Egypt. These doors were reserved for the exclusive use of the governors of the area.<sup>84</sup> One of the seven doorways on the south wall is provided with a fretted pattern in brick. (plate XVe)

The massive but simple appearance of the mosque with its slightly tapering walls and towers invest it with a rare dignity. The pierced facade is bare, plasterless and is of pale red colour. Each doorway is framed within pointed arches, the spandrels of which were once relieved with floral embossings, much of which has now disappeared or defaced in course of centuries.

The bastion-like huge corner towers are round and slightly tapering. The two storied towers on either side of the east, are ascendible by a spiral staircase. These are known as 'Andhar Kuthi' and 'Rowshan Kuthi', which originally appear to have been used as Mazina. Their tops rise about 13' above the roof level and are surmounted by semi-circular cupolas. The back towers on the west, however, do not have windows. Water runs down the roof over the bodies of these towers at angles.

The northern and southern walls are similarly bare but the spandrels of arches are sparsely decorated with terracotta vegetal and geometric patterns. ( J.V.R.M. . . . . Plate VI e. . . )

84. Bari, JVRM, 1982, P. 189.

It is rather curious that the unusually extensive ablution tank, one of the largest in the area, is located on the west or the back side. This strange location probably was due to the fact that Khan Jahan's residential area was also located towards the west and he used to enter the mosque through the small postern door provided in the west wall.

"At the Shait Gumbad Mosque which lies on the east bank of the Ghora Dighi, remains of a boundary wall on the eastern side containing the fine entrance gateway, have been found in the past. Its course can now also be identified on the southern side, by following a recently dug ditch. The adjacent landowner confirmed that during excavations for the ditch he had removed bricks which had obviously belonged to the former wall surrounding the mosque. On the western side there are some indication of the former enclosure wall but on the northern side the wall has been buried under the made up ground"<sup>85</sup>. Similar boundary wall was traceable around the Singer mosque, located near the Shait Gumbad Mosque on south. Moreover, a wedge-shaped brick was found embedded exactly at the south-east corner of this enclosure wall. This indicated that small turrets similar to those on the corners of the inner and outer boundary wall of Khan Jahan's Tomb were probably part of wall around Singer mosque, suggesting that these slightly tapering corner turrets were an architectural feature of Khan Jahan's time, repeating, as it were, the four large turrets on the corners of the main building". The archaeologists responsible for the preservation of Bagerhat Monuments think that "the surrounding wall might have contained similar windows of carved brick resembling the balusters or the jalis or pierced windows evident in the inner enclosure wall of Khan Jahan's tomb, a common feature during this and earlier periods". (plate 1c)

---

85. Report of United Nations Development Programme, (Paris, 1983), P. 109.

Thus on the basis of available evidences it may be surmised that the Shait Gumbaz Masjid was originally surrounded by an enclosure wall with an imposing entrance gateway on the east and the walls were strengthened by smaller turrets at four corners. The slightly tapering turrets might be somewhat similar to the larger round turrets at the corners of the mosque. The walls might also have had decorations of baluster in Jalis. From this conjectural reconstruction the analogy follows that the slightly tapering corner turrets at four corners of the boundary wall was an architectural feature of Khan Jahan's time, repeating as it were, the four large turrets on the corners of the main building.

As the mosque was surrounded by wall, the plinth of the sanctuary was at the same level of the courtyard. We do not usually find boundary wall around mosques of Sonargaon and curiously their sanctuaries are built in level with the surrounding ground. But this is the most usual feature of a mosque in Bengal. The courtyard and the sanctuary are always placed on the same level such as at the Adina Mosque, the Chhota Sona Mosque, etc. Nevertheless it appears very strange that the builder of such as imposing and massive edifice like the Shait Gumbad Masjid did not think of building it on a high plinth. It could not only gain greater prominence but also could save the structure from the perpetual dampness resulting from inundation of the sea-water, especially in view of the fact that the buildings of the Imperial Tughlaq style near Delhi, which it emulates as an easternmost off-shoot, are all erected on high imposing podium even though they were raised in a relatively much drier land.

Regarding the builder, recent archaeological report asserts that the Shait Gumbaz Masjid and Khan Jahan's tomb were probably built by Khan Jahan himself during his lifetime. The report observes "Ulugh Khan Jahan undoubtedly

erected his own mausoleum with its adjoining mosque and almost certainly also erected the spectacular Shait Gumbaz Masjid with fine entrance gateway".<sup>86</sup> Khan Jahan not only built the mosque and other monuments around Bagerhat but in all likelihood also erected the mosque of Mymensingh, dated 1452 A.D. and repaired the Churihatta (Nasrallah Gully) mosque of Dhaka in 1459.

The Shait Gumbad Mosque is the earliest surviving mosque in Bangladesh. Its certain features were followed by most of the monuments of Gaur and Pandua. The 'chauchala' style introduced in the Shait Gumbaz Masjid was followed at the Darasbari (1479) and the Chhota Sona mosque in Gaur. The latter monuments also appear to have emulated the feature of introducing side wings on either side of the middle bay (chauchala) from the former.

The idea of covering the roof with a cluster of domes was followed in the highly renovated/<sup>second</sup> mosque of Ronvijoypur. Here the roof is covered with a cluster of 10 domes, arranged in two rows of five each. Its earliest appearance in Bengal is found in the mosque of Zafar Khan Ghazi at Tribeni built in 1298 A.D. Later the use of 5 domes in a row continued until the maximum number reached 7 rows in a wing. This resulted in forming a cluster of 35 domes, in total.

The style of 10 domes in two rows is found in the mosque of :

1. Zafar Khan Ghazi at Tribeni, 1298 A.D.
2. Ronvijoypur at Bagerhat, 15th century (early period).
3. Tantipara at Gaur, 1480 A.D.
4. Gua multi, Gaur, 1489 A.D.
5. Pathrail, Faridpur, 15th century A.D.
6. Qutb Shahi, Gaur, 1582 A.D.
7. Kuliarchar, Kishoreganj, 16th century A.D.

86. Report of UNDP (Paris, 1983), P. 77.

This style of clustered domes in rows are also found in the mosque of Shahzadpur in Pabna, (three rows with five domes each, 16th century) and in the mosque of Satgachhia, Jessore (arranged in five rows with seven domes each, 16th century A.D.).

Khan Jahan probably was influenced by the style of the Bara masjid at Chhota Pandua and the Adina Mosque at Hazrat Pandua (1375).

Tombs :

Tomb is the second important religious monument in Islam. In the history of Islamic architecture/<sup>the</sup>tradition of erecting tomb or mausoleum began with the construction of Qubbatus Sulaybia in the 9th century A.D.<sup>87</sup> Prior to that the construction of an edifice to house the dead was regarded as unislamic, for, it meant glorification of the deceased. Muslim tradition says that the most beautiful tomb is one that vanishes from the face of the earth<sup>88</sup> and the Quran mentions :

"All that on earth  
Will perish;  
But Will abide (for ever)  
The face of the Lord".<sup>89</sup>

However, the erection of tomb is a common practice in all Muslim countries. The instinct to perpetuate the memory of the dead and the love for this world led to the development of this type of architecture. As such tombs are often the highest artistic creations in Muslim Art. usually these are constructed over the graves of rich and eminent persons like the Sultans, Saints and the like.

- 
87. On the west bank of the Tigris stands an octagonal tomb building called Qubbatus Sulaybia. The tomb is that of Caliph al Mustansir who died in 862 A.D. and is attached to his Greek mother. This is the earliest tomb in Islam; K.A.C. Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, part-II, (Oxford 1969), P. 285.
88. H. Khatun, JVRM, (Rajshahi, 1982), P. 185; T. Burckhardt, Art of Islam Language and Meaning, West Hen, Kent (England, 1976), P. 93.
89. Al Quran, IV, 26-27. (translated by Moulana Yusuf).

Our study on the tombs of Sonargaon territory is confined to the following :

1. Tomb built by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah;
2. Tomb of Khan Jahan;
3. Tomb of Fath Shah;
4. Tomb of Shah Jalal;
5. Tomb of Shah Langar; ✓
6. Tomb of Shah Niamat Allah Butshhekin;
7. Tomb of Qutub Shah;
8. Tomb of Shah Ali Baghdadi; ✓
9. Tomb of Baba Salih; ✓
10. Tomb of Shah Kamal and others. ✓

7. Tomb of Sonargaon (City). Plate XVIIa

The stone-tomb of Sonargaon at Shahchilapur is the earliest existing structure of the Muslim period in Bangladesh. This is ascribed to Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, the third Ilyas Shahi ruler. The tomb stands on the edge of a dried up pond, locally known as Magh Dighi, located about a hundred feet east of the Panch Pir Dargah and on the southern outskirts of the old city.

The fine stone sarcophagus consists of a single block of black basalt forming a keeled top which is placed on a table of the same material.<sup>90</sup> According to James Wise "this was formerly surrounded by an enclosure of stone pillars which supported a canopy on the top".<sup>91</sup> It was embellished with chiselled work on stone. Today, the decoration is seen only on its eastern face. The cornice of the table has a line of billet decoration below a beaded ornament - a pattern very similar to that of the stone carvings of the 'Badshah Ka Takht' in the Adina Mosque. Below this line there are series of panels, each decorated with trefoil arched niche and a hanging motif within. This looks like a 'shika' design hanging )

90. Dani, MAB, P. 73.

91. James Wise, JASB, XLIII, (Calcutta, 1874), P. 88.

from the roof of an arched window<sup>plate II, a. b.</sup> This has been described by Dani as a motif of a lamp.<sup>92</sup> This motif bears similarity with that of the Adina mosque in Pandua and the Goaldi mosque in Sonargaon. Only difference is that, here they are held in double chain, whereas in the mihrab of the Adina Masjid it is suspended from a combined single chain. At the head of the tomb formerly stood a sandstone pillar, which carried a lamp this was known as 'chiragdan'. The style of the design and carvings bring this tomb very close in time to the Adina mosque.

There is no inscription on the tomb but this appears to be the earliest existing monument to copy the decorative designs of the Adina masjid. Local legend ascribes it to Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah who died in 1409 A.D.<sup>93</sup> Thus the monument may be placed to the period of early 15th century A.D., when Ghiyasuddin was the Sultan of Bengal. Architecturally the monument belongs to the period of this Sultan as it follows the decorative style of the Adina mosque built by Sikandar.<sup>94</sup>

---

92. Dani, Ibid, P. 73.

93. HB, Vol.II, Ibid, P. 109.

94. For identification of the tomb see page 59-60.



It is a matter of great controversy among scholars as to the identity of the person buried in this stone-tomb. Legend ascribes it to Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. Dani thinks that probably Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah was buried here.<sup>94a</sup> But Buchanan records that he was buried in the Elkakhi mausoleum at Hazrat Pandua.<sup>94b</sup> Literary evidences testify that he fought against his father Sultan Sikandar Shah near a village Sonagarh<sup>94c</sup> about 20 (twenty) miles west of his place, in course of which Sikandar was severely wounded and died on the lap of his penitent son. Azam Shah though overwhelmed by the grief at this tragic event, left his father's funeral at the hands of his courtiers and rushed to Pandua to establish his succession to the throne. It appears more likely, therefore, that Sikandar Shah was hurriedly buried here at Sonargaon. The tomb of Sikandar Shah, usually identified with the chamber at the back of the Adina Mosque, is unlike a tomb. Once it was a nine domed chamber, all of which have collapsed now. There is no stone grave within this chamber. In all likelihood, it was a resting place and a place where the Sultan's horse could reach upto the second storey of the mosque, through a postern gate which gave access to the Badshah ka Takht, or a protected enclosure of the mosque for the Sultan, a feature common to the Chhota Sona Masjid

94a. Dani, MAB, p.13

94b. Martin, Antiquity and History, Vol. III, p. 649, Dani MAB, p.80.

94c. Reazus Salatin, (Beng. Tran.) by akbaruddin, Banglar Itihash, Dhaka, 1974, p.182.

Though Blockman identified the place with a village at Pandua, ( JASB, 1873 p. 256 ), James Wise identified it with a village near Jafraganj within the original district of Dhaka near the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna. He even tried to establish the tradition of the locality that the tomb of Sikandar Shah was located somewhere in the neighbourhood some eighty years ago, ( JASB, 1874, p.85 ). Salam's identification of the place Sonagarh near Sonargaon suggests the 'neighbourhood' within Sonargaon. Again our identification of Sonagarh within present Jafrabad area of Dhaka lends another support in favour of the supposition of the burial of Sikandar Shah in Sonargaon. This view also got support by Hasan who mentions that under the circumstances Sultan Sidandar Shah could not have been buried in the annexe of the Adina Masjid, ( Mahmudul Hasan, Mosque Architecture of pre Mughal Bengal, Dhaka, 1979, p. 92 ).

and the Darasbari Masjid. Buchanan Hamilton's record only lends support to this supposition. Though Golam Hussain Salim has mentioned that the tomb of Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah was at Pandua. He in fact, did not specifically indicate it to be the Eklakhi tomb. He has stated on the contrary that there was a large tower over the mausoleum at Pandua where the family of Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah, son of Raja Ganesh are lying buried on the floor.<sup>94d</sup> It is not, however, clear what he exactly meant by a 'large tower'. Sayeed Ilahi Bakhsh identified the large grave inside the Eklakhi mausoleum with that of Jalaluddin and the smallest one with that of his son, while the grave located between the two was identified by him to be of Jalaluddin's wife.<sup>94e</sup>

Among all these observers, only Buchanon followed different tradition and mentioned three tombs belonging to Ghiyasuddin, Jainuddin and Wazuhuddin. But as Ghiyasuddin died at Pandua and Sikandar Shah at Sonargaon, it is more logical that Ghiyasuddin was buried at Pandua and Sikandar Shah at Sonargaon. Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah was a great builder and a patron of indigenous craftsmen-both Hindus and Muslims. The Eklakhi mausoleum is a synthesis of the two art traditions. The prevailing terracotta art of Bengal in which the Hindus excelled was liberally used in this monument. It is indeed a museum of terracotta art where as many as 13 patterns are found embellishing its wall surface. Ghiyasuddin spent his early life at Sonargaon and later at Gaur. In all likelihood he built the present tomb at Sonargaon for his father and erected the famous Eklakhi mausoleum at Pandua for his own interment.

94d. Riazus Salatin, 1788, Eng. tran. By A. Salam 1844, London, p. 118. In British Museum, the Eklakhi Tomb has been indicated as that of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah ( Personal visit, M. S. Islam, 1982.)

94e. Dani, quoted from the JASB, 1895, p. 211; MAB , p. 80

Sikandar Shah built the stupendous Adina Mosque at Pandua in combination of stone and brick masonry. In the Eklakhi mausoleum also we find the use of both stone and carved brick. However, here the use of stone is on a very limited scale. " The real function of the stone is confined to pillars, to their bases and capitals. The introduction of curvature in the cornice inaugurated a new character in building art of Bengal. This distinctive feature, desired to throw off the excess rain water from the roof during copious downpour, is also found in the monuments of south Bengal. Eklakhi tomb was indeed a landmark in the development of Bengali Muslim Architectural style which was adopted in a modified form by Khan Jahan to his monuments. The tomb of Khan Jahan, the single domed mosque close to it, the Chunakhola, the Singer and the Bibi Begni's mosques are excellent modified examples of the Eklakhi style in Sonargaon territory.

Tomb of Khan Jahan (Fig.26). Plates XVIIa.b. XIX,a.b.

The single domed austere tomb of Khan Jahan, commonly known as 'khanjali majar' is about a mile and a half south-east of the Shait Gumbad Masjid. This is situated on the elevated northern bank of an extensive square tank locally known as Thakur Dighi. The tomb is accompanied with a mosque in the west and enclosed within a brick boundary wall with an arched entrance on the north-eastern corner and three arched gateways on the south. Of course, there is a small entrance on the eastern wall. The second enclosure wall within contains a gateway on the south through which the domed tomb chamber of Khan Jahan is approached. The interesting feature of this is the provision of a 'chauchala' vault accommodated within a two-centered arched passage the soffit of which reproduces the 'chauchala' hut design with bamboo rafters. This bears similarity with 'chauchala' domes of the Shait Gumbad masjid. In between the tomb and the mosque, there is a stone tomb traditionally ascribed to certain Muhammad Tahir who is believed to have been originally a Brahmin and whose family name was Thakur. It is likely that the Dighi on south of the tomb, known as Thakur Dighi derived its name after that family. It is also believed that he was a converted Muslim and the first disciple of Khan Jahan. The existence of the two graves of Khan Jahan and Ali Muhammad Taher alias Pir Ali within the same compound might be a possible explanation

of calling this complex by the local people as the Majar of Khanjali\* (i.e., Khanja + Ali). The domed tomb chamber of Khan Jahan is a 45'-0" square building having round corner turrets. It rests on a base of five courses of dressed stone. Three arched entrances lead to the interior of the tomb through the walls on three sides except the fourth on the north. The arches are transformed into rectangular door frames by large stone slabs. The walls are about 8'-0" thick and relieved internally by two spear-headed multicusped small arched lamp niches on each wall.

The sarcophagus is of black stone raised on three steps of the same material, the whole being covered with beautifully carved verses from the Quran as well as an inscription stating the date of demise of Ulugh Khan Jahan in Persian. The longest stone of the raised platform is decorated and originally inlaid with scarlet and gold.<sup>95</sup> There are still evidences that the floor of the tomb was originally decorated with glazed tiles of white, blue and brown colours, some bearing attractive floral motifs. Stone brackets of the corners support the squinches which transform the square into octagon in order to carry the base of the hemispherical dome above. The curved cornice bands gently slope outwards to the corner round towers, each faceted at regular intervals. The towers are crowned with ribbed cupolas. It is the only monument in Bengal still retaining its original cupolas.

---

\* The word 'Khanja Ali' appears to be a full name. But Khan Jahan was never mentioned as 'Ali' in the inscriptions. This is always written as 'Ulugh Khan Jahan' and 'Khan al Azam Khan Jahan'. Commonly he is called Khan Jahan of Bagerhat. The inscription of Dhaka dated 1459 A.D. mentions Khawja Jahan and another inscription of Mymensingh dated 1452 A.D. mentions Ulugh Khan (Jahan). As such it is not understood why he is called 'Khan Jahan' 'Ali' or Khanja Ally'.  
The tomb of Khan jahan is under a domed structure while the tomb of 'Ali' lies in the open, west of it. The tombs are similar to one another and rest on a platform but a striking feature of the tomb of Khan Jahan is the provision of a crypt or a mortuary chamber beneath the tomb chamber, a feature which is rarely noticed in any other tombs in Bengal. For these two tombs, the complex is probably called as the Majar of Khan Jahan and Ali or 'Khanjali'.

95. . UNESCO Research Papers I, Islamic Heritage of Bengal Edited by Michell, (Paris, 1984), P. 174.

An earlier description of the tomb is available in an unpublished manuscript of 1866 written by Reginald Craufuird Sterndale, procured by late Prof. Johana E. Van Lohuizen de Leeuw from a private collection. The manuscript supplies not only the description of the monument, it also contains several charming water colours prepared by the author, who was the Magistrate of the Sundarbans in 1866 A.D. One of the illustrations shows the tomb along with the tank and crocodiles. This is probably the earliest illustration of the monument.

Regarding the interior description of the tomb Sterndale gives the following descriptions :

"The floor was covered with hexagonal encaustic tiles, of many patterns and colours the chief 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 at Issuripoor, being carved on 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 of Gaur and those at Rajmahal, which were brought from the former place".<sup>97</sup> The stones of the tomb at Sonargaon are also of the same material and seem to have been brought from the Rajmahal hills in Bihar.

---

96. UNDP Report (Paris, 1983), P. 111; UNESCO, Research Papers I, The Islamic Heritage of Bengal edited by G. Michell (Paris, 1984), P. 173.

97. UNDP Report (Paris, 1983), P. 111.

At present no tile is found on the floor but a few of them are still sticking out in the three steps around the tomb itself. The scarlet and gold of the inscription on the upper part of the tomb have also vanished. As in many other Muslim tombs the manuscript says, "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". If these inscriptions are studied they may furnish highly important historical information about Ulugh Khan-i-Jahan. Following the description of the manuscript it is presumed that originally the outer and the inner enclosure walls had turrets at four corners which were similar to the larger turrets on the corners of the tomb, one of which still survives on the south-west corner of the outer wall. There were four axial entrances, one in each wall of the outer enclosure. The eastern entrance door contained a gateway to the complex which is indicated by the existence of a ruined eastern wall of an unidentified structure, locally known as the refectory complex of the great man. Its roofless walls have a distinct curved profile bearing at places floral decoration on either side of its northern entrance.

Immediately on the west of the tomb of Khan Jahan the square mosque is a duplicate of the tomb with an entrance gateway on east. Each of the enclosure wall was decorated with Jali works. Such works are also found at the Shait gumbad Masjid, the Raza Khoda Masjid and the Singer Masjid of Bagerhat.

The austere tomb of Khan Jahan bears some affinity to the famous Eklakhi tomb at Pandua. The Eklakhi tomb is a fine example of blending of the local Bengali elements on the <sup>one</sup> hand and the features derived from Muslim

monuments outside the country on the other. The terracotta motifs, the stone door lintels, the balcony designs, the curved cornice, corner towers, all display local influence while the huge drumless dome, octagonal interior, the squinches etc. are derived from extraneous sources.

The Eklakhi, with all these features, appeared in early 15th century, precisely at a period when Khan Jahan settled in Bagerhat. "It is possible that the area had been settled previously, but by the time Khan Jahan arrived, the region had completely reverted to jungle."<sup>\*</sup> He founded the city "in the midst of the wild and inhospitable Sundarbans, a vast marshy and impenetrable tract along the coast line of southern Bangladesh". Later on, Bagerhat became a mint town and came to be known as Khalifatabad in the 16th century. But where from did Khan Jahan come ?

We know that the title of the Wazir of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah at Pandua was Khan Jahan.<sup>99</sup> The Sultan had one general named Azam Khan.<sup>100</sup> It is further learnt that the brother of Nur Qutb Alam was a Wazir in the court of Pandua and his name was Azam Khan.<sup>101</sup> For some-time he was in the court of Delhi under the Tughlaqs.<sup>102</sup> He was, however at Pandua when Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah was killed.<sup>103</sup> This same Khan Jahan<sup>appears</sup> to have settled subsequently at Bagerhat in the first half of the 15th century and began to layout a Muslim Colony in earnest with various buildings in it, while the architectural excellence of Eklakhi was still fresh in his memory.

- 
- \* This is also evident from the stone sculptures fished out of the Thakur Dighi. Satish Chandra Mitra, Jessore-Khulnar Itihash, P. 271.
- 99 . Karim, Banglar Itihash, Dhaka, 1977, P.501; Sukhamoy Mukhapadhy, Banglar Itihaser Dusho Bachar, (Calcutta, 1980), P. 74.
- 100 . Buchanon. Referred from a manuscript in Martin's Antiquity; Vol. II, P. 649.
- 101 . Md. Enamul Haq, A History of Sufiism in Bengal, (Dhaka, 1975), P.173; S. Murtaza Ali, Saints of Bangladesh, (Dhaka, 1971), P. 45.
- 102 . Blochman, 'Contributions to the Geography & History of Bengal', JASB, 1873, P. 262.
- 103 . Chapter IV, Azam Khan was the Khan al Azam Khan Jahan or Chief Wazir at Pandua; Yahya, son of Arab Shah was his another Khan Jahan.



But the Eklakhi mausoleum was erected with materials appropriated from earlier monuments in the area, while the materials used in the tomb of Khan Jahan were specially quarried for it. However, the style of the Eklakhi was considerably modified by Khan Jahan by providing an underground mortuary chamber; a gateway on one side and the mosque on the other and finally by providing a vast tank on south for the ablution of the faithful.

But although the tomb of Khan Jahan is sparsely decorated on its outer surface it is richly embellished inside.

The extremely simple but graceful little tomb of Khan Jahan is a striking example of tomb architecture in Bengal, especially because of its glazed tile work of scarlet and gold, the underground crypt, the double enclosure walls, jali decoration, the duplication of turrets at corners and the black stone sarcophagus engraved all over with elegant Arabic and Persian calligraphy.

The location of the sombre monuments on the bank of an extensive square tank invests it with an enchanting natural environment befitting the last resting place of a great man.

The eastern gateway and the square single domed mosque on the west reminds one of the Mughal system that developed later in the 17th century A.D.

The tomb of Fath Shah :

A small mound covered by heaps of brickbats near the old Pathrail mosque is locally identified as the tomb of Fath Shah. Near this ruined, shapeless masonry grave, the local people testified to the existence of an old mosque measuring about 12' square. But no trace of it survives today.

Fath Shah is believed to be the conqueror of Fatehabad. He was probably a warrior saint and a theologian named Amin Jainuddin Fath Shah who came to Bengal sometimes in 800 A.H.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup>. N.M. Azmi, Hadiser Tattyakatha, (Dhaka, 1982), P. 21.

Tomb of Shah Jalal :

The tomb of Shah Jalal, the Muzarred is situated on the top of a hilly area in the northern outskirts of the town in Sylhet. The existing buildings are so highly renovated that its modern look has covered all the Sultani characteristics. "The existing building do not go beyond the 17th century".<sup>105</sup>

The far famed tomb complex of Shah Jalal is within an enclosure wall. The complex consists of his masonry tomb, Chilla Khana, graves of his companions and the Bara Gumbad. Close to this complex, there is the ablution pond containing coloured fishes and a 'Langarkhana'. Beyond this tomb complex the famous well of the saint known as the 'chashma' is situated. Its water is regarded sacred by the visitors. The well stands within a square enclosure of brick wall.

It is said that Shah Jalal of Sylhet came to Bengal to propagate Islam. Famous traveller Ibn Batutah went to Sylhet to meet him in 1345 A.D., when Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah was the ruler of Sonargaon. Sylhet was conquered by the Muslims in 1303 A.D.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> Dani, MAB, P. 240.

<sup>106</sup> Shamsuddin Ahmed, IB, IV, P. 25.

The tomb of Shah Langar :

This tomb stands in the village ~~Mojumpur~~ near Dhaka under Rupganj Upazila. According to a legend, Shah ~~Langar~~ is a great saint, who is buried in a large mesonry tomb, now covered under corrugated tin shed.

Tradition ascribes him to be a prince of Baghdad who renounced the world, wandered through different countries and at last came to this place and died. A recent research has revealed that one Shah Langar was the grandson of Saint Shah Mozaffar Balkhi, a great theologian and contemporary of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, who was a teacher in the Kushke-lal-Madrasah of Feroz Shah Tughlaq at Delhi and also a 'Khalifa' of Shaikh Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri. His full name was Shaikh Ahmad Langar, who died in 891 A.H./1487 A.D.<sup>107</sup> The date of this saint is nearer to the date of saint Shah Ali Bughdadi of Mirpur(1480 A.D.).<sup>108</sup> The supposition that Mojumpur was once an important historical place is supported by the existence of this tomb.

There is a ringwell within the enclosure wall on the north of the tomb. This is a peculiarity of the low lying area of Mu'zamabad, where instead of ponds, wells were used. Similar ringwell is noticed at the Fakirbari Mosque at Hatabo within the same locality of Mauza Musumabad.

The tomb of Niamat Allah Butshekin :

The earliest Muslim habitation in Dhaka at Narinda is testified by the existence of the mosque of Binat Bibi, dated 1456 A.D., while the extension of the area towards north is also proved by the existence of the tomb and mosque of Shah Niamat Allah Butshekin of Dilkusha. This great saint, as tradition relates, had settled and died here in the 16th century. It is believed that he was a prince of Baghdad like Shah Ali of Mirpur and Shah Langar of ~~Mohzampur~~

107.. N.M. Azmi, Hadiser Tattyakatha, (Dhaka, 1982), P. 33.

108.. Dani, Ibid, P. 230.

He renounced worldly pleasures and pomp of the royal court, wandered through various places and at last came to Bengal and settled and died at Dhaka. There is another tradition which relates that Shah Niamatullah, an inhabitant of Sultan was a descendant of Shah Kamal of Sherpur, who settled there in early 16th century and died in 1545 A.D. He inherited all the properties of Shah Kamal under greater Dhaka. Butshekin is a Persian word which means killer of non-believers or idolbreakers. Similar title is found in the history of Kashmir, where Sultan Sikander was known by the title of 'Butshekin' in 15th century A.D.<sup>100</sup> It is not known whether there is any relation between these two persons.

But from careful study of various traditions it appears that Niamat Allah Butshekin came to Bengal along with Shah Kamal during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah and settled in the northern reign of Sherpur in Mymensingh district for the propagation of Islam. He seems to have fought and killed many non-believers and earned the title of 'Butshekin'. After the death of Shah Kamal he inherited his large landed property and settled at Dilkusha where his tomb and mosque are located.

The tomb is a flat roofed enclosed area, where there are three graves. The highly renovated 5-stepped masonry grave of Shah Niamat Allah Butshekin rests on a high platform. There is a terracotta rosette on the grave. Originally it was roofed over by a domed structure, which collapsed long ago. There were doors on south and east side the traces of which are still visible. The entire area was renovated by one of the members of the family of Nawab Nasrat-Jang. Two members of the same family were buried on either side of the grave.

---

<sup>100</sup>. M.S. Islam, An unpublished article on Tomb of Jainul Abedin in Kashmir, Dhaka, 1986; Percy Brown, Indian Architecture, (Islamic period), Bombay, 1967, P. 81.

The tomb of Outb Shah :

The Astagram Mosque, popularly known as Outb Mosque, is inscribed to the famous saint Outb Shah. He is buried by the side of the mosque. The ruined grave was originally a domed structure where the bricks and terra-cotta motifs exhibit similar designs/<sup>as</sup> on the surviving four tombs on its south side.

The tomb of Shah Ali : Plate ~~XXV~~ b.

About 8 miles to the north-west of Dhaka near Mirpur there is a tomb, known as the Dargah of Shah Ali Shaheb. It is a square building with about 36 feet sides from outside with 7 feet thick walls. It contains the tomb of the saint in the centre. The structure is surmounted by a single large dome with four small minarets at the corners. Over the central doorway there are two stone inscriptions, one in Arabic Tughra character and the other in ornamental Persian character.<sup>110</sup> The local tradition relates that about 400 years ago Shah Ali, a prince of Baghdad, having renounced the pleasures of the world came with his four disciples at this place and lived in a small mosque. He ordered his disciples not to disturb him in his prayer, for 18 months and shut himself up in the mosque for the performance of penances without any food or drink. The time passed and when only one day remained the curiosity of the disciples was aroused by a noise within, as if some liquid was boiling over a fire. They forced open the door and found nothing remaining of the saint except a pool of boiling blood. They remained transfixed when an aerial voice in the tones of the saint ordered them to inter the blood as his remains at the spot, which they did. The place became famous for its sanctity, and ever since pilgrims have been flocking in large numbers. Sometime after his interment an unknown merchant, who made large profits in his business in the

<sup>110</sup>. Dani, MAB, Dhaka, 1961, P. 206.

neighbourhood which he attributed to the saint, built this present 'Dargah' or tomb on this spot. Close to this tomb, there is a mosque, originally built in 1480 but was renovated by Shah Muhammad Shahib of Maghbazar in 1806 A.D. The out houses that are seen within the compound were built by Sir Ahsanullah Bahadur.<sup>111</sup>

According to a later inscription, fixed in the mosque, Shah Ali came from Baghdad along with 40 disciples to preach Islam. He settled in Mirpur and died in 1577 A.D.<sup>112</sup>

The masonry tomb of Shah Ali is devoid of any architectural importance. It is built on a high plinth, probably containing within an underground cell, where the grave lies.<sup>113</sup>

#### The tomb of Baba Salih :

In the town of Bandar stands a masonry tomb belonging to Haji Baba Salih, a high official of the Royal Court. At first he was "Malik Baba Salih" or governor, under Jalaluddin Fath Shah, who built a mosque at Khondkar bagh in 1482 A.D. Then the same officer built other mosques at Bandar and Azimnagar under Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah in 1504 and 1505 A.D. He built his own tomb at Bandar by the side of a mosque before his death in 912 A.H./1506 A.D.<sup>114</sup> The building which originally covered this grave has long disappeared. Now a new enclosure wall has been erected.

#### The tomb of Shah Kamal :

The tomb of Shah Kamal is at Kasba in Sherpur district on the bank of the Brahmaputra river. It is enclosed within a brick wall but the dome of the tomb has collapsed. It was in existence during the visit of Blochman in 1874 A.D.<sup>115</sup>

111. Dani, Dhaka, PP. 263-64.

112. Dani, Dhaka, P. 264.

113. District Gezetteer, Dhaka, 1910, P. 9.

114. S. Ahmed, IB, Vol. IV, P. 172.

115. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 136.

At present the masonry tomb has been enclosed within a larger boundary wall. The tomb chamber is entered through a doorway to the south. There are several carved bricks loosely placed on the top of the present wall. The motifs of these carved bricks bear similarity with those of the ruined Kasba mosque nearby, probably dated to the 16th century A.D.

According to Blochman Sherpur Parganah was formerly called "Dashkahania Bazu", under which name it occurs as a Mahal of Sarkar Bazuha in Todarmal's rent-roll of Bengal in 1582. In Jafar Khan's rent-roll of 1722, the old division into Sirkar was abolished and 'Dashkahania' Bazu appears under the name of 'Sherpur-Dashkahania' as a parganah, annexed to the district of Dhaka.<sup>116</sup>

There are many local legends about the original muslim settlements at Sherpur. One such legend ascribes the first settlement to 'Mujlis Samana' or Hymayun Shah, a nephew of the king. It further states that on his arrival at Garh Jaripa, which was then a dense jungle, he found a man named Jaripa, half buried in the ground. The man left that place on the assurance that the place would be named after him as 'Garh Jaripa'. The place was named as such and still continues to be known by this name. Later on the king sent an army to Garh Jaripa to suppress the rebellious nephew but he (nephew) committed suicide.<sup>117</sup> According to 'Sherpur Bivaran', the first Muhammadan proprietors of Sherpur were the Ghazi family.<sup>118</sup>

In 1503 A.D. Shah Kamal came from Multan to Bengal and settled at 'Durmakh', where as the legend narrates, he miraculously changed the course of the river Brahmaputra and saved the land from erosion. Being pleased at this, the Ghazi granted a Jagir to Shah Kamal. Shah Kamal lived in that place and died in 953 A.H./1545 A.D. and was buried at Sherpur.<sup>119</sup>

- 
116. S. Ahmad, Ibid, P. 135.  
 117. S. Ahmad, Ibid, P. 135.  
 118. S. Ahmad, Ibid, P. 136.  
 119. S. Ahmad, Ibid, P. 25.

The same source also narrates that Shah Niamat was the nephew of Shah Kamal who accompanied the latter in his journey to Bengal. He settled at Sherpur and after the demise of the saint without any issue, became the owner of the Jagir. At present his descendants are looking after the tomb of Shah Kamal and that of Barai Bibi, the wife of the saint.\*

Tomb of Baba Khashmiri :

"The most remarkable example of the continuation of pre-Mughal building plan is demonstrated by the mosque at Atia in Tangail district, which is a square domed structure with a varandah roofed over by three small domes"<sup>120</sup>. According to an inscription the above mentioned mosque was built in 1609 A.D. by one Sayyid Khan Panni in honour of the great saint Pir Ali Shahanshah Baba Khashmiri whose masonry tomb is lying nearby.

Dargah of Shah Paran, Sylhet :

"About four miles away from Sylhet, on way to Jaintiapur, there is the Dargah of Shan Paran. The Dargah is perched on the top of a small hillock. In an enclosure of brick wall lies the masonry grave of the saint. At the head of the grave there is a cheragh dan"<sup>121</sup>. To the west of the tomb there is a three domed beautiful mosque probably of the Mughal period.

---

\* During the reign of Sultan Shamsuddin Feroz Shah a fort was built on the frontier of Dashkahanua by the Muslim army which was sent to subdue a rebellious relative of the Sultan. Probably the family continued to live at Sherpur or Dashkahaia Bazu until the time of Husain Shah, when Hasht Gamarian or Astagram, together with Kamrup, Kamta, Jainagar and Orrisa were conquered by Rukn Khan in 1512 A.D./918 A.D. ( IB. , P. 25). By this time, Shah Kamal reached Sherpur and settled there in 1503 A.D., and received land grant from the Ghazi family, established by Sikandar Khan Ghazi, after a lapse of two hundred years. One more thing is to be noticed here that Shah Niamat Allah came to Bengal along with Shah Kamal in early 16th century A.D.

120. Hasan, pre-Mughal Monuments of Bengal, Dhaka, 1969, P. 32.

121. Dani, Ibid, P. 241.



The tomb of Mannan Shah Darvesh, Sheikh Yusuf and Sheikh Kamal at Mograpara :

"Adjacent to the Fath Shah's single domed mosque on south are remains of three tombs, built on a common platform and enclosed by a masonry boundary wall which are popularly attributed to Mannan Shah Darvesh, Sheikh Yusuf and Sheikh Kamal".<sup>122</sup> The plastered walls are covered with deeply curved Bengali chau-chala roof. It is believed in the locality that the saint came to Bengal from Persia in about sixteenth century and the family exercised tremendous influence on the locality in the succeeding centuries.<sup>123</sup>

Graveyard of Sonargaon 1300 A.D. :

This graveyard is in Mograpara, Sonargaon, and is said to be the earliest graveyard in the area where Abu Tawwama, the famous theologian was buried in early 14th century A.D.<sup>124</sup> At present there are eight graves of various sizes on the bank of a pond and the graves are surrounded by a modern wall.

Tomb of Ponkai Dewanah :

In the Gohatta locality, north of Mograpara, there is an undated tomb believed to be of the famous saint Shah Abdul Ali Ponkai Dewana or Dewan. "He (Abdul Ali) got the nickname of 'Ponkai Dewanah' because he sat for twelve years in the forest so absorbed in his devotion that he was unconscious of the lapse of time. When, found, he had to be dug out of the mound of the white ants (ponka) that had raised around him, and which reached to his neck". There is nothing of architectural significance in it. His son and wife are supposed to be buried near his tomb. Now there is nothing more than heaps of mud.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>122</sup>. N. Ahmad, Discover the Monuments of Bangladesh(Dhaka, 1984), P. 157.

<sup>123</sup>. Dani, Ibid, P. 234.

<sup>124</sup>. N. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 134; Dani, Dhaka, P. 18; Karim, Social History, (Dhaka, 1959), 67.

<sup>125</sup>. Researcher's personal visit and local legend.

Tomb of Pagla Shahib :

To the east of Mograpara near Habibpur village there is a simple tomb locally known as Pagla Shahib's tomb. It is said that the saint became crazy due to the intensity of his devotion. Another story current in the locality is that this man was a great thief catcher and "nailed severely the thief he caught to a wall, and then beheaded him. Having stringed several heads together he threw them into an adjoining 'Khal' or creek which has ever since been known as the 'Munda Mala Khal'<sup>126</sup>. The tomb is venerated by both Hindus and Muslims and specially visited when one's child is dangerously ill.

Panch Pir Dargah :

The Panch Pir Dargah at Mograpara in Sonargaon is situated about one hundred feet west of the <sup>alleged</sup> tomb of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. "There are five small masonry tombs arranged on a platform about four feet high.<sup>127</sup> About one hundred years ago along the edges of the platform there were some unfinished brick pillars, which looked as if they had been intended for the support of a roof or perhaps only indicated existence of a trellised railing. At present there is nothing of the sort." To the south east of it there is a small single domed mosque, which was renovated several times since 1880. At the head of each grave there is one lamp post built of brick with a Bengali hut shaped design. The famous Pir Badr Alam, the patron saint of boatmen is said to have been buried in one of the graves.

---

<sup>126</sup>. . Cunningham, ASI, P. 142.

<sup>127</sup>. Dani, Dhaka, 1962, P. 257.

Idgah :

Idgah is the place where the Muslims perform their festival prayers twice in a year. Muslim calendar year has two canonical festivals - the 'Idul Fitr' and the 'Idul Azha'. On the occasion of these festivals all Muslims of a particular locality generally assemble in an 'Idgah' for a congregational prayer.

From the analysis of the data regarding the monuments of Sonargaon it is revealed that during the Sultani period, there was an Idgah at the northern border of the territory near Garh jaripa.<sup>128</sup> At present it is completely demolished. No architected features can be found there except some fragments of bricks; only excavation can reveal the ground plan of the Idgah.

---

128. . S. Ahmed, IB, IV, P. 134.

CHAPTER - III

BUILDINGS OF MISCELLANEOUS ORDER

The territory of Sonargaon had different administrative centres, often located on different river banks. Besides the religious monuments, these centres were provided with residential quarters, forts, bridges reservoirs and wells. The management and administration of these buildings were entrusted to a hierarchy of civil servants such as Wazir in iklim, Maliks in charge of Arsah and Syar-Niabat or Naib-i-Wazir incharge of a Khitta.<sup>1</sup> For the safety and security of the kingdom these centres were guarded by many military outposts and naval bases at the strategic places. Since rivers were the lifeline of communication and transport of the country from remote antiquity, important market places and port-cities sprang up on the bank of important rivers. All these administrative centres, port cities, market places and strategic outposts usually were protected by series of mud-forts.

The earliest reference of a fort is found in the sketch map of Bengal drawn by Major James Rennell in 1783 A.D.<sup>2</sup> The vestiges of the fort was still surviving in 1982 A.D.<sup>3</sup> It was supposed to be a Mughal fort built by Mir Jumla and known as Dapeka Kella.<sup>4</sup> Pentagonal in plan with four bastions at four corners, it could be approached both by land and water. Its western gate was open to the land route while its south-eastern area was accessible by water route. A big reservoir in the middle supplied drinking water to the inmates. The fort was enclosed by a brick rampart.

- 
1. A. Karim, Banglar Itihas (Dhaka, 1982), P. 263.
  2. Rennell's Map in the Dhaka University Library.
  3. I visited the area in 1982.
  4. Dani, Dhaka (Dhaka, 1960), P. 13.

The position of the fort on the north bank of the Buriganga near its confluence with Sitalakhya, is significant, for the Daveka of the Gupta period and Narkila of Tughril stood on the same site. It was protected by the jungle of Bhawal on the north and the swampy area of Areal beel on the south with a reservoir in the middle. This mud fort was used by the Chiefs of Bengal against the Mughal attack. Later it derived its name of Dapa Kella from its situation at Dapa in Fatullah area. In fact, the name appears to be a concocted form of Deveka, the capital city-site of the Guptas.<sup>5</sup> The fort was demolished by the Mughals after its conquest but again it was rebuilt by Mir Jumla and used against the Portuguese pirates.

#### The Ekdala Fort :

The earliest reference of a fort in the territory under the independent Sultans of Bengal was Ekdala.<sup>6</sup> This famous mud-fort which twice baffled the grand army of the Tughlaq, had water on one side and jungle on the other. The surrounding low lying area used to be flooded with water during the rainy season. The fort itself like an island was fortified with massive ramparts of adhesive clay peculiar to the locality and further protected by a sixty feet wide double moat running around it.<sup>7</sup> The Ekdala city was about 14 miles away from the fort.<sup>8</sup>

Ferozshah Tughlaq of Delhi invaded the city of Ekdala in 1353 A.D. but could not capture the fort. He breached a part of the rampart in 1353 A.D. when he invaded Bengal for the second time during Sultan Sikandar Shah's reign.<sup>9</sup>

- 
5. H. Khatun, 'Depeka', *Dhaka Vishya Vidyalaya Patrika*, June 1985, P. 158.
  6. *HI (Barni Twarikh-i-Ferozshahi)*, P. 509; (and Afif), P. 111.
  7. *Karim, Ibid*, P. 244.
  8. *HB, Vol. II*, P. 509 and P. 111.
  9. *Karim, Ibid*, P. 214.

The inadequate descriptions in Tawarikh-i-Feroz Shahi of Afif, Twarikh-i-Mubarakshahi of Yahya bin Ahmad and Twarikh-i-Ferozshahi of Barni do not help us much in identifying the site of the fort. Modern scholars identified the place differently. Westmachott identified it with a village of the same name in the Danjar pargana of Dinajpur District; Reverty tried to identify it with another place in the same district. Abid Ali and Stapleton thought of its existence somewhere near Pandua.<sup>10</sup>

But Beveridge identified it with a place of the same name in Sonargaon on the bank of the Sitalakhya. This view was indirectly supported by Sir Wolessy Haig who<sup>11</sup> held that Ekdala was a village situated on an island in the Brahmaputra and protected by the dense jungle which clothed the river banks. In view of the vague description of the early historian, it still remains an open question.<sup>12</sup>

The Egarsindur Fort : *plate XX, a.*

Egarsindur is a large village, situated on the confluence of the Banar, the Sitalakhya, the Arial Khan and the Geyra Sunda, - all feeder channels of the mighty Brahmaputra river. There is a high mound profusely littered with brick bats and pottery and a few masonry tombs on its top which is identified as a fort that once protected the southern part of 'Vanga'. "Tradition ascribed the fort to Koch Chief Bebuyid, who made it his capital in about the 16th century. Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala occupied the fort after defeating the Koch Chief and established a strong frontier outpost there. Mughal Emperor Akbar's famous general Man Singh, advanced on the fort in 1589 A.D. in order to suppress the confederacy of the local chiefs, headed by Isa Khan. He eventually made a treaty and withdrew. In the early 17th century the Ahom King invaded and

---

10. HB, Vol. II, P. 79.

11. Wolessy Haig, Cambridge History of India, Vol. III, P. 176.

12. The Ekdala is a confused site. There can be more than one Ekdala in the history of Bengal.

occupied the fort and still later, Islam Khan, the Mughal Subadar of Bengal, attacked the Ahom stronghold and virtually razed it to the ground. Whatever straggling remains of the fort survived that attack, were obliterated in the devastating earthquake of 1897 A.D."<sup>13</sup>

At present, the ruined mound is identified as the site of Isa Khan's fort. The 60' wide earthen rampart and the double moats if at all existed, have now completely disappeared. Only the Sadi Mosque (1652), the Shah Muhammad Mosque (1680) and the series of shapeless mounds and masonry tombs are found in the locality today. The existence of this 16th century fort on this strategic river bank testifies to the strong defence system of the Sultanate period. The bricks are mostly of 7" x 7" x 1½" size and similar to that used in other Sultani monuments.

The 'Damdama' and others :

Another site of a fort in Sonargaon was located at the present site of Damdamah. Dr. Wise in 1874 visited the site<sup>14</sup> and thought it to be a fortified city area. The mound has now been levelled by the villagers and reclaimed it for cultivation.

There are references of mud forts at Ganakpara on the bank of the Bangsi; Dumuria on the bank of the Turag and 'Dur Duriya' on the bank of the Sitalakhya but all vestiges of their remain have completely disappeared today.

The Katrabo Fort : Plate XVI b

However, the remains of the famous Katrabo\* fort is still traceable on the eastern bank of the Sitalakhya and the 'Bahadur Khan beel'. On the basis of the grids around the fort it is still possible to visualize the ground plan of the fort.

13. N. Ahmed, Discover the Monuments of Bangladesh, (Dhaka, 1984), P. 190.

14. James Wise, JASB. (Cal. 1874), P. 214.

\*Katrabo is the same place as that of Katrabhu.

Katrabo was a populous city and fortified residence of Dewan Isa Khan.<sup>15</sup> Even today it is a 'tappa' or revenue subdivision like 'tawji' under Rugganj Upazila. It appears from the narratives in the Baharistan that 'Katrabo' was situated about twelve miles off Khizirpur and Cadamrasul to the north, and on the left bank of the Sitalakhya.<sup>16</sup> The place is now known as Musumabad which includes the 'Mahalla Hatabo' on the north and 'Dewanbari' on the south. The Dewan Bari is still famous for its conspicuous ruins. This was, in all likelihood, the fortified residence of Isa Khan.

The site of the fortified city and residence of Katrabo is corroborated by the discovery of some significant archaeological remains in the Musumabad village. It is located on a high land, composed of red 'Kankar' (graval) soil on the left bank of the Sitalakhya and bounded by the marshy area of the 'Bahadur Khan beel'. The remains of the fortified city and residence of Katrabo consists of the Dewan Dighi, the vestiges of the 'Dewan Bari' with its tank known as 'Mithapushkarani' and a dilapidated tomb which stands on the northern bank of the Dewan Dighi.

The ruins of Dewan Bari consist of a large earthen fort protected by a strong 9'-6" thick brick wall on the west, south and east with octagonal corner towers. The area occupied by it is about 1000 feet in breadth (EW) by 1300 feet in length (NS) with a marshy area of about 200 feet on the west and south side beyond the rampart. The entrance is to the east through a huge pillared gateway, leading through an oblong highland, which was most probably the site of the retainer's quarters. Immediately to the south side of the gate and adjacent to the thick wall there is a highland which was pro-

---

15. K. Majumdar Mymensingher Itihas, (Cal. 1910), P. 57.

16. H. Beveridge, JASB (1904), No. II, PP. 58-59.



basely the site of the high bastion tower. From this bastion the second protecting wall extends upto the 'beel' area on east and turns north and skirts the southern bank of the 'Dewan Dighi' in the middle. This second wall again turns towards the west and meets the north-eastern corner tower of the 'Dewanbari'.

Beyond the northern boundary of the 'Dewan Bari', there are traces of brick walls which extends upto the 'Qazi Bari'. This was probably the residential part of the high officials of the 'Dewan'.

The northern boundary of the 'Dewanbari' area is marked by a number of pillars now reduced to the ground level, except one which is 10 feet high and 6'-6" square. There is a kiln burnt earthen pipe, vertically embedded in it meant to carry water inside. Beyond this pillared line inside the 'Dewan Bari', there is an oblong masonry floor measuring 150 feet by 160 feet towards south. The eastern boundary wall of this floor runs upto the west bank of the 'Mithapushkarani'.

The 'Mithapushkarani' or 'sweet water' tank is nearly a square. It is about 20 feet deep and is bounded on all sides with brick retaining walls. The bricks are not of uniform size. On its north-west bank there are traces of masonry flights of steps (ghat). The tank originally might have supplied drinking water to the inmates. Even 20 years back there were huge black pillars inside the tank, but no trace of these are now visible. On the northern bank of this pond once there was a three domed mosque. It was decorated with carved bricks having floral motifs. On the western bank of the tank there are traces of brick walls, overgrown with fruit trees, brushwood and tall grass. The bricks are of 8" x 6½" x 1½"; 7½" x 6" x 1¼; 6" x 5" x 1⅓" and even of smaller size.

In the east of the residence of high officials and beyond the north-eastern boundary of the palace there is a large tank with an island in it, known as the Dewan Dighi, which occupies an area of over 20 acres of land. It measures 1440 feet in length from north to south and 720 feet in breadth from east to west. The water is deep and clear and the banks are aligned with large old trees.

On the western bank of the Dewan Dighi there is a ruined mound littered with brick bats, covering an area of about 56 feet in length and 46 feet in breadth. It was probably the site of an ordinary 'hammam' perched on a masonry ghat, called Rajghat.

There is a square island picturesquely situated in the middle of the 'Dewan Dighi'. (p. 161 b) This was connected, until 1972, by a causeway with the west bank. There might once have been a gateway on the northern boundary of the 'Dewan Bari' adjacent to the Rajghat, which was the water route of the low lying area of 'Bhati'.

There is an enclosed graveyard with a ruined tomb in it on the northern bank of the 'Dewan Dighi'. As it appears from its site, it seems that the enclosed complex was probably in the same alignment with the island in the middle of the Dighi. It covers an area of about 40 feet in length and 35 feet in breadth. The broken masonry pillars lying nearby indicating the remains of a mihrab, suggest the existence of a 'Qinyeti' mosque at the site, which was a common feature in North India.<sup>17</sup> In between the mihrab and the tomb there is a plinth of some building still surviving today. To gateway at the middle of the south wall offered picturesque view of the whole surroundings. It is not known who is lying buried in the masonry grave. As Katrabo was renovated by Masum Khan Kabuli after Isa Khan had shifted his capital to Sonargaon in 1584 A.D., he probably occupied it till his death in 1598 A.D.<sup>18</sup> This tomb was probably built by him for himself.

17. M.S. Islam, An unpublished thesis on Lodi phase of Indo Islamic Architecture, University of Berlin, 1961, P. 16-60.

The Bandar Fort :

The Bandar fort is often identified with the present fort of Sonakanda, built by the Mughal Subadar Mir Jumla. But tradition says that the name Sonakanda is derived from Sona, the widowed daughter of Kedar Rai, one of the chiefs of Bengal, who cried (Kanda) at the spot, while being carried away by Isa Khan.<sup>19</sup> From the tradition it appears that there was an old fort at the site which was probably rebuilt and used later by the Mughals.

The Hajiganj Fort :

The Hajiganj fort, also known as a Mughal fort, occupies the western bank of the Sitalakhya river in Narayanganj. It stands "on the head of the river Sitalakhya, where also meet the Dhaleswari, the Brahmaputra, the Meghna and the Buriganga."<sup>20</sup> The older name of the locality is Khizirpur. From its site it seems that it was a river fort, guarding the passage into the Buriganga, which then joined the Sitalakhya at this spot.

A careful examination of sites of these river forts reveals that from remote antiquity, Hajiganj fort must have occupied a very vital position. As such it is likely, as Dani has pointed out that there was a fort at this place before the Mughal.<sup>21</sup> It is also known as Khizirpur fort which was sometimes the residence of Isa Khan (Ralph Fitch). Besides these forts there were others of the series at Bokainagar and Tejpur in Mymensingh and Dakchara and Jatrapur, in Dhaka.<sup>22</sup>

The Bokainagar Fort :

"The site of Bokainagar, which is situated about twelve miles east of Mymensingh town on the eastern bank of the Brahmaputra river, is an important medieval defence post. It is said to have been established in the

- 
19. Dani, Ibid, Dhaka, P. 7.  
 20. Dani, Ibid, Dhaka, P.13.  
 21. Dani, Dhaka 1962, P. 33.  
 22. Baharistan II, Borah, P. 529.

15th century by a certain Coch Chief called Bokai when the ancient kingdom of Kamrup was beginning to disintegrate. Soon after it was annexed by Husain Shah in 1495, and he placed his son Nusrat Shah in charge of it. Subsequently Khwaja Usman being driven by the Mughals from Orissa, entrenched himself in the region east of the Brahmaputra river, with the fortified city of Bakainagar as his stronghold. Usman fought several battles against the Mughals from Bokainagar and two of his other fortified posts - Hasanpur and Egarsindhur - both on the eastern bank of the Brahmaputra. In 1611, he was driven out from Bokainagar by Islam Khan's generals and the city was immediately occupied by the Mughals. Today the fort is a complete ruin and is built over by a number of villages. Apart from its unidentified ramparts and moats, some of the more interesting relics of Bakainagar that survive above the ground, are a roofless Mughal mosque, a bridge and several ~~ruins~~ ".<sup>23</sup>

#### Tejpur Fort :

The Tejpur fort is situated about six miles northeast of Bokainagar and was for sometime, under the occupation of Nasir Khan and Dariya Khan who were initially Usman's allies. Later in 1611, they deserted the Afghan rebel and joined the Mughal camp. This mud fort is about a mile long and three quarter of a mile wide. Except for the ruins of a comparatively modern brick building, known as Paddar Badi, virtually the entire area enclosed within the high mud rampart and moat is bereft of any remains of original structures. The area however is littered profusely with brick-bats and pottery under heavy undergrowth. At the southeastern corner near Butacona Bazar, the rampart has been washed away by a small tributary of the Brahmaputra river, exposing a structure averaging 30'-0" wide at its base and tapering to a height of about 15'-0" from the surrounding ground. The ramparts have semi circular bastions at intervals.<sup>24</sup>

23. N. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 197.

24. N. Ahmed, P. 200.

As regards the hastily built mud forts of Dackchara and Jatrapur, no trace is in existence today.<sup>25</sup>

No vestige of gateway is traceable in Sonargaon today but an inscription preserved in the National Museum, Dhaka, dated 863 A.H./1459 A.D. refers to the existence of a gateway.

Although a large number of ancient mosques have disappeared in course of centuries, some of their inscribed tablets have come down to us. These provide a great wealth of historical information. These refer to persons with their titles, places and monuments, which are no longer in existence.

During the reign of Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah (830 A.H./1427 A.D.) a mosque was built by one Ulugh Dinar Khan, who was a 'Siqdar' or subdivisional officer.<sup>26</sup> The mosque was built at Mandra on the bank of the Padma. Another inscription of Sultan Barbak Shah, dated 869 A.H./1465 A.D. records that a mosque was built by one Majlish Khurshed Khan, the "Siyri-Niabat" or Chief of a Division.<sup>27</sup> The mosque was built at Manikganj on the bank of the Ichhamati. Peril is a village mart close to a village known as Khitta Keshabpur.<sup>28</sup> This Khitta most probably was an original unit of the iklim Mu'zamabad under the Sultans of Bengal.

So, it corroborates the assumption of Dr. Karim that Khitta was the next administrative unit of an iklim.<sup>29</sup> A similar Khitta Baria is in existence in Bhawal on the bank of the Balu river.

---

25. Baharitan, P. 51.

26. S. Ahmed, IB, Vol. IV, P. 45.

27. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 80.

28. Pargana list in the Map of Bengal 1857 A.D., now preserved in the Directorate of the Surveyor of Bangladesh, Dhaka.

29. A. Karim, ibid, P. 328.

A mosque was built by one 'Mir-i-Bahr' or Admiral of a fleet with the name of Zahiruddin Malik Akhunda Shir at Dhamrai, on the bank of the Bargi river in 887 A.H./1482 A.D. during the reign of Sultan Jalaluddin Fath Shah.<sup>30</sup> The inscription is a clear record of the existence of a naval headquarter on the confluence of the Bangsi, the Dhaleswari and the Buriganga rivers on way to Dhaka.

An inscription found in Sylhet, dated 911 A.H./1503 A.D. refers to a building, erected during the reign of Sultan Husain Shah by one Khan al Azam Khalis Khan the Wazir and commander of the iklim Muzamabad. It was built in memory of Sheikh Jalal of Koneya.<sup>31</sup>

Another inscription refers to the erection of a building at Jawar in Mymensingh in 941 A.H./1534 during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Shah by Khan al Muazzam Noor Khan son of Rahat.<sup>32</sup> No trace of these buildings are now standing above the ground. But their existence, as recorded in inscription, suggest that these places were important stations.

No other monuments such as bridges and palace exist in Sonargaon and as such no description is available.

---

30. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 117.

31. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 170.

32. S. Ahmed, Ibid, P. 239.

ORNAMENTATION OF THE MONUMENTS

Introduction :

In Sonargaon, the building art of the Muslims logically followed a brick tradition in the total absence of stone in the country. The monuments were embellished with various architectural and decorative elements. Architectural elements of the monuments under study consist of brick built massive walls, round and octagonal towers, stone columns, pointed arches, concaved mihrabs, domed roof on squinches and pendentives, corridors, etc.

The decorative elements of these monuments provide a rich repertoire of exquisite terracotta ornamentation which excelled both in fineness and execution. Some of the monuments again provide an excellent study of some of the earliest instances of encaustic tile decoration and stone carving. The latter art with its great exuberance of intricate carving is particularly noticeable on the mihrabs. In fact although this type of decoration was started on earlier monuments such as at Bara Masjid of Chhota Pandua and the Adina Masjid of Hazrat Pandua, the art of stone carving reached its highest watermark during the period under study, particularly, as illustrated on the stone mihrab of the Galdi mosque and the brick carving of the Ronvijoypur mosque.

In the field of calligraphic ornamentation the carvers of Sonargaon excelled in forming Arabic and Persian letters into a variety of intricate designs while adhering to the basic norm of Arabic calligraphy. The brick-built Islamic monuments in Sonargaon as elsewhere in India, followed the

arcuate system. The bricks were finely moulded and kiln-burnt, and were often extra-ordinarily red in colour. The bricks fired from the red-lateritic clay of Bhawal, madhupur and Bagernat particularly showed this quality. The brick of the monuments under study were small thin and well fired and variously measured between 6" x 5" x 1½" and 7" x 7" x 1½". Their size sharply contrasted with bricks of the pre-Muslim period, which usually measured between 18" x 15" x 2½" and 18" x 15" x 2½" and 18" x 12" x 2". The sparse use of stone was confined to areas nearest to the quarries at Rajmahal in Bihar. During the initial period of Muslim rule some monuments at Gaur, Pandua and Tribeni which were relatively nearer to Rajmahal, were encased in black basalt but with the expansion of territory on the east and southeast, the builders were forced to follow the old tradition of building in brick.

#### Brick :

The most popular ornamentation of early Islamic building in Sonargaon was the brick setting in the monument. Unlike the Sammanid, the Ghaznavid or the Seljuq who extensively used bricks for embellishing the entire surface of the monument, here, this technique, was mainly confined to the stalactite pattern within the building. This is also called pendentive. But here it was so different from others in appearance that like Turkish pendentives it may rightly be given the name of Bengali pendentive,<sup>1</sup> <sup>pl. XVIIc</sup> "Here, the setting of bricks consist of horizontal rows of bricks set cornerwise and edgewise alternately, giving an appearance of delicate carved pattern in high relief". This is exemplified in the renovated mosque of Ronvijoypur (10 domed) and Galdi mosque (single domed). This may be regarded as one of the most distinguishing features of the monuments of Sonargaon.

---

1. Mosharraf Hussain, Shilpakala, Vol. I, Dhaka, 1978; P. 2.



Another pattern of brick setting is noticeable in the rings of arches. These consisted of "several depths of bricks set edgewise, and vertically, sometimes projecting out of the wall boldly, giving an appearance of strength and beauty".<sup>2</sup> Examples of this type of setting are well illustrated at the Galdi mosque and the Bibi Begni mosque.

A rare example of brick setting, consisting of circular rows of bricks set corner-wise around the upper part of the dome in the Ronvijoypur mosque of Bagerhat, is a type by itself,<sup>3</sup> <sup>Pl.xa</sup> It bears a similarity with the Samanid mausoleum of Bukhara, built in the 10th century A.D. This may be regarded as a Central Asian influence on Sonargaon architecture. Here the artisans used bricks so skilfully in their monuments as to form the largest dome ever built in Bengal. It may be mentioned here that skilful use of brick is also found in the largest dome of the world the Gul Gumbaz at Bijapur, popularly known as the tomb of Sultan Muhammad Adil Shah (1606).<sup>4</sup>

The heavy brick walls were unplastered and divided vertically into offsets and recesses. The middle part of each was higher than the sides and that being so the middle doors and central mihhrabs were higher and broader than others. The small semi-circular pointed arched door-ways, framed within rectangular borders admitted little light into the interior, but protected the interior of the monuments from such elements of nature, as rain and sun, and kept the room relatively cool in summer and warm in winter. The practice of building heavy walls seems to have originated from Central Asia, Anatolia and Iran.<sup>5</sup>

---

2. M. Hussain, Ibid, P. 6.

3. Ibid, P. 6.

4. P. Brown, Indian Architecture, (Islamic period), (Bombay, 1975), 2nd ed. P. 76.

5. Oleg Graber, Art Orientalists, (London, 1965), P. 49.

The provision of ~~both round and octagonal~~ corner towers was simultaneously practised.<sup>6</sup>

#### Stone Carvings :

The monuments using stone columns carrying the roof were of various designs but it seems that the most popular form was octagonal at the base and sixteen sided at the top (Shaitgumbaz, Rampal, Nine domed Mosques). Most of these were appropriated from the spoils of earlier Hindu-Budhist monuments, often carved with bell-and-chain relief on their shafts (Rampal, Qasba, Majum-pur). These stone columns were sometimes strengthened with additional brick pillars of a chamfered square type which, although, inelegant in appearance, carried the thrust of the superstructure (Shait Gumbad, Mojum-pur).

Sometimes carved stone mihirabs in the centre of the qibla wall of mosques were finely chiselled and decorated with motifs of bell-and-chain and sunflowers (Shait Gumbad, Galdi Mosques). Tombs are sometimes decorated in relief with motifs of hanging patterns from the apex of the trefoil arches (chain-and-lamp in modified form, beaded garlands etc.).<sup>pl. II</sup> These patterns bear a similarity with the Adina mosque at Pandua.

The stone graves of Khan jahan and Pir Ali are finely decorated with engraved verses from the Quran and pious expressions in Persian.

#### Calligraphy :

From the study of coins and inscriptions on stone tablets of the period it is clear that various styles of calligraphy prevalent in the Islamic World were also practised in Sonargaon with consummate skill and ingenuity.

---

6. Round corner tower was prevalent in Bukhara in the 12th century. Octagonal corner towers was in use in pre-Muslim Bengal Architecture. Oleg Graber, Ibid, P. 49; and Makachion, the Temple Architecture in Bengal (Calcutta, 1978), P. 25.

The ~~Tughra~~ style of writing flourished in Sonargaon in at least, five intricate varieties. The excellence and skill with which these were carved have no parallel in the entire world of Islam. The style is purely ornate in character, the scribe arranged the words and letters of the text ingeniously, not in sequence, but according to his fancy, so that the effect of the whole is a highly decorative composition. It had the advantage of accomodating long texts in a relatively restricted space by twisting, expanding or intertwining letters which often so complicated the text that its decipherment became extremely difficult. Of the many varieties of Tughra script developed in this region, the most popular was, what may be called the 'Bow and Arrow', also variously known as the 'Boat and Oars', 'Marching of Soldiers' and the 'Congregation of the Faithful'. The upright shafts of the letters are tipped as arrows, the curved letters are gracefully drawn in sweeping curves in the shape of a bow (or boat) across the long tipped upright shafts. This highly specialised Tughra Calligraphy attained its highest watermark during the Husain Shahi period. This style is totally absent in the contemporary Delhi School and therefore, may aptly be regarded as a significant contribution of this region in the development of this art.

#### Transition and roofing :

The method of transition from the square to a circular plan was achieved by providing a squinch and pendentives at the corners. In some of the single-domed mosques the squinch system was used across the corners. Corbel pendentive has been used in most of the mosques. The roofing of these mosques consists of drumless hemispherical domes and small domes in clusters. The largest hemispherical dome in Sonargaon is the single dome that covers the mosque of Ronvijoypur at Bagerhat. Among its other decorative features it seems to emulate the decorative style of the Samanid mausoleum of the 10th century

A.D. at Bukhara. Some of its features were hidden under plaster work during its restoration. The use of 'chauchala' on the roof of the Shait Gumbaz Masjid is certainly a local element. It has been followed in the mosques of Darasabari, Chhota Sona and Gummant in Gaur. Similar domes have also been used over the corridor roofs of some mosques such as at the Masjidbari and Shankarapasha Mosque. These features of roofing are also found on the roof of corridors of Ghankatti, Gopalganj, and Tantipara mosques at Gaur. However small domes in clusters covering the roof appear to have been a popular feature in the territory. This style comprised of six, nine, ten, fifteen, thirty five and seventy seven in groups. This method of domed roofing originated from Yazd (Iran 1037 A.D.), Anatolia (Ulu cami 12th), Delhi (Khirki 14th) and Pandua (13 and 14th-Bara Masjid of Chota Pandua and Adina Masjid of Hazrat Pandua).

#### Terracotta : pLV

The most important decorative elements applied on the surface of walls and ceilings was the terracotta plaques and brick carvings. Pl. VI, VI<sup>a</sup>

Terracotta moulding is basically a ceramic art in which various patterns in clay prepared in mould were fixed to fit in certain areas of the surface of a monument for decoration. In other words it is an applied art which is more expensive than stucco but capable of imparting greater contrasts in different types of designs. This technique was already known in Parthian times in Central Asia and Afghanistan in the Middle Ages at Uzgend or Qilah-Bust.<sup>7</sup>

---

7. Oleg Graoer, Ibid, P. 79.

Terracotta moulding possibly ~~was in use in Sonargaon~~ in pre-Muslim Buddhist monuments. Its use was a logical development in this deltaic part of the country from remote antiquity. The plastic medium i.e. the abundantly available clay from the soil, responded easily to the manipulation by hand and could be given infinite varieties of form in which the indigenous artists excelled.

The builders of the pre-Mughal Muslim monuments in Bengal decorated the surface of walls mainly with terracottas. The decorative themes on these monuments were very effectively produced and translated from the stone carvings practiced in earlier monuments. Not only that, the early Muslim conquerors and settlers in Bengal had come in contact with the brick built monuments of Balkh, Bukhara, Anatolia, Ghazna and the Punjab and thereby gained experience in decorative brick work. They also adopted the age old tradition of terracotta moulding in Bengal. Thus the developed technical ideas that they carried from Central Asia and Western Asia was combined with the traditional technique of Bengal.<sup>8</sup> The combined technique was applied on the monuments of Sonargaon.

Due to prohibition of figural representation in Islam the decorative motifs were invariably proliferated into geometrical or abstract forms, vegetal patterns, and crescent. Ornamentation in geometrical forms consisted of triangles, squares, circles, stars etc.<sup>pl. v</sup> The lozenge and abstract design with triangles, net-pattern with repeated use of circles and triangles and other motifs were common in most of the monuments.<sup>pl. III & IV</sup> These patterns were elaborated by multiplication and subdivision, by rotation and symmetrical arrangements. "The geometric designs represented unity in diversity and diversity in unity".<sup>9</sup>

---

8. S. Hasan, Glimpses of Muslim Art and Architecture (Dhaka, 1983), P. 126.  
 9. S. Ahmad, A Thesis on Muslim Architecture of Gujrat (Boroda, 1982), P.159.

Vegetable elements included such flowers as the rosettes, lotuses, sunflowers, and creeper designs. All these motifs were placed within geometrical circles on the spandrels of arches, horizontal panels, above the arched windows, in the spandrels of mihirabs and so on. The recesses within panels of walls also contained these designs. The arabesque and vine motifs, so popular in Central Asia, found expression in the form of tendrils. This was characterised by a continuous stem which splitted regularly, producing a series of counterpoised leafy secondary stem, which again could, in turn split or return to be reintegrated into the main stem. This limitless rhythmical alternation of movement conveyed by the reciprocal repetition of carved lines produced a design that is balanced and free from tension.<sup>10</sup> (Astagram, Shankarparaha) . "Muslims never used sterile vegetal motifs, they used constant movement of nature in art. It gave tremendous sense of nervous life to the ornament. The first appearance of this design is found in Anatolia and Iran. The use of the palm tree; chain-and-square pendant and plants rendered in a naturalistic form with abstract motifs in some square panels were common in important mosques at Anatolia in the 14th/A.D.<sup>11</sup> The only monument of Bangladesh bearing a stylised figural motif with a floral scroll is the Sabek Danga monument at Bagerhat. A somewhat similar motif is found in the bowl decoration of the Mongols in the 14th century A.D.<sup>12</sup>

The popular pre-Islamic motif of the chain-and-bell continued to be used by the Muslims in this country. This was however often modified into chain-and-pendant, chain-and-floral disc of geometrical forms, 'Shika' with

10. Derik Hill, Decoration of Muslim Architecture, (London, 1972), P. 86.

11. Ibid.

12. Demand, A Handbook of Muhammadan Art, London, 1937, P. 147.

decorated pot or chain-and-lamp or hanging lamp etc.<sup>pl.II</sup> (Shait Gumbad Masjid, Rampal, Goaldi, tomb of Mograpara). Besides, the superimposed jars, mini pilasters, leaf in rows and star like designs in rows were also favourite motifs (the mihirabs of Mohzampur, Hajiganj, Ronvijoypur). The crescent was another motif in terracotta which was liberally used on the wall surface of the mosques of Astagram and Kuliarchar. This is regarded as an Anatolian motif.<sup>13</sup>

The baluster design<sup>pl.I.c.</sup> and the jars were also favourite motifs used on the windows of the Bagerhat monuments especially on the boundary walls of the tomb of Khan Jahan and the Reza Khan mosque.

Some of the ceilings of mosques and corner pendentives were decorated with floral embossings of geometrical form while others show ribs and floral knot motifs (Goaldi, Bhadugar).

Glazed tile : Plate XIXa.

The use of encaustic tiles in the tomb of Khan Jahan was the earliest example of this kind in Bengal. The hexagonal tiles bearing blue, golden and red colours were most attractive. Similar tiles were also used in later monuments at Gaur,<sup>14</sup> with green, yellow, blue and white colours.

---

13. P. Brown, Indian Architecture (Islami period) (Bombay, 1975), P. 73.  
 14. Mosharraf Hussain, 'The ornamentation of the Sultani Architecture in Bengal', Shilpakala, Vol. I (Dhaka, 1978), P. 5.

CHAPTER - IX

MINOR ARTS

The minor arts that flourished at Sonargaon consisted of i) textiles, ii) pottery, iii) filigree works, iv) jewellery, v) ivory carvings and others.

Textile :

"The history of textile manufacture in Bengal goes back to the remotest antiquity. At the time when the Arthashastra of Kautilya was composed, it was already a well established industry with a wide reputation in the country.<sup>1</sup> The author mentioned "four varieties of textile commodities which were produced in Bengal in his time, viz., Kshauma, Dukula, Patrona and Karpasika. Kshauma was a kind of linen of coarse variety, mixed with cotton.<sup>2</sup> Commenting on Kshirasvamin Amarakosa explained kshauma sa made of the fibre of Kshauma or Atasi. Atasi is a synonym for common flax, hemp, linseed etc.<sup>3</sup> Its pure and finer form was known as dukula. Its white and soft variety was produced in Lower Bengal (Vangaka)<sup>4</sup> the territory that included Sonargaon. Karpasika obviously meant cotton fabrics and Vanga produced the best variety of it.<sup>5</sup> The best cotton fabric was known as muslin and its producing centres were on the bank of the river Geyra Sunda,<sup>6</sup> now flowing through Kishoreganj and Narsingdi. The speciality of its water was referred to by travellers as particularly suitable for whitening cotton fabrics.

- 
1. HB., Vol. I, (Dhaka, 1963), 2nd impression, P. 654 and referred from Arthasastra, HB. II, Ch. II.
  2. Ibid, P. 655.
  3. Ibid, Footnotes, P. 655.
  4. Ibid, P. 655.
  5. There is still a village named Kapasia in Sonargaon territory but its soil is considered to be least suited to cotton production. Its surrounding area is still renowned as the best cotton weaving area.
  6. Ain, Jerret-II, P. 136, Reazos Salatin, P. 40. Rahim, in/ra p. 426. The upper stream of Geyra Sunda is known as Geyrautra, which is a tributary of the Brahmaputra. It is known as the Banar, the Arial Khan, in places.



Historical references dating from the first century A.D. mentioned that the muslin of the finest variety was included among the chief exports of the country.<sup>7</sup> A fine and delicate stuff made of cotton in Bengal is referred to in the account of an Arab merchant of the ninth century, named Sulaiman. Even in the thirteenth century, cotton fabric was a famous export materials of the territory.

From the beginning of Muslim rule Sonargaon acquired a reputation for its fine cotton textile i.e. muslin. The Chinese travellers furnish a vivid account of the product. They mentioned as many as six varieties of textile produced in Sonargaon.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the European travellers also highly speak of the extremely fine and delicate cotton fabrics, coloured for their own use and white fabrics for export. They were very precious and in great demand by the ladies of the royal court in England, Arabia, and Persia. These fabrics were sold at a high price at these courts.<sup>9</sup> The muslin fabric was preferred to all other fabrics both under the Sultans of Bengal and the Subadars of the Mughals.<sup>10</sup> The Sonargaon territory was always the principal weaving centre where cotton producers of Surat and Bombay used to send their produce.<sup>11</sup>

- 
7. Scuff, P. 9 - 47; HB. I, P. 655. Periplus of the Erythraemy Sea.
8. i) Pipo was a kind of cloth of different colours which was two to three feet in breadth and fifty feet in length.  
 ii) Man-Cha-ti, was a ginger yellow fabric.  
 iii) Shah no Keih, it resembled the Chinese Lopu.  
 iv) Hin Pei tung toli, Special type cotton.  
 v) Sha-ta-cul, it had two variety fabric.  
 vi) Ma-hei-ma-li, (malmal) : Chinese Accounts, Visva Bharatia Annals 1945, Vol. I, PP. 96-134.
9. Barbosa, Hakluyat Society, Vol. II, P. 145-146, A. Rahim Social and Cultural History of Bengal, Vol. I, P. 391; K.M. Ashraf, Life and Culture of the People of Hindustan, (Lahore, 1957), P. 97.
10. A. Rahim, Ibid, P. 396.
11. J.C. Sinha, Economic Annals of Bengal, 1952, P. 34 and A. Rahim, Ibid, P. 392.

The spinning and weaving of muslin was considered as an honourable profession; spinning was generally done by women in their leisure hours. Poor widows of higher classes of society earned their subsistence from it. Fine threads were produced by ladies with delicate fingers. Both spindle and whorl were used in the process. The spindle produced fine thread whereas the whorl produced coarse thread.<sup>12</sup> Morning and evening hours were considered to be the most suitable for spinning.

Different varieties of muslin were given some poetic names such as Ab-i-Rawan (running water), Baftawa or Bafthama (woven air); Shasbath (sweet as sherbet); Shabnam (evening dew) and Malmal Khas (King's Muslin) etc.<sup>13</sup>

These artistic names only convey the delicacy and loveliness of the fabric. Muslin was so filmy and fine that it could be almost diaphanous.<sup>14</sup>

The most beautiful and important muslins of Sonargaon and Dhaka were the Dorias or striped muslin and the figured muslin or embroidered muslin. The last is still maintaining its tradition and is known as 'Jamdani'.\*

The 'Jamdani' was essentially a production of the loom and shuttle to which various designs and patterns were added by hand during the course of weaving, resulting in an embroidery effect. The method of production was somewhat like tapestry work. Usually gold and silver threads were used in the process". The Jamdanis, due to their complicated designs and fineness, always constituted the most expensive of the Dhaka Loom. It was exquisite to look at . The Jamdanis of the old are today considered the prized handlooms of many a Bengali family.<sup>15</sup>

12. A. Rahim, *Ibid* p. 34.

13. R.D. Mehta, *Textile Industries of India*, (Delhi, 1978), P. 4.

14. There are such incredible stories about the delicacy of the fabric that once princes Zebunessa, the daughter of Aurangzeb is said to have been rebuked by her father for apparently wearing nothing, although she was clad in several folds of muslin garments.

\* Photo of a Jamdani Sari, Pl.No. XXI a, b

15. R. Mehta, *ibid* 4.

The weaving of the Jamdani required not only skill but infinite patience as well. The soft weather of mornings and evenings when there was no strong wind was ideal for the work. The soft monsoon weather with sufficient light was suitable for weaving.<sup>16</sup> The skilled weavers produced finest Jamdanis on a most simple but primitive loom. Soft tamarind wood was used as warp. Very often the finest Jamdani was made of grey ginger coloured cotton with designs either in bluish black gorgeous colours or in gold and silver thread. In the case of a Jamdani sari the field contained small floral sprays scattered all over (Butidar) or in diagonal rows (Tichha) with large and bold motifs at the corners. The floral motifs formed a regular network (Jhalar) but perhaps the most attractive design was the "Panna Hazari" or a thousand emeralds. The design presented to the eye the effect of a thousand scintillating jewels set in glimmering silver or gold. The most popular motif consisted of a large rosette set in the interspaces of the diaper in bright green.<sup>17</sup>

The motifs on figured or embroidered muslins bore close similarity to those of the terracotta used in the monuments of the locality. The designs of 'casidas' or embroidered muslin reflected the arabesque design in Sonargaon as the muslins of Oudh had motifs of inscriptions. Some scholars are inclined to assert that the designs of muslins were of Persian origin, but actually they represent individual craftsmanship as we find from references going back to the Maurya period.<sup>18</sup> Of course the trade route from East to West along which the traders moved, carried many lovely patterns of weaving and embroidery. This is evident from the common designs found in the printed pattery of Harappa and the textile design of Fustat. The early practice of producing rosettes within a circle was also reflected in them.<sup>19</sup>

16. A. Rahim; *ibid*, P. 420.

17. This is a study from the collection of old Jamdanis in the Folk Museum of Sonargaon.

18. R. Mehta, *ibid*, p. 4

19. Indian printed textiles, Govt. of India, A Report of 1982, P. 28.

Regarding the fineness of muslin it is learnt from travellers' accounts that the greater the length of a muslin the lower was its weight. A muslin of two hundred and fifty yards long was equal to one pound in weight.<sup>20</sup> Naturally the thread of such light weight and fine texture could only be spun and worked during the rains in order to prevent the thread from snapping during the process. It took an expert weaver nearly five months to weave a piece of the size mentioned.<sup>21</sup>

Besides muslins jute sarees were common to women of Bengal. This was known as 'Patta-Bastra'.<sup>22</sup> A kind of Silk was produced from jute and fine jute cloth was made from it.<sup>23</sup> The river bank of the Brahmaputra was the most favourite area for producing clothes and then washing these in its water. The reference to Kayra Sunda in the Ain-i-Akbari as the proper place for washing and making fine cotton cloth indicates the identity of the river. Still today a large number of weavers of the locality produce cotton cloth of various kinds, though the quality has deteriorated greatly.

The extreme paucity of objects of arts and crafts which flourished in the region during the Sultanate period precludes a systematic and authentic study of these materials or the degree of excellence these arts attained. Except for a few specimens of textiles, painting and metal work preserved in museums, particularly those belonging to a later period virtually no specimen survives, even the fabulous muslin of Sonargaon which is so repeatedly referred to by Chinese and European travellers.

---

20. James Taylor, Topography of Dhaka, London, 1834, P. 128. The commonest method of testing the fineness was to pass the piece through a ladies finger ring. In the time of Jahangir muslin of fifteen yards in length and one yard in width could be so finely made as to weigh a mere 900 grains. The famous 'malmal khas' ten yards in width comprised one thousand to eighteen hundred threads in the warp.

21. Mehta, P. 4.

22. Nihar Roy, Banglar Itihas, P. 537.

23. Jarret, Ain II, P. 136 & A. Rahim, P. 387-392. But Bengal was mainly a cotton growing and cotton cloth producing country. Barbosa found many cotton fields in Bengal in the 16th century A.D. Bombay and Surat sent their raw cotton to Bengal looms for the production of cotton clothes, I. C. Sinha, Economic Annals of Bengal, P. 24.

Pottery :

The heritage of terracotta art is closely related to pottery. The patterns attained great variety and perfection in successive generations. The main centres of the potters were Sabhar, Rayerbazar, Bengal Para, Dhaka and Bagerhat. The use of earthen ware with various designs such as flowers, leaves, (isolated or in branches) animals etc., was common. Some of the traditional motifs are still practiced on wares known as Laxmisara, gazi's sara, painted jar, or ewers, toys and terracotta figurines, fabricated from home made moulding of cakes.

Except for a small collection of simple porcelain wares and celadon, accidentally dug up by a local villager recently from a low cultural mound believed by local tradition to be the site of Khan Jahan's residence at Bagerhat, no specimen of such ceramic wares as were used by the nobility is known to have survived in this country. The Bagerhat collection, consisting of plain and fluted plates, saucers, tumblers, goblets and the like are now in the possession of one Sayful Islam, an influential gentleman of the locality.

Wood Carving :

Wood carving of extraordinarily fine quality had a very long tradition in Bengal. During the pre-Muslim period, especially during the Pala-Sena period, it attained a high standard of perfection. A few specimens of richly carved wooden columns, divine and semi divine images and semi-nude female figures, salvaged from ancient sites near Dhaka, Mogradpara, Rampal and Rajshahi which are now preserved in the Dhaka Museum and the V.R. Museum, Rajshahi may be compared with any old masterpieces of the world for artistic delicacy. Most probably this tradition of wood carving continued under the Sultans of Bengal.

These were indispensable for furnishing and decorating private homes, and palaces. The fast vanishing art of making wooden palanquins, lampstands, wooden boxes, carved doors, carved wooden temples, musical instruments and the like amply testify to the rich artistic traditions of the land. Besides, the bell metal industry is still a flourishing trade in the country. Similarly various articles manufactured from bamboo and cane, such as baskets and attractively patterned mats are still a living art.

### Tiles :

The art of glazed tiles, introduced in Bengal in the middle of the 15th century definitely faded out of fashion in the late 16th century, strangely at a time when it became a craze in Lahore and other Mughal cities in upper India. It seems that it never became popular with the local artists and craftsmen who were more at home with the traditional art of terracotta. From the pattern and styles of the glazed tiles adorning many monuments of Gaur and Pandua like the 'Eklakhi', 'Lotton', 'Feroza Minar', 'Gumant', 'Sona Mosque' etc., it is clear that most of the tiles were manufactured locally and were not of high quality. Of course the earliest design was brought by Chinese travellers who made a presentation to the Sultan. The inlay mosaic of floral and figural pattern with faience, known as Kashan was unknown here. The glazed tiles of various colours and designs used at the tomb of Khan Jahan in Bagerhat are *square* hexagonal in shape and are not of very high quality. Glazed pottery was in use in some parts of Sonargaon.

### Metal work :

The art of metal work with moulded decoration was common in Sonargaon. The silver and gold coins also likewise attained a high degree of perfection. The brass works of Mymensingh fabricating such articles as 'Pandan', 'Kajaldan', 'Gachha', lamp and water pots, are known to have gained great popularity. Deli-

cately carved objects of art on ivory were another art which was particularly patronized at the royal court. Carpets, prayer rugs, embroidered quilts, and various other objects of daily use made of jute and palm leaves were widely known. Equally known were famous conch-shell work and various artistic objects of cane with endless patterns. The use of coconut shell for fabricating various objects of art was a peculiarity of the area. The river shell and mother-of-pearl were widely used for jewellery.

Painting and other arts :

Painting, however, was never a popular art in Sonargaon. This was most probably due to the moist climate and atmosphere of the region. Gold and silver jewellery inlaid with precious stones and exceptionally fine filigree work attained a high degree of excellence in the region.

CHAPTER - ১

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Identification :

Located on the South and South-Eastern part of Bengal, Sonargaon was one of the three administrative units (--- Lakhnauti, Satgaon and Sonargaon ---) of the Sultanate and a place of great commercial and cultural importance. In the early pre-Islamic days it was known as 'Suvarnagrama' through which the sacred river Brahmaputra flowed. 'Suvarnagrama' is synonymous with Sonargaon, which appears to have originated from 'Suvar Nigama' --- 'Suvar' was the name of the principality while 'Nigama' was its commercial centre on the bank of the Brahmaputra river. In pre-Islamic days the 'Uparika' or the governor of 'Navvaya Vikasika' (a significant name meaning newly risen) territory lived in 'Nigama'. Suvarnagrama comprised of Vanga and 'Navyavikasika' or the newly emerged coastal region of the delta. The term Sonargaon came to be used during the Senas in the 12th century. The orthodox Sena ruler of Lakhnauti (Gaur) being ousted by the Muslim conquerors in early 13th century escaped to this part of the country. The place of refuge was on the bank of the Sitalakhya, branching off the Brahmaputra. They continued to rule over the area unmolested for quite sometime.



Ziauddin Barni, the Muslim historian of Delhi, while writing his history (Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi) in the 14th century mentioned the area as a territory ruled by Rai Danuj. It was occasionally visited by Muslim preachers, travellers, traders and the like. The famous Muslim theologian Abu Tawwama came to Sonargaon and established a centre for Islamic theology and died at the place in 1300 A.D. His grave is believed to be located within the old graveyard at Mograpara. The world famous traveller Ibn Batutah visited the country and the busy port-city in 1345 A.D., when Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah was the ruler of Sonargaon. He met many saints in the capital. The inland river port of Sonargaon, he observed, was crowded with numerous junks ready to sail for Java and elsewhere. The traveller particularly noticed the cheapness of agricultural products and abundance of fruits. Ma Huan, a Chinese interpreter of the Chinese Emperor Yanglo's mission at the court of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah (1406) has left an interesting account, in which, besides other things he expressed his amazement at the exceptional fineness and variety of a cotton fabric manufactured in Sonargaon. He visited the walled city and extolled the splendour of the royal court. Subsequently when Ralph Fitch visited Sonargaon, the capital of Isa Khan of Bhati, in 1586 A.D., he did not find it to be a walled city but a cluster of ruined masonry buildings and huts. The passage of time has so completely obliterated the remains of the proud city that today there is not even a village within the old city-site, bearing the name of Sonargaon.

Reasons of desolation :

Two factors are mainly responsible for its decadence - political and natural.

At the outset of the Muslim conquest Sonargaon was a mint town during the reign of Sultan Shamsuddin Feroz Shah and Sultan Bahadur Shah. Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah was the first independent Sultan of Sonargaon who issued coins from the mint of Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon. His son Ghazi Shah was defeated and killed by Haji Ilyas, who took the title 'Bhangra' after uniting Varendra, Vanga and Radh territories. <sup>Map-1</sup> He and his son minted coins from Sonargaon. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah ruled from his capital at Sonargaon, while his father Sikander Shah was in power at Pandua. Sultan Ghiyasuddin rebelled against his father who invaded Sonargaon. In the battle field the father was severely wounded and killed, whereupon Ghiyasuddin occupied the throne of Pandua. His transfer of the capital from Sonargaon to Pandua reduced its political importance to insignificance and thereafter, it progressively deteriorated. Later, its administrative centre was shifted to Mu'zamabad. This name continued till the end of the Sultanate period. Under the Suri rulers, Sonargaon became a pargana, and still later it came under the possession of Isa Khan of Bhati. During this period, the Portuguese pirates depopulated the port area by their recurrent plundering raids. The Mughals renamed it Bandar. The transfer of the capital to Dhaka by the Mughals in 1608 A.D. finally sounded the death knell of Sonargaon's prosperity.

Among the natural causes contributing towards its decay, the frequent shifting of the courses of the principal rivers traversing the area is largely responsible for its decay and destruction, for, often with the erosion of these mighty rivers large habitation areas were engulfed within its bed. In this way the port city, located at the site of Sripur, was completely washed

away by the scouring of the Meghna river. Besides, the silting of these rivers hindered water communication. Old centres of trade and commerce languished with the erratic behaviour of the river system encircling the area. It is on record that within the last few centuries, the old course of the Brahmaputra dried up near Mogradpara while the old bed of the Sitalakhya dried up in the north near Tok and took a new course near the confluence of the Buriganga, the Meghna and the Ganges. This sort of frequent change in river courses caused corresponding changes in the sites of towns and outposts located on their banks. The deltaic nature of land and the presence of innumerable creeks also limited the habitation areas on red 'Kankar' soil. To these factors, frequent natural calamities like tornado, flood and tidal bore also added widespread havoc, contributing to the decadence of the principality. Due to the shifting of river courses, the famous muslin of Sonargaon lost its natural advantages. Cotton production sharply fell as the source of abundant good river water needed for washing the best quality of cotton thread became dried up. The import of cheap industrial products from the West also posed a threat to the production of muslin.

#### Area of Sonargaon :

From the forgoing discussion it is clear that Sonargaon was an important 'iklim' embracing a vast tract of land. It consisted of a capital city, a cultural centre and an inland port of the same name. Subsequently it was renamed as Mu'zamabad or Mahmudabad. The cultural centre of Sonargaon most probably was at Mogradpara. The port came to be known as 'Bandar' as a synonym of the port. The important rivers of the area are the Brahmaputra, the Meghna, the Padma, the Dhaleswary, the Sitalakhya, the Banar, the Arial Khan, the Geyara Sunda, the Balu, the Madhumati, the Bhairab, the Gorai, the Turag and the Bangsi.

The geographical limits of the iklim or principality during the Sultanate period were probably as follows :

It was bounded by the Jamuna, the Gorai, the Bhairab and the Kobadak on the west, while the Meghna, the territory of Tippera defined its eastern boundary. The north was bounded by the kingdom of Kamrupa and Kamta and it stretched upto the Bay of Bengal on the south. (Map. 2).

The original area of the districts of Sylhet, Mymensingh, Dhaka, Faridpur, Bakherganj including the south-eastern part of Khulna (Bagerhat) were included in it. Following are the old historical names of these places :

Arsa Sirhat or Sylhet;

Arsa Shahr-i-nau or Bagerhat;

Shahr-i-Mu'zamabad and Mahmudabad or Sonargaon and Rupganj;

Hasht Gamarian or east Mymensingh;

Qasba of Dashkahania or West Mymensingh and Sherpur;

Fathabad or Faridpur;

Qasba Dhaka Khas or Dhaka;

Khitta Kesinapur or West Vikrampur;

Khitta Baria or Bhawal area;

Early Settlements and the Capital City Site of Sonargaon :

During the early stage of Muslim penetration in Sonargaon the new comers settled at such places of historical importance as Langalband and Panchamighat, situated on the west bank of the Brahmaputra and the east bank of Sitalakhya rivers. A village close to these places, known as Qusyr Amra, was probably the site of the residence of an Amir as its name indicates. Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah was the first Sultan of Sonargaon who minted coins from 'Hazrat

Jalal Sonargaon'. The place can still be identified with the present village Hazratpur-Jalalpur. With the expansion of the area the importance of the 'iklim' also increased. For the protection of the ruler the residence probably was shifted to a more secure area located on the eastern bank of the Brahmaputra and north of the Menikhali rivers. The walled capital city was fortified and protected by moats as place name of Dandamah or fort indicates. The new residence most probably was established by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. The palace site can still be identified in the village Bhita-Azampur. The cultural centre was towards its south-east side, while the port was on the south-west side. (Map. 3).

#### Political History of Sonargaon :

The first independent Sultan of Sonargaon was Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah who rose to power in 1338 A.D. His mint town was at Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon and his residence probably was located in the village of 'Qusyr Amra' on the west bank of the Brahmaputra. It is likely that he named his 'iklim' as Mubarakabad which comprised the western part of Dhaka Division.

After his death his son Ikhtiaruddin Ghazi Shah ascended the throne of Sonargaon. But very soon he was dethroned by Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah. Like the earlier Sultans, Sultan Ilyas minted coins from 'Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon'. He took the title of 'Bhangra' or 'Vangrah' after uniting 'Varendra', 'Vanga' and 'Radh' territories. Within his kingdom he established the mint-town of 'Shahr-i-nau', located probably in the south-western part of Sonargaon. His son Sikandar Shah also minted coins from this mint. He named the 'iklim' as Mu'zamabad. From this time onwards Sonargaon ceased to be the official name of the 'iklim'; it was occasionally used only on the coins of the rulers of the House

of Raja Ganesh and the coins of Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah and Sultan Yusuf Shah.

During the lifetime of Sultan Sikandar Shah his son Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah ruled Sonargaon and minted coins in his own name. His rule of 20 (twenty) years at Sonargaon from 772 A.H./1370 A.D. to 792 A.H./1390 A.D. was a period of great prosperity and fame. Foreign travellers visited his court and he sent emissaries to other countries of the world. He was a liberal patron of religious institutions. It is on record that he established a Madrasah at Mecca and supported it with his endowments. The Local Islamic Centre rose to its zenith under his patronage; great saints like Alaul Huq, Sarfuddin Yahya maneri and Muzzaffar Balkhi used to stay at his court and regularly held discussions on theology and jurisprudence with him. Saint Alaul Huq himself was his teacher and Alaul's son Nur Qutb Alam and Azam Khan were his friends. Sultan Ghiyasuddin's fame as a gifted poet is recorded in an interesting episode. It is narrated that he invited the great poet Hafiz of Shiraz to his court at Sonargaon and requested him to complete an incomplete verse of his own. Although Hafiz could not come to his court he sent an apt second line to complete the distich along with another beautiful 'Gazal' to the Sultan. Local tradition maintains that he was a just and benevolent ruler. Azam Khan, an exceptionally gifted brother of Nur Qutb Alam was employed as his general and wazir. Most probably he established a ribat on the south-west frontier of the iklim and changed the name of its mint town 'Shahr-i-nau to 'Jannatabad'. The name Sonargaon was not used on the coins as a mint town; Mu'zamabad was the mint town of Sonargaon as it was the name of the iklim also. Sometimes in 1390 A.D. he rebelled against his father and the father was killed in the battle of Sonargaon near Dhaka. Sultan Ghiyasuddin ascended the throne of Pandua and

ruled Sonargaon from there until 813 A.H./1410 A.D. His liberal attitude towards his subjects enabled some of his Hindu nobles to become too powerful at Pandua and eventually their leader, Raja Ganesh, killed the Sultan.

On his death, Ghiyasuddin's general and Wazir - Khan al Azam Khan Jahan probably fled from Pandua and took shelter in the 'Arsa Shahr-i nau', presently known as Bagerhat, where he established a flourishing township in this inhospitable region. . . . Most probably the area was inhabited earlier by Ilyas Shah when he fled to south Bengal in 1343 A.D. This place was also known as Khalifatabad in the 16th century. <sup>Map-4</sup> Thus the area was really repopulated by Khan Jahan after escaping from Pandua. Among <sup>those</sup> who escaped, there must have been some nobles and descendants of Ilyas Shah. With the overthrow of the house of Ganesh these nobles installed Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, a descendant of Ilyas on the throne of Gaur in 1441 A.D., who had been reared up in his younger days by Khan Jahan.

Khan al Azam Khan Jahan of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah in his old age probably was reappointed as chief Wazir or 'Ulugh Khan Jahan' of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah I. This Khan al Azam Khan Jahan (same as 'Ulugh Khan Jahan) was a great builder. He adorned his town (Shahr-i nau) with an impressive series of monuments, tanks and highways. it seems that he occasionally visited the Tughlaq Sultans at Delhi and Bengal Sultans at Pandua. Thus his experience of the imperial as well as the provincial administration and buildings of those places helped him in evolving a happy combination of both.

As he was a noble man of distinction at the court of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, he tacitly owed allegiance to the house of Ilyas Shah while scrupulously avoided supporting the rule of Jalal Uddin Muhammad Shah and his family. But in order to avoid inviting trouble he discreetly abstained from minting coins and awaited the restoration of the house of Ilyas.

One important point, to be noted here, which we have noticed earlier, is that Sikandar Shah, father of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah was killed in the battle against his rebel son while invading Sonargaon. The battle probably took place at Sonagar near Jafragonj, presently known as Jafrabad near Dhaka. The repentant son, leaving the formalities of his father's burial at Sonargaon in the hands of his nobles and family members, hurriedly proceeded to Pandua and ascended the throne. The so-called stone tomb of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah at Mograpara at Sonargaon, in all likelihood, enshrines the body of Sikandar, his father. After a reign of about twenty years at Pandua, Ghiyasuddin was killed by Raja Ganesh, a powerful nobleman of his court who usurped the throne. Anarchy and chaos followed his death at the capital. Under such circumstances it is unlikely that his dead body was carried to Sonargaon for burial. Instead, he was probably buried in the 'Eklakhi tomb' of Pandua.

The Ilyas Shahi dynasty ruled Sonargaon for nearly a century and a half with an interlude of twenty five years when the house of Ganesh usurped the throne. Ilyas Shah was succeeded by Sikandar Shah, Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah I, Barbak Shah, Yusuf Shah and Jalaluddin Fateh Shah.

Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah was a great builder. The earliest surviving mosque of Dhaka was built during his life time. It was erected in 1456-57 A.D. According to an inscription fixed on it, it was built under the patronage of a lady named Bakht Binat, daughter of Marhamat. By this time a new city grew up on the eastern bank of the Sitalakhya river which was named as Dhaka. A Qazi was appointed for this city who was related to Khan Jahan of Bagerhat. He was the son of Qazi Ahmad, son of Alaul Huq. Ahmad was the name of Nur Qutb Alam, the famous saint of Pandua.



Nasiruddin ruled for ~~twenty~~ years and after his death his son Barbak Shah ascended the throne of Gaur and also ruled over the eastern part of his empire including Mu'zamabad.

Barbak's son Yusuf Shah also was a patron of the Sonargaon cultural centre and renamed it Yusufganj and built a mosque there.

Mu'zamabad was also known as Mahmudabad by the time of Sultan Jalaluddin Fath Shah, son of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah; it was better known as Mahmudabad. Its administrative centre according to several historians was situated at Majumpur. But recent studies have revealed that there are villages with the names of Musumabad and Mahmudabad within the mauza Musumabad. There are substantial vestiges of ruined fortified residences within the area. It is probably the site of Isa Khan's famous Katrabo fort. The ruins indicate that the site earlier might as well have been used by the Malik of Mu'zamabad. It is located on the eastern bank of the Sitalakhya river. Majumpur most probably was an outpost and naval base on the bank of the Brahmaputra where Baba Langar was appointed to hold charge. The six-domed mosque at Majumpur was built by one Masnad Shahi Ahmad Shah, who might have been a member of the family of Barbak Shah, a ruler of the Bhati, immediately before Isa Khan.

Sultan Jalaluddin Fath Shah was keenly aware of the necessity of protecting the river routes to Sonargaon. Accordingly he established several naval bases on the confluence and strategic points of rivers. In all likelihood he appointed a naval officer at Dhamrai on the bank of Bangsi and another to the fortified post on the bank of the Sitalakhya near 'Bandar' where Baba Salih was appointed as Malik. Moreover, he strengthened the outpost of Rampal and built a mosque by the side of the tomb of Baba Adam. One Baba Kashmiri was placed in charge of a post situated on the bank of the river Turag near Atiya. Yet another fortified naval post was established by him upstream on the Brahmaputra river near Sherpur where later, Shah Kamal settled.

Fath Shah's governor of Mu'zamabad built a mosque at Sonargaon and probably named the place after him. His name was Mogra-ud-Dowla. The place is still known by the name of Mogra (Para).

Sultan Jalaluddin Fath Shah was a victim of the powerful coterie of the Abyssinian slaves in the court and was killed by one Barbak Shah, who usurped the throne. The Ilyas Shahi dynasty produced a succession of exceptionally capable rulers. They were tolerant, enlightened administrators and great builders. In shaping the intellectual and economic life of Bengal they played a leading role. To have ruled over a people professing an alien faith for eight generations was itself a great achievement; but to be reinstated on the throne after 25 years of usurpation by a local dynasty was even a greater one. It speaks of their great popularity, which rested on their past services.

Putting an end to the tyrannical rule of the Abyssinian slaves Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah became the ruler of Bengal in 1493 A.D. His rule over Mu'zamabad was as successful as it was over Gaur. His general Rukn Khan expanded the frontier of Sonargaon and included Astagram within the iklim Muzamabad in 1505 A.D.

Nusrat Shah succeeded his father Husain Shah to the throne of Gaur. His rule was rudely disturbed by the Mughal advances in India and the dispersal of the Afghans towards the western frontier of Bengal. The Sultan, divided his iklim into several smaller units for better administration. The units of the iklim Mu'zamabad were named Nusrat Shahi, Sonargaon, Bhawal, Vikrampur, Khalifatabad, Sherpur etc. The last ruler of the dynasty was Mahmud Shah alias Badar Shah.

Sher Shah conquered Bengal in 1538 A.D. and appointed Khizir Khan as his governor of Sonargaon. Though it is said that Khizir Khan established the township of Khizirpur at Sonargaon, Sher Shah's jurisdiction never extended north and north-east of Dhaka, Mymensingh and Sylhet. The area lying beyond the conquests of Sher Shah on south-east Bengal was called Bhati. It was ruled by a congeries of local chiefs. One of them was Barbak Shah, son of Hymayun Shah. He minted coin in his own name. Another chief who ruled this part was Sulaiman Khan, father of Isa Khan. All these chiefs tried to arrest the advance of the new comers but could not succeed. After a lapse of 20 years, they joined hands with the Afghans and tried to thwart the penetration of the Mughals in the region. During these 20 years, the Karrani rulers held sway over Sonargaon and its surrounding area. With their fall Isa Khan, the leading Bara Bhuiyan of Bhati controlled the area from his stronghold at Egarsindhur, located on the bank of the Sitalakhya. With the advance of the Mughal general Khan Jahan, he abandoned Egarsindhur while Shahbaz Khan forced him to leave Katrabo. Thereafter, he established his administrative centre at Sonargaon but his residence continued to be at Khizirpur. The Mughal fugitive general, Masum Khan Kabuli took shelter with him at Katrabo. He along with his allies, Usman Khan of Bokainagar, Sonagazi of Bhawal, Ibrahim Moral and Karim Dad Musazai of Mymensingh, Kedar Rai of Vikrampur, Binod Roy of Chandpratap, Majlis Qutub of Fathpur, the chief of Bhushna and Matang, all fought against the Mughals till 1586 A.D. But with the arrival of Mansingh, the new viceroy of Bengal, Isa Khan, Masnad Shahi was finally defeated and made an ally of the Mughals.

His son Musa Khan, an equally brave leader, resumed the struggle against the Mughals. He along with his allies offered resistance against them in Jatra-pur, Dakchara, Bandar, Khizirpur, Qadam Rasul and Katrabo. But ultimately he had to submit to the superior arms of the Mughals. Dhaka, thereafter was made

their capital and renamed Jahangir Nagar by subadar Islam Khan Chisti in 1608 A.D. After this event Sonargaon passed into obscurity.

No epigraphic record has ever mentioned the south-eastern part of Bengal as Sonargaon. Only the name of Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon has been found on coins.

The chief towns of this territory were Sonargaon, Khalifatabad and Dhaka. The chief rivers that flowed through it were the Brahmaputra, the Meghna, the Surma, the Geyra Utra, Geyra Sunda, the Banar, the Sitalakhya, the Buriganga, the Dhaleswari, the Turag, the Ichamati, the Padma, the Kali-ganga, the naya Bhagni, the Bhairav, the Pasur, the Madhumati, the Kobadak, the Gorai and the Arial Khan. Besides, it was also traversed by innumerable creeks and rivulets.

#### Monuments of Sonargaon :

During its heyday innumerable monuments of various descriptions were built by the Sultans and their noblemen (Map. 2). As a writer has graphically said, "At the whim of Kings and Conquerors, eager to perpetuate their fame, new cities have arisen with startling rapidity, often but to be deserted in their turn wellnigh before the last stones have crowned the minarets and pinnacles of their mosques and palaces"<sup>1</sup> Most of these monuments have disappeared with the passage of time but the names of a few are still preserved in stone inscriptions.

The monuments of Sonargaon belong to three major categories :

1. Mosque
2. Tomb and
3. Buildings of miscellaneous order.

---

1. Bradely Birt, Romances of Eastern Capital, P. 64.

Mosque :

There were as many as eight types of mosque in Sonargaon :

- i) Single domed square mosque;
- ii) Single domed mosque with corridor;
- iii) Three domed mosque;
- iv) Five domed mosque;
- v) Six domed mosque;
- vi) Nine domed mosque
- vii) Ten domed mosque; and
- viii) Multi domed mosques. No other parts of Bengal shows such varieties of style.

It appears that the single domed mosque was more popular than multi-domed ones as they outnumbered the multidomed ones. This is a speciality in Sonargaon. These small mosques probably owed their origin to the small fragmented units of habitation in the area. The mosque of Binat Bibi, Bibi Begni, Ronvijoypur, Chunakhola, Khan Jahan's tomb, the Singer mosque, the Gorai, the Bandar, the Khondokar Tola, the Yusufganj, the Shariatganj mosques, the mosque of Mai Saheba, the Goaldi mosque, the Rekabi bazar mosque are notable examples of this type.

Each square, single domed mosque is characterised by a curved cornice, four corner towers, three pointed arched entrances on the east; the middle entrance which is bigger and higher than others has a singularity of appearance. Corresponding to these doors, there are three ornate mihrabs in the qibla wall. One door and two blind recesses are common to most of the single-domed mosques on the north and south sides. Eight engaged stone pillars, two on either side of the middle door and mihrab, carry the thrust of the dome.

The phase of transition is achieved by providing a squinch or *pendentive* in the corners. No drum yet appears on these monuments and the dome directly rests on walls. The largest single dome is found in the Ronvijoypur mosque with a diameter of 35'-6". The shape of the dome and the round corner towers resemble the tenth century tomb of Ismail the Samanid of Bukhara.

Some single-domed mosques were enlarged with the addition of a *varendah* on the east. The mosques of Masjidbari, Hajiganj and Shankar Pasha are specimens of this style. The main sanctuary is covered by a large dome while the *varandah* is roofed over by another three domes. The building is entered through five doors, --- three arched doors on the east and one on each north and south sides. In the mosques of Masjidbari and Shankar Pasha all the domes on corridor are not round; the middle dome being 'chauchala' while the one on the sides are round. Each mosque contains six round towers in all. A similar design was also followed in the mosques of Chamkatti and Tantipara in Gaur.

Mosques with clusters of domes show varieties of style in Sonargaon.

Multidomes in clusters, an extraneous influence in Bengal but their disposition in different variety (three, five, six, nine, ten and more) is a peculiarity of Sonargaon.

The three (Mithapukur at Bagerhat, Niamatullah Butshakin at Dhaka and Jangalbari at Kishoreganj) and the five domed variety (the Qutub mosque at Astagram and Becharam Deowry mosque at Dhaka) are single aisled while the six domed (the mosques of Rezakhoda, Rampal and Majumpur) and the ten domed (the Pathrail mosques, the Ronvijoypur mosque and Kuliarchar mosque) are two-aisled. Nine domed mosques have three aisles and three bays. They are a distinctive class by themselves. Four free standing pillars and eight pillars embedded in walls carry these domes. The square mosque is divided into three

aisles and three bays by three doors on each side : east, south and north. The qibla wall contains three mihrabs. Four round corner towers and curved cornice are usual characteristics of this region. The division of the sanctuary into three aisles is also a characteristic feature of the Jami mosque of Damascus, built during the Umayyad period. The mosque of Masjidkur, Qasba, Satoir and one at Bagerhat belong to this group. A similar cluster of nine domes is also found in the Kali and Khirqi mosques of Feroz Tughlaq in Delhi. An exactly similar example of nine domes in cluster is also found in the mosque of Ulu Jami in Turkey, built in the 14th century. In Bengal, the first example of nine domes in cluster is found in the attached chamber of the Adina Mosque at Pandua, built by Sultan Sikandar Shah in the 14th century.

The multidomed mosques were usually built on strategically important locations, normally on river banks, such as the mosques of Pathrail, Kuliarchar, Astagram, Mojampur, Rampal, Satoir, Qasba etc.

The number of domes above them was determined by the number of aisles and bays. The number of front doors usually determined the number of mihrabs in the qibla wall.

By far the most magnificent and largest multi-domed mosque in Bangladesh is the imposing Shait Gumbaz Masjid at Bagerhat. It is erroneously known locally as the Shait Gumbaz or sixtydomed mosque, although actually the number of domes is seventyseven. The domes are symmetrically distributed over the roof with thirty-five round squat domes in two groups occupying the north and south sides while a row of seven 'chauchala' domes divides them down the middle. There are sixty stone pillars or 'Khambas' inside the mosque which might have caused it to be known as 'sixty Khamba Masjid' eventually leading to its present misleading name.

A striking feature of the simple but massive edifice is the provision of a triangular gable or pediment in the middle of its eastern facade from where the cornice slopes away in a graceful curve to the corner towers. The curved cornice runs around the mosque and terminates in the corner towers. The sanctuary is divided into seven aisles and eleven bays. That being so, there are eleven arched entrances on the east and seven on either side: north and south, except one in the south. This exceptional doorway has been converted into a window with perforated bricks. An unusual feature of the mosque is the provision of a small doorway in the western wall adjacent to the central mihrab on the north in place of a mihrab and therefore, instead of eleven corresponding mihrabs on the qibla wall there are now only ten. There are four hollow round towers in the mosque which rise above the cornice level, with a distinct taper, the frontal two of which contain windows and staircases. These were obviously used as mazines. This is the only example of towers used as mazines in the area. The mosque originally had an extensive courtyard enclosed within walls and a gateway on the east. A test excavation here and at the Singar mosque revealed that the enclosure wall was repaired at times with perforated brickjalis.

Its impressive central stone mihrab displays the Bengali motif of bell-and-chain. The brick mihrabs also display fine terracotta designs, depicting bell-and-chain and other floral motifs. It is curious that the present level of the floor of the monuments is flush with the surrounding ground which allows moisture to rise considerably high up on walls and thereby cause steady deterioration. It is not easy to understand why a high plinth was not provided to the mosque especially in this highly waterlogged saline zone.



Tombs :

The stone tombs of Sonargaon may conveniently be classified into two groups :

- i) Tomb without underground chamber.
- ii) Tomb with an underground mortuary chamber.

The stone-tomb built by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah without any underground chamber near the city site of Sonargaon is the earliest example of its kind in the iklim. The sarcophagus consists of a single block of black-basalt forming a keeled top which rests on a table of the same material. According to James Wise this was formerly surrounded by an enclosure of stone pillars which supported a canopy above. "The stone grave is decorated with carved motifs very similar to those at the Adina Mosque of Pandua, built by Sultan Sikandar Shah. The cornice of the stone table has a line of billet decoration below the beaded ornament - - a pattern very similar to the stone carving of the 'Badshah-ka-Takht' in the Adina Mosque". Lower down there are three panels, each showing a trefoil arched niche with a hanging pattern suspended from their apex. Instead of a combined chain with a hanging lamp in the mihrab of Adina Mosque, here a double chain is found with a hanging container, similar to local 'shika' design. At the head of the gravestone, there was once a sandstone pillar and a 'chiragh-dan' for lamp.

Although there is no inscription on it at present, the style of its designs and carving bring this tomb very close in time to the Adina mosque. As Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah's assassination at Pandua was followed by anarchy and confusion in the capital it is unlikely that his body was carried to Sonargaon and buried there by his enemies. On the contrary it is more likely that since his father died at Sonargaon, he was buried in the tomb built by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah.

The next tomb in Sonargaon territory is that of Khan Jahan at Bagerhat. He died in 1459 A.D. This tomb is very important as it contains an inscription bearing his date of demise. This is the second earliest dated monument of the region. The black basalt sarcophagus is decorated with inscriptions from the Quran and the date of demise of Khan Jahan. The tombstone rests on a stepped platform originally decorated with encaustic glazed tiles of variegated colours. The underground cell below contains the grave and its passage is further relieved with more inscriptions, which have remained undeciphered and unpublished to this day. A careful study of these inscriptions may lead to the identity of Khan Jahan and also to other incidental information about his time. This is the earliest tomb of Bengal having an underground mortuary chamber. The tradition of building tombs with underground mortuary chambers began with the first tomb structure in Islam. In India early examples of this type of monuments are the tombs of Sultan Garhi and Iltutmish.

The tomb structure at Bagerhat is roofed over by a single dome and crowned by a 'Kalasa' motif. The curved cornice runs around and terminates in round towers at the corners. There are four doors in four walls, the north and the west doors are now closed. The stone brackets, supporting the squinches carry the thrust of the dome. The domed chamber is surrounded by a low wall having balustered windows. The whole building complex here consists of a ruined roofless building on the east, the tomb, the open stone grave of Pir Ali and a mosque similar to the tomb of Khan Jahan on the west. The complex is surrounded by a low walled enclosure with two gates on the south and one on the north.

The masonry tombs in Sonargaon are either in ruins or have been so renovated as to be devoid of their original features. The most prominent masonry tombs are (1) The tomb of Baba ~~Adam~~ Shahid at Rampal, (2) The tomb of Baba Langar at Mojampur, (3) The tomb of Baba Salih at Bandar, (4) The tomb of Baba Kashmiri at Atiya, (5) The tomb of Shah Ali at Mir, (6) The tomb of Shah Niamatullah Butshekin at Dhaka, (7) The tomb of Shah Kamal at Sherpur and (8) The tomb of Qutb Shah at Astagram.

Panch Pir Dargah is a group of highly venerated five masonry graves within an enclosed graveyard. These prominent 'dargahas' are located at Mograpara, Dhamrai and Astagram.

#### Buildings of Miscellaneous Order :

No secular monument at Sonargaon has survived the passage of time. On the basis of some of the ruined mounds supported by place names and vestiges of ruins indicating the sites of palaces, bridges and forts these secular monuments may be grouped as follows :

- i) Residence or city remains;
- ii) Forts or security outposts and naval bases.

The earliest residential area of Sonargaon may be identified with the place name of the village known as Qusyr Amra located on the west bank of the Brahmaputra river near Langalband.

The walled city built by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah at Sonargaon was probably situated on the east bank of the Brahmaputra, at the present village site of Bhita Azampur. It was protected by moats and natural creeks. It could be approached from the north across the Jalalpur bridge. The area is dotted with choked up ponds, creeks, and monuments.

The city site of Khalifatabad on the township of Khan Jahan at Bagerhat was established on the south-west frontier of Sonargaon and on the bank of the Bhairab river. It was a planned city having regularly planned roads, aligned with various buildings on either side and radiating to different parts of the town and beyond.

The fortified township and residence of Isa Khan Masnad Shahi was at Katrabo on the east bank of the Sitalakhya river. On the basis of the vestiges of ruins in this area, the general characteristics of a fortified township-cum-residence may be conjectured. It consisted of three main divisions : the protected royal palace approached through a gateway, the area of high officials and the area for their dependents. The entire area used to be enclosed within a thick mud rampart strengthened by kiln burnt bricks. The defence walls were further strengthened by corner towers and bastions. The protected residence contained a private mosque with a water reservoir for the inmates. A hammam was an invariable adjunct to these establishments, adequately supplied with water. These fortified areas usually had access to some water routes and therefore, offer an interesting study of the defence system in Sonargaon.

The port city of Sonargaon was on the east bank of the Sitalakhya near 'Bandar'. The mosque and tomb of one of the Maliks of the port city stand in the area.

Security outposts and fortified naval bases were built on the bank of rivers and at strategic points such as Egarsindhur, Sonakanda, Dapeka, Khizirpur and the like. The most important naval base of Sonargaon appears to have been located at Dhamrai on the bank of the Bangsi river. The layout of these forts was both rectangular and pentagonal.

### Ornamentation of the Monuments :

The bare massive walls of the monuments of Sonargaon were made of kiln burnt bricks and provided with 2-centred pointed arches in doors and windows. Other constructional features of the monuments are clusters of 'chauchala' and round domes, round and octagonal towers, curved cornice bands and massive walls with offsets and recesses. The phase of transition for the dome, from square to circular, was achieved by providing squinch or pendentive at the corners. Stone pillars together with massive walls and lateral arches carried the thrust of domes. No drum was used at the base or neck of the domes.

The chief decorative features on these monuments were the terracotta plaques, carved bricks bearing the crescent symbol, vegetal, geometric and floral scrolls with foliate motifs. Mihrabs were the most ornate portions of the mosques where apart from the various floral patterns, the bell and chain motif predominated. In addition to these decorative elements perforated jalis in windows, polygonal glazed tiles and indigenous calligraphic carvings were also popular.

### Minor Arts :

The extreme rarity of materials on minor arts of this period in Bengal such as painting, wood carving, metal work, ivory, jewellery, filigree, textile, ceramics etc. renders it very difficult to assess the degree of excellence these arts attained. Of the famous muslin of Bengal, so frequently referred to by the Chinese and European travellers, very few specimens now survive in different museums for study. Muslins were finely embroidered with motifs similar to those found on terracotta plaques. They were made of fine cotton thread; decorated with gold and silver thread, and sometimes with coloured cotton thread as well. The embroidered muslin still bears its traditional

name of 'Jancani'. The few specimens of decadent silver filigree work preserved in our museum only testify to the rich tradition of Bengal in silver smithery. The tradition of exceptionally fine basketry and bed-spread matting of cane and ivory is still a live art in Bangladesh.

But probably the most famous of these arts was wood carving; intricate and delicately carved woodwork had a very long tradition in Bengal like terracotta, but very few examples have survived the inimical climate of the country. Probably painting was not a favourite art in this extremely moist climate. The application of glazed tile decoration on monuments was introduced in this region in the 15th century but it went out of fashion within a century, probably because of the dominance of the terracotta art in which the indigenous artists felt more at home than in the imported art.

Some unrefined glazed plates, saucers and goblets not unlike those found in other areas of the Islamic world of the 14th or 15th century have been found in the so-called residence mound of Khan Jahan in Bagerhat. They offer an interesting study of this art in the region.

Of all the minor arts the art of calligraphy developed in this region during the Sultanate period largely under the patronage of the ruling elite. The countless Arabic and Persian inscriptions on mosques, tomb and other public buildings which have come down to us together with a large collection of gold and silver coins bearing elegant styles of writing, testify to excellence achieved in the field of calligraphy. A study of pre-Mughal coins and epigraphic records show that various styles of calligraphy developed in this region with consummate skill and ingenuity. From the very beginning it was characterised by delicacy of form and subtlety of arrangement, and attained striking perfection and refinement during the Husain Shahi period. Among the various forms practiced in Bengal, the excellence and skill of the Tughra Style has no parallel in the entire world

of Islam. The style is purely of a decorative nature in which the scribe arranged the words and letters of the text ingeniously, not in order of sequence but according to his fancy so that the effect is a highly decorative composition, although often extremely difficult to decipher. The most famous varieties of Tughra characteristics of Bengal are variously known as 'the Bow and Arrow', 'Boat and Oar', 'Marching Soldier', 'Congregation of the Faithful' etc. The letters in this variety are written across the body of the shafts in the shape of bows exemplified beautifully in the Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah's Rajshahi inscription dated 878 A.H. and Alauddin Husain Shah's Rajshahi inscription, dated 904 A.H.

#### Conclusion :

Sonargaon was always a place of attraction to power seekers, preachers, travellers and merchants. This deltaic area of the Sultanate of Bengal was famous for its fabulous wealth and aptly justified its name. Contrary to the general impression that Sonargaon was a small area within the jurisdiction of the original district of Dhaka, the present study identifies the area of Sonargaon as a vast tract of land. The study which covers a period of more than two hundred and fifty years (1338-1608 A.D.) leads to that conclusion .

A vast tract of land in South East Bengal was known as Sonargaon. Its capital city and port within the administrative jurisdiction of the original district of Dhaka bore the same name. It was bounded by the Jamuna, the Gorai, the Bhairab rivers on the West, while the Meghna, the territory of Tippera defined its eastern boundary. The north was bounded by the kingdom of Kamrupa and Kamta and it stretched upto the Bay of Bengal in the south.

At the outset of the Muslim conquest, the early habitation area grew along the west bank of the Brahmaputra and the east bank of the Sitalakhya rivers. The place was identified around the village of Qusyr Amra near ancient sacred Hindu bathing places of Langalbandh and Panchamighat.

The walled capital city of Sonargaon was established by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah in the latter part of the fourteenth century on the east bank of the Brahmaputra river. The palace area within the city site has been identified around the village of 'Bhita Azampur' commonly known as 'Sultan Bhita Azampur' within the jurisdiction of Baidyar Bazar Police Station and the modern upazila of Sonargaon.

The city was protected by 'Damdamah' or fort, moats and natural creeks. It could be approached by a bridge on the north.\* On the south western outskirts of the city area there is a stone tomb usually ascribed to Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. But circumstances and other evidences indicate that it may not be the tomb of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. It is very likely that the stone tomb enshrines the body of Sultan Sikander Shah as he died in a battle with his son at Sonargaon.\*

The cultural centre of Sonargaon developed on the south-east side of the palace area; the area is dotted with mosques, tombs, ponds and other ruined vestiges of the Sultanate period.

The port city was always on the south-west side of the walled city; on the east bank of the Sitalakhya and west bank of the Brahmaputra river. In later times the port city was under the control of another Malik or governor. A naval base protected the port city. This was the custom of pre-Muslim days also, when it was known as 'Nigam' or port town. The residence of the 'Amir' or 'Malik' of the port was in the area around the village 'Qusyra'.

\* Where the present Painam bridge stands. Please see page no. 47.

\* For fuller understanding please see page no.170-171 .



Azam Khan, elder brother of Nur Qutb Alam and son of Alaul Haq was the general and the Khan al Azam Khan Jahan of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. After the murder of the Sultan by Raja Ganesh the Khan al Azam Khan Jahan left Pandua along with his followers and established himself in the south-west frontier of Sonargaon i.e. modern Bagerhat . Today, he is known by the name Khan Jahan. This Khan Jahan is Azam Khan and Khan al Azam Khan Jahan and Ulugh Khan Jahan of Bagerhat inscriptions. He founded a well planned township there and erected a large number of mosques with a newly evolved style. These structures display a good combination of the Tughloqian and the Bengali style of architecture that developed at Delhi and Pandua respectively. He very tacitly avoided any conflict with the house of Raja Ganesh; never minted coins nor owed allegiance to any Sultan at that time. In an opportune moment some of the nobles who supported the house of Ilyas Shah, installed Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah on the throne of Gaur.

Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah appointed Azam Khan, the Khan al Azam Khan Jahan of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, as his Ulugh Khan Jahan. The Ulugh Khan Jahan of Sultan Nasiruddin built a mosque at Mymensingh and died at Bagerhat in 1459 A. D. The town of Khan Jahan came to be known as Khalifatabad in the 16th century.

The stone tomb of Khan Jahan at Bagerhat within a complex is decorated with variegated glazed tiles and calligraphy. The tomb with an underground chamber is also decorated with calligraphic writing. The writings if deciphered may bring out revealing facts about the history of the period.

The most magnificent work of Khan Jahan is the Shait Gumbaz Masjid. This may correctly be called Shait Khamba Masjid. It is the largest mosque of Bangladesh in extant.

Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah was killed at Pandua and the present work suggests the possibility of his lying buried in the mausoleum known as the Eklakhi at Pandua and not in the cenotaph at Sonargaon as is generally believed. No architectural objection has been found in placing this tomb to the days of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah.\*

As many as eight types of mosques were built in Sonargaon. No other part of Bengal displays such varieties of structure. The embellishment of monuments with terracotta plaques, carved bricks balustar jali patterns exemplify varieties of design that developed at Sonargaon.

The implied term Sonargaon was never used in any epigraphic record as the name of the 'iklim'. The 'iklim' was always referred to in inscriptions as Mu'zamabad and Mahmudabad. 'Sonargaon' and 'Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon' were used on coins only.

Fortified residences and townships consisted of three main divisions. The entire area used to be enclosed within a mud rampart, strengthened by kilnburnt bricks. The defence wall was further strengthened by corner towers and bastions. The protected residence contained a private mosque and a water reservoir for the inmates. A hammam was an invariable adjunct to these establishments. The fortified areas usually had access to some water routes and therefore, offer an interesting study of the defence system of Sonargaon. These features are particularly noticeable at 'Katrabo' of Isa Khan of Bhati. No trace of fortification has so far been found in the city site of the Khalifatabad.

On the banks of rivers and at strategic points several fortified outposts and naval bases like Egarsindhur, Mojampur, Dapeka, Khizirpur, Sonakanda, Dhamrai were built. The layout of these forts

Thus Sonargaon, as the name suggests was an attractive tract of land with a capital of same name. It was a place of abundance having second residential palace for immediate successors and influential personalities of the kingdom of Gaur. Though it stood on the bank of the mighty Brahmaputra river its proximity to the sea enabled it to earn fame as a port town.

The lowlying area of Sonargaon did not permit its builders to raise monumental structures. On the contrary its small village units surrounded by marshy areas fostered the growth of small units of mosque. its climate and soil dictated the construction of covered type of mosques in brick. Traditional decorative style of monuments with terracotta and glazed tile continued in Sonargaon. We come across with the square glazed tile on the floor of the tomb of Khan Jahan, probably for the first time in India.

The religion and culture of Islam was ofcourse the prime mover of the cultural pattern of Sonargaon, But nevertheless, its local tradition, had a role equally important in dimension. This happy marriage between the two older and richer art and architectural tradition resulted in a happy fusion of what is the glory that Sonargaon can boast of to-day.

APPENDIX I.

A Comparative Dynastic Chronology of the Rulers  
of Bengal and India.

<u>Bengal (A.D.)</u>	<u>India</u>
320-650 Gupta Dynasty	320 Chandragupta I, Accession 500 Hun invasion by Taramana
606-37 King Sasanka	606-47 Harshabardhan's rule
650-700 Khagda dynasty	-
750 - Pala Dynasty of Bengal founded by Gopala	-
770-810 Dharmapala Paharpur vihara founded	-
c.8th Century Deva dynasty - Salban Vihar, Kutila Mura Stupa	
900-1050 Chandra Dynasty of Bengal	1001-26 Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni's series of invasion in India. 1145 Bairam, the king of Ghazny being expelled by Alauddin Ghazny makes Lahore, his capital.
1095-1204 Sena Dynasty	1147 Khasrow, king of Lahore
1204 - Ikhtiaruddin Khalji's conquest of Bengal	1173 Sultan Mohammed Ghuri invades India
1206 - Death of Ikhtiaruddin Khalji	1175-1206 Carries on war into the Province of Delhi.
1206-1212 The Khalji civil war	leaves Qutubuddin Aibak as his lieutenant
1213-1227 Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji  - Lakhnauti : capital, first expedition against Bang.	1206 Qutubuddin Aibak, the first Muhammadan Sultan of Delhi.

- 1227-1287 Bengal under the Mamluks of Delhi
- 1228-1229 (May) Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud
- 1229 - (Nov.) Malik Ikhtiaruddin Balka Khalji
- 1230-1231 Malik Alauddin Jani
- 1231-1236 Malik Saifuddin Aibak
- For few months Aor Khan Aibak
- 1236-1245 Malik Tughril Tughan Khan
- 1245-1249 Malik Tamar Khan
- 1247-1251 Malik Jalaluddin Masud Jani
- 1251-1257 (July) Malik Ikhtiaruddin Yazbak
- 1257-1259 Malik Izzuddin Balbani Yuzbaki Second invasion of Bengal.
- 1259-1265 Malik Tajuddin Arsalan Khan
- 1265-67 - Prince Tatar Khan
- 1267 - Sher Khan
- 1268-1272 Amin Khan with Tughril Khan, a deputy Governor
- 1268-1281 Sultan Mughisuddin Tughril, Sonargaon is mentioned in history.
- 1281-90 Bughra Khan
- 1291-1301 Kai Kaus
- 1301 - 22 Sultan Shamsuddin Firuzshah mint of Sonargaon. 710 A.H./ 1310 A.D. conquest of Sylhet.
- 1211 Sultan Shamsuddin Altamash at Delhi
- 1233 Sultan Rukauddin Feroz
- 1239 Sultana Razia
- 1242 Sultan Alauddin Masood
- 1245 Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud
- 1266 Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban
- 1290-1320 Khalji Dynasty repeated invasion of Mongols.
- 1321-1388 Tughlaq Dynasty
- 1321 Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's invasion of Bengal in 1324.

- 1322- 28 Sultan Ghiyasuddin Bahadurshah
- 1325 Muhammad bin Tughlaq
- 1328-1338 Bahram Khan alias Tatar Khan at Sonargaon
- three administrative units in Bengal namely - Lakhnauti, Satgaon, Sonargaon.
- 1328-1399 Malik Qadar Khan at Lakhnauti
- 1328-1344 Izzuddin Yahya at Satgaon
- 1339-1342 Ali Mubarak at Lakhnauti, then comes Haji Il-yas.
- 1338-1349/750 A.H. Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah at Sonargaon.
- 1349-1352 Ikhtiaruddin Ghazi Shah at Sonargaon
- 1351-89 Sultan Feroz Tughlaq's invasion of Bengal 1353 A.D. and 1358 A.D.

#### Il yas Shahi Dynasty

- 1352-1358 Sultan Shamsuddin Haji Il-yas - An Independent Kingdom in Bengal. (Lakhnauti, Satgaon & Sonargaon combined).
- 1358-1399 Sultan Sikander Shah
- 1364 - The Adina Mosque of Pandua  
The mosque of Mollah Simla, Hoogly. The mosque of Gangarampur, Dinajpur.
- 1390-1410 Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah.
- 1398 Invasion of Timur
- (1370-1390) (at Sonargaon) Stone tomb at Sonargaon.
- 1410-144 Sultan Saifuddin Hamza Shah.
- 1412 - 15 Sultan Shihabuddin Bayezid Shah
- 1415 Sultan Alauddin Feroz Shah

- 1415-1431 Sultan Jalaluddin  
Muhammad Shah
- 1432-1435 Sultan Shamsuddin Ahmed  
Shah
- 1436-1459 Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud  
Shah I.
- Stone tomb at Bagerhat
  - Shait Gumbaz Mosque

— Humayun Shah ( )

### Bengal under the Surs

1539-1564

1530 Death of Babur and accession of Humayun.

1539-1545 Sher Shah Sur.

1540 - 45 Tomb of Sher Shah at Sasaram

1555 - Restoration of Humayun

1556 - Second battle of Panipath

1565 - Tomb of Humayun at Delhi.

### The Karrani Dynasty

1564-1576

1575 - Mughals victory in the  
battle of Tukhario.

### Local Chiefs' Rule

1584 - Isa Khan shifted capital  
from Katrabnuto Sonargaon.

1598 - Death of Isa Khan of Bhati  
Musa Khan's struggle with  
the Mughals.

1608 - Dhaka became capital of  
the Mughals in Bengal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Al Badaoni, Muntakhabu-t-Twarikh, Eng. tr. by S.A. Geogre Rankin (edi),  
{Darab-i-Adabiyat {Delhi, 1973}, 3 volumes.
- A.U. Pope, A Survey of Persian Art, Oxford University Press, {London, 1938},  
6 volumes.
- A.L. Basham, (ed), A Cultural History of India, Clarendon Press, {Oxford, 1975}.
- A.S. Beveridge, tr. Babur Nama (Memoirs of Babur), Oriental Books Reprint  
Corporation, {New Delhi, 1970}, volume I & II.
- Aptullah Kuran, The Mosque in Early Ottoman Architecture, {Chicago and London, 1968}
- Aga Mahdi Hussain, Rehla-i-Ibn Batutah, Gaekwar Oriental Series No. CXXII,  
{Boroda, 1959}.
- A.M. Chowdhury, Dynastic History of Bengal, The Asiatic Society of Pakistan,  
{Dhaka, 1967}.
- Abul Fazl Allami, Ain-i-Akbari, Eng. tr. by Jerrett, volume II, 3rd edi., New  
Delhi Oriental Books, {New Delhi, 1978}.
- Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, volume II & III Eng. tr. by Beveridge, Ess Ess Publication,  
{Delhi, 1977}.
- The  
A.B.M. Habibullah, Foundation of Muslim Rule in India, 2nd edition,  
{Allahabad, 1961}.
- Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Historical Geography of Bengal, {Calcutta, 1982}.
- Al Dabir, Zafar Ul Walih-bi-Muzaffar-Wa-Alihi, Eng. tr. by Lokhandwala M.F.  
{An Arabic History of Gujrat}, Oriental Institute,  
{Boroda, 1974}.
- A. Ghosh, The City in Early Historic India, Indian Institute of Advanced  
Studies, {Simla, 1973}.
- Abdul Karim, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal, Asiatic Society of  
Pakistan, {Dhaka, 1959}.
- " Corpus of the Muslim Coins of Bengal, Asiatic  
Society of Pakistan, {Dhaka, 1960}.
- " Banglar Itihasha (Sultani Amal) First edition,  
Bangla Academy, {Dacca, 1977}.
- Abdur Rahim, Social and Cultural History of Bengal, Pakistan Publishing House,  
{Karachi, 1967}.



- A.H. Dani, Muslim Architecture in Bengal, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, (Dacca, 1961).
- " Dacca A Record of its Changing Fortune, Asiatic Press, 2nd edition, (Dacca, 1962).
- Alexander Papadopoulos, Islam and Muslim Art, Thames and Hudson Ltd., (London, 1980), (Eng. tr.).
- Anisuzzaman, (edi), Bangla Shahityer Itihasha, Bangla Academy, (Dhaka, 1987).
- A.K.M. Zakaria, Bangladesher Protna Sampad, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, (Dhaka, 1984).
- Alexander Cunningham, Archaeological Survey of India, Report of a Tour in Bihar and Bengal in 1879-80, volume XV, (Calcutta, 1888).
- Banister Fletcher, A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method for Students etc., 16th revised edition, Batsford, (London, 1953).
- Charles Stewart, The History of Bengal, Bangshashi Office, (Calcutta, 1910).
- Charles D'Oyly, Antiquities of Dacca, (London, 1830).
- D.C. Sircar, Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, 2nd edition, Motilal Banarjidas, (Delhi, 1971).
- E. Thomas, Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi, (London, 1871).
- Elliot and Dowson, History of India as told by its Own Historians, the Muhammadan period, 8 volumes, Susil Gupta, (Calcutta, 1953-56).
- : Minhaj-i-Siraj, Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, Eng. tr. by Raverty in Elliot's volume II (from beginning of the conquest of Bengal to 1261).
  - : Ziauddin Barni, Tarikh-i-Ferojshahi, Eng. tr. by in Elliot's volume III, (from 1266-1357 A.D.).
  - : Shams-i-Siraj-i-Afif, Tarikh-i-Feruzshahi, Eng. tr. in Elliot's volume III (Feruzshah Tughlaq's period).
  - : Amir Khursrau, Qiran-us-Sa'dain, Eng. tr. in Elliot's volume III.
- Enamul Haque, Islamic Heritage of Bangladesh, (Dhaka, 1985).
- Farid-ud-din Attar, Tadqiratul Aulia-i-Hind, Eng. tr. by Nicolson, (London, 1905).
- F.B. Bradley Birt, The Romance of an Eastern Capital, Bell, (London, 1914).
- Golam Husain Selim, Reazus Salatin, Eng. tr. by A. Salam; Bengali tr. by Akbaruddin, Bangla Academy, (Dhaka, 1974).
- George Michell, ed. The Islamic Heritage of Bengal, UNESCO, (Paris, 1984).

- H. Blockman, Historical and Geographical Accounts of Bengal, (Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873-75), (Calcutta, 1875).
- H. Gardner, Art Through The Ages, fifth edition, Harcourt, Brace and World INC., (New York, 1970),
- ✓ H. Dey, Ibn Batutah's Account of Bengal (extra.) edited by Pranabendra Nath Ghosh, Prajna, (Calcutta, 1978) .
- H.M. Chakrabarti, Vikrampur Itihasa, 2 volumes, (Dhaka 1854) .
- Irfan Habib, An Atlas of the Mughal Empire, Centre of Advance Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University, Oxford University Press, (Delhi, 1982) .
- I.H. Qureshi, The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, 2nd edition, Kashmiri Bazar, (Lahore, 1944) .
- James Taylor, Topography and Statistical Accounts of Dacca, 1840 (Xerox copy in the Dhaka University Library).
- Jotindra Mohan Roy, Dhakar Itihasa, 2 volumes, Sri Shashi Mohan Roy Kabi Ratna, (Calcutta, 1322 Bangabda),
- Jatindra nath Gupta, Vikrampur Itihasa, Bhattacharya and Sons, (Calcutta, 1316 B.
- Jadunath Sarkar, (edited), The History of Bengal, volume II, 3rd edition, (Dhaka University, 1976).
- J.N. Das Gupta, Bengal in the 16th Century, (Calcutta University, 1914) .
- J. Fergusson, History of Indian and Eastern Architecture, volume II, Munshiram Mohoharlal, (New Delhi, 2nd edition, 1972) (first published in 1876 in London).
- ✓ J.A. Campos, History of the Portuguese in Bengal, (London, 1913) ,
- J.H. Ravenshaw, Gaur, Its Ruins and Inscriptions, (London, 1878) .
- J. Anderson, Catalogue and Handbook of the Archaeological Collections in the Indian Museum, Part II, (Calcutta, 1883) .
- J. Briggs, Firishta, in Elliot's volume IV, (London, 1829) .
- John Sandy, (ed.), A Master plan for the conservation and preservation of the Ruins of the Buddhist Vihara at Paharpur and the Historic mosque city of Bagerhat (Paris, 1983).
- Khan Shahib M. Abid Ali Khan, Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, edited by H.E. Stapleton, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, (Calcutta, 1924) .

- K.A.C. Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, volume I, (Oxford 1932), Revised, 1969.
- K.N. Majumdar, Mymensingher Vivaran, 2nd edition, Kuntalin Press, (Calcutta, 1907).
- " Dhakar Vivaran, (Calcutta, 1910).
- Montgomery Martin, (edited), History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India, Comprising of the Districts of Behar Shahabad, Bhagalpoor, Gorackpoor, Dinajpoor, Purniya, Rungpoor, and Assam, volume II, (London, 1838).
- M.A. Bari, Khalifatabad, A Study of Its History and Monuments, an unpublished M. Phil Thesis, (Rajshahi University, 1980).
- Mirza Nathan, Baharistan-i-Ghaibi, Eng. tr. by M.I. Borah, 2 volumes, (Gauhati Govt. of Assam, 1936).
- Muhammad Sirajul Islam, Some Aspects of Lodi Architecture an unpublished thesis, (Berlin University, 1962).
- Muhammad Enamul Hoque, A History of Sufiism in Bengal, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, (Dhaka, 1975).
- Montazur Rahman Tarafdar, Husain Shahi Bengal, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, (Dhaka, 1965).
- M.S. Dimand, A Handbook of Muhammadan Art, (London, 1938).
- Mvi. Shamsuddin Ahmed, Inscriptions of Bengal, volume IV, Varendra Research Museum, (Rajshahi, 1960).
- Nazimuddin Ahmed, Bagerhat Monuments, (Dhaka, 1980).
- " Islamic Heritage of Bangladesh, (Dhaka, 1982).
- " Discover the Monuments of Bangladesh, Edited by John Sandy, The University Press Limited, (Dhaka, 1984).
- Nur Muhammad Azmi, Hadither Tattya Katha, Bangla Academy, (Dhaka, 1982).
- N.K. Bhattasali, Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal, W. Heffer and Sons, (Cambridge, 1922).
- Nihar Ranjan Roy, Banglar Nod O Nadi, (Calcutta, 1932).
- N. Majumdar (ed), Inscriptions of Bengal, volume III, VRM., (Rajshahi, 1929).
- O.H. Spate, India and Pakistan, A General and Regional Geography, 2nd edition, Methuen & Co. Ltd., (London, 1957).
- Oktay Aslanpa, Turkish Art and Architecture, (London, 1971).

- Oleg Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art, (The Yale University Press, 1973),
- Percy Brown, Indian Architecture, (Islamic Period), 6th Reprint, D.B. Taraparavala Sons and Co. Pvt.Ltd., (Bombay, 1975),
- R.C. Majumdar, The History of Bengal, volume I, Hindu Period, (The University of Dacca, 2nd Impression, 1963),
- R.D. Banarjee, Bangalar Itihasha, 2nd edition, Ranjit Shaha, (Calcutta, 1974), 2 volumes.
- R. Nath, History of Sultanate Architecture, Avinava Publication, (New Delhi, 1978)
- Ralfh Fitch, Travels(edi) by Reley, also by Foster, 1921.
- Rennell, Map of Hindustan etc. Dhaka University Library.
- Sebastien Manrique, Travels(edi), tr. by Buard and Hosten, (Hakluyt Society, 1926-27)
- Sajjad Husain, East Pakistan, A Profile, (Dacca, 1962) .
- S.M. Hasan, Ancient Monuments of East Pakistan, (Dacca, 1971)
- " Mosque Architecture of Pre-Mughal Bengal, (Dacca, 1979).
- " Sonargaon, (Dacca, 1982}
- " Bangladesher Lokshilpa(ed.)(Dhaka, 1983).
- Satish Grover, The Architecture of India, (Islamic Period), (New Delhi, 1981) .
- Sayed Murtaza Ali, Saints of Bangladesh, (Dhaka, 1971).
- S.C. Mitra, Jessore Khulnar Itihasha, 2 volumes, 3rd edition, Das and Company Pvt. Ltd., (Calcutta, 1963), (edited by Shib Sankar Mitra).
- Sheikh A.Hoque Dehlavi, Akhbar al Akhyar, (Delhi, A.H. 1332) .
- S.M. Taifoor, Glimpses of Old Dhaka, 2nd edition, S.M. Perwez, (Dhaka, 1956) .
- Sukhmaya Mukhospadhyia, Banglar Itihasher Duso Bachar, Swadhin Sultander Amal, 3rd edition, Bharati Book Stall, (Calcutta, 1980) .
- Swarup Chandra Roy, Suvarnagramer Itihasha, (Calcutta, 1910), (Copy in the Dhaka University Library) .
- Sayed Aulad Husain, Notes on the Antiquities of Dacca, M.M. Basak, (Dacca, 1904) .
- Sultan Ahmed, Architecture of the Muslim Towns of Gujrat, an unpublished thesis of M.S. University of Boroda, 1982.
- Shamsul Hoque(Mowlana) Tajkiratul Awlia-i-Hind, volume II, (Delhi, 1931) .

- T.K. Roy chowdhury, Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir, (Calcutta, 1935).
- T.C. Das Gupta, Aspects of Bengali Society from Old Bengali Literature, (Calcutta University, 1935).
- T.P. Hughes, A Dictionary of Islam, (London, 1935).
- V. Smith, The Oxford History of India, (Oxford, Reprinted, 1941).
- Wolsley Haig (edited), The Cambridge History of India, volume III, S. Chand & Co., (Delhi, 1958).
- W.W. Rockhill, Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of Indian Ocean during the forteenth century, Part I. (Copy in the Museum of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, Dhaka University).
- Z.A. Desai, Indo Islamic Architecture, (New Delhi, 1970).
- Zulekha Hoque, Terracotta Decoration of Late Medieval Bengal, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, (Dhaka, 1980).

ENCYCLOPAEDIAS, GAZETTEERS, JOURNALS, PERIODICALS  
ANNUAL REPORTS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS.

Encyclopaedia :

- The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vols. I - IV (Leiden, 1953).  
The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. IV (New York, 1965).  
Sangkhipta Islami Vishvakosha, Islamic Foundation, Vol. II,  
(Bangladesh, 1981-82).

Gazetters, Census Reports and other  
Government Publications regarding factual data :

- Dhaka District Gazetteer, 1969.  
Dhaka District Gazetteer, 1910.  
Khulna and Jessore District Gazetteer, 1910.  
Bangladesh District Gazetteer, Rajshahi, (Dhaka, 1976).  
Bangladesh Archaeology, Vol. I, No. I; (Dhaka, 1979).  
Handi Crafts of South Asia, SARC, Handi Crafts Exhibition  
Organising Committee, Govt. of Bangladesh, (Dhaka, 1985).  
Census of Bangladesh, 1982, published by the Govt. of  
Bangladesh, Dhaka.  
Statistical Report, 1982, Govt. of Bangladesh.  
Bulletin of Calcutta Museum, Vol. V(1970), Vol.VI(1971).  
Catalogue of National Museum, (Dhaka, 1983).

Journals and Periodicals :

- Journal of the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.
- (a) A.K.M. Yaqub Ali, A study of Mural Calligraphy in Bengal etc.Vol.7,1985.  
(b) H. Khatun, The Tomb of Arifail in Comilla District, Vol. 7, 1985.  
(c) M.A. Bari, The Masjid of Satgachhia etc., Vol. 7, 1985.  
(d) Parameshawri Lal Gupta, The date of Bakhtiyar Khilji's Occupation of  
Gaur, Vol. 4, 1975-76.  
(e) A.K. Maitra, Monuments of Varendra, Vol. 5, 1976-77.

Shilpakala, Dhaka :

- ✓(a) A.B.M. Hussain, The Ornamentation of the Sultani Architecture in Bengal, Vol. 1, 1978.  
: Ornamentation in Indo-Muslim Architecture, Vol. 1, 1986.
- (b) L.A.A. Habib, The Art of Glazed Tile etc., Vol. 1, 1978.
- (c) S.M. Hasan, Some Interrelations between Persian Islamic and Pre-Mughal Bengal Architecture, Vol. 1, 1978.

Itihash Patrika, Dhaka University :

- (a) Gulshan Ara Ahmed, Sonargaon, Vol. 3, 1377 B.S.
- ✓(b) H. Khatun, Bagerhater Nay Gambud Masjid, Ist to 3rd issue, 1382 B.S.  
" Muhammadabad, 1393 B.S.

Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta :

- ✓(a) James Wise, The Bara Bhuiyan or 12 Chieftains of Bengal, 1874-75.  
" Notes on Sonargaon, 1873.
- (b) Blockman, Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal, Part I and Part II, XL,II, No. 3, 1873-74.
- (c) Monomohan Chakravarti, Notes on Gaur and other places of Bengal, 1909.  
" Pre-Mughal Mosques of Bengal, 1910.
- (d) Stapleton, Notes on seven sixteenth century cannon etc., vol. V, 1909.  
" Contribution to the History and Ethnology of NE India, vol. VI, 1910.
- (e) N.K. Bhattasali, An inquiry into the origin of the city of Dacca, vol. V, 1939.
- (f) Beveridge, Isa Khan, 1904.
- (g) J.N. Sarkar, The Feringi Pirates of Chat-gaon, 1907.

the  
Journal of Asiatic Society of Pakistan :

- (a) G.S. Farid, Rare Lion Coins of Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah, Vol.XVI, No. 1-4.
- (b) A. Sobhan, Islam in Bengal (13th to 19th century), vol. XIX - XX.
- (c) K.M. Karim, The Provinces of Bihar and Bengal under Shahjahan, 1979.

Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh :

- (a) H. Khatun, In Quest of Katrabo, 1986.

Bengal Past and Present :

- (a) N.K. Bhattasali, Bengal Chiefs' Struggle for Independence in the reign of Akbar and Jahangir, 1928, 1929, vol. XXXV, XXXVI and XXXVIII.
- (b) Hasan Ashkari, New light on Rajah Ganesh and Sultan Ibrahim Sarqi of Jaunpur from contemporary correspondence of two Muslims Saints, 1948, LXVII

Dhaka Visyavidyalaya Patrika, Dhaka :

- (a) H. Khatun, Depeka Kella, 1985.

Rajshahi University Studies, Rajshahi :

- (a) A.B.M. Husain, Monuments of Husain Shahi's Reign, vol.3, Rajshahi, 1970.

Itihash Patrika, Chittagong University :

- (a) A. Karim, Chattaygram Jadughare Rakkhita Ekti Apropashita Mudra, 1979.

Journal of the Itihash Samity, Dhaka University :

- (a) Shamsuddin Ahmad, Ilyas Shahi Administrative Units, 1986.

Journal of the Bihar and Orissa  
 Research Society, Patna :

- (a) Hasan Ashkari, Letter of Nur Qutb Alam, 1948.

" Correspondence of the two 14th century Sufi Saints of Bihar with contemporary sovereigns of Delhi and Bengal, 1956

Indian Printed Textiles :

- (a) All Indian Handicrafts Bureau, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1980.



ILLUSTRATIONS

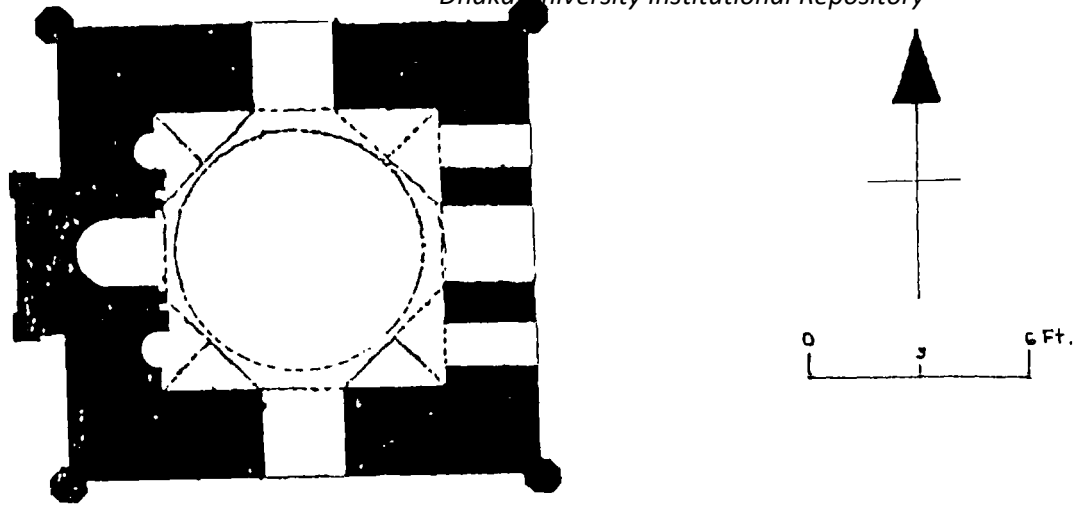


Figure-1, Binat Bibi Masjid(reconstructed), ground plan.

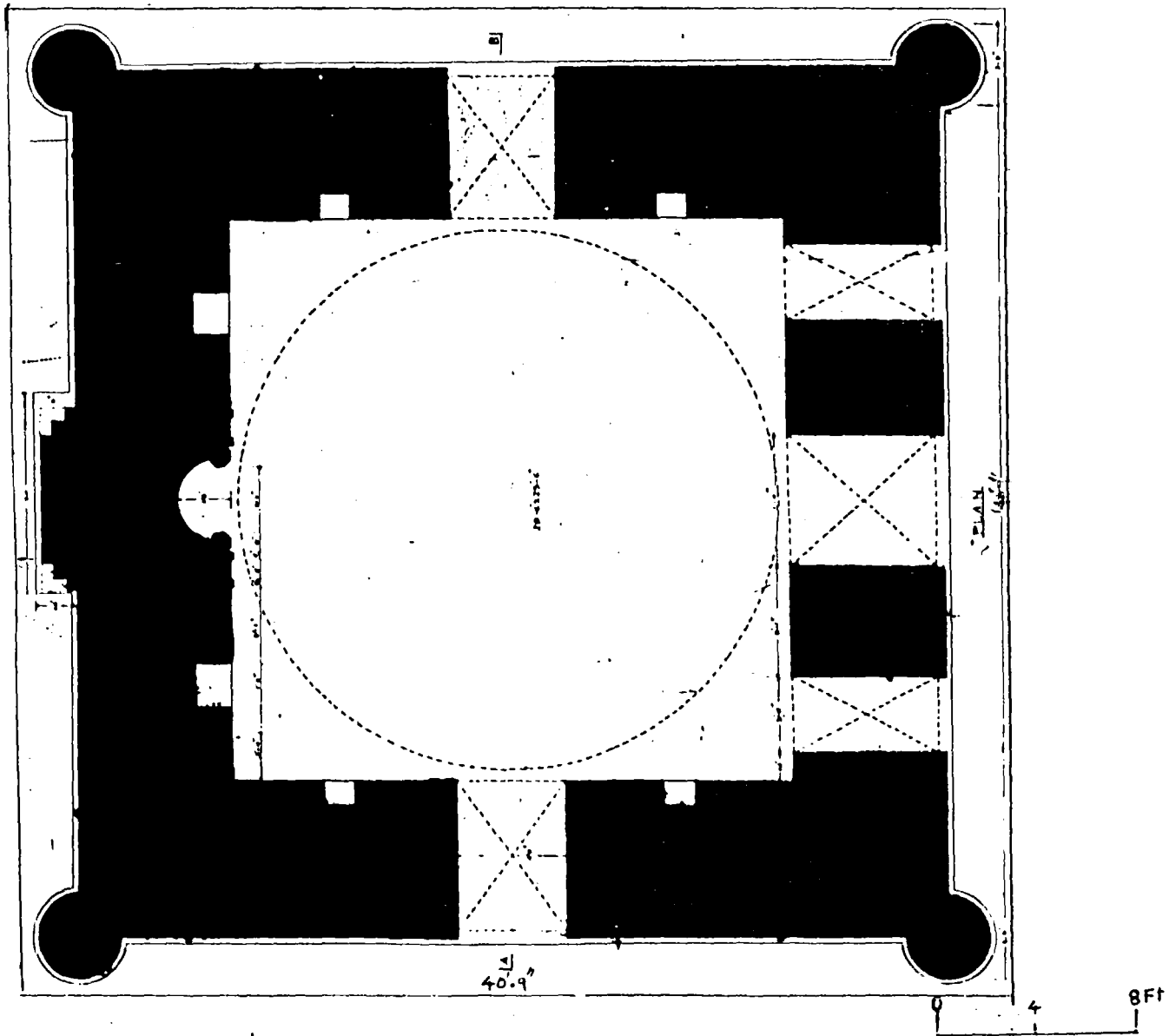
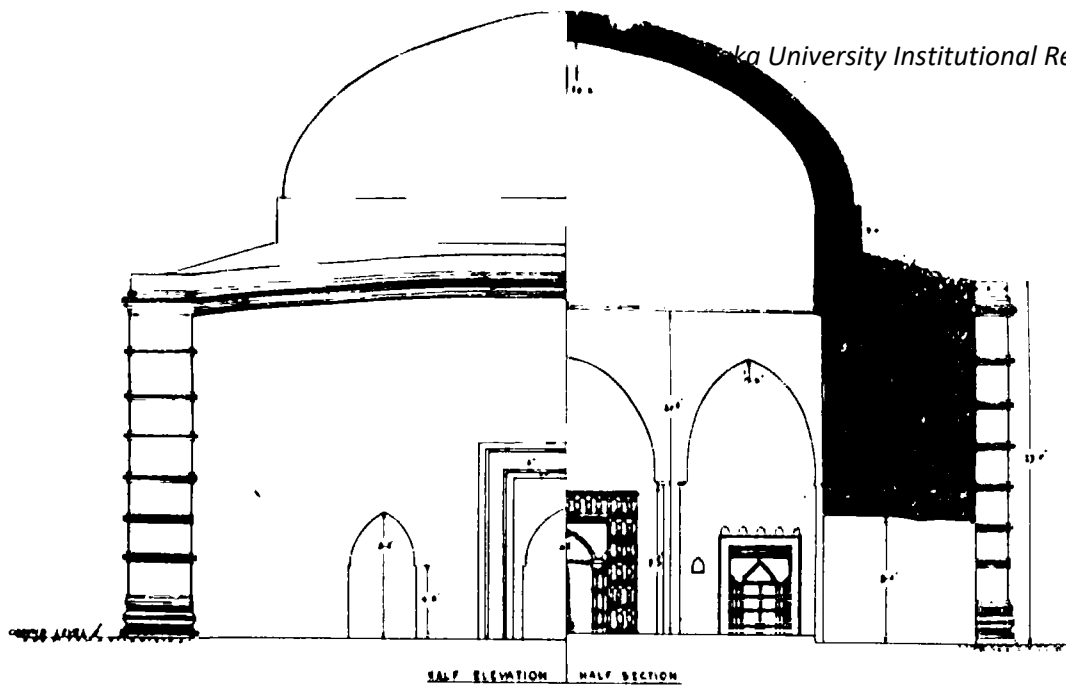
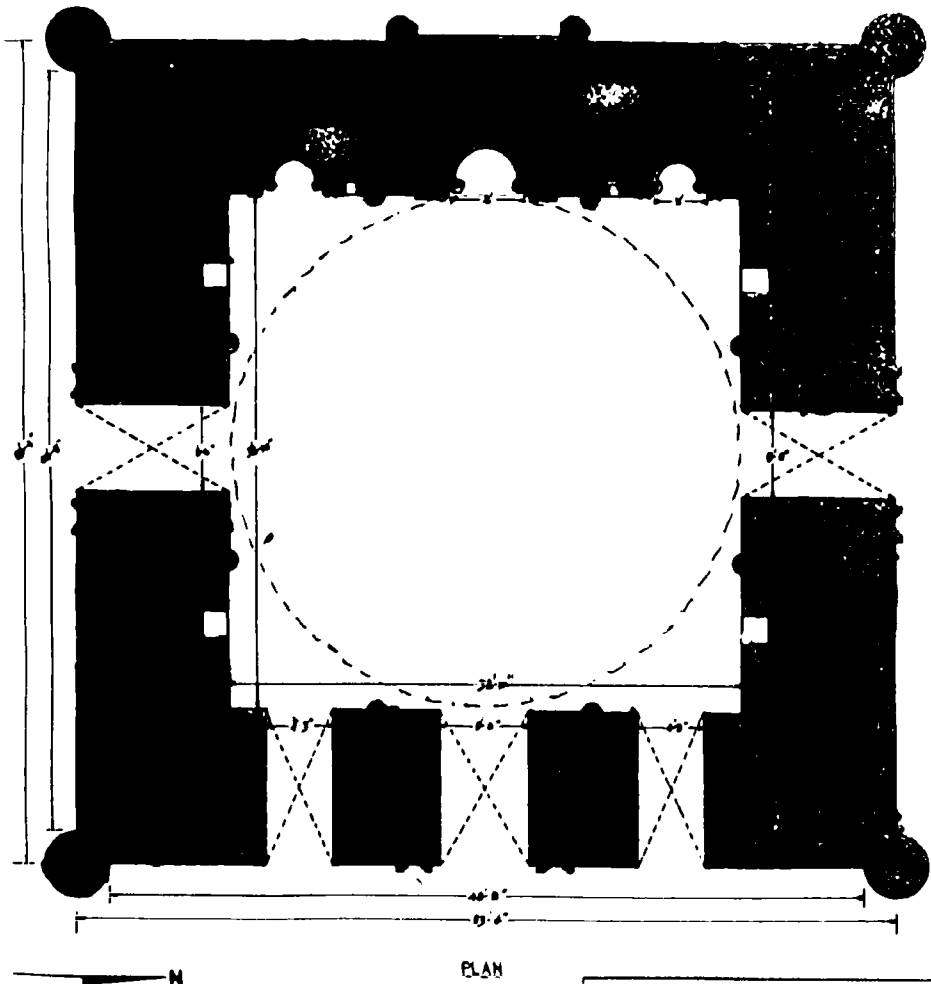


Figure-2, Shager Masjidd, ground plan.



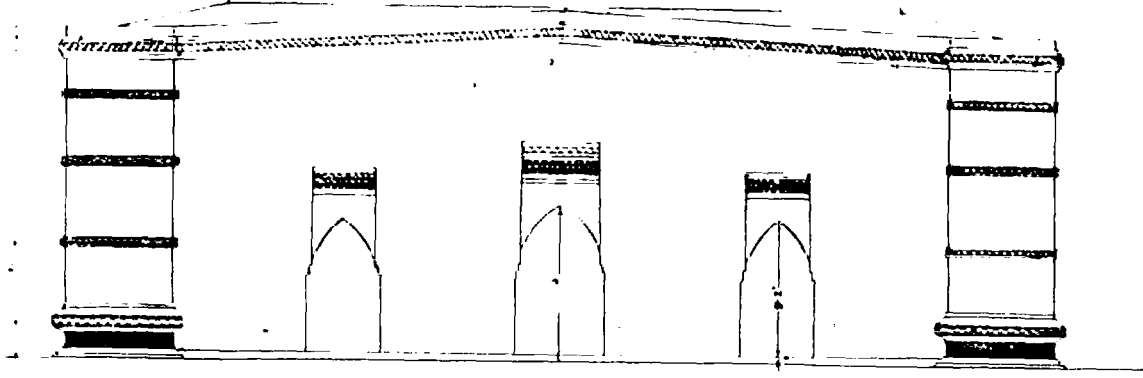
HALF ELEVATION HALF SECTION



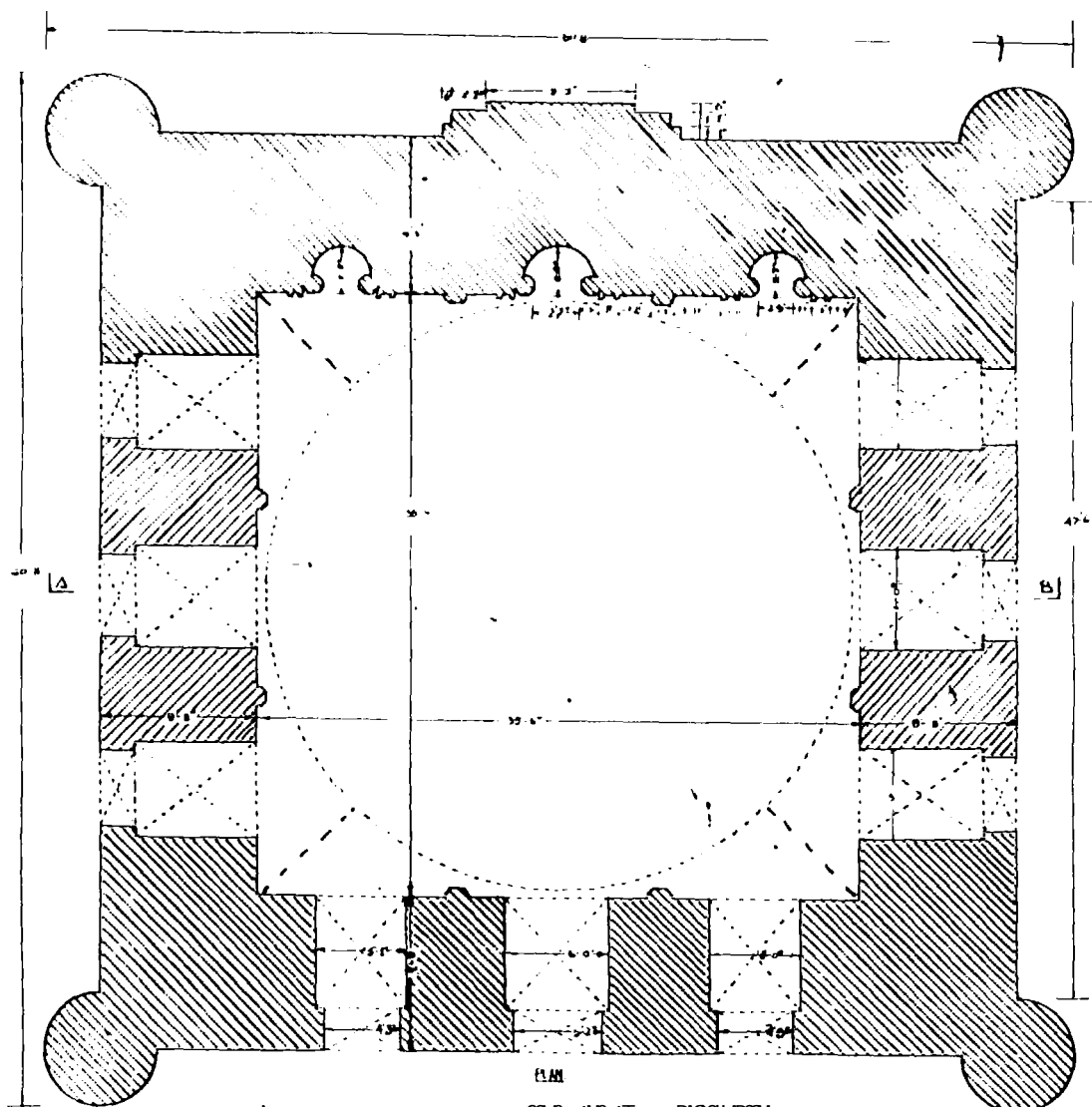
PLAN

GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH		
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY		
5, ELEPHANT ROAD, DACC-A-5.		
PLAN ELEVATION & SECTION OF BIBI BEGNI'S MOSQUE		
AT BAGERHAT DISTRICT KHULNA.		
DRAWN BY:		SCALE:
AMZAD HOSSAIN		4 FT. = 1" IN CH
INCHES: 1/8" = 1'		DRAWING NO.
DATED: JULY, 1970	SUPERINTENDENT	SAD 559

Figure- 3, Bibi Begni Masjid, ground plan and elevation.



FRONT ELEVATION.



PLAN

GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH  
 OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF ARCHITECTURE,  
 5 BHERHATI ROAD, DACC-A-5.  
 PLAN AND FRONT ELEVATION OF RAMJOSHUR  
 MOSQUE AT BAGERHAT, KHULNA.  
 DRAWN BY: M. A. H. M. SUPERINTENDENT  
 SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"  
 SHEET NO: 10/77

FOR SECTION NO. 11

Figure 24 - A. Section of the mosque, ground plan and elevation.

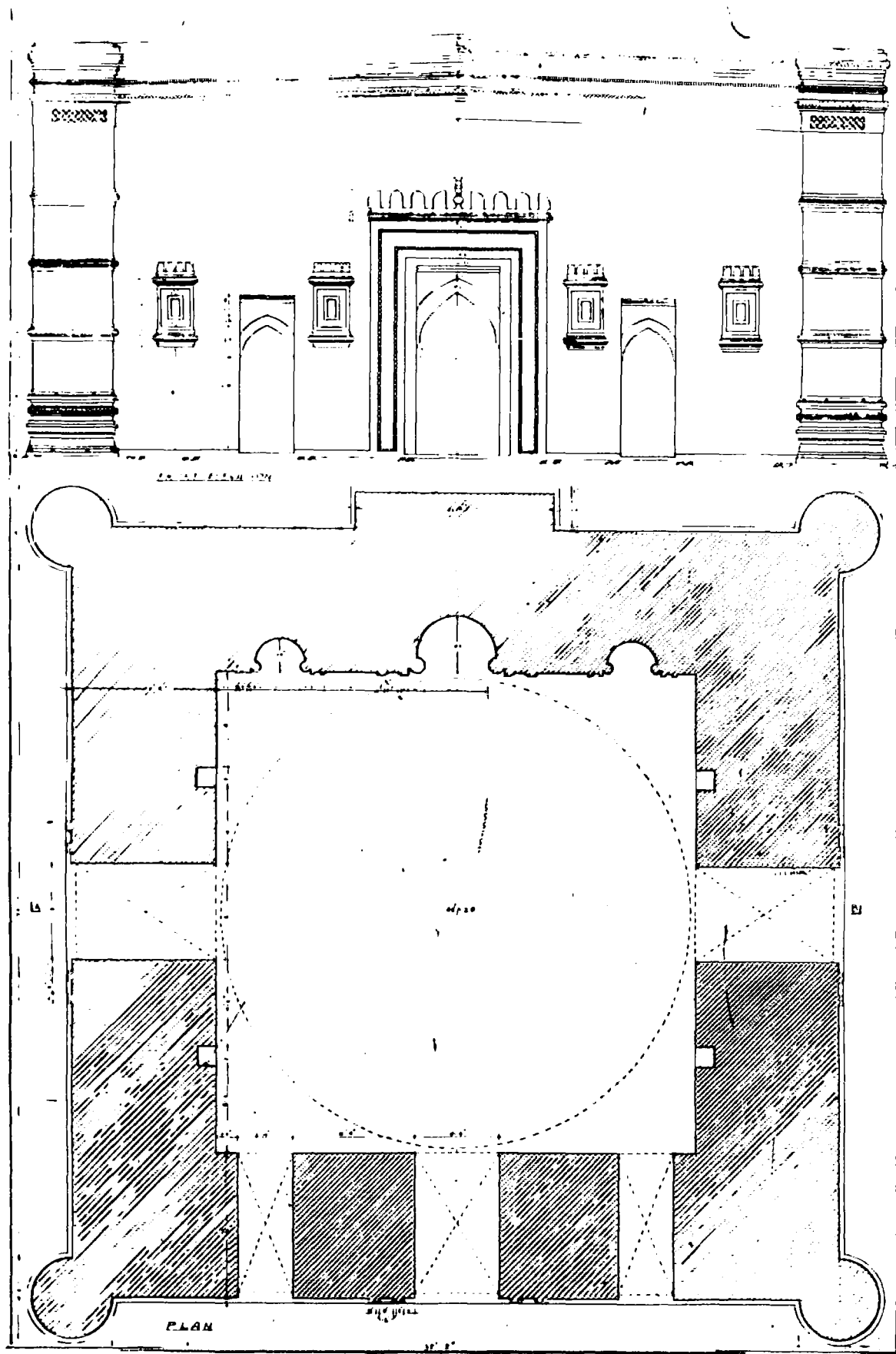
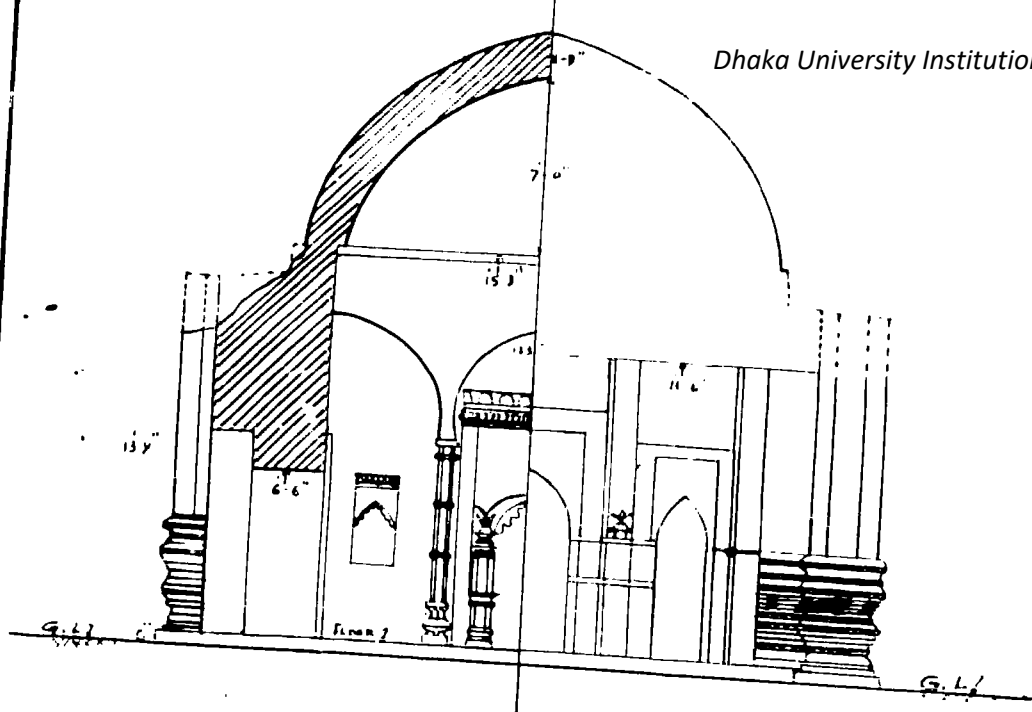
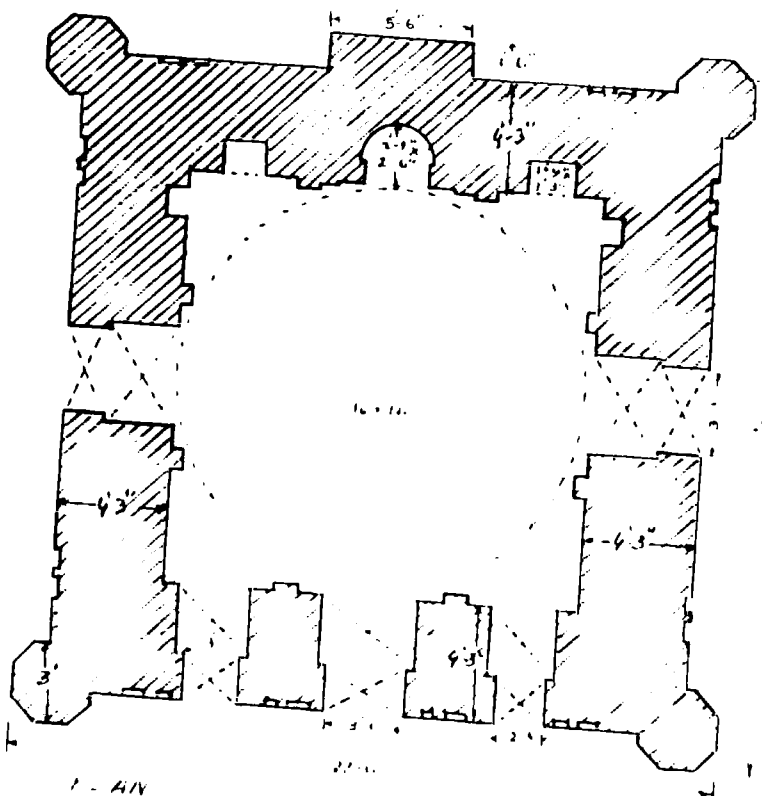


Figure 5 of Chhushtkhana Masjid, ground plan and elevation.



HALF SECTION & HALF ELEVATION.



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT  
JANUARY 11, 1912  
DATE: 11-1-12 SUPERINTENDENT

Figure-1, Zindapir Masjid, ground plan & elevation



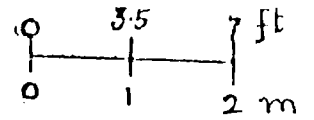
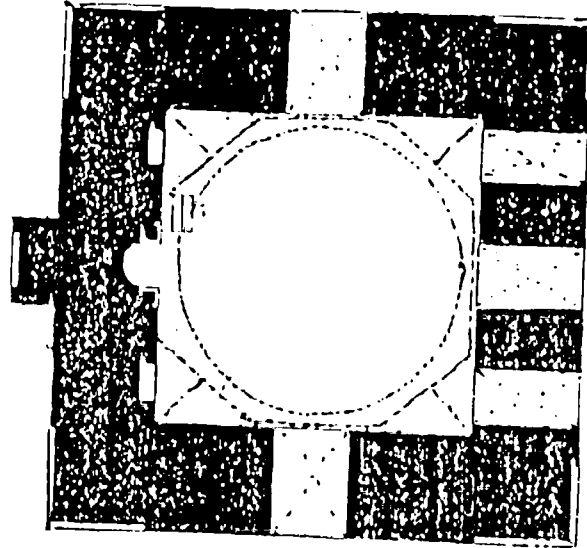


Figure-8, Yusufganj Masjid, ground plan.

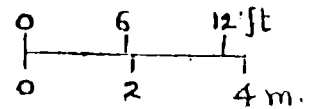
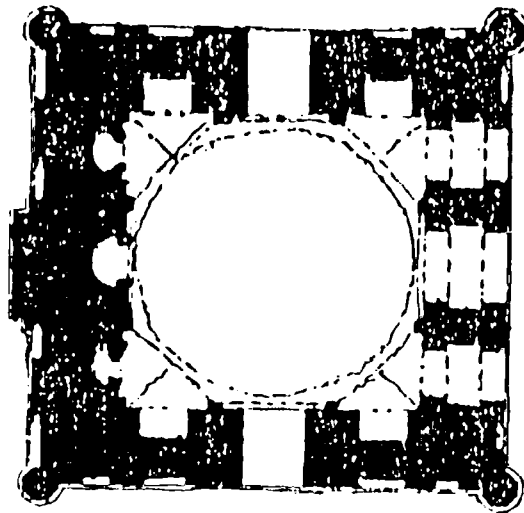


Figure-9, Khondkarbag Masjid, ground plan.



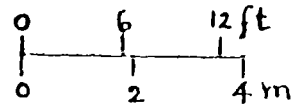
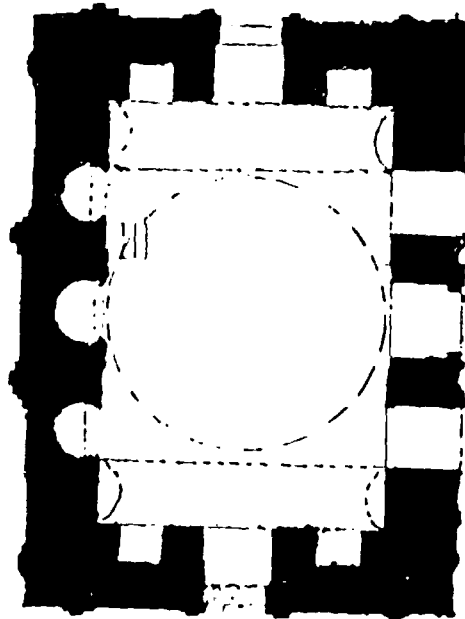


Figure-10, Mograpara Masjid, ground plan.

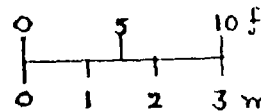
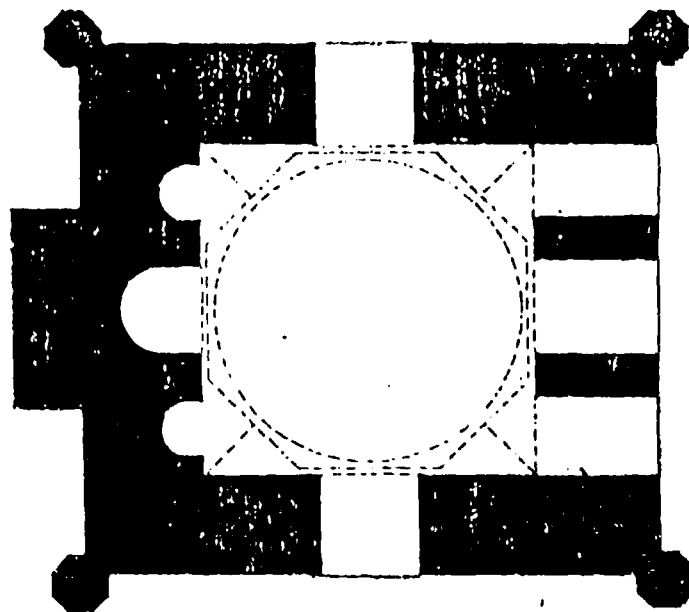


Figure-11, Baba Salih's Masjid, Bandar (reconstructed), ground plan

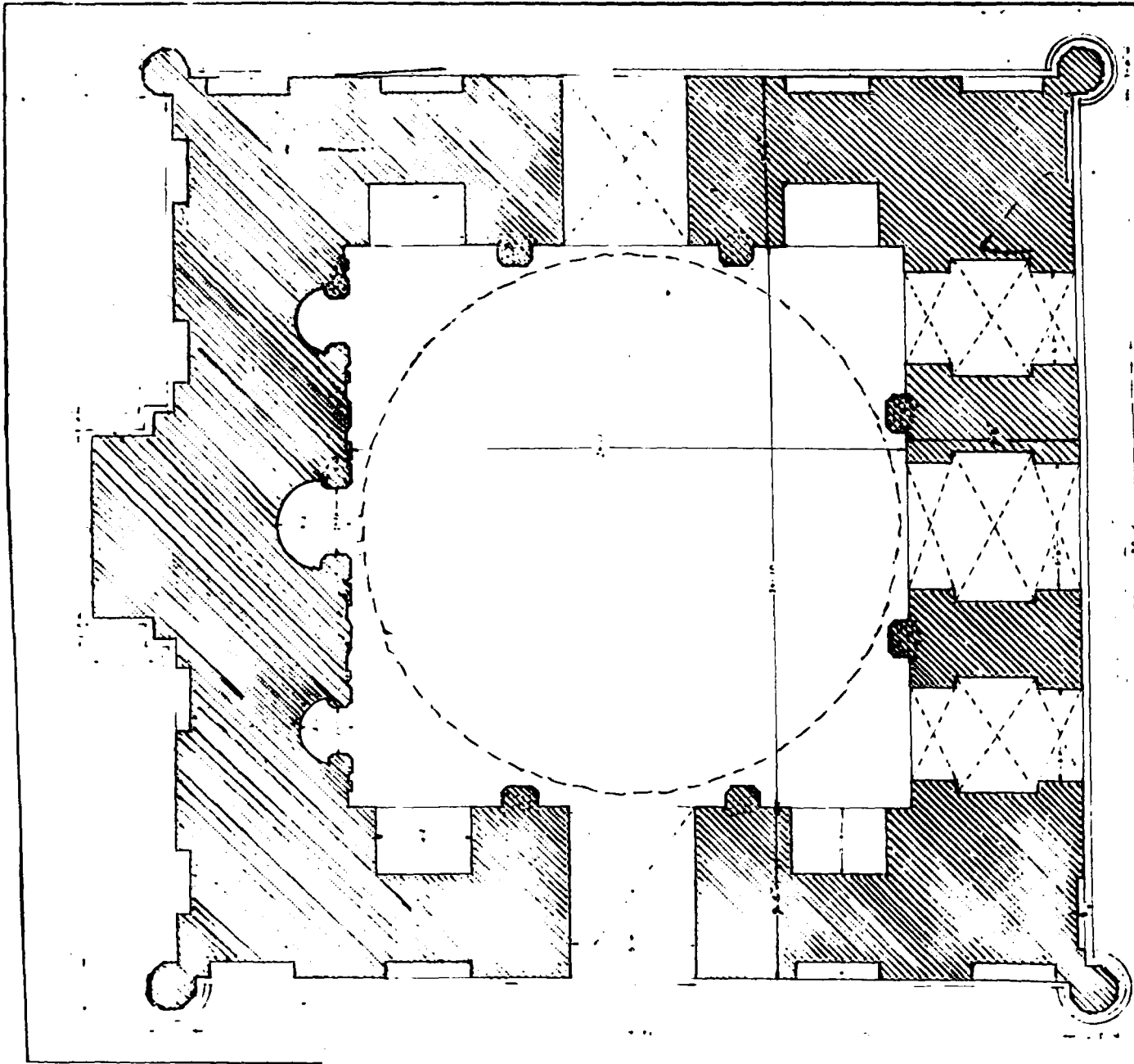
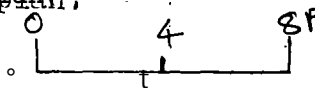


Figure 12, Gerd-i-Masjed, ground plan.



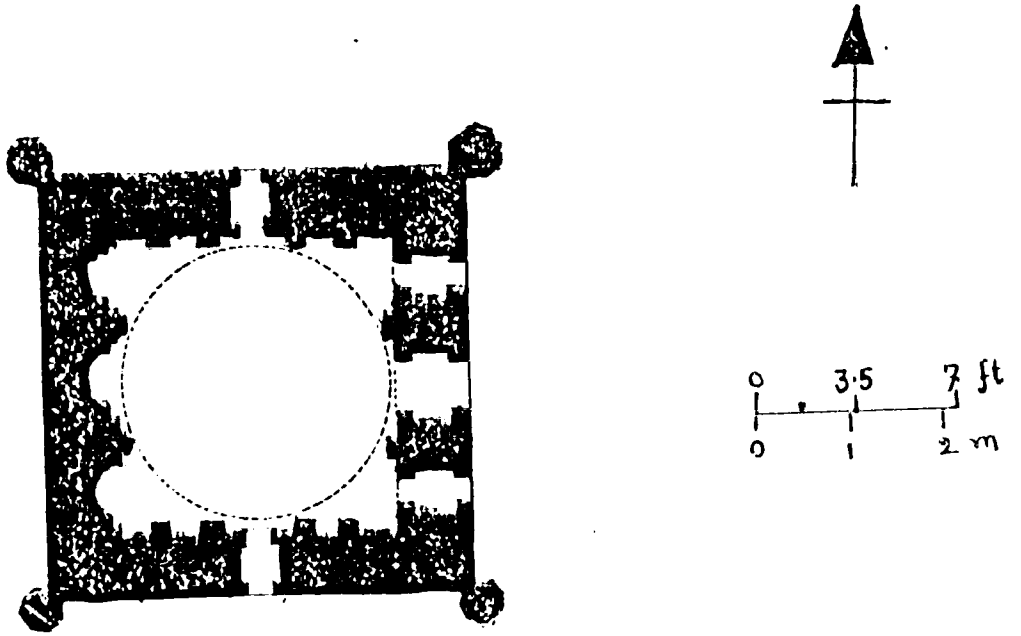


Figure-13, Mai Shaheba Masjid, ground plan.

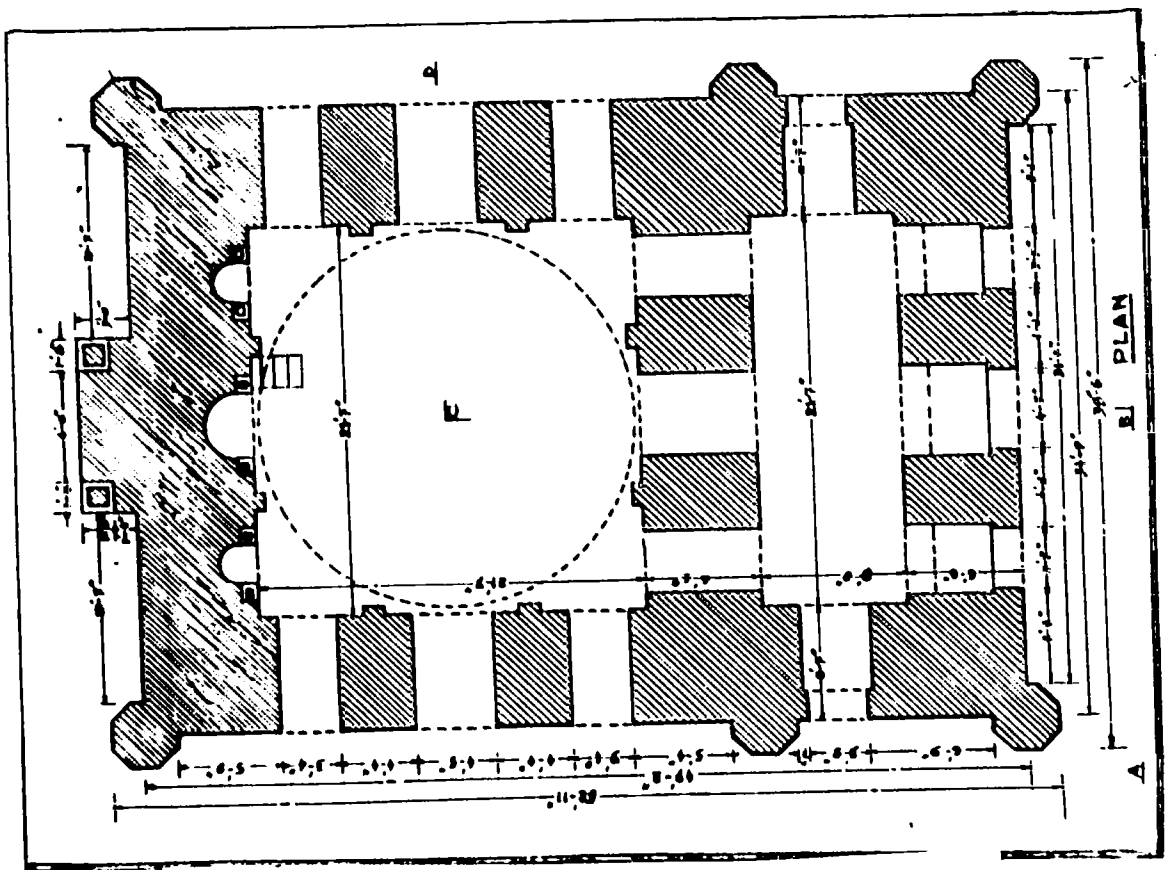
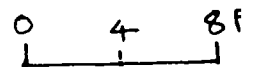


Figure-14 Masjidbari Masjid, ground plan



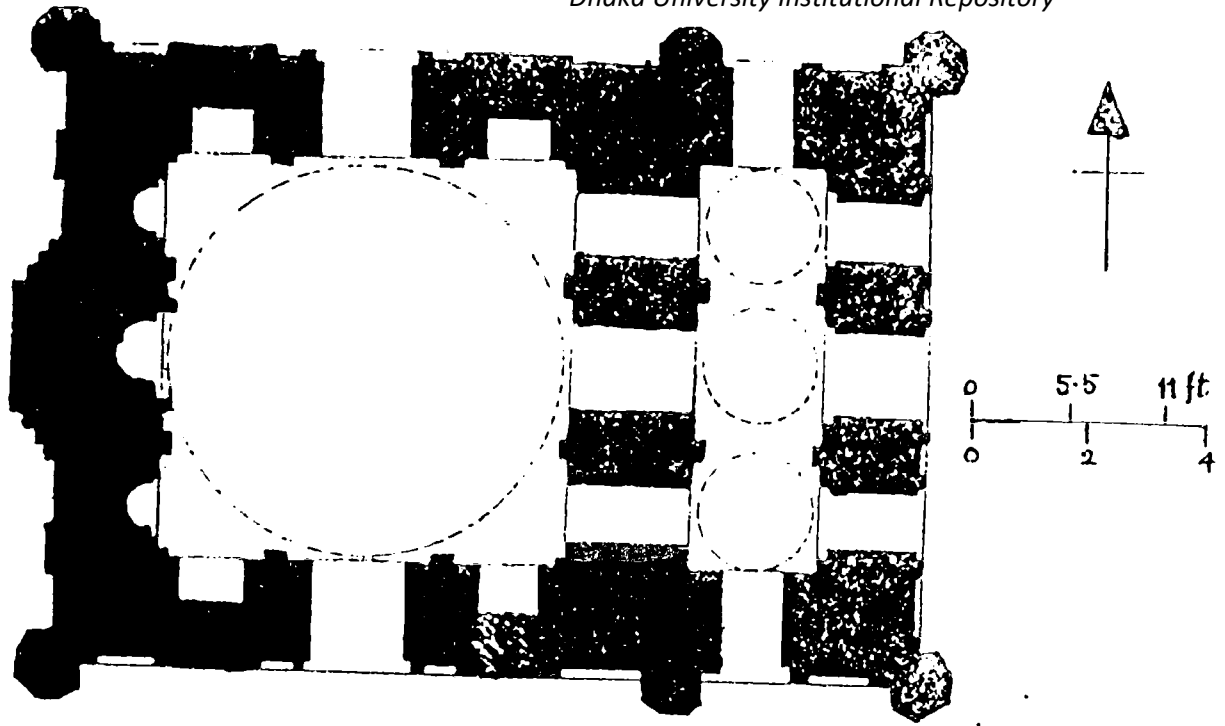


Figure-15, Hajiganj Masjid, ground plan.

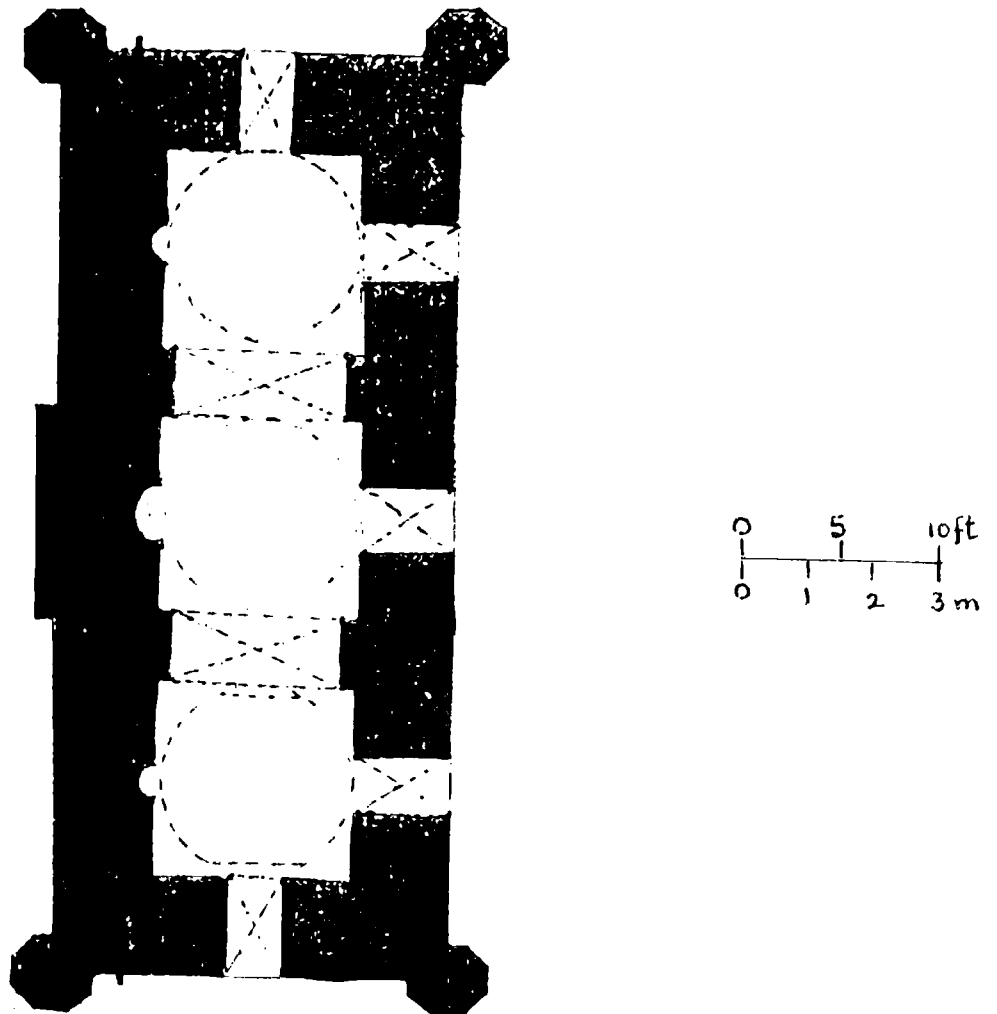


Figure-16, Jangalbari Masjid, ground plan.

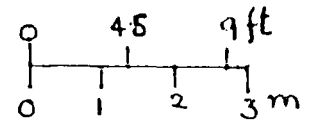
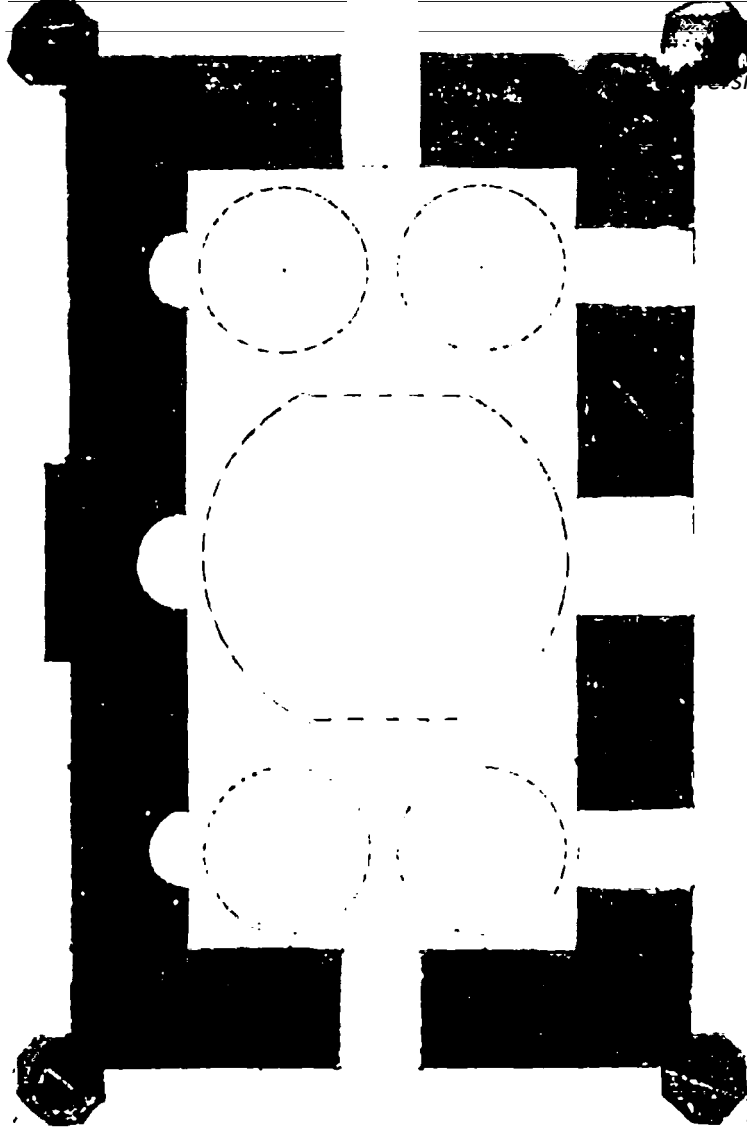


Figure-17, Astagram Masjid, ground plan.

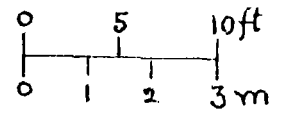
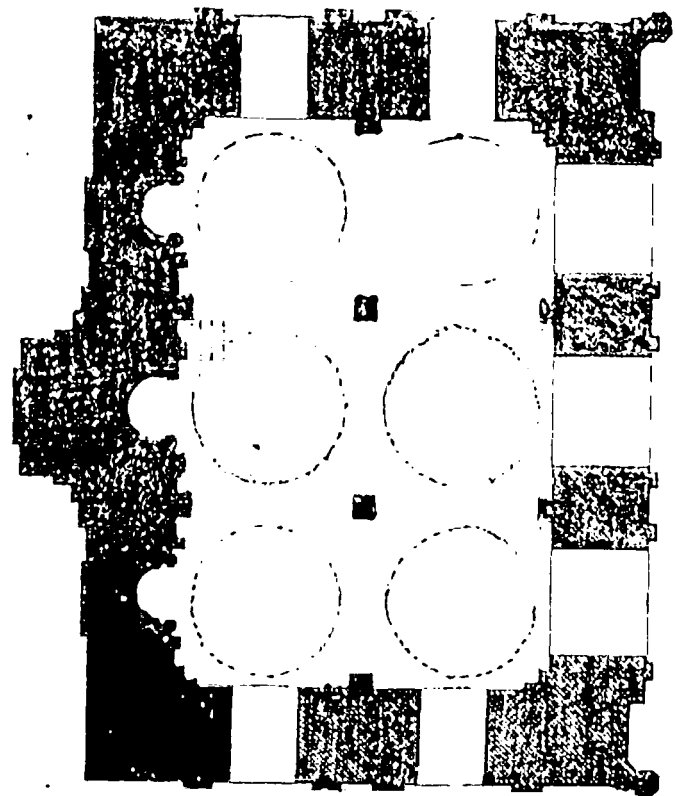


Figure-18, Mohatchipur Masjid, ground plan

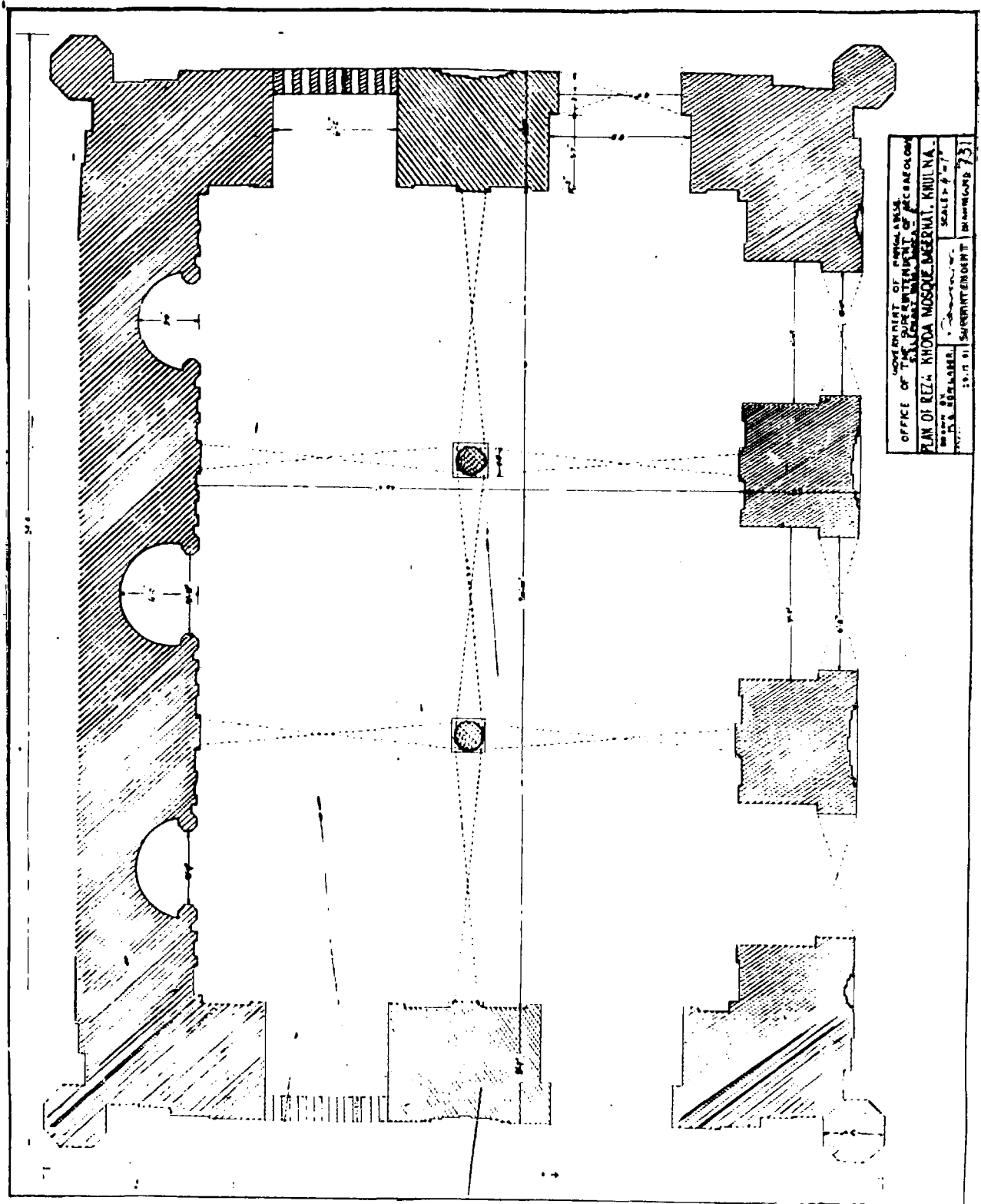
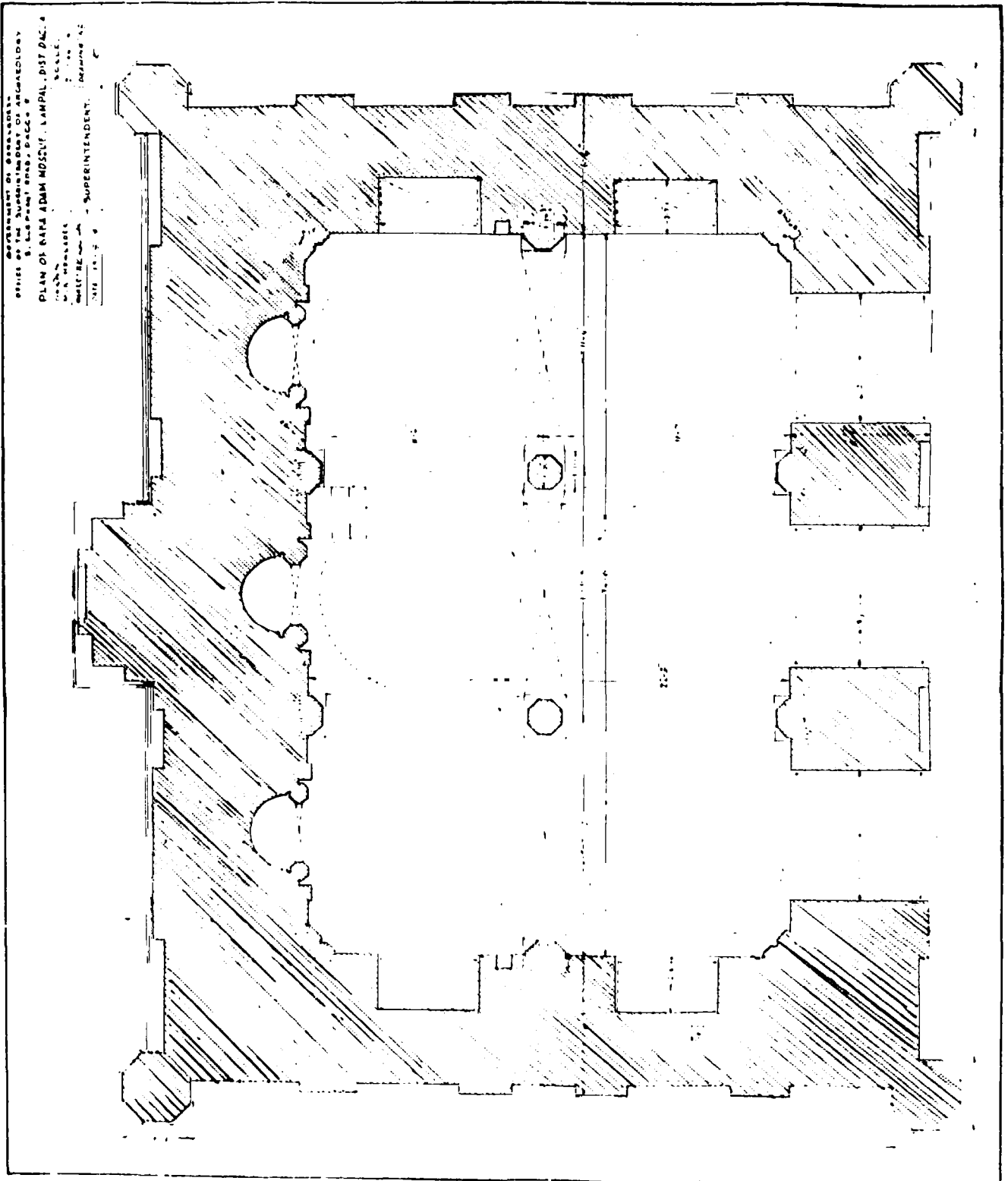


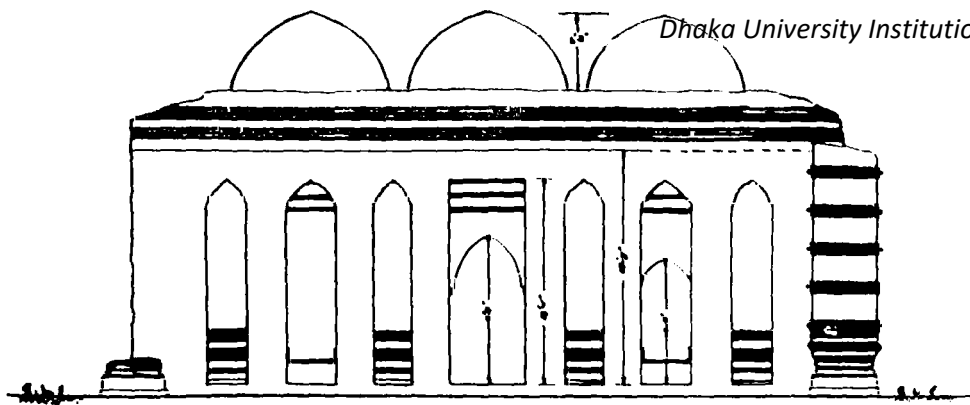
Figure-19, Reza Khoda Masjid, ground plan.

10

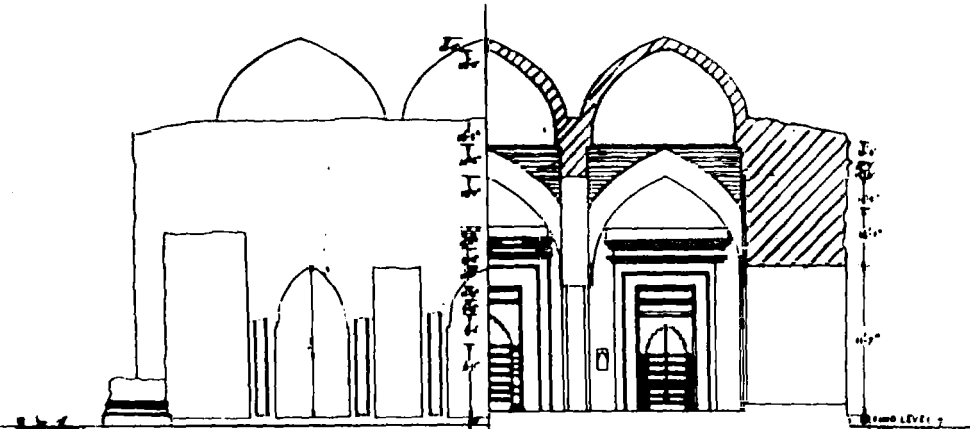
ORIENTAL



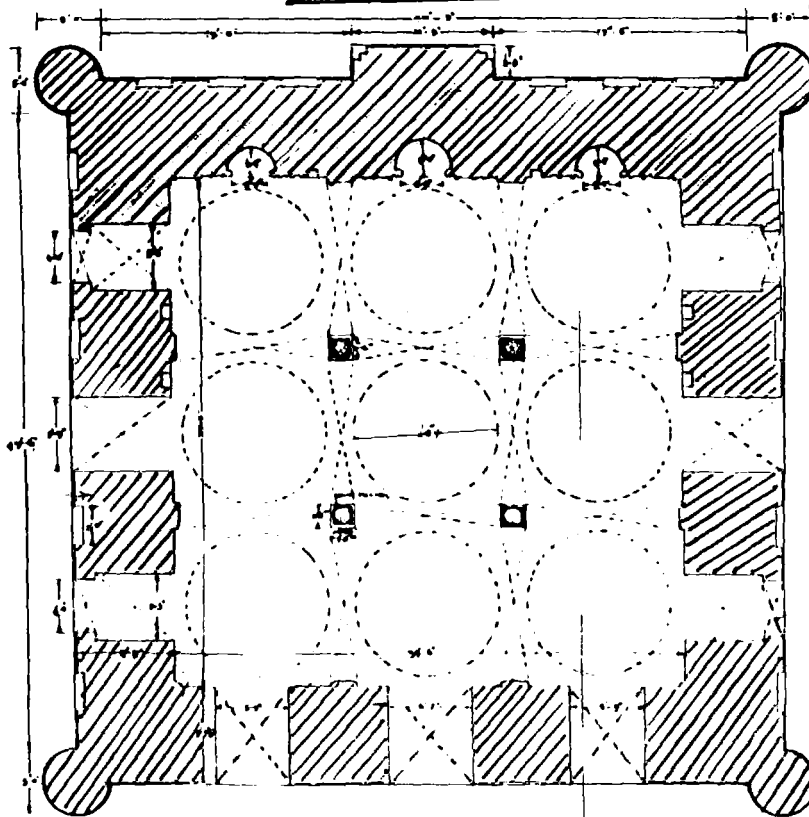
১০, বাবা অদিতী মাজিদি, গ্রাউন্ড প্লান.



NORTHERN ELEVATION



HALF ELEVATION HALF SECTION



PLAN OVER PLINTH

GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF ARCHITECTURE  
AND PLANNING, DAKHA  
DISTRICT, KHULNA

SCALE	1/4" = 1'-0"
DATE	1957
PROJECT NO.	1000
DESIGNER	...
APPROVED BY	...

Figure 12, Nine domed Masjid, Bagurhat, round plan and elevation.



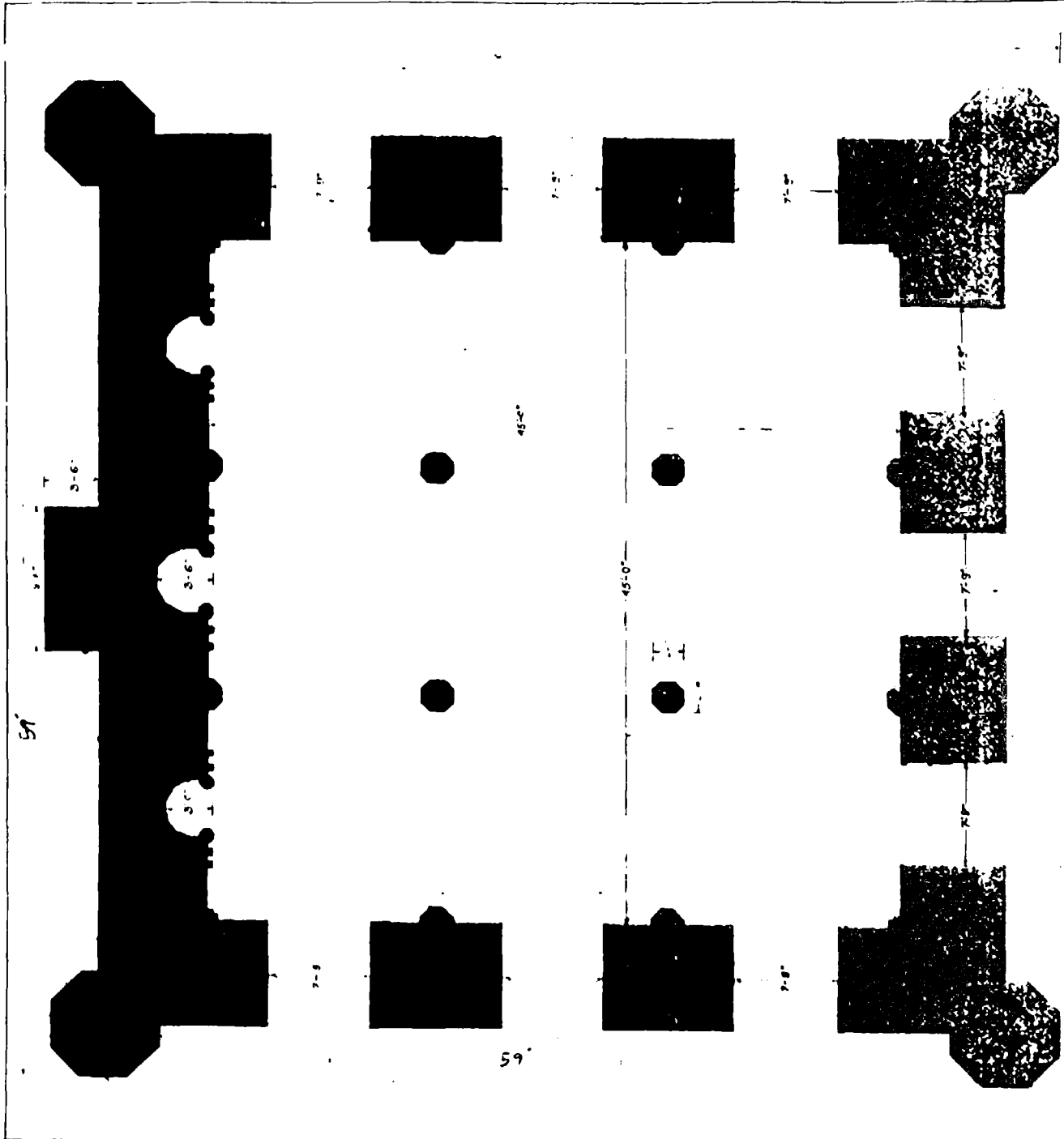
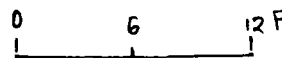


Figure-22, Mosque of Satair, ground plan.



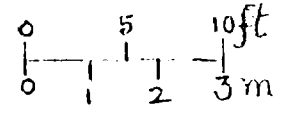
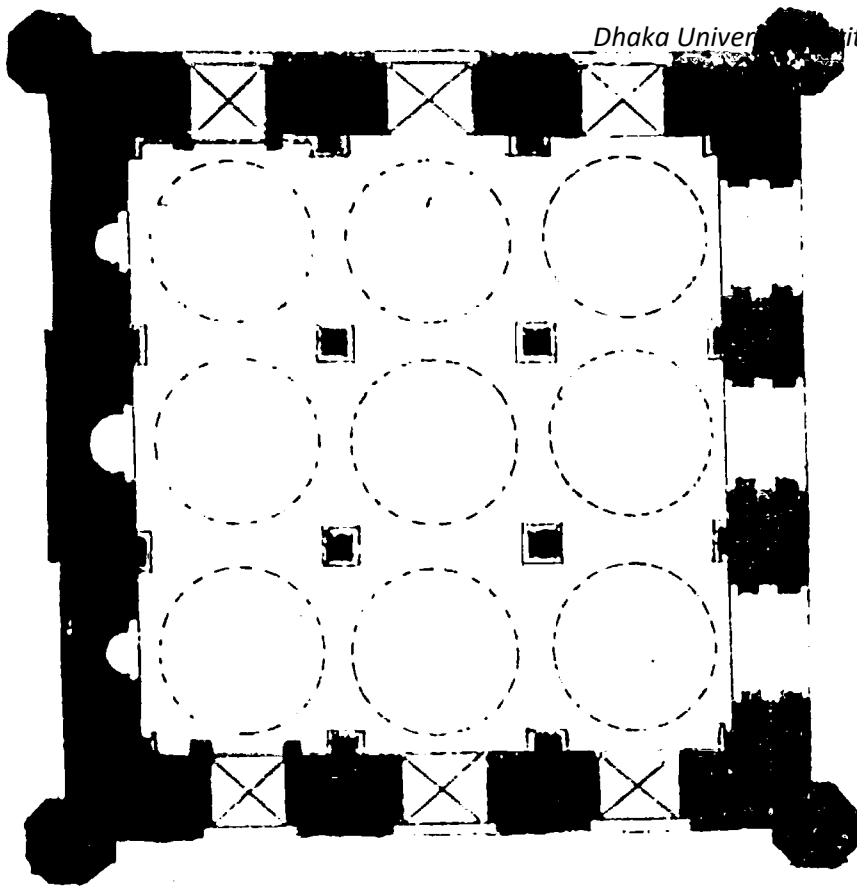


Figure-23, Qasba Masjid, ground plan.

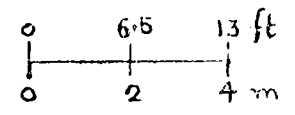
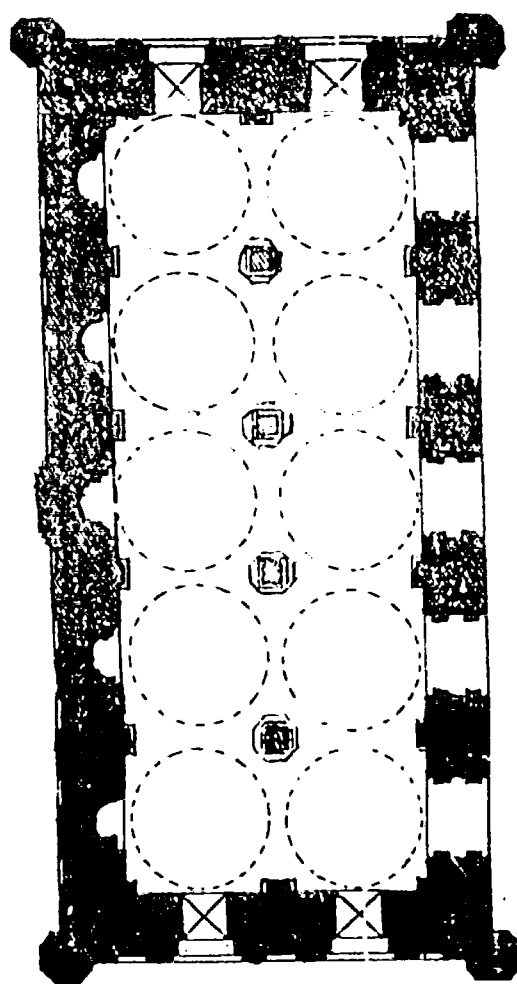
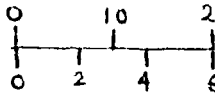
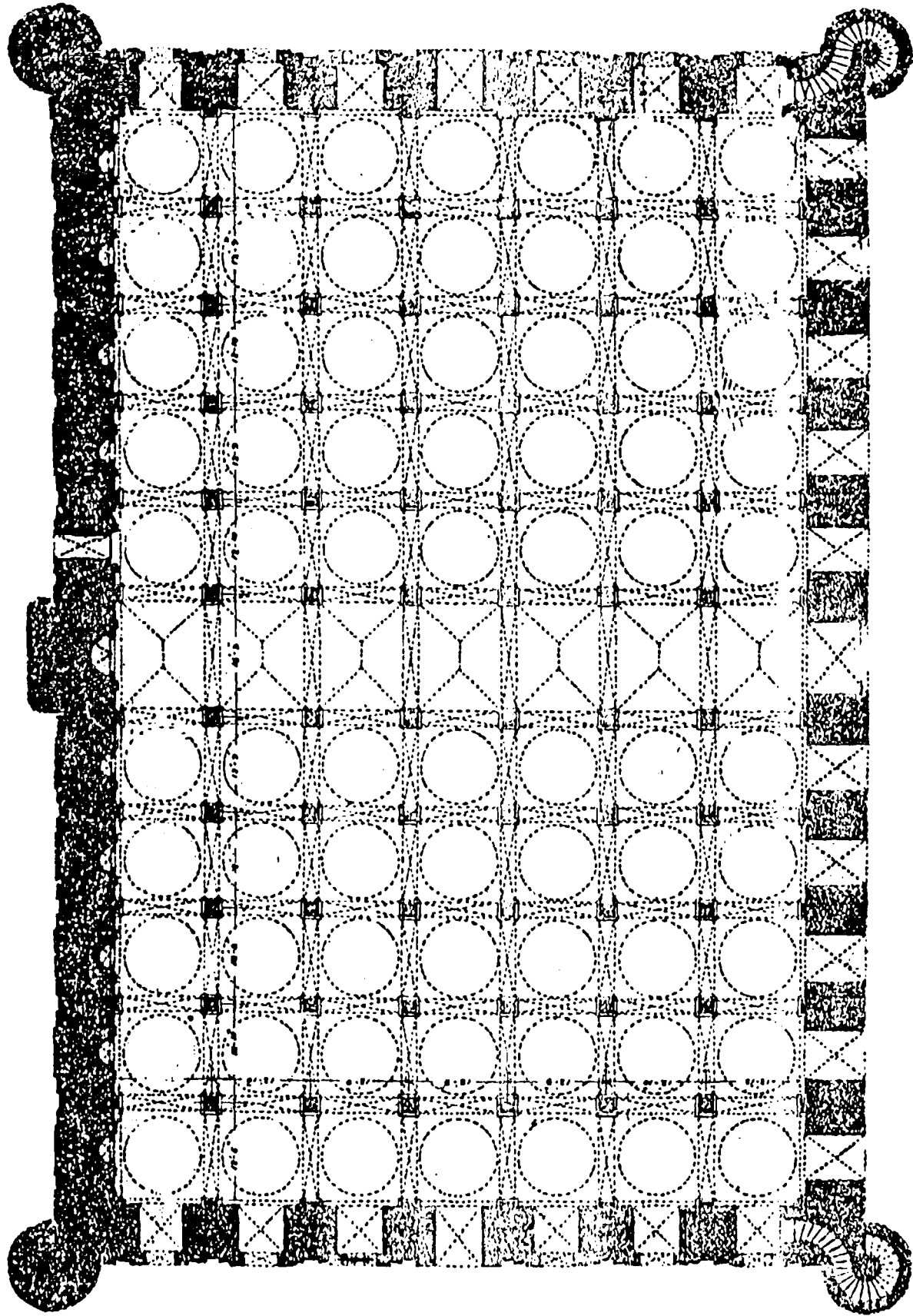
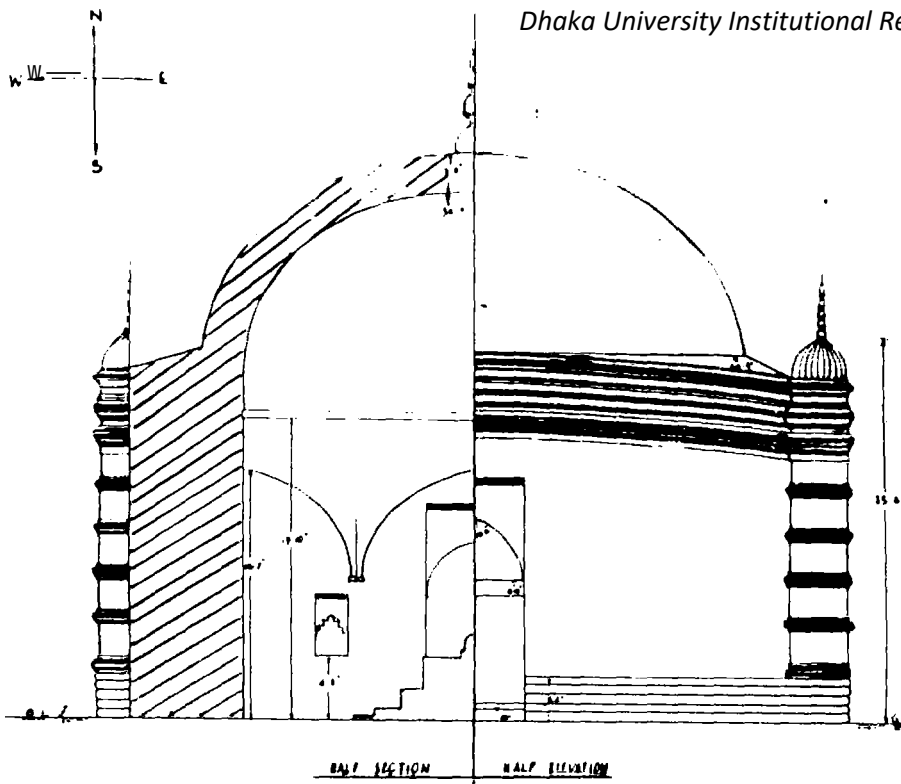


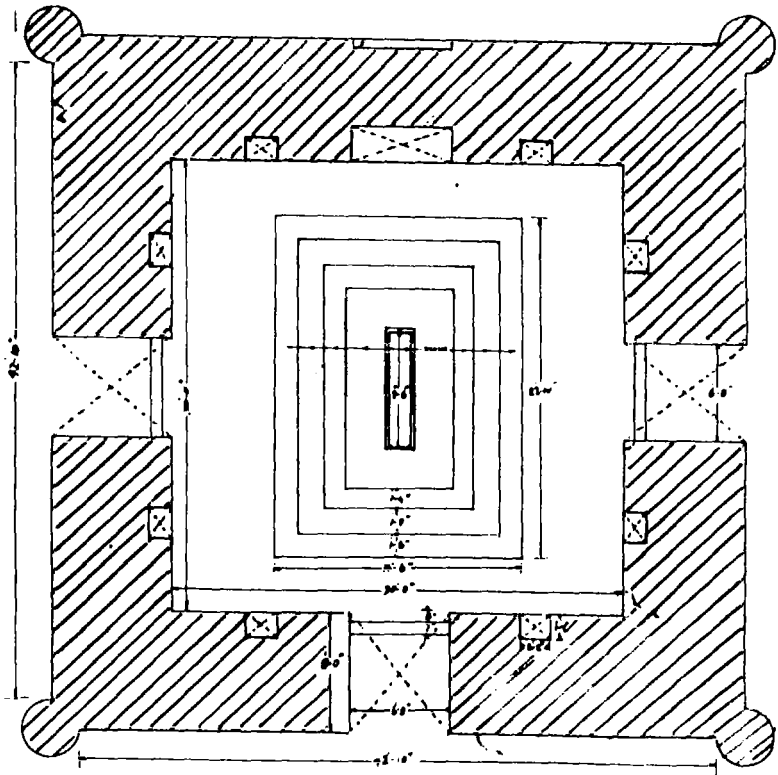
Figure- 24, Kuliar char Masjid, ground plan.



বিগিগনোর-জাঙ্গ, এস্ট্রাট উতুলবাজ লিঙ্গজাদ, গররান্দ প্লান.



HALF SECTION      HALF ELEVATION



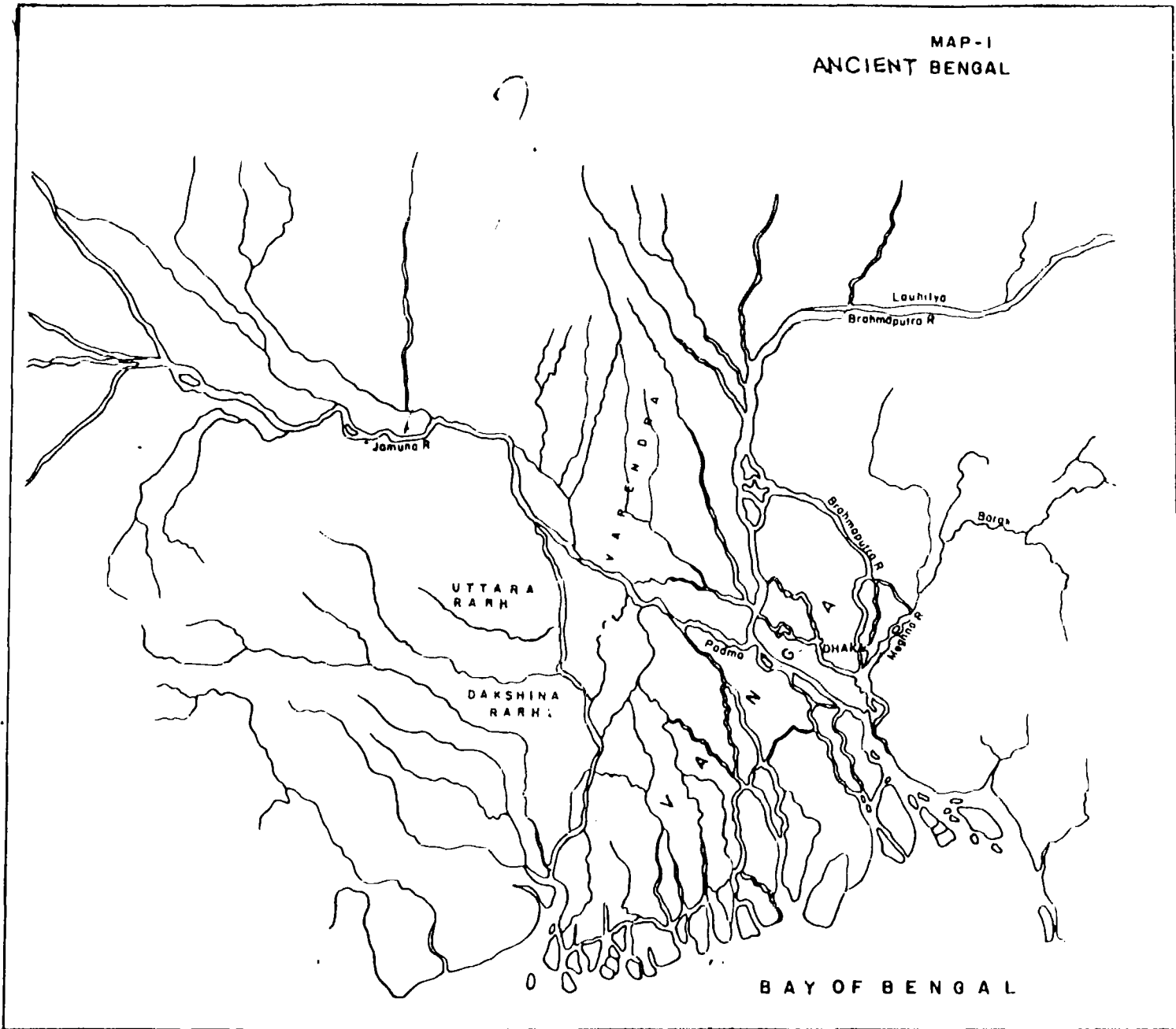
EIRAN

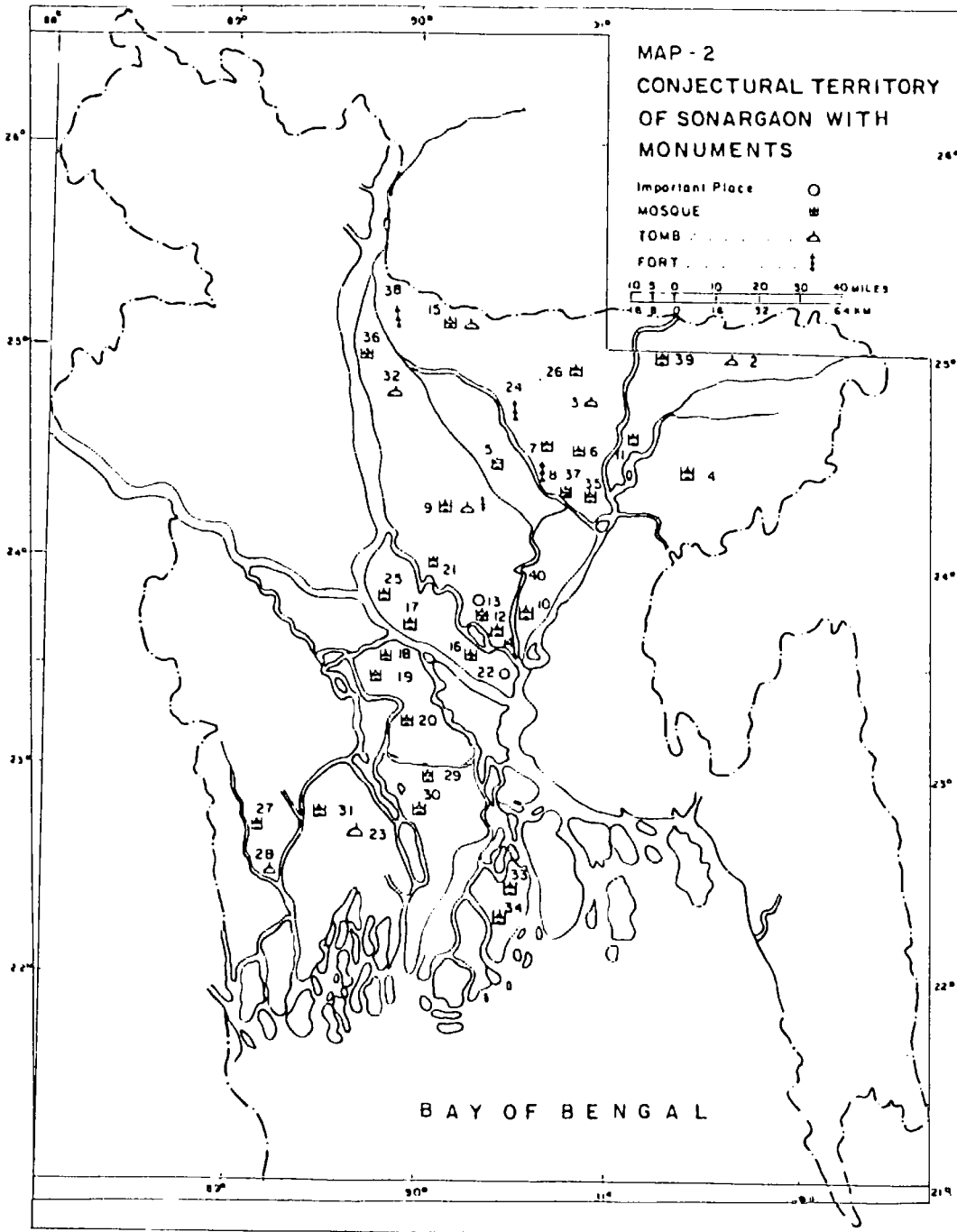
GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH  
 DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES  
 OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY  
 5, ELAHIABAD ROAD, Dacca-5

Figure 286, Tomb of Khan Julian, ground plan, Section and Orientation.

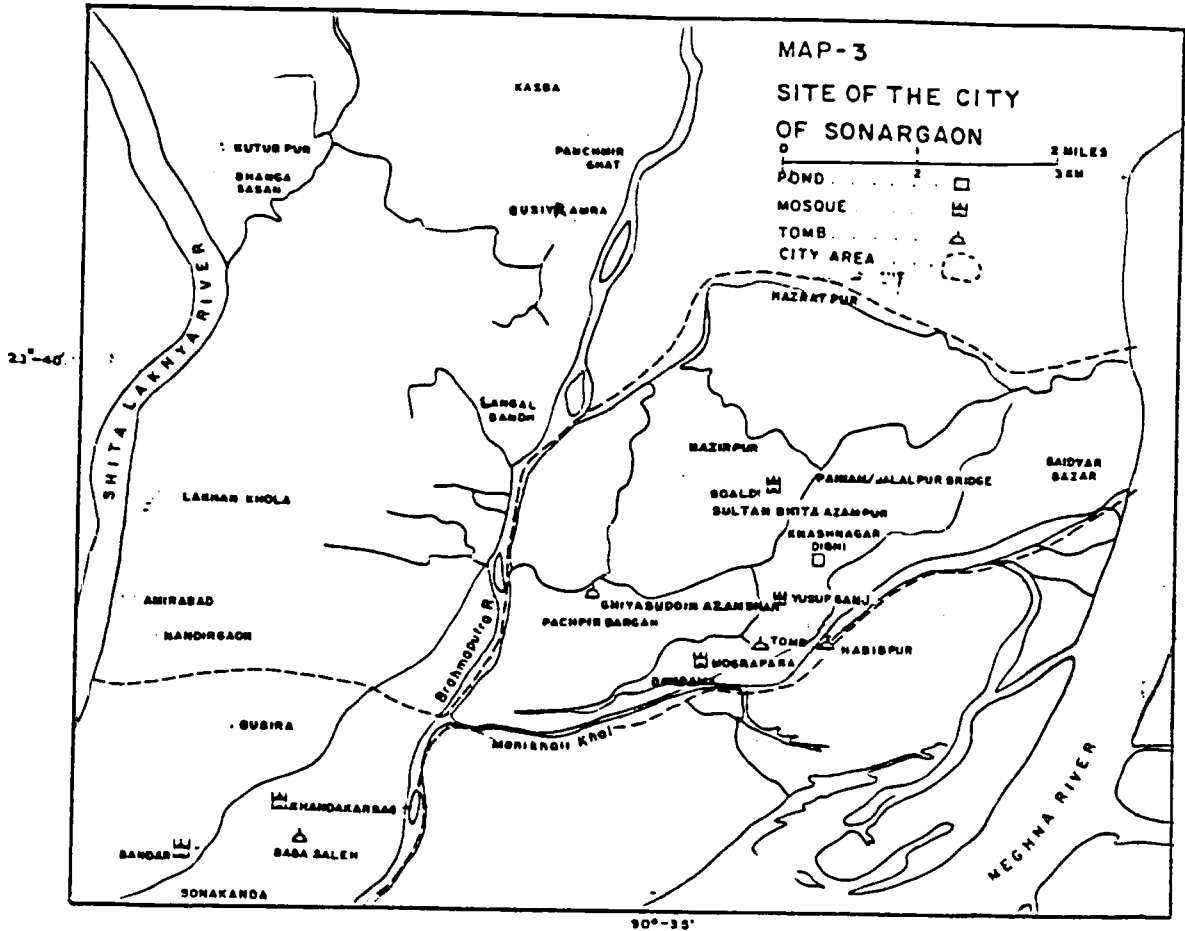
DRAWN BY: MANSUR HOSSAIN INK: RAJIB PA DATE: JULY, 1970	SUPERINTENDENT	SCALE: 1/4" = 1' INCH DRAWING NO. S.A.D. 350.
--	----------------	--

MAP-1  
ANCIENT BENGAL



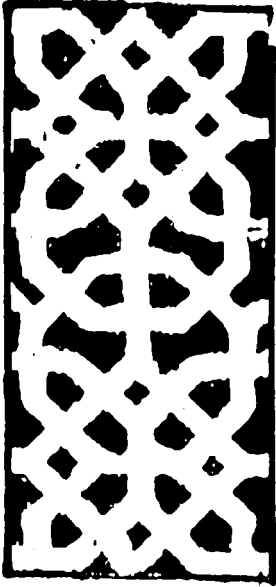


2. SYLHET
3. MADANPUR
4. SANKAR PASHA
5. GHAGRA
6. JANGALBARI
7. MASJIDPARA
8. EGARASINDHUR
9. ATIA
10. SONARGAON
11. ASTAGRAM
12. NARINDA
13. DHAKA
14. HAJIGANJ
15. SHERPUR KASBA
16. RAMPAL
17. MANDRA
18. FARIDPUR
19. PATHRAIL
20. SATAIR
21. DHAMRAI
22. MUNSHIGANJ
23. BAGERHAT KHAN JAHANS TOMB & MOSQUE
24. BOKAINAGAR
25. PERIL
26. TEJPUR
27. MASJIDKUR
28. AMADI
29. KASBA
30. KAMALAPUR
31. SAT GAMBUIZ MASJID
32. JAMALPUR
33. BIBICHINI
34. MASJIDBARI
35. KULIARCHAR
36. DURMUH
37. GORAI
38. GARJARIPA
39. ANAIR HAOR
40. KATRARA

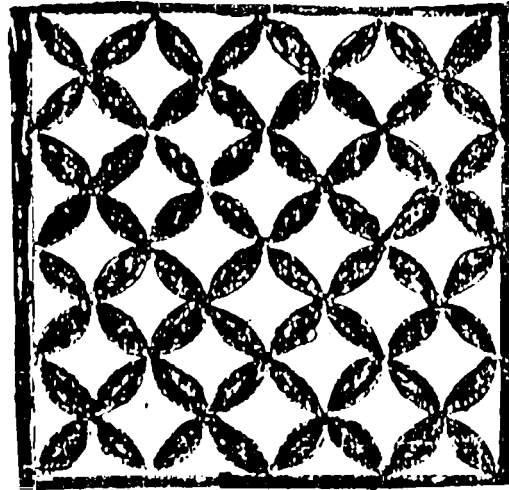


CONJECTURAL CITY SITES OF  
THE TERRITORY OF SONARGAON

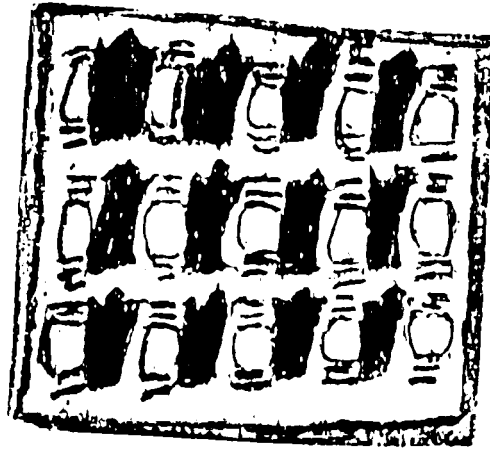
Plate I,



a



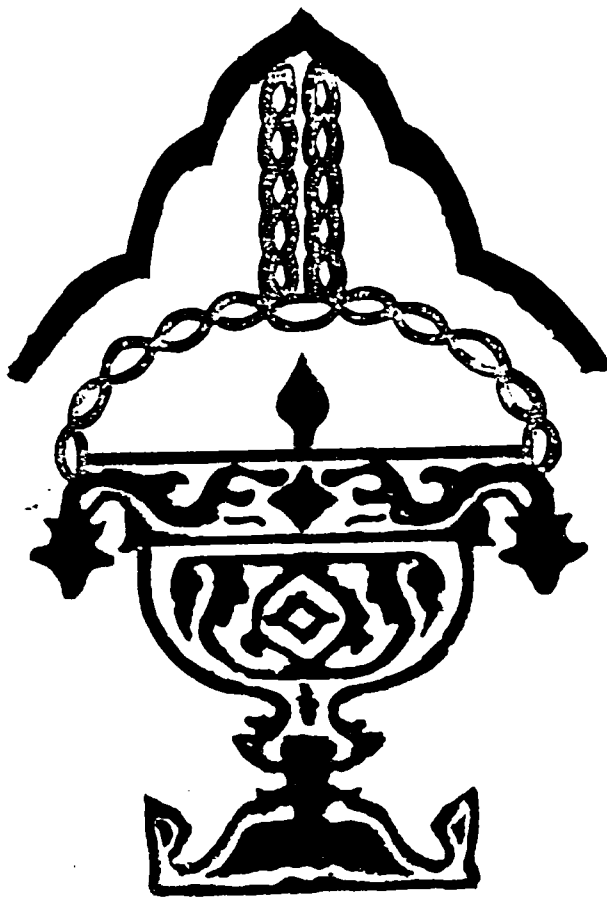
b



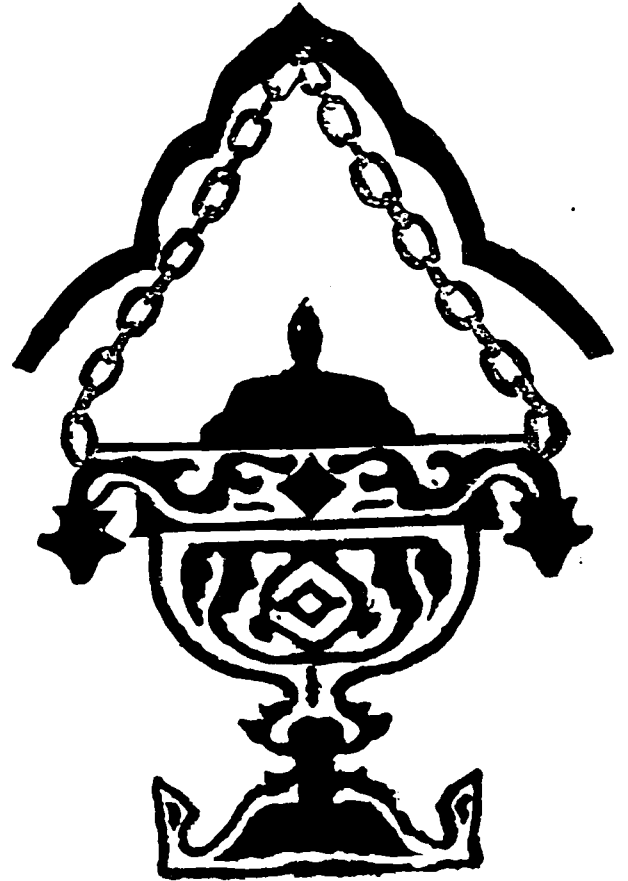
c



Plate II. Gradual development of chain and bell pattern.



a.



b.

a.Chain and lamp pattern in the Adina Masjid.

b.Hanging pattern in the stone tomb of Sonargaon.

c.Bell and chain.

d.Bell and square pendant.

e.Stylised bell and chain.

f.Stylised bell and floral disc.

g.Stylised pendant.

h.Stylised bell and chain  
(in floral form).

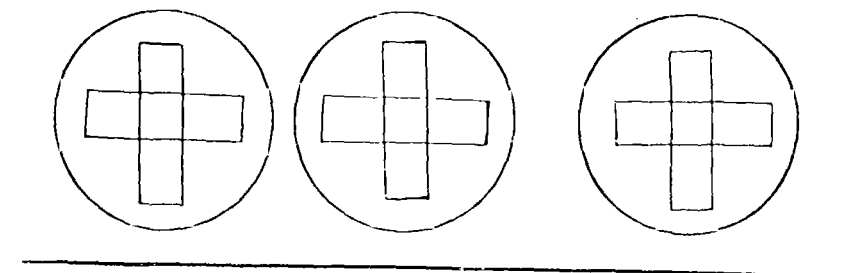
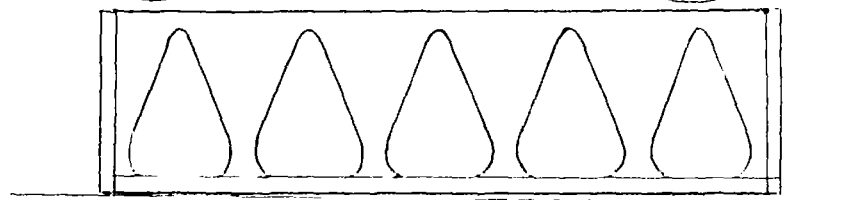
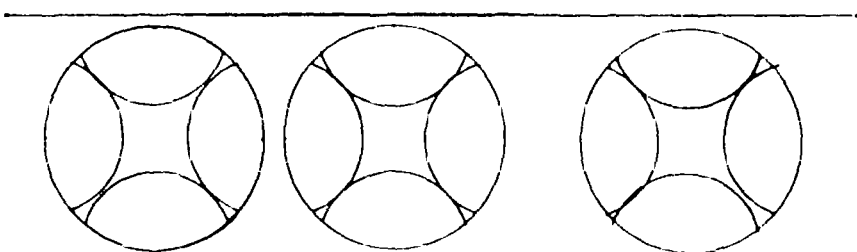
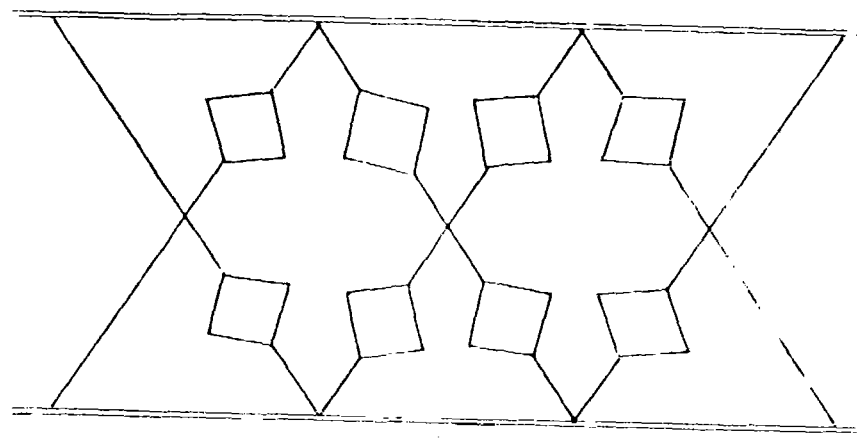
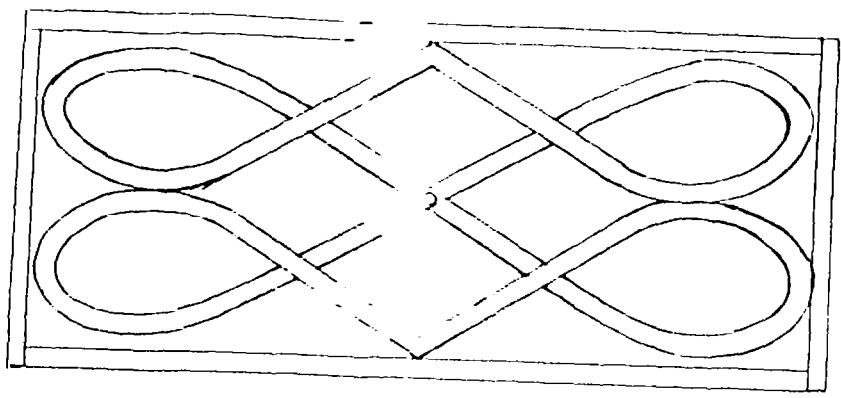
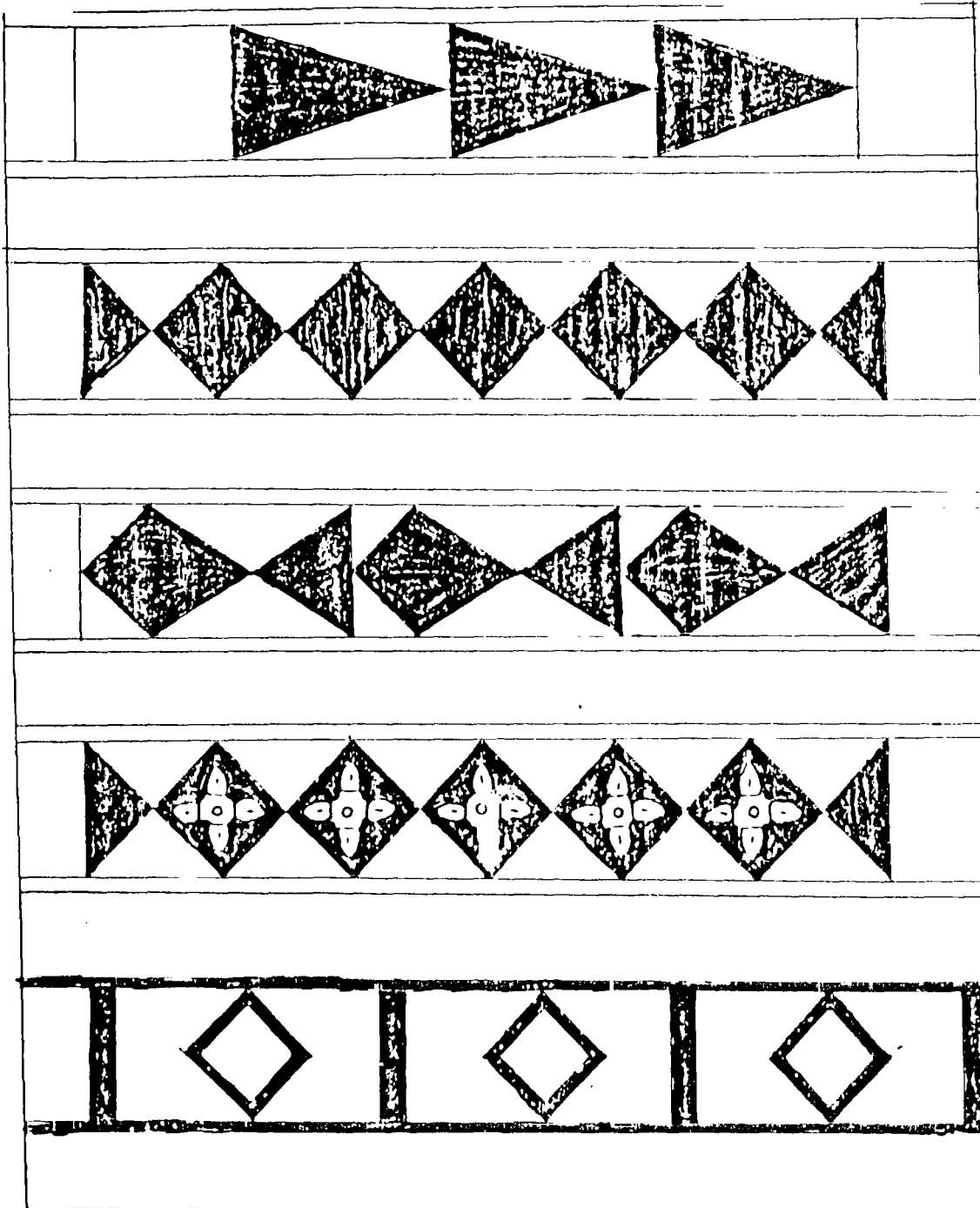
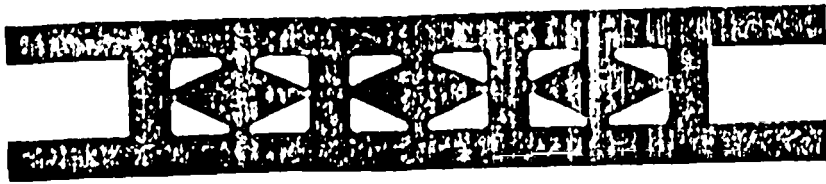
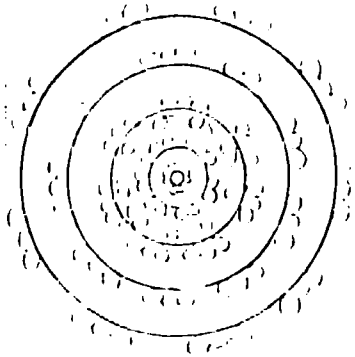
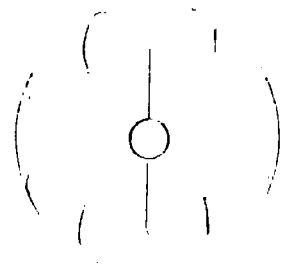


Plate IV. Geometrical pattern in band around corner towers and plinths of mosques.

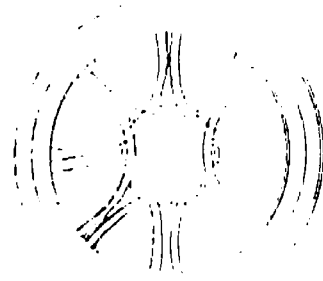




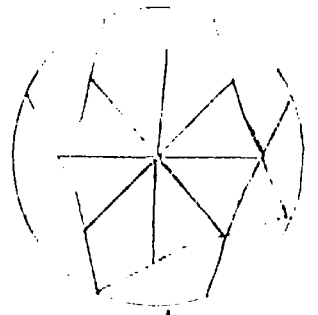
a



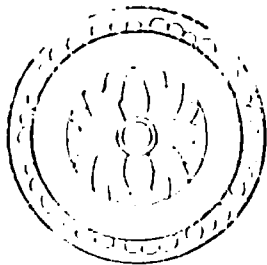
b



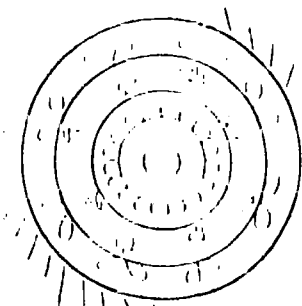
c



d



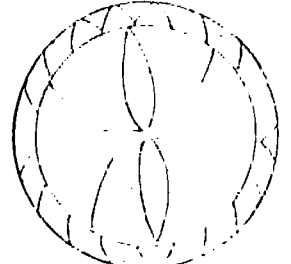
e



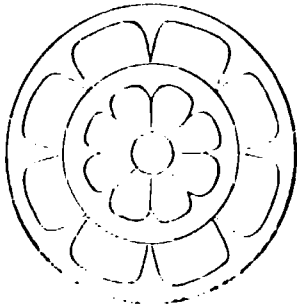
f



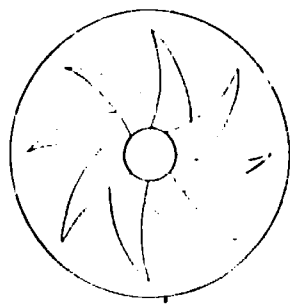
g



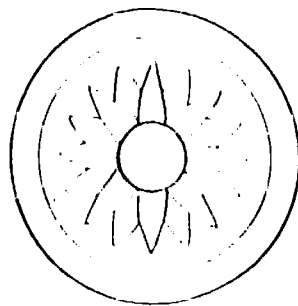
h



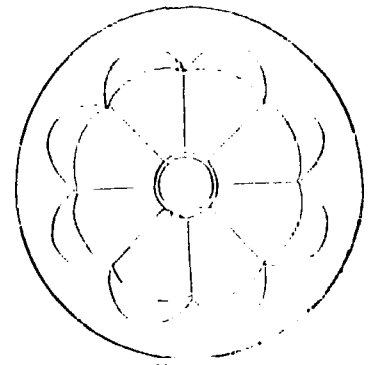
i



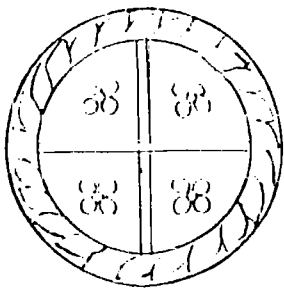
j



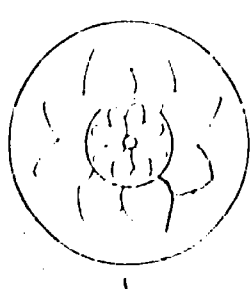
k



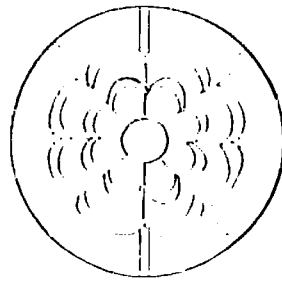
l



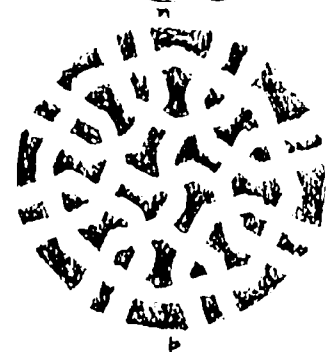
m



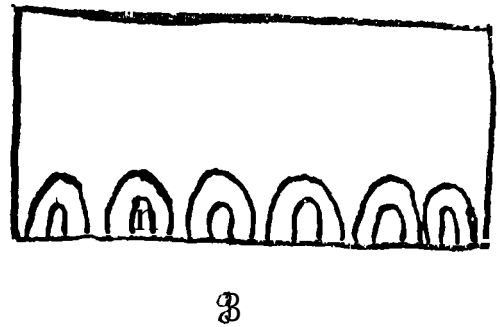
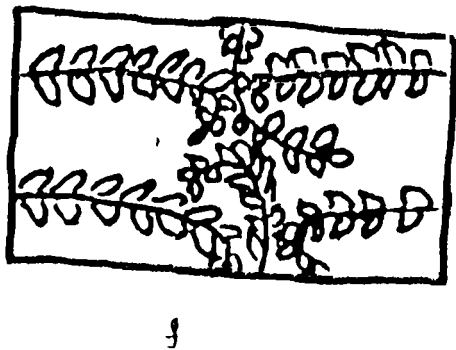
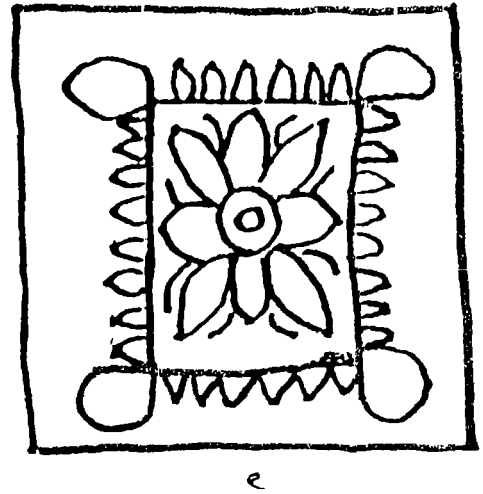
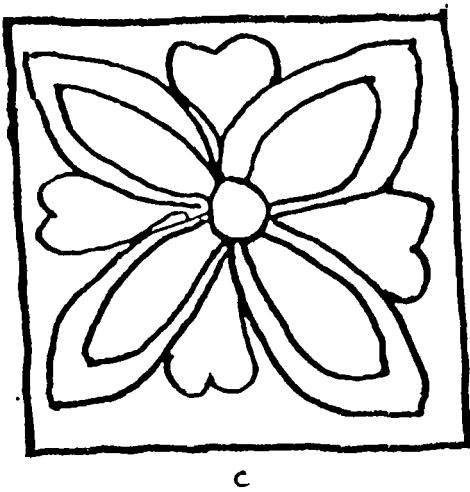
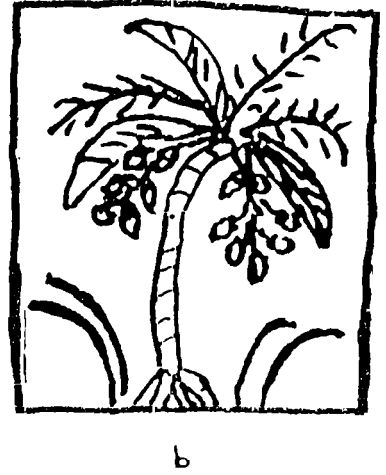
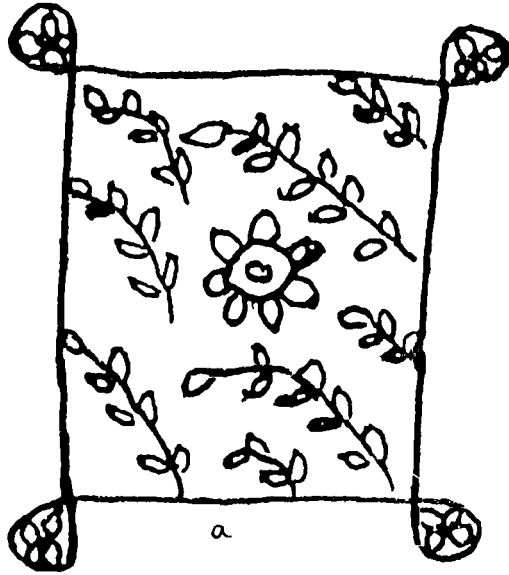
n

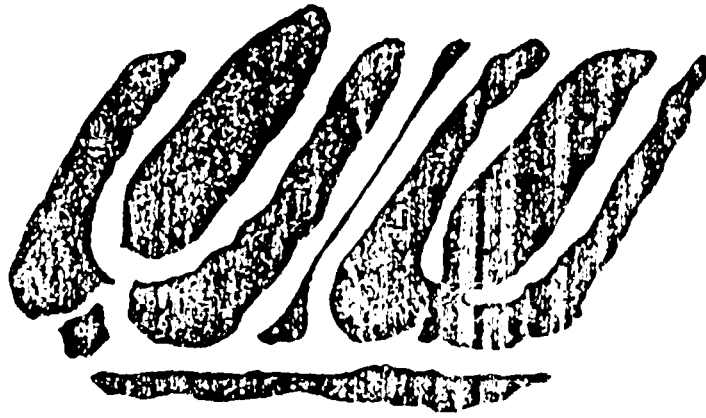


o

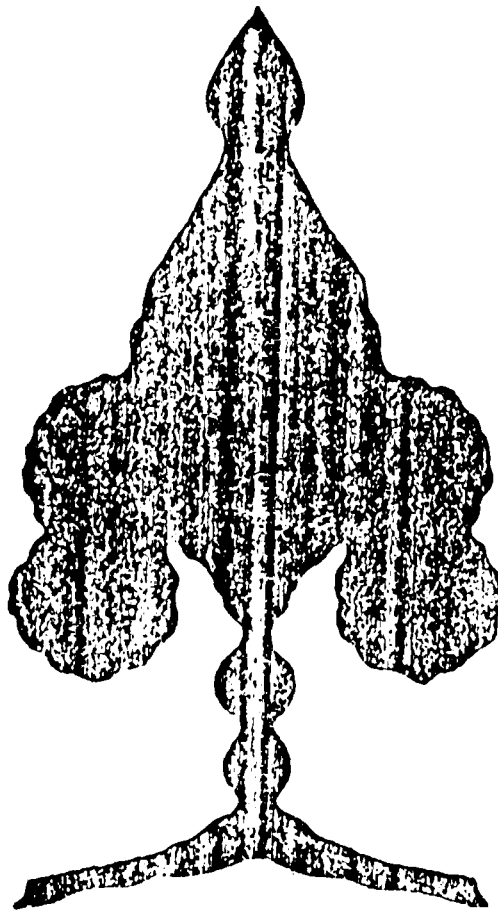


p

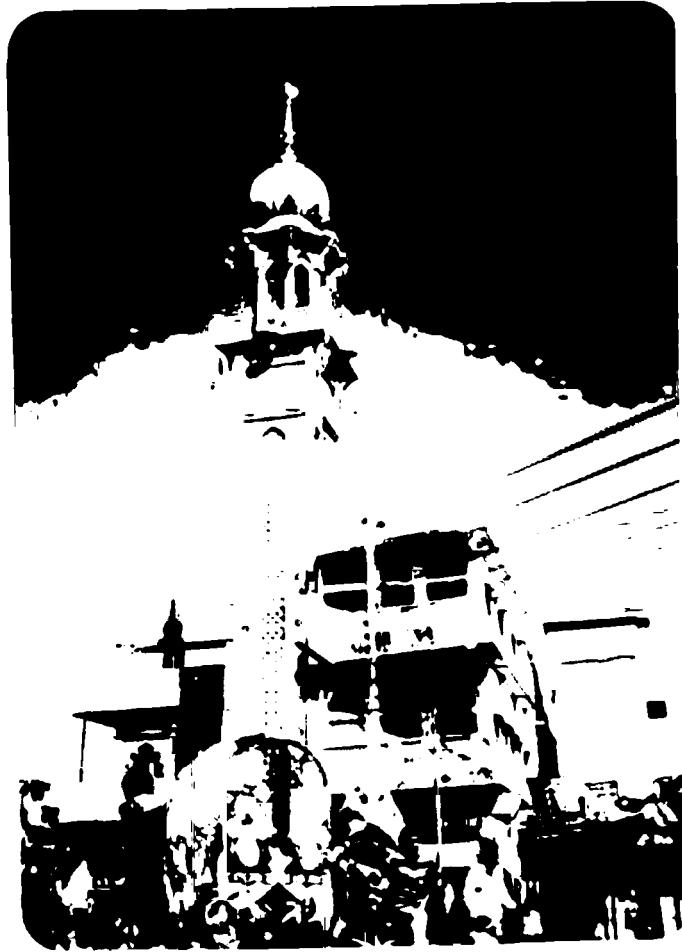




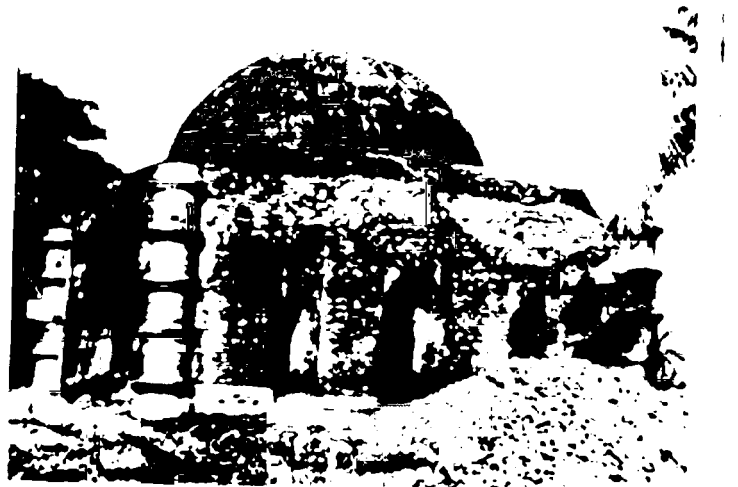
a



b



a



b



a



b





a



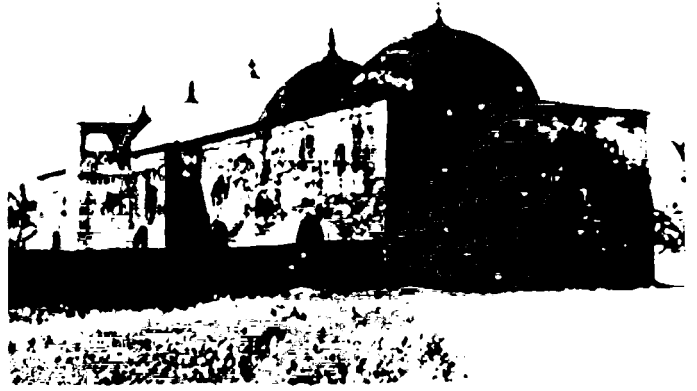
b



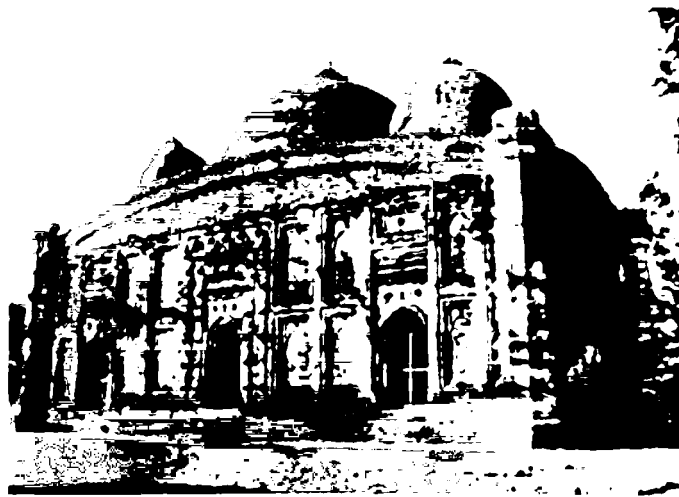
*a*



*b*



a



b



a



b



c



a



b



a



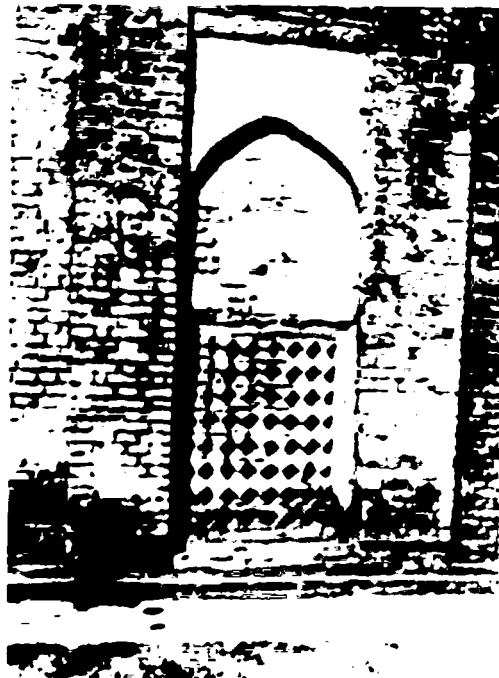
b



a



b



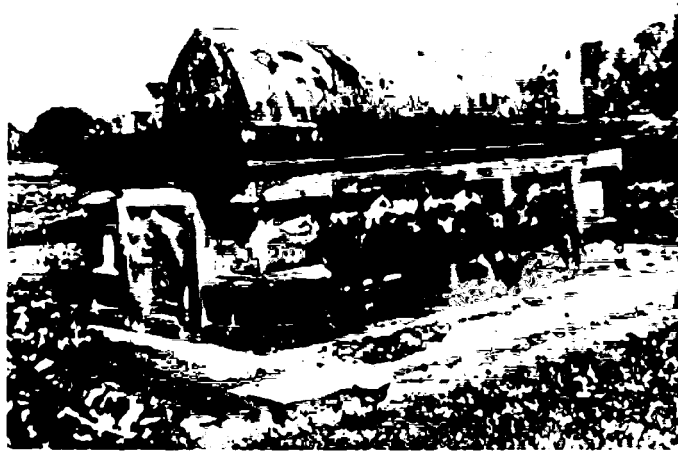


a



b

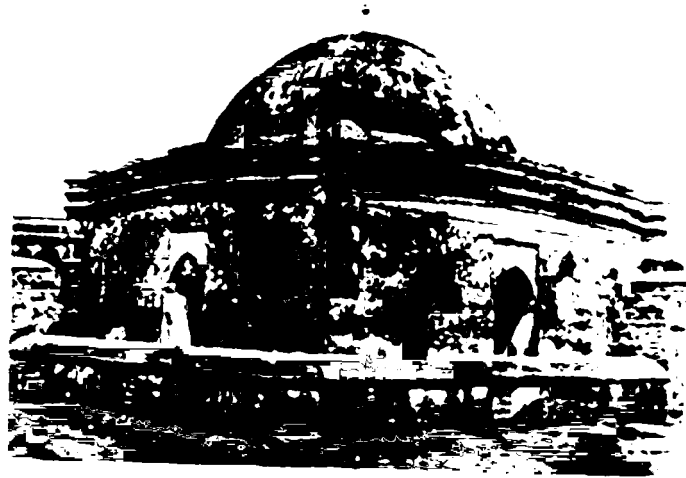




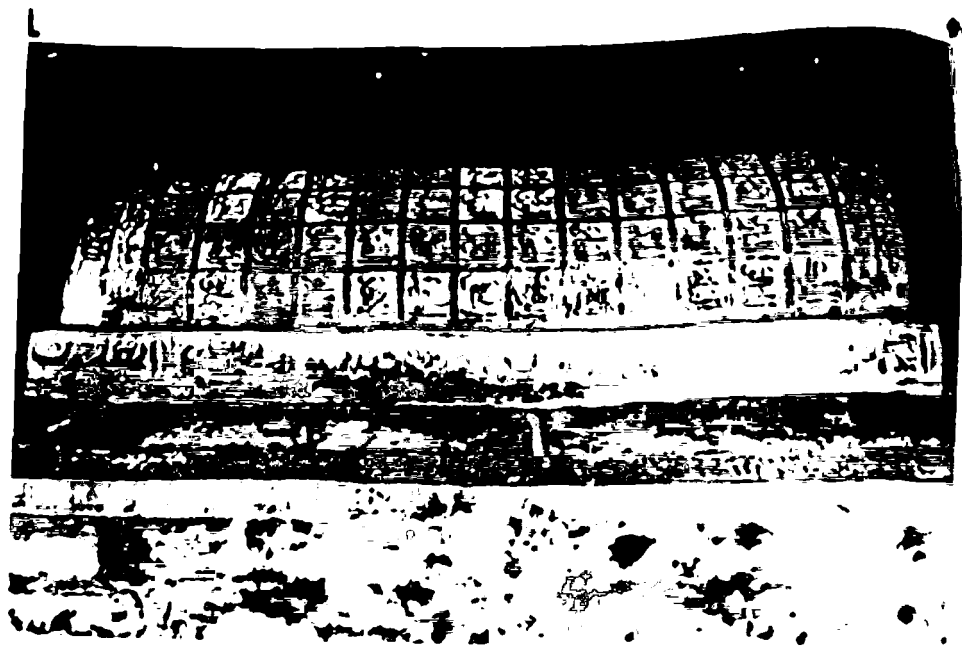
a



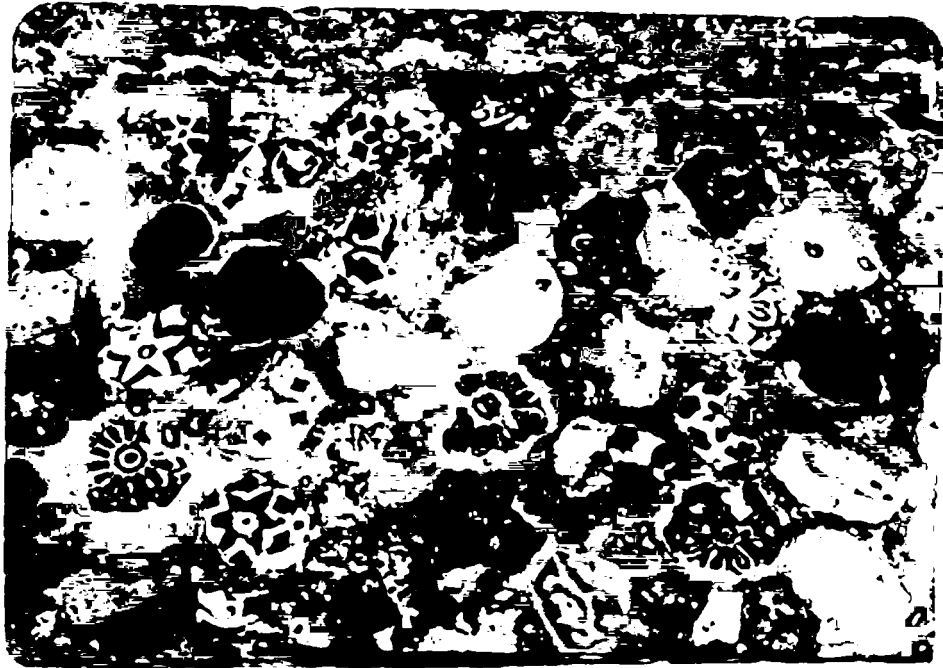
b



a



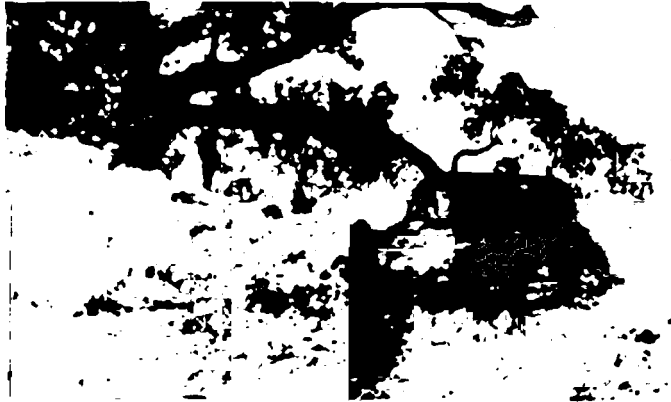
b



a



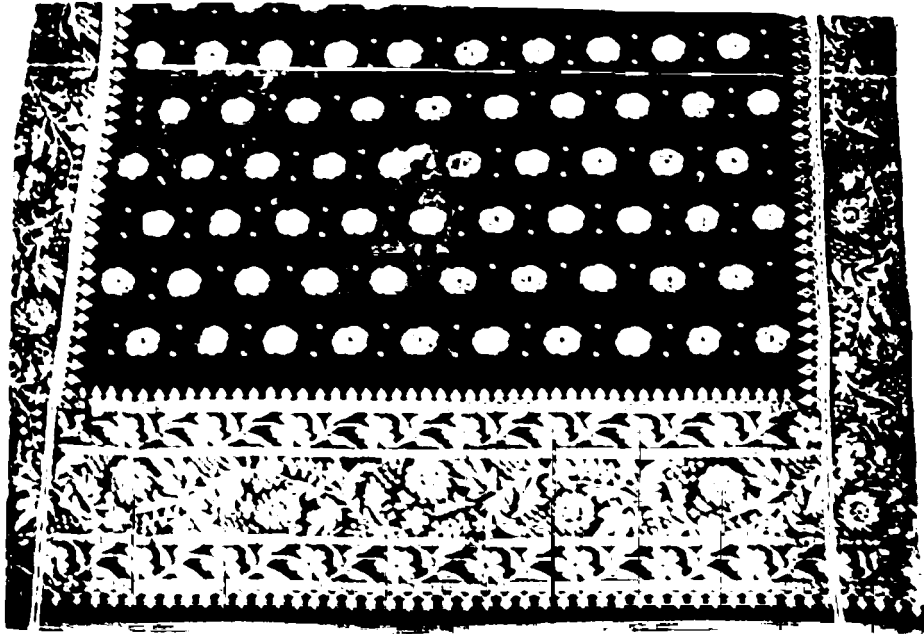
b



a



b



a



See caption under a for border of a shawl from Chittagong  
1929

b