

ISLAMIC ART HERITAGE OF BANGLADESH



Enamul Haque

Bangladesh National Museum

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by
Enamul Haque

Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka

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**To the artists, builders and craftsmen
who added to our pride**

Contents

9	Foreword
11	Preface
15	List of Illustrations
31	Introduction
49	Architecture
129	Manuscripts & Calligraphy
159	Metalwork
205	Wood & Ivory
225	Textiles
235	Paintings
241	Other Arts
248	Index

Foreword

Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in December 1971 and, hence, is young as a state. But, its land, people and culture are steeped in history. The cultural heritage of Bangladesh reflecting the creative genius of the people was enriched by the great civilizations that flourished in the region for well over two millenia. After the advent of Islam in the South Asian subcontinent, the various art-forms that flowered in Bangladesh bore the deep imprint of Islam.

The convergence of the leaders of the Islamic countries in Dhaka from far-flung parts of the world for the Fourteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers was considered a fitting occasion to introduce them to the Islamic heritage of Bangladesh. Accordingly, the Bangladesh National Museum assembled an Exhibition of Islamic Arts and Crafts on 6 December 1983 in the newly inaugurated building of the Museum and, also, launched a project for the production of a well-documented and well-illustrated volume on the Islamic Art Heritage of Bangladesh.

Dr. Enamul Haque, the Director-General of the Museum, undertook the task of preparing and producing this volume. It redounds very much to his credit that despite the many demands on his time in the present stage of the development of the Museum, he has through his painstaking efforts succeeded in accomplishing this arduous task within a short span of time.

The product is a book of art and history combined in one. Covering a wide variety of art forms, such as, architecture, manuscript, calligraphy, metalwork, woodwork, ivorywork, textiles, paintings, ceramics etc., the volume contains nearly two hundred plates, most of them in colour, and is, perhaps, the first of its kind to be published in Bangladesh. The author's concise, crisp and scholarly introduction has added to the value of the volume.

I sincerely hope that both as an introduction to the Islamic heritage of Bangladesh, and, also as a reference book, art-lovers, scholars, historians and others will find this volume interesting, enjoyable and useful.

The growth of a nation's cultural heritage is a complex, continuous and dynamic process. As a product as well as a mirror of the mind of a people, the cultural heritage of a nation is a unique record of its history and, also, an integral part of the universal heritage of mankind. The creative works of art are among the most valued treasures of this heritage. Their universal language and appeal also endow them with the role of an easily intelligible means of international communication and understanding. I, therefore, hope that the present volume will be of interest equally to the member-states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and others.

I would like to conclude on the hopeful note that this timely and commendable contribution of Dr. Enamul Haque will be followed by other scholarly works on the rich cultural heritage of Bangladesh.

Dhaka
9 December 1983

Muhammad Shamsul Huq
Chairman
Board of Trustees
Bangladesh National Museum

Preface

Islam unites nearly a fifth of the world's people, transcending their enormous diversities of race, nation and political ideologies. But the Islamic art heritage is shared and enjoyed by the entire humanity. Bangladesh having the distinction of nourishing the highest density of Muslims per square mile in the world, has been known for its colourful contribution in the wide spectrum of the Islamic arts and crafts. The Muslim artists and craftsmen who created this legacy were both synthesisers of earlier ancient cultures and brilliant innovators of intellectual achievements. In the pages which follow, an attempt has been made to present a random selection of the principal documentations of the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh. An exhaustive compilation would in any case is nearly impossible in a single volume.

This book is not aimed at to be a penetrating study or anything like history of art of Islam in this region. One may look at it as a modest introduction to one of the many facets of Islam in Bangladesh, that of the mosaic of arts, the import or creation of which would not have taken place unless the Muslim minds and hands were actively involved. During more than six hundred years, from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries A. D., Bangladesh had been either an independent Sultanate or a province of successive subcontinental empires. What is now the culture of Bangladesh is largely the product of the creative genius of its people under the patronage of the Muslim rulers. Such patronage of the ruling class to arts and crafts, encouragement to trade and commerce, and liberal appreciation of poets, builders, scholars and divines made Bangladesh a terminal point for many travellers and fortune hunters. The prosperity of the place together with a receptive attitude of its people to mendicants and mystics attracted a large number of savants, Sufi saints, *makhdums* and *darveshes* who established all over Bangladesh innumerable *maktabs*, *madrassas*, *khanqas* etc. as well as caused the creation

of many mosques and mausolea. Over the centuries, Bangladesh continued to receive new stimulants and concepts brought along with the batches of new immigrants from western and central Asia, thereby continuously enriching its cultural heritage.

The present volume is presented on the occasion of the 14th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers being held at Dhaka from 6th to 10th December 1983. This gave us an opportunity to produce a volume on the Islamic monuments and historic works of arts created or patronised by the Muslims of this country. Many of the items included here originated outside Bangladesh, coming from the wide world of Islam. Together with the monuments, these art objects largely represent the multi-regional aspect of Islamic art heritage. They reveal a multiplicity of styles and idioms often interacting simultaneously.

The subject received special attention in Bangladesh when a special exhibition of Islamic art in Bangladesh was arranged by the Dhaka Museum, the predecessor of the Bangladesh National Museum, in 1978. The descriptive catalogue published on the occasion by the author was well received within the scholarly community. A similar month-long special exhibition has been arranged on 6th December 1983 in the new building of the Bangladesh National Museum with addition of new materials. A new catalogue has also been published. I have freely used contents of my previous writings on this subject in the present volume.

The production of the book has been possible due to a grant made by the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. But the time allowed for the preparation of this volume was extremely inadequate, and this fact alone largely determined the scope and nature of its presentation. However, efforts have been made to include as many items as possible along with illustrations and brief descriptions to depict the range

of art heritage as manifested through architecture, inscription, manuscript, calligraphy, documents, coins, wood works, metal-works, ivoryworks, arms, jewellery, ceramics, paintings, textiles etc. It is reasonably expected that by perusing these objects with some amount of imagination, the expanse of history may be bridged and the force that Islam wielded in the creativity of its votaries in Bangladesh may be more readily appreciated.

The necessity of a publication such as this was long overdue and it is hoped that the readers would find the present volume useful for having a glimpse and at least a cursory understanding of the treasures belonging to the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh. A large number of the illustrations have been included in this volume which are previously unpublished. Also, new aspects have been highlighted of known items and photographs of unusual views presented. Although, the general aim had been to reach the ordinary readers, the scholars may as well find ample material useful for their further study.

I am grateful to Prof. Muhammad Shamsul Huq, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Bangladesh National Museum, for kindly agreeing to write the foreword for the book and giving constant encouragement for its completion. I thank Mr. Mohammad Asafuddowlah, Acting Secretary, Sports and Culture Division, for making it easier to solve many a mundane problem in connection with the publication programme. It is my pleasure to record the valuable cooperation I have received from various individuals and institutions, particularly from the colleagues in the Bangladesh National Museum. Thanks are especially due to Mr. Abdus Sadek, Senior Photographer, for arrangement of the photographs and transparencies used in this volume many of which were taken by him at great pains. Mr. Mohammad Mohsin, Display Officer, gave all the time demanded of him in the supervision of the production. Mr. Mohammed Nizamuddin, Keeper, Mr. Anwarul Huq & Begum Al-Ward Fil-Akmam, Deputy 13

Keepers, Mr. Shahabuddin, Administrative Officer and Mr. Abu Yunus, Publication Assistant, were never failing in giving any assistance asked from them. The Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh, kindly supplied some old photographs and plans of monuments which have subsequently been extensively renovated. I should also thank my wife Prof. Zulekha Haque for offering criticism and suggestions in the preparation of the manuscript and also for lending a few transparencies previously unpublished and earmarked for her book *Jewellery of Bangladesh*. Thanks are also due to Painter Qayyum Choudhury and Ghazi Shahabuddin of M/s. Kathakali Printers for their encouraging cooperation. But no acknowledgement is complete without mentioning my debt to the earlier scholars in the field. Their contribution has always inspired me to go to many of the inaccessible monuments in the remote corners of the country as well as study invaluable art objects preserved in the Museum.

Dhaka, 9th December 1983

Enamul Haque

List of illustrations

1. Shait Gumbaz Mosque, Bagerhat, view from the east, *circa* 1450 A. D.
2. Shait Gumbaz Mosque, Bagerhat, interior colonnade from the south.
3. Shait Gumbaz Mosque, Bagerhat, view from the south-east.
4. Shait Gumbaz Mosque, Bagerhat, view from the south-west.
5. Shait Gumbaz Mosque, Bagerhat, ground plan.
6. Ranavijaypur Mosque, Bagerhat, view from the north-east. *circa* 1450 A. D.
7. Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, view from the south-east.
8. Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, view from the east, *circa* 1500 A.D.
9. Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, view from the south-west.
10. Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, central *mihrab*.
11. Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, details of eastern facade.
12. Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, ground plan.
13. Darasbari Mosque, Gaur, view from the south-west (renovated), 1479 A. D.
14. Darasbari Mosque, Gaur, central *mihrab* with *mimber*.
15. Rajbibi Mosque, Gaur, view from the east, *circa* 1490 A. D.
16. Mograpara Mosque, Sonargaon, view from the east (renovated), originally 1478 A. D. The tomb of Hazrat Ibrahim Danishmand can be seen at the far end with the *chauchala* roof.
17. Mosque of Baba Adam Shahid, Rampal, view from the east, 1483 A. D.
18. Goaldi Mosque, Sonargaon, view from the south-east, 1519 A. D.
19. Bagha Jami Mosque, Bagha, built by Sultan Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah, view from the south-east, 1523 A. D.
20. Decorated stone panel, Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur.
21. Decorated terracotta panel, Bagha Mosque.
22. Details of dome, Bagha Mosque.
23. Details of central *mihrab*, Bagha Mosque.
24. Jami Mosque, Sailkupa, view from the north-east, *circa* 1520 A. D.
25. Kusumba Mosque, Kusumba, view from the east, 1558 A. D.
26. Kusumba Mosque, Kusumba, central *mihrab*.

27. Kusumba Mosque, Kusumba, Ladies gallery.
28. Kherua Mosque, Sherpur, view from the east, 1582 A. D.
29. Qutb Shah's Mosque, Ashtagram, view from the east, *circa* 1590 A. D.
30. Atiya Jami Mosque, Atiya, view from the north-east, 1609 A. D.
31. Saadi's Mosque, Egarasindur, view from the south-east, 1652 A. D.
32. Shah Muhammad's Mosque along with the *dochala* gateway, Egarasindur, *circa* 1680 A. D.
33. Lalbagh Mosque, Lalbagh Fort, view from the east, *circa* 1680 A. D.
34. Sat Gumbaz Mosque, Mohammadpur, Dhaka, view from the south-east, *circa* 1680 A. D.
35. Sat Gumbaz Mosque, ground plan.
36. Sat Gumbaz Mosque, elevation.
37. Shah Niamatullah's Mosque, Firuzpur, Gaur, *circa* 1650 A. D.
38. Kartalab Khan's Mosque, Begumbazar, Dhaka, view from the north-east, 1704 A. D.
39. Hamid Khan's Mosque, Kumira, Chittagong, view from the south-west, *circa* 18th century.
40. Shah Niamatullah's Mosque, Firuzpur, Gaur, *circa* 1650 A. D.
41. Chandanpura Mosque, Chittagong, view from the east, *circa* 19th century A. D.
42. *Mihrab*, Qadam-i-Mubarak Mosque, Chittagong, 1719 A. D.
43. *Mihrab*, Wali Khan's Mosque, Chittagong, 1790 A. D.
44. Sarail Mosque, Sarail, Comilla, 1670 A. D.
45. Bajra Shahi Mosque, Bajra, Noakhali, 1741, A. D.
46. Sitara Mosque, Armanitola, Dhaka, *circa*, 18th century A. D.
47. Kashaitully Mosque, Dhaka, *circa* 19th century A. D.
48. Baitul Mukarram Mosque, Dhaka, 1962 A. D.
49. Tomb of Khan-i-Jahan, Bagerhat, view from the south-east, 1459 A. D.
50. Tomb of Khan-i-Jahan, Bagerhat, sarcophagus with names of Allah.
51. Tomb of Khan-i-Jahan, Bagerhat, head of the sarcophagus with burial inscription.

52. Tomb of Khan-i-Jahan, Bagerhat, encaustic tiles at the feet of the tomb platform.
53. Tomb of Shah Niamatullah Wali, Firuzpur, Gaur, view from the south, *circa* 1650 A. D.
54. Tomb of Bibi Pari, Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka, view from the south, *circa* 1684 A. D.
55. Tomb of Bibi Pari, Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka, details of marble screen.
56. Tomb of Bibi Pari, ground plan.
57. Tomb of Bibi Pari, section
58. Tomb of Bibi Pari, cenotaph
59. Dhaka Education Extension Centre Mosque, Dhaka, 1959 A. D.
60. Dhaka University Mosque, Ramna, Dhaka, 1966 A. D.
61. Tomb of Sultan Ghyasuddin Azam Shah, Shahchillapur, Sonargaon, view from the south-east, 1410 A. D.
62. Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka, general view from the east.
63. Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka, southern gate, view from the north.
64. Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka, southern gate, elevation.
65. Hajiganj Fort, Narayanganj, Dhaka, view of main entrance from the south, *circa* 1660 A. D.
66. Sonakanda Fort, Sonakanda, Narayanganj, Dhaka, view from the south-east, *circa* 1660 A. D.
67. Panam Bridge, Panam, Sonargaon, Dhaka, view from the west, *circa* 15th century A. D.
68. Pagla Bridge, from Buriganga river side, Pagla, Dhaka, *circa* 1661 A. D.
69. Qadam Rasul Gateway, Nabiganj, Narayanganj, Dhaka, 18th century A. D.
70. Column, black basalt, from Gaur, Rajshahi, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
71. Screen, sandstone, from Mahi Santosh, Rajshahi, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
72. Ahsan Manzil Palace, Sadarghat, Dhaka, view from the south, 1872 A. D.
73. Manuscript *Quran*, 7¼" × 5", copied by Khawajah Shaikh in 1091 A. H./1680 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

74. Manuscript *Quran*, 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", circa 17th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
75. Manuscript of *Maqtul Husain*, 12" \times 7", Bengali text written in Arabic script, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
76. Mandra inscription of Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah, 21" \times 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 830 A. H./1427 A. D., from Mandra, Dhaka. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
77. Satalur inscription of Emperor Muhammad Shah, 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 1151 A.H./1738 A. D., from Satalur, Barisal. Bangladesh National Museum.
78. Wooden Partition, 94" \times 111", from Faridpur, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum.
79. Ceremonial Umbrella, 48" dia., from Dhaka, 18th century A. D., Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
80. Fez cap with jewelled funna, believed to be belonging to Nawab Bahadur Salimullah of Dhaka, 19th century A. D.
81. Manuscript *Quran* in scroll, 35' 1" \times 4", copied by Abul Fath, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
82. Manuscript of *Shahnama*, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ ", colophon of the first volume, illustrated, 1007 A. H./1599 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
83. Manuscript of *Bustan*, Emperor Shahjahan's personal copy, 11" \times 7", circa 1650 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
84. *Kabin Namah*, marriage registry document, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 1823 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
85. Specimen of calligraphy, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", *Gulzar* type of *Nastaliq*, by Mirza Bahadur Husain of Dhaka. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
86. Specimen of Calligraphy, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", *Nastaliq*, by Ilahi Buksh. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
87. Specimen of Calligraphy, 25" \times 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", *Nastaliq*, by Muhammad Yusuf, on loan to Bangladesh National Museum from Begum Khaleda Fahmi.
- 88a. Sitalmath inscription of Abul Fath Yuzbak, 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times 53 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 652 A. H./1254 A. D., from Sitalmath, Rajshahi. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

- 88b. Reverse of above.
89. Hatkhola inscription of Sultan Barbak Shah, 12"×27", 868 A. H./1460 A. D., *in situ* at Hatkhola, Sylhet.
90. Kusumba inscription of Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah, 23"×10", 904 A. H./1498 A. D., from Kusumba, Rajshahi. Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.
91. Sonargaon inscription of Sultan Nusrat Shah, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ "×47", 929 A. H./1522 A. D., from Sonargaon, Dhaka. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
92. Bara Katra inscription of Shah Shuja, 17"×50", 1644 A. D. from Bara Katra, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
93. Fulchowki inscription of Emperor Shah Alam, 53"×13 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 1186 A. H./1772 A. D., from Fulchowki, Rangpur. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
94. Qadam Rasul inscription of Ghulam Nabi, 22"×15", 1191 A. H./1777 A. D., from Nabiganj, Dhaka, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
95. *Aftaba*, H. 36", brass, 19th century, from Dhaka.
96. Tray, D. 12", brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
97. Tray, D. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
98. Tray, D. 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
99. Tray, D. 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
100. *Hukka* bowl. H. 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", Silver, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
101. *Hukka* bowl, H. 8", Silver, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
102. *Rihl*, H. 30", wood, from Jangalbari, Mymensingh, 19th century.
103. Dish, D. 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", Chinese porcelain, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

104. Plate, D. 8'', Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
105. Plate, D. 9'', Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum Dhaka.
106. Plate, D. 13'', Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
107. Plate, D. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ '' Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
108. Plate, D. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ '', Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
109. Plate, D. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ '', Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
110. Plate, D. 10'', Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
111. Plate, D. 18'', Chinese celadon, 17th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
112. Dish, D. 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ '' Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
113. Storage jar, H.15 $\frac{1}{2}$ '', Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
114. Storage jar, H. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$, Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
115. Storage jar, H. 24'', Chinese porcelain, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
116. Storage jar, H. 19'', Chinese porcelain, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
117. Cups and Saucers, inscribed and dated porcelain, 1292 A. H./1875 A. D., belonging to Khan Bahadur (Later Nawab Bahadur) Abdul Latif, H. (cup) 2'', D. (Saucer) 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ '', Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
118. Legs of throne, ivory, H. 11'', 18th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
119. Miniature *Darbar* of Emperor Bahadur Shah, ivory, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
120. Caparisoned elephant, ivory, H.8 $\frac{3}{4}$ '', 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

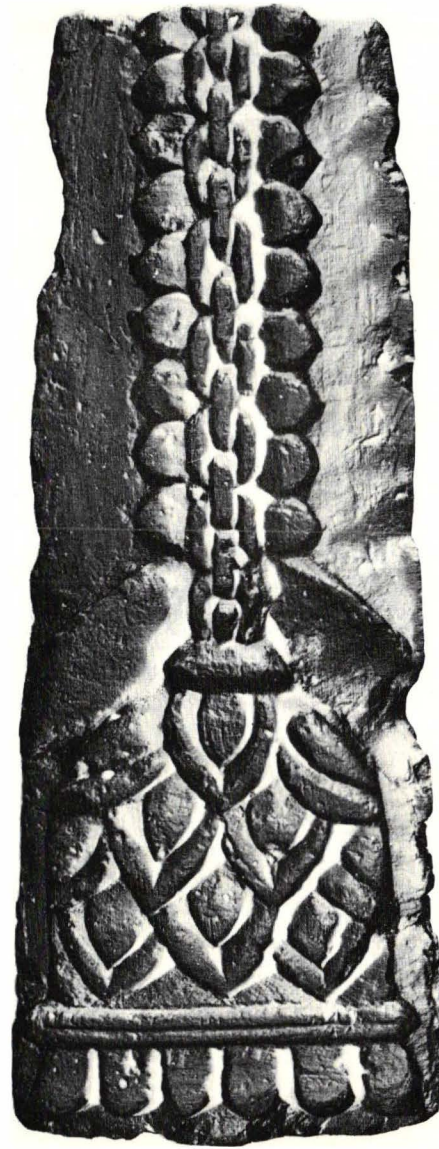
121. *Kalamdan*, pen-case of sandal wood, L. 10", 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
122. *Kalamdan*, pen-case of ivory, L. 8", 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
123. Daggers, 17-18th centuries A. D. Bangladesh National Museum Dhaka.
124. Swords, 18-19th centuries A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
125. Knives, ivory, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
126. *Atardan*, perfume pot of silver filigree work of Dhaka, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
127. *Golabpash*, rose water sprinkler of silver with decoration produced by chasing, H. 21½", 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
128. *Golabpash*, rose water sprinkler of silver filigree work of Dhaka, H. 14", 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
129. Model of Ahsan Manzil, gold and silver filigree work of Dhaka, L. 18", W. 20", H. 15", made in 1905 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
130. Model of Husaini Dalan, gold and silver filigree work of Dhaka, L. 30½", W. 24½", H. 13", made in 1905 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
131. *Khasdan*, casket of silver filigree work of Dhaka, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
132. Tray, silver filigree work of Dhaka, 9½" × 7½", 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
133. Jewellery Box, silver filigree work of Dhaka, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
134. Tray, 17½" × 11½", brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
135. *Pikdan*, H. 12¾", brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
136. *Surahi*, H. 11¼", silver *bidri*, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

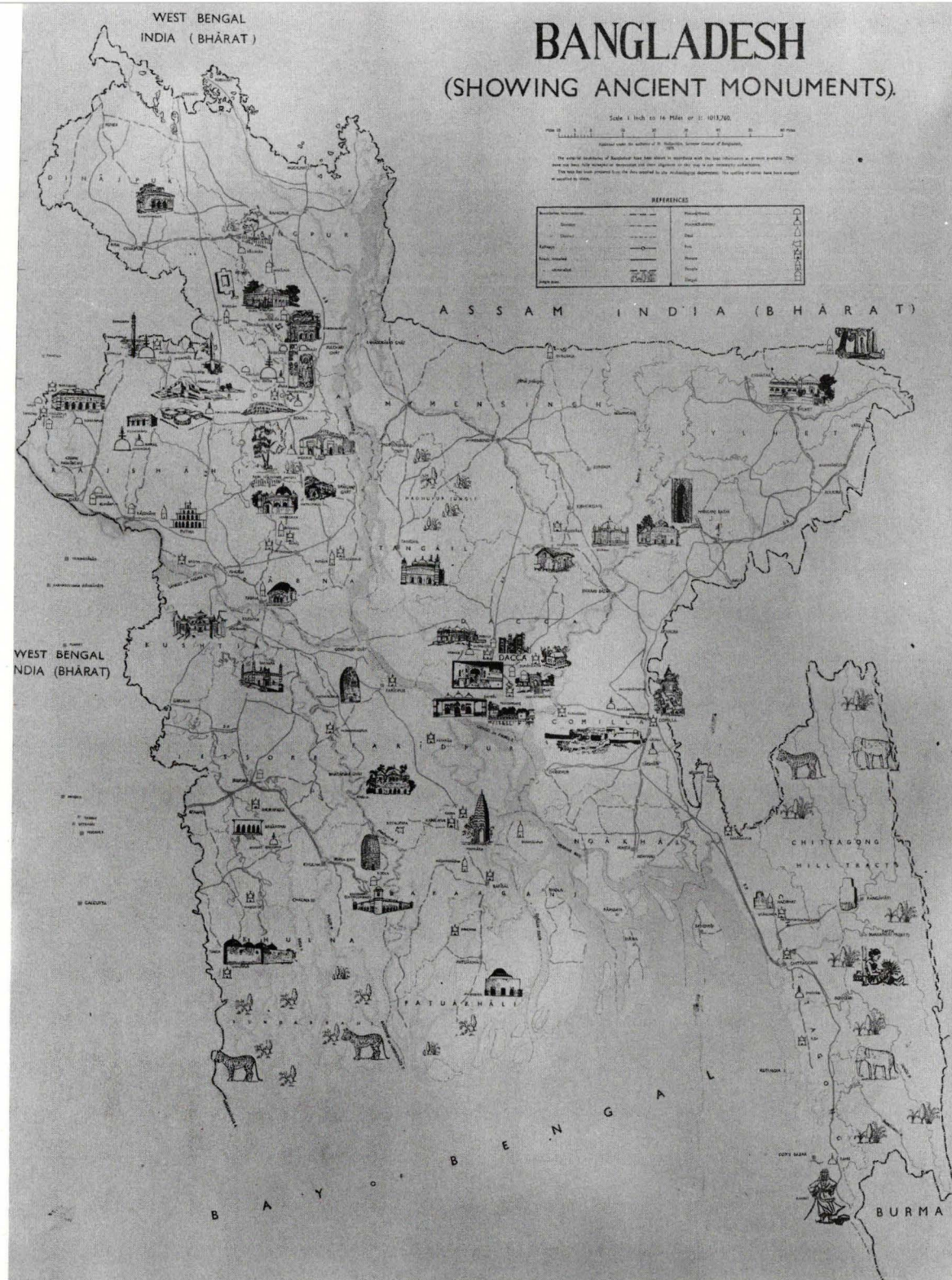
137. Ewer, H. 12', silver, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
138. Cannon, L. 57", brass, 1542 A. D., from Dewanbagh, Dhaka. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
139. *Dastarkhan*, 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times 112", *Nakshi Kantha*, from Faridpur, early 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
140. Coins, silver, of Sultans of Bangladesh and Delhi emperors, 14th-17th centuries, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
141. Designed brick, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", circa 1450 A. D., from Bagerhat, Khulna. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
142. *Nakshi Kantha*, L. 30" \times W. 30", from Faridpur, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
143. *Ghilaf*, cover for *Quran* of *Nakshi Kantha*, L. 11" \times W. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", from Faridpur, early 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
144. *Nakshi Kantha*, L. 22" \times W. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", from Faridpur, early 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
145. *Nakshi Kantha*, L. 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times W. 22", from Faridpur, 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
146. *Nakshi Kantha*, L. 72" \times W. 42 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", from Faridpur, 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
147. Shawl, L. 106" \times W. 51", 19th century, from Kashmir, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
148. Shawl, L. 112" \times W. 54", 19th century, from Kashmir, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
149. Shawl, L. 114" \times W. 45", 19th century, from Kashmir, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
150. Details of 149.
151. Shawl, L. 120" \times W. 56 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 19th century, from Kashmir, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
152. Ceremonial Fez cap, H. 3", *Karchob* work, from Murshidabad, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
153. *Achkan*, H. 43", satin printed with floral design, 19th century. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
154. Ceremonial Choga, H. 52", *Karchob* work, belonging to Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif (1828-93). Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

155. *Kurta*, H. 16", velvet with *Karchob* work, from Dhaka, early 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
156. *Angarkha*, H. 29", wool with *butis*, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
157. *Jamdani*, cotton, design of a border of a *sari*, from Dhaka, 20th century.
158. *Kurta*, H. 17", velvet with *Karchob* work, from Dhaka, early 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
159. Alexander defeats the Russians, scene from *Iskandarnamah* of Nizami, 9¼" × 5¾", 1531 A. D., reproduced from *Indian Painting* by Colnaghi, London, 1978.
160. Scene from *Shahnamah*, 12" × 7¾", 1677 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
161. Portrait of Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719-48), 11¼" × 18½", 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
162. Scene from *Id* procession at Dhaka, water colour, 24" × 18", circa 1820 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
163. Scene from *Muharram* procession at Dhaka, water colour, 24" × 18", circa 1820 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
- 164a. *Kanpata*, gold ornament, from Dhaka, 20th century.
- 164b. *Jhumka*, gold ornament, from Mymensingh, 19th century.
165. *Painchhi*, gold ornament, from Dhaka, 19th century.
166. A pair of Shields with *Koftgari* work, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
167. *Hasuli*, silver ornament in filigree. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
168. *Bichha*, silver ornament, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
169. Scene from *Muharram* procession with Husaini Dalan in the background, water colour, 24", × 18", circa 1820 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
170. Scene from *Id* procession passing by Begambazar Mosque, water colour, 24" × 18", circa 1820 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

171. Shield of Emperor Shah Abbas of Persia (1587-1628), D. 30½", 17th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
172. Helmet of Emperor Shah Abbas of Persia (1587-1628), H. 21", D. 12½", 17th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
173. *Katars*, H. 13"-18", 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
174. Cover of *Quran*, Leather, 18½" × 9¾", 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
175. *Kalamdan*, brass with *koftgari* work, L. 10¾", 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
176. *Kalamdan*, brass with *koftgari* work, L. 11½", 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
177. A pair of *Atardans*, silver with filigree work, H. 5" & 5½", 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
178. *Padmavati*, leaf from manuscript by Alaol, 8" × 4½", 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
179. Alexander receives Dara's messenger, scene from *Iskandarnamah* of Nizami, 9¼" × 5⅝", 1531 A. D., reproduced from *Indian Painting* by Colnaghi, London, 1978.
180. Queen Nushaba shares her throne with Alexander, scene from *Iskandarnamah* of Nizami, 9¼" × 5⅝", 1531 A. D., reproduced from *Indian Painting* by Colnaghi, London, 1978.
181. Colophon of *Iskandarnamah* of Nizami, 9¼" × 5⅝", 1531 A. D., reproduced from *Indian Painting* by Colnaghi, London, 1978.
182. *Hukka* bowl, silver *bidri* with *jar nashan*, from Murshidabad, 19th century. Bangladesh National Museum Dhaka.
183. A pair of *Surahi*, brass, H. 7¾", carving with floral designs, 19th century. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
184. Terracotta plaque, with geometric designs, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
185. Terracotta plaque, with floral designs, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
186. Terracotta plaque, with arabesque design, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

187. Terracotta plaque, with stylised fruit design, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
188. Carpet, wool, 211"×193", from the court of Nawab Serajuddowla (1756-57) of Murshidabad. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
189. Fight between Turanian king Afrasiab and Rustam's grandson Barzu, from *Shahnamah*, 9¼"×5¼", 1599 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
190. Horse Breast-cloth, velvet and wool, H. 51", W. 29", 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
191. Bibi Mariam', Cannon of Mir Jumla, iron, L.132", circa 1660 A. D., Dhaka.





1. Next Page Shait Gumbaz Mosque, Bagerhat, view from the east, circa 1450 A. D.
Bangladesh map showing ancient monuments







2. Shait Gumbaz Mosque, Bagerhat, interior colonnade from the south.

Introduction

In order to appreciate the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh with a better perspective it may be worthwhile to briefly glance through a historical outline with some recounting of the aesthetic achievements of the pre-Muslim phase.

Bangladesh is a riverine delta with nearly 56,000 square miles of area. The historic Bangladesh with its changing connotations, variously known as Gangaridai, Pundravardhana, Gaudadesh, Bangalah, Bangodesh, Bengal etc., was often a bigger entity. The aggregate of the geo-political regions of Varendra, Radha, Suhma, Vanga, Samatata and Harikela, with minor contractions and expansions among these constituent units, witnessed more or less a common political, social, economic and cultural development during the last two and a half millenia of the known history. The latest political boundary of Bangladesh was drawn up on the occasion of the departure of the British and consequent partition of the sub-continent in 1947. The same political boundary has been inherited by the People's Republic of Bangladesh in 1971.

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

continued to influence profoundly the growth and development of all sorts of art in Bangladesh in the same way in Islamic period as they did before.

The investigation into the remote past of Bangladesh has been admittedly inadequate. Besides sporadic references in various epic, Puranic and Buddhist literature of uncertain dates, we have no written evidence prior to the discovery of the Brahmi stone inscription of *circa* 3rd century B. C. from Mahasthangarh in the district of Bogra. It has already been established that the Mahasthangarh with its extensive ruins is the site of the ancient Pundranagar, the provincial capital city of the Imperial Maurya rulers and the inscription mentioned above could have been issued by Emperor Ashoka. The discovery of the Northern Black Polished ware and the terracotta plaques of the Sunga period from the archaeological excavations at Mahasthangarh bears the testimony of Bangladesh experiencing an imperial culture during the 3rd to 1st centuries B. C.

There appears to be a void as far as material evidence is concerned till the establishment of the well known rule of the Guptas in the 4th century A. D. The facts of the provincial administration of the Guptas and that of their semi-independent scions are available mainly from their copper plates issued for recording grant of the land for religious purposes. After the Guptas, Sasanka is known to have ruled independently for more than three decades at the beginning of the 7th century A. D. The Chinese traveller Huen Tsang came to Bangladesh during Sasanka's reign.

Perhaps, the most renowned of the pre-Muslim rulers were the kings of the Pala dynasty. They ruled from the middle of 8th to the end of 11th century and were known for their patronage of art. The largest Buddhist monastery of the sub-continent which is situated at Paharpur in the district of Rajshahi is a monument to their glory. The central cruciform temple complex of this 8th century monastery with elaborate terracotta

embellishment is known to have influenced the development of certain important examples of architecture in south-east Asia, particularly, in Ankor Vat and Borobudur. The Buddhist Palas were replaced by the Hindu Sena kings who were also patrons of artistic activities. In the eastern Bangladesh, contemporary to the Palas, were the succession of other Buddhist dynasties, namely, the Khadgas, the Devas and the Chandras. At least, the last two dynasties are famous for their patronage of the Buddhist monastic establishments at Mainamati in the district of Comilla. The Chandras were succeeded by the Hindu Varmans in eastern Bangladesh, and the Varmans by the Senas. The four centuries of the rule of these dynasties saw the creation of innumerable sculptures of stone, terracotta and wood, which form the popular basis of what is generally known all over the world as the 'Bengal Art'.

The dawn of the 13th century introduced a new epoch in the history and culture of Bangladesh. The victory of Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji in 1204 over the Hindu King Laksmanasenadeva established a new administration of the adventurist Muslims in northern and western parts of Bangladesh and within a century or so the entire Ganges-Brahmaputra delta was brought under their sway. The early Muslim contact with Bangladesh through the Arab sailors or pioneering saints appears to have left no recognisable impact on this fertile soil. The first century of Muslim rule was in fact an unsettled period which saw the conquering generals either quarrelling among themselves, or throwing away the central authority of the Delhi Sultanate and administering the region as independently as possible. Ultimately, in 1338 was established the unbroken two-century long independent Sultanate which really saw the consolidation and expansion of the Muslim rule in Bangladesh.

The distinguishing feature of the Sultanate of Bangladesh through out the period of the growth of the early Muslim rule was that inspite of attempt made to the contrary the land 33

remained in the hands of the Muslims. The political moves of usurping Hindu Raja Ganesa did not bear any fruit and collapsed when his own son Jadu accepted Islam, sat on the throne as Jalaluddin Mohammad Shah and continued the work of the early Muslim rulers. It was a period of Muslim ascendancy in Bangladesh wherein institutions were gradually built up and works initiated to consolidate and expand the basis of Muslim culture. Eversince the beginning of 13th century, many other regions of the subcontinent were brought under Muslim rule and remained so for the next six or seven centuries. But nowhere the impact of the early rulers were so deeply felt and the legacy left over were of so far reaching consequences as it were in Bangladesh. The independent Muslim Sultans became patrons of Bengali language and literature and the vocabulary of the common people experienced the taste of liberty from the tyranny of superimposed Sanskrit. Many men of learning, particularly, poets like Maladhar Basu, Jashoraj Khan and Vijay Gupta flourished under royal patronage. Besides important works in Arabic and Persian, the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were translated into Bengali for the first time. The tolerance of the Sultans contributed to upsurge of Chaitanya's *Bhakti* Movement in the 16th century. The innumerable Sufi saints played their dominant role to soothe the apprehension of the non-believers and made up for the imprudence if any, of the monarchs. Perhaps, Bangladesh had never witnessed such a social revolution, dynamic but peaceful at the same time.

The independent Sultanate was followed by an interregnum of about three quarters of a century when Bangladesh became a land of scattered battles between the local chieftains called the *Bara Bhuiyans* of an independent nature on the one hand and the imperial armies of the Delhi monarchs on the other. However, by the beginning of the 17th century when the Mughals firmly established themselves, Bangladesh began to

34 enjoy the provincial stability of a well administered empire.

The next century saw the gradual decline of the Mughals and a process of degeneration setting in among the erstwhile dominant ruling forces.

In the battle of Palassey in 1757, the British victory over Nawab Serajuddouhah achieved by means of treachery and deception ushered in the colonial domination of the foreign powers. By the middle of the 19th century, the Muslims, as any other native community, were a defeated political power, lamenting over their lost glory. The attempts to restore their lost authority by the feudal and military conglomerates in 1857 ended in a disaster and caused the establishment of direct rule by the British. The reprisal measures taken by the colonial power hurt the Muslims most. Already the Permanent Settlement of the revenue system of the previous century put the Muslims on a down-hill slope. Now the aftermath of the 1857 pushed them further backwards.

However, due to various historic factors the Hindus were already experiencing a regeneration from the beginning of the 19th century. The Muslims lagged far behind. But by the turn of the century, thanks to Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Syed Ameer Ali and their associates, the Muslims were gradually being awakened to think about their own destiny. The partition of Bengal in 1905 was followed in 1906 by the launching of the first effective all-India Muslim political organisation from Dhaka. Eversince, the Muslims gradually became an ascending political force. But the nationalist movements of the succeeding decades to remove the colonial rule failed to accommodate simultaneously the aspiration of the rising Muslim mass. As a result, when the British left in 1947, the subcontinent was partitioned with the Muslim majority areas forming an independent Pakistan.

The story of the two wings of Pakistan separated from each other by more than a thousand miles of foreign territory 35

is of too recent past to be repeated in details. The ruthless and uncompromising exploitation of East Pakistan by the ruling elites of West Pakistan went far beyond all tolerable limits. No constitutional means to remedy the situation were heeded to. A War of Liberation was thrust upon the people and consequently emerged the People's Republic of Bangladesh in 1971. All through these vicissitudes, the overwhelming Muslim majority of Bangladesh continued to imbibe a cultural pattern which was hardly isolated from the extant world of Islam.

The centuries of Muslim rule in Bangladesh fostered an atmosphere in which a fusion occurred between the newcomers and the locals. A sort of unitary feeling was born among the inhabitants which later was to make the foundation of a distinct nationhood. The long territorial and political sovereignty gave an opportunity to a peaceful conflict between all that was imported and all that was indigenous. The new society was seized with a revolutionary fervour and the outcome was evidenced during the following centuries. The new cultural impulse, while endorsing the liberal co-existence of ideals and faiths, severely dented what was ancient and firmly established a new social and religious structure of the land. There was a release of a new mass of energy hitherto enchained by the tyranny of rituals and sanctions imposed by a distant hierarchy. The resultant expression in literature, art and architecture are too well known to be recounted here.

The impact of Islam in Bangladesh rather than being based on manifestation of physical domination expressed itself as a cultural power. The strength of its universality, transformation and adjustment contributed to its peaceful and general acceptance. Deeply saturated in rich art traditions as it already was, Bangladesh, with the coming of Islam, received and absorbed waves of artistic influences from various regions of Central and West Asia, East Africa, China and, to some extent, from the littoral countries of its own Bay. The ruling dynasties and authorities

and they came mainly from Turkey, various principalities of Central Asia, Afghanistan, Arabia, and even Abyssinia. But as they marched towards and ultimately established themselves in the heart of Bangladesh, they adopted the highly developed culture of Persia. Since then, as in many other parts of the sub-continent, Bangladesh has, all through the era of Muslim supremacy, borrowed heavily from the Persian treasury of art, architecture, language and literature. The Arabia-born Islam which had been known to the Bengali masses and scholars, obviously had a Persian cloak and flavour.

Islam, when it arrived in Bangladesh, had more than half a millennium of maturity and an enormous wealth of varied experience. It was still an ascending force, politically and culturally, in all the continents known till then. The advent of desert-born Islam in the deltaic Bangladesh was of utmost significance to its people. But it has to be admitted that the archaeology of Bangladesh, howsoever studied for earlier times, is yet to make a debut for the period surrounding the appearance or early centuries of Islam in Bangladesh. Except minor and so far little exploited explorations and excavations, no systematic archaeological information exists on the passage from a pre-Islamic to an Islamic culture. The initial Muslim settlers must have experienced a considerable ecological change in early Islamic time with the foundation of new urban centres and reuse of the old ones for military, administrative and religious purposes and steady islamization super-imposed over a not so familiar riverine agricultural setting. The Turks who brought Islam in Bangladesh as a political power had very little or no knowledge of the deltaic region, nothing comparable to the situation in western part of northern India or further west. Bangladesh did not become Muslim in its entirety as in Iran or in the Maghrib. Islam could not replace the Bengali language nor the alphabets, nor islamize the collective memory of the Bengali pre-Muslim past. The naturalisation of Bangladesh into Islam was neither

immediate nor complete. While it took less than a decade to establish Islamic empire in the northern India, it took more than a century for more or less the whole of Bangladesh.

Although the Muslim takeover of Bangladesh, not forgetting the contacts of the earlier centuries with the sailors and saints was principally the work of the soldiers, yet it occurred without physical destruction and without massacres. Therefore, the Muslims had to inherit the sum total of the art and the material culture of the pre-Islamic Bangladesh along with an immense complex of associated collective memories, legends, and myths. However, it remains to be studied, as elaborately as the subject demands, as to the degree to which pre-Islamic Buddhist- and Hindu-inspired artistic tradition have affected the Islamic art in Bangladesh. To what extent the existing or newly established political, cultural and intellectual centres of Bangladesh which became important during the Muslim rule predominated in the creation of new forms or grafting of newly imported ideals and tastes? How innovative were these centres? Did really much appreciable urbanisation take place during the Muslim rule against the overwhelming rural expanse of Bangladesh? These questions remain to be satisfactorily answered.

The term 'Islamic' may not be understood as conveying a rigidity of sanctions dictated by religion, at least when it has been applied to identify an art. Islamic art is the heritage of the Muslims. The manifestations of this art are not governed by any canon of laws to be found in the *Quran*. These are expressions of ideals suited to the socio-religious needs of the Muslims. They unmistakably demonstrate some universal characteristics of trends which have been and, to some extent, are still being nourished and developed wherever the Muslims are living as a community. It is now universally accepted that the mainspring of any civilisation is its underlying spirit and principles.

38 Its arts, as much as the customs and socio-political institutions,

are manifestations of these. The fundamental doctrines of Islam, as they cross race, territory and language barriers, emerge as a unique uniting factor. Yet, at the same time, the degree of diversities admitted by and practised in Islam is without any parallel.

Islam being the only great living religion which still provides for development of its inner understanding allows its members in no insignificant scale to shape their impulses in accordance with social or individual needs rather than spiritual obligations alone. Notwithstanding, Islam has been generally depicted as theologically opposed to the representation of living beings. Arguments for and against the presumed prohibition and its causes and consequences have been discussed in encyclopaedias and general works on the history of art. Obviously, this is not the place to re-examine the attitude of Islam to this issue. But the truth is this that such prohibition of images for veneration or worship led the Muslims to turn their mind to utilitarian and decorative objects such as textiles, ceramics, glass, wood works, metal wares, carpets, calligraphy, miniature paintings and above all to architectural monuments of all purposes and varieties. The sectarian opposition to the representation of human and animal forms never really got an upper hand, although absolute restraint was observed in cases of objects and buildings directly connected with religious functions. A predilection for the abstract dominated Islamic art expressed through the infinite variation of abstracted vegetal and geometric forms woven into unending patterns. The climax was demonstrated through the fullest possible exploitation of the art of calligraphy. The beautiful writing in Arabic script was employed to enhance the appeal of the words of the *Quran*, which was cultivated by the Muslims from the earliest times.

Nevertheless, the features and vocabulary of Islamic art in Bangladesh, at once display multinational and multiregional characteristics. At the same time it is hardly ever divorced 39

from the local geography, human skill and tradition. In its making saints, soldiers and sailors from abroad were as much participants as were the indigenous scribes, painters, masons, potters, craftsmen and, not the least, the hoards of immigrants and recent converts and their descendants, throughout the centuries.

Islamic art heritage has indeed expanded the horizon of civilization. A refined and rythmical expression of a rich and inspiring aesthetic experience epitomises its spirit. The words and ideals of Islam hold a sizeable part of the humanity in a kind of universal brotherhood. The art of Islam have held in no less firmer bondage not only the community which produced it but also the art lovers from all corners of the world. The loving eye gives up the distinction between the religious and secular, as it refuses to discriminate between the local and the alien. The radiating influence not only reached the hearts of so many classical civilisations spread over at least three continents but forced to bring about metamorphoses wherever contemporary life expressed itself through art.

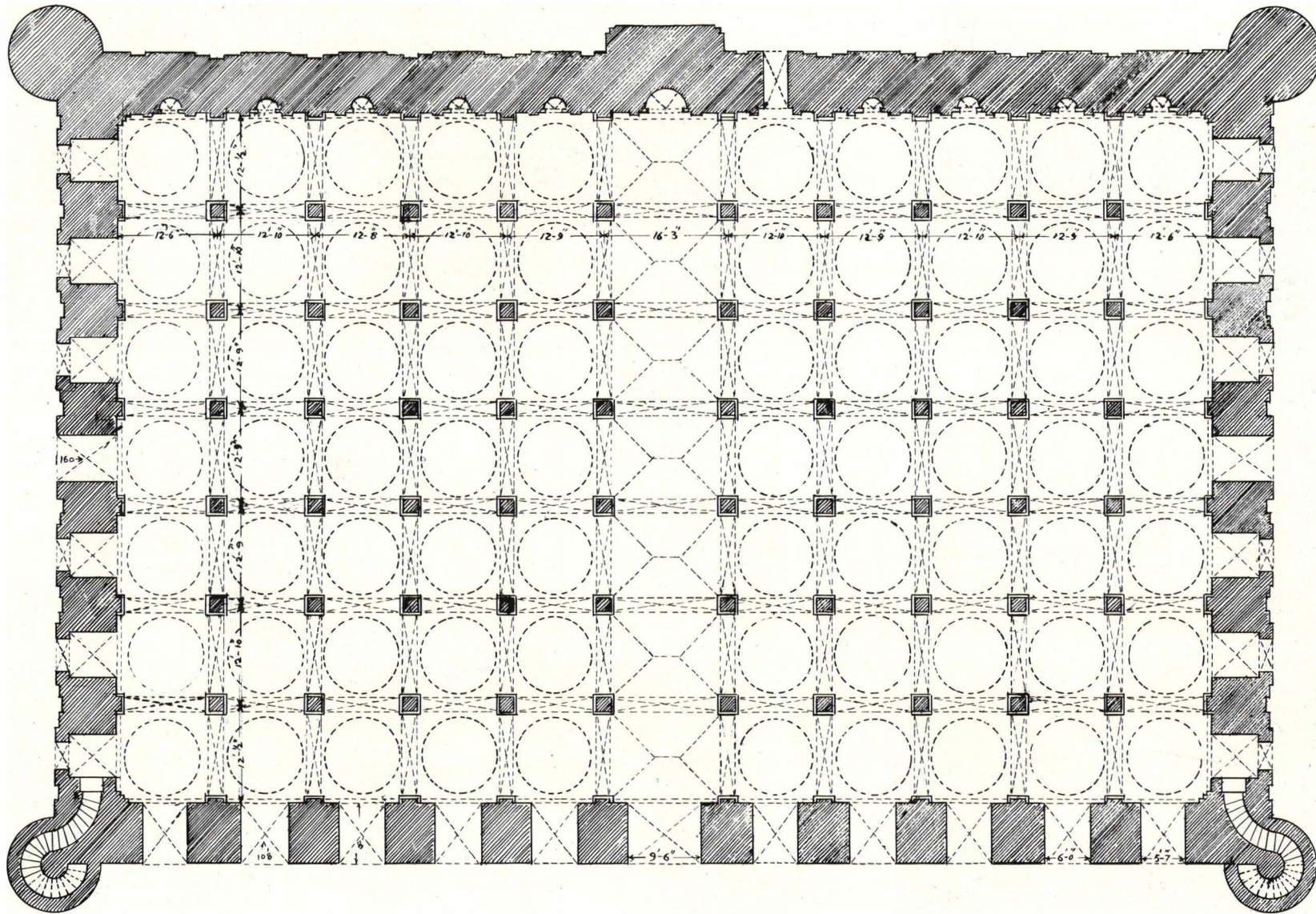
The seven centuries of Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh identify a period when a vast and populous area changed from something else to Islamic forming at once a federating unit of the world of Islam. It is mainly through these objects that it is possible to discover the relative time it might have taken Islam to create an international art tradition that can clearly be defined and identified. Here the artist was continuously exploring the variations or combinations in a repertory of selected motifs. He was not a slave to any doctrine. Yet he consciously followed a consensus of restrictions. With its great integrative power, the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh avoided certain means of expression and emphasised others, resulting into a synthesis of restraint and freedom, of assimilation and rejection, of stability and movement, and, last but not the least, of tradition and creativity.



3. Shait Gumbaz Mosque, Bagerhat, view from the east.



4. Shait Gumbaz Mosque, Bagerhat, view from the south-west.



5. Shait Gumbaz Mosque, Bagerhat, ground plan.



6. Ranaviyappur Mosque, Bagerhat, view from the north-east. *circa* 1450 A. D.



7. Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, view from the south-east.
8. Next Page Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, view from the east, *circa* 1500 A.D.







Architecture

There can be no question that the architecture in Bangladesh, as elsewhere, provided the main focus of Islamic art throughout the Muslim dominaton of the area. The Muslims built innumerable mosques, madrassas, *khanqahs*, mausoleums, gardens, forts, palaces, *hammam-khanas*, *katras*, bridges, carvansarais, gateways and such other religious as well as utilitarian structures. The hands of time coupled with the social and political changes worked for the decline and destruction of many of them. The climate and constant riverine erosion also took their toll. But the human neglect and a proverbial incapacity to attend to the past were perhaps the main reasons for the disappearance of many a piece of architecture which would have added to the splendour of the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh. Also, at the same time, the numerous indiscreet and indiscriminating alterations done to most of the extant Muslim monuments either to renovate or expand the edifices have not only deprived them of their pristine beauty but imposed an unmitigable burden on the art-historian of today to evaluate them in their true perspective. Such distortions have led us to exclude many structures from this compilation which are otherwise important from the point of view of writing a proper art history.

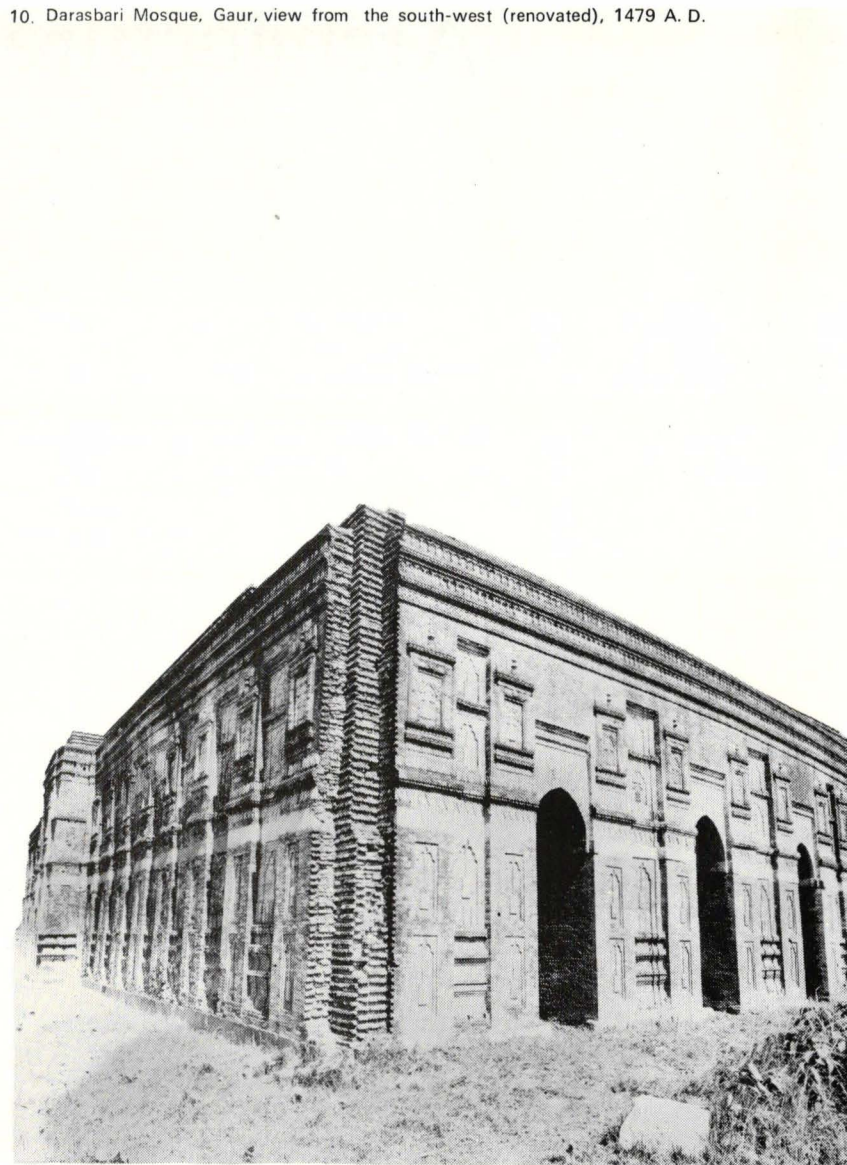
The history of the early Islamic architecture in Bangladesh is not the same as the history of the early centuries of Islamic architecture. The conquering Muslims of the 13th century A. D. already possessed a highly developed architecture of their own. By then, certain elements, such as arch, dome, minaret, *mihrab* etc. have been recognised as fundamental features of Islamic architecture. While the walls of the Hindu temples were pulsating with imagery, representation of natural forms were prohibited in Islamic religious monuments. The mystery of the *garbhagriha* of the temple was by-passed by the clarity of the *liwan* of the mosque. Sculptured texts with decorative lettering appeared on the surface of the Muslim monuments with fully developed forms, when the Hindus had hardly anything else other than

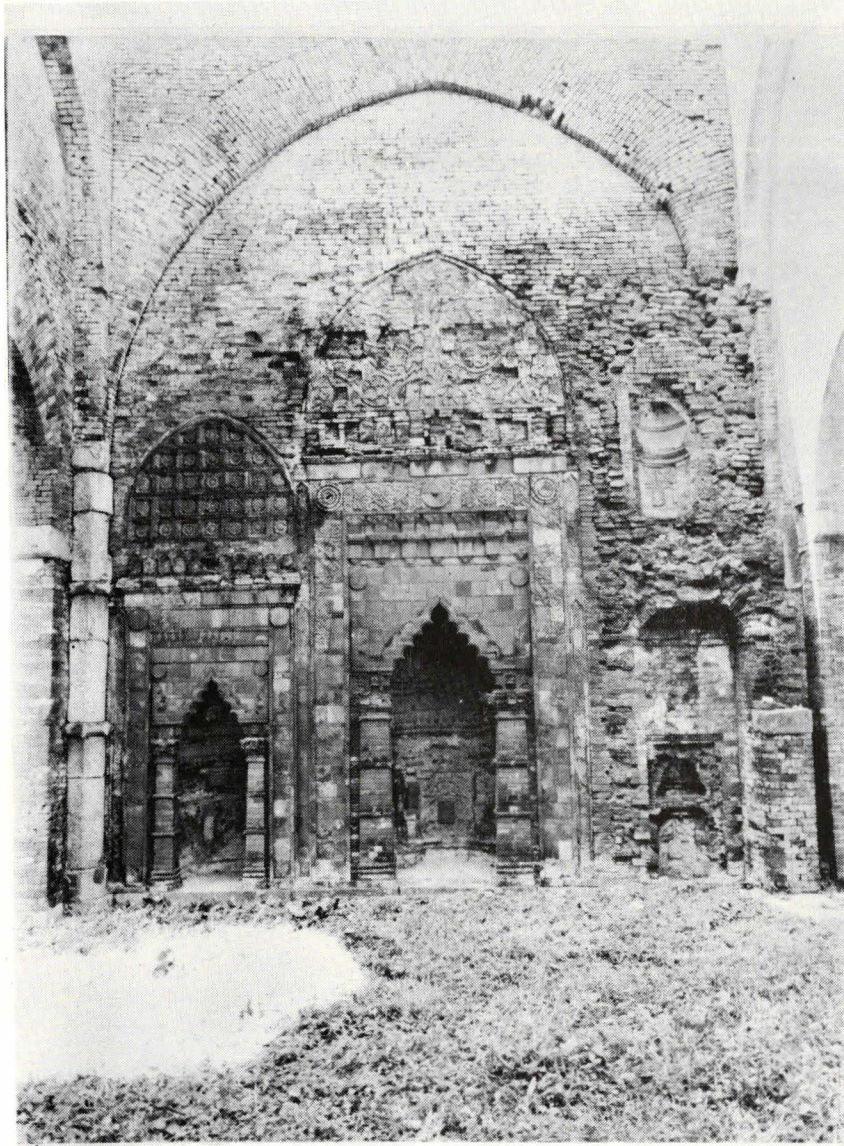
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carved figural compositions. Due to lack of easy availability of stone within its own boundary, Bangladesh continued to be dominated by brick masonry in its building art and the moulded terracotta made out of the fine textured alluvial clay were employed for the purpose of surface decoration. In fact, terracotta decorations reached a new dimension which attained an aesthetic individuality of its own, claiming equal glory with that of the mosaics of Damascus or tiles of Ispahan. But the use of stone was not totally neglected. The Muslim architects of Bangladesh recognised its strength and whenever possible used them into pillars for supporting arches and domes. Stone was also used occasionally as outer facing of the walls, the inner core of which was made of bricks, to overcome the hazard of atmospheric humidity. The scarcity of stone also dictated the adoption of arcuate structure which is an essential characteristic of extant Muslim monuments.

Although the Muslims came to Bangladesh with a corpus of well established building traditions and imposed their method of construction on the local people yet, inevitably, the imported ideas and elements gradually felt the impact of local influence. The fusion contributed to the development of a distinctive indigenous style. Following the advantages of the elasticity of bamboo, so universally employed in the dwellings of the Bengalis, the Muslim masons soon evolved a curvilinear form of roof, which after establishing itself as a permanent and prominent feature of architecture in Bangladesh found its way even into the imperial Mughal monuments of Agra, Fathepur Sikri, Delhi and Lahore. Thus the *dochala* and *chauchala* forms of roofs, made of bamboo and thatch, when translated into brick or stone buildings enriched not only the architectural traditions of the sub-continent but also the plethora of Islamic architecture as a whole. Besides, the two-centred pointed arch springing from the side pillars and the engrailing at the arches, also appear in Bangladesh for the first time in the sub-con-

10. Darasbari Mosque, Gaur, view from the south-west (renovated), 1479 A. D.





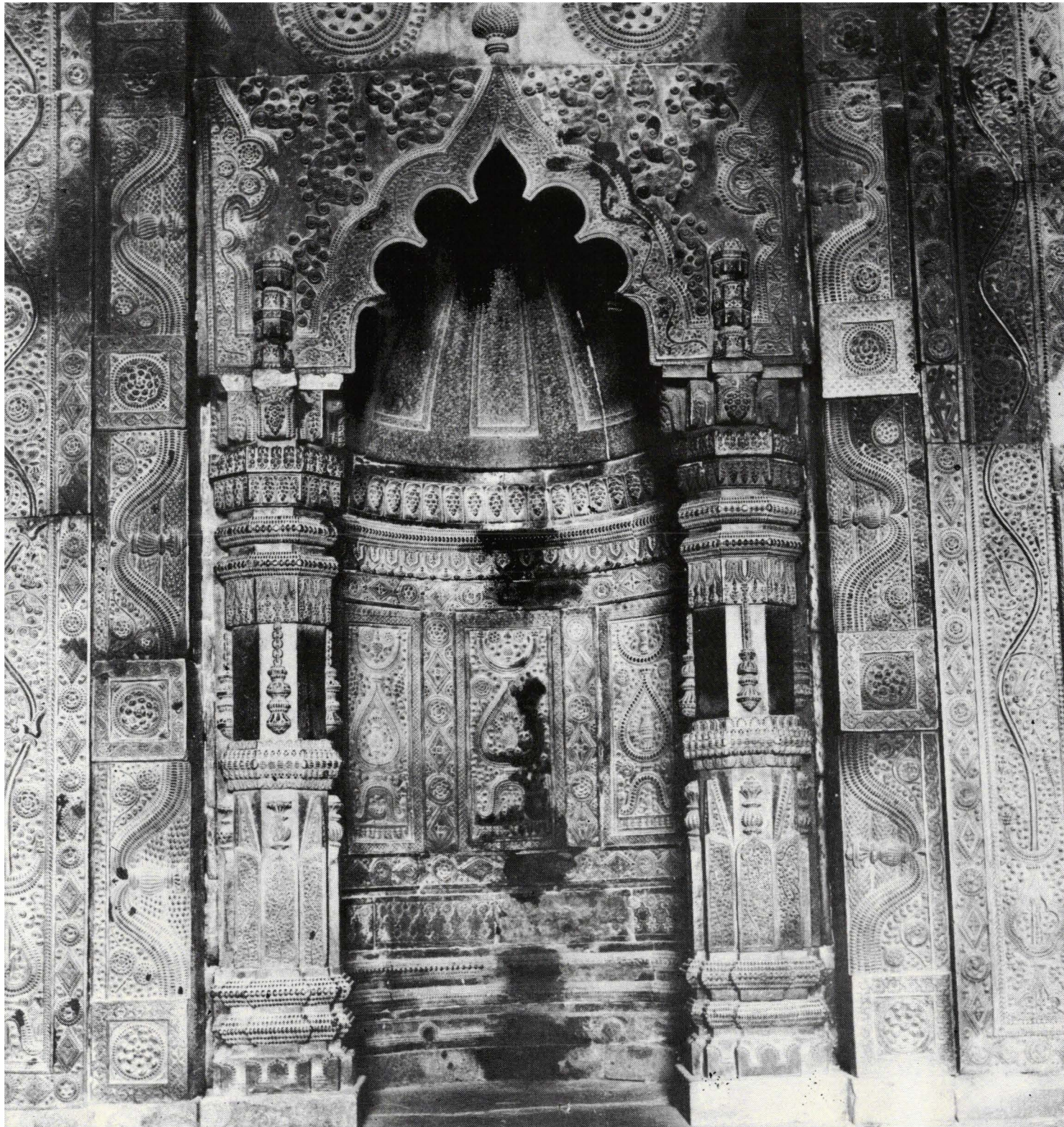
11. Darasbari Mosque, Gaur, central *mihrab* with *mimber*.

continent. The latter feature was employed outside this region nearly three centuries later by emperor Shahjahan in some of the Mughal buildings.

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

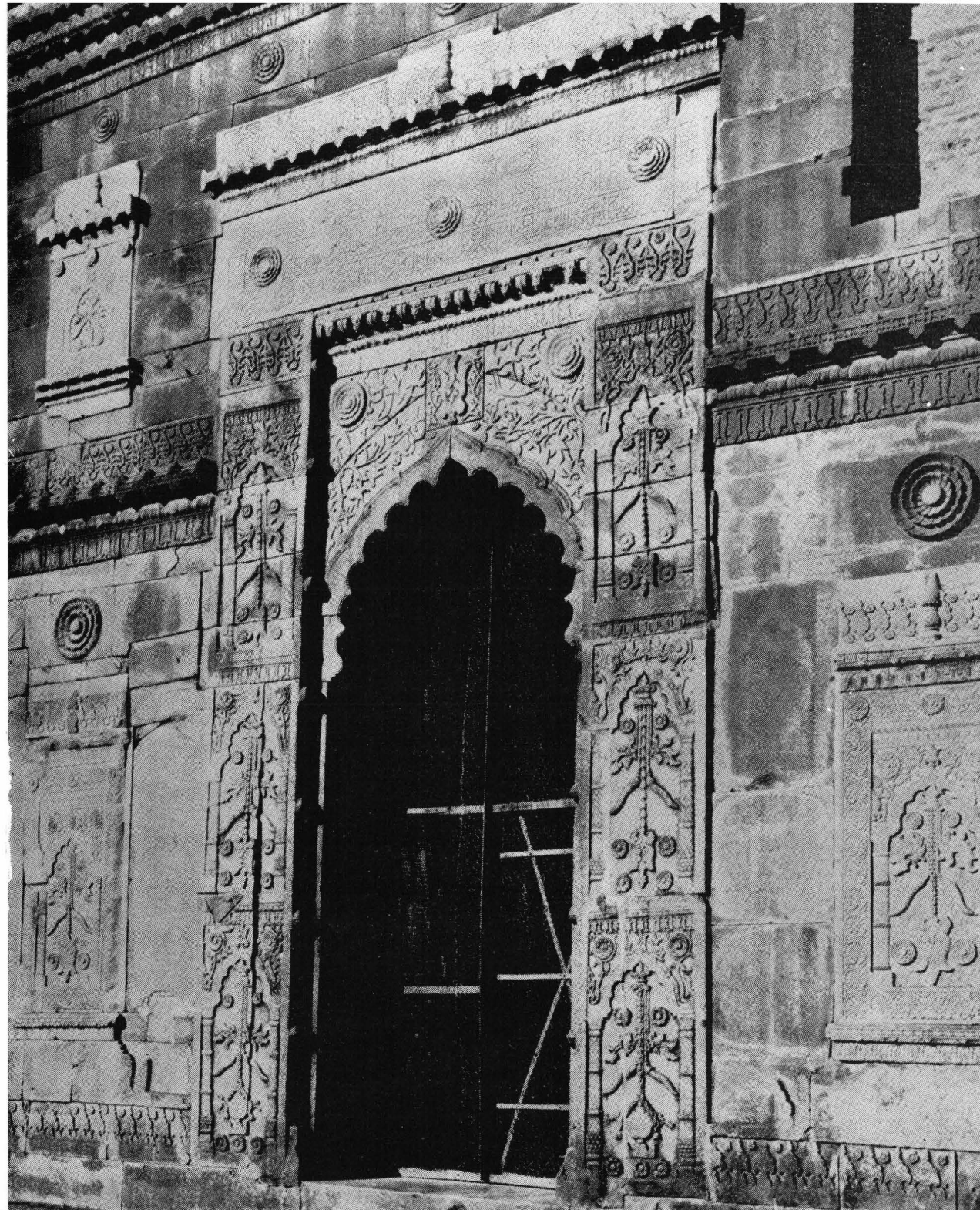
It may not be overlooked that notwithstanding the introduction of the basic Islamic architectural elements of arch and dome from the very beginning of the arrival of Islam in Bangladesh, the use of pre-Muslim tradition of corbelled roof continued as can be seen in the tomb of Bibi Pari, an important Mughal monument within the Lalbagh fort at Dhaka, belonging to as late as the last quarter of the 17th century A. D. The building also has a false copperdome on its top without having any structural significance. This shows that the pre-Muslim tradition of corbelling was acceptable by design even at such a late stage of Islamic architecture.

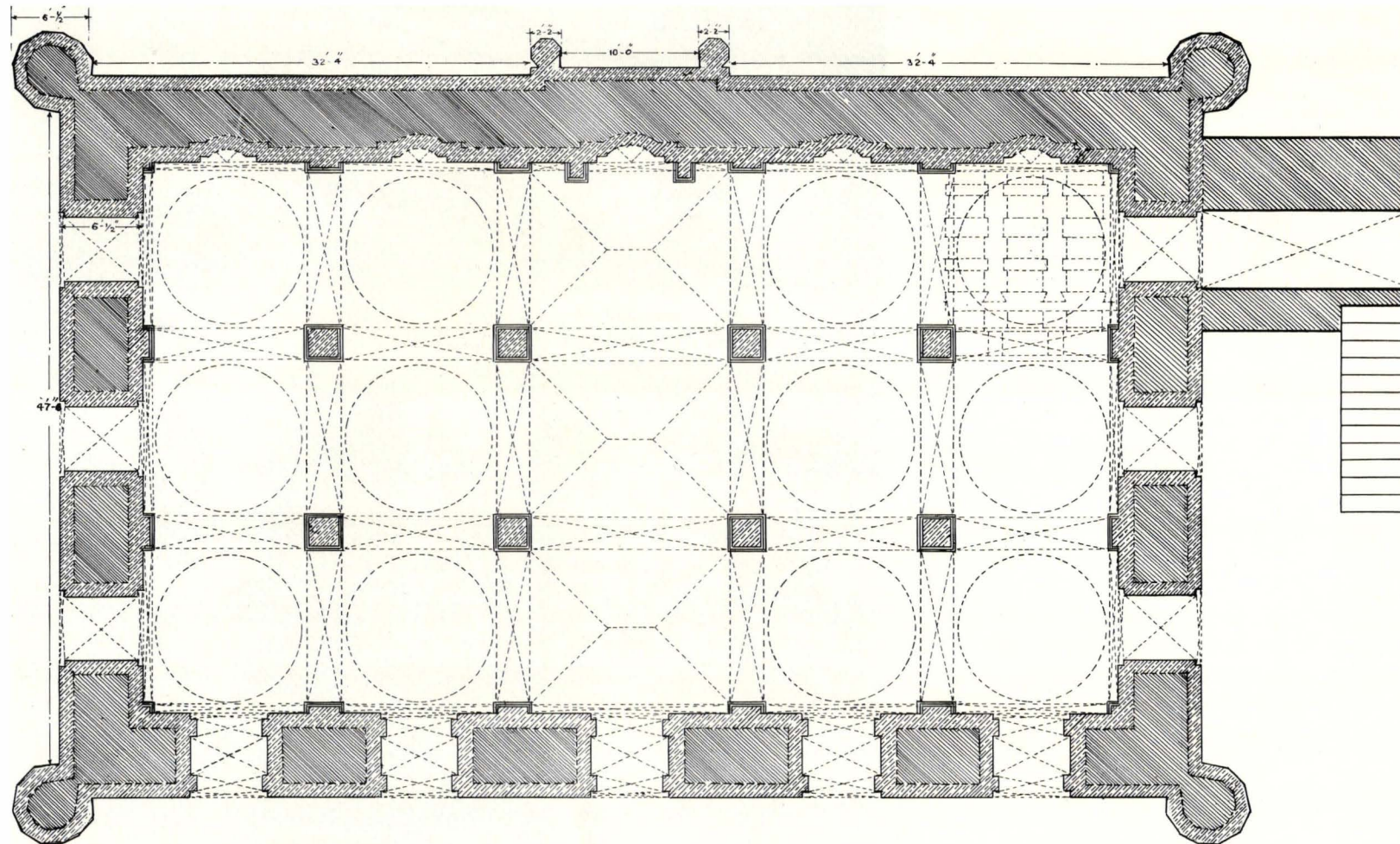
The comparative political isolation of the pre-Mughal Bangladesh from the rest of the Muslim empire of the sub-continent left an imprint of rigidity on the contemporary monuments. But the consolidation of the Mughal rule in Bangladesh ushered in an era of inter-flow of ideas with other parts 51



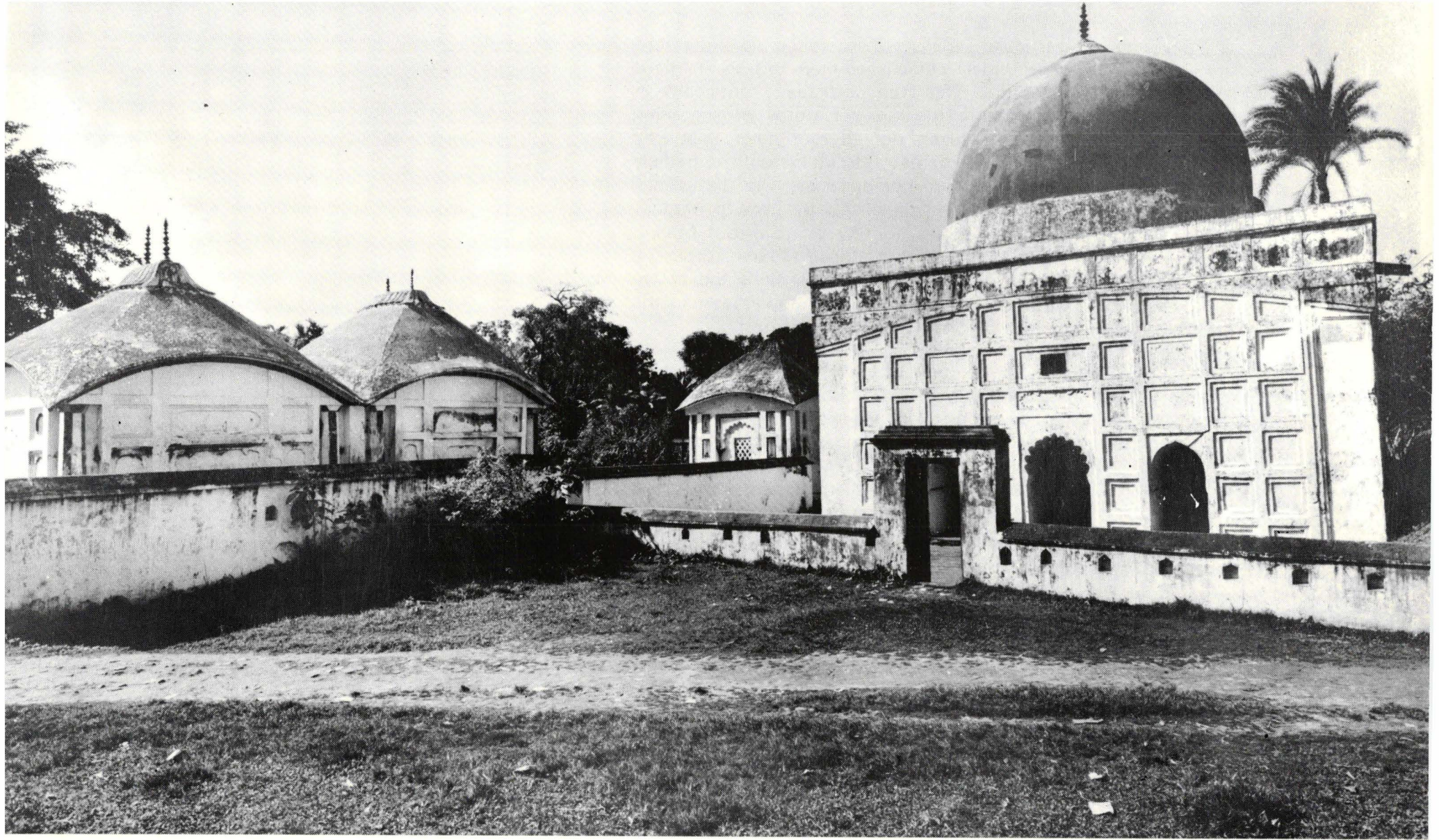
12. Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, central *mihrab*.

13. Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, details of eastern facade.





14. Chhota Sona Mosque, Gaur, ground plan.



15. Mograpara Mosque, Sonargaon, view from the east (renovated),

of India and, in particular, the northern India, resulting into the development of an widely established more or less standard lay-out of the architecture. This was particularly noticeable in the case of mosques, where the earlier features of six, nine, ten, twenty-one or seventy-seven domed roof gave their way largely to innumerable three-domed structures with extremely few exceptions of single or five-domed ones. On the whole, the Mughal occupation of Bangladesh saw the growth of mosques, mausoleums, forts, bridges, gateways, *hammam-khanas*, *idghas* etc. to an extent which do not appear to have surpassed the varieties in concepts, styles, mediums, dimensions and, above all, in aesthetic orientation manifested through fewer monuments of the same nature of the preceding Islamic period.

We now take a closer look at a few of them. It may be convenient to notice them in two broad groups, viz., those built during the pre-Mughal period and those during the Mughal period and afterwards. Mosques are the most numerous of all the extant examples of architecture built by the Muslims. They at once offer a varied spectacle of sizes, styles and ornamentations as much as they truly represent the contemporary social existence.

The largest of the most remarkable mosques of Bangladesh is the 'Shait Gumbaz' mosque (the mosque with 60 domes), situated at Bagerhat in the district of Khulna (Plates 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5). Although the popular name of the mosque suggests it to be roofed over with 60 domes but actually it has as many as 77 domes, 70 of them are hemispherical and 7 of Bengali *chauchala* shape. The rectangular mosque chamber measuring 160 feet by 108 feet is internally divided into seven aisles and eleven bays by rows of arcaded colonnades. The central bay, is wider than the others and covered as before with those *chauchala* type of domes. The *mihirabs* on the west wall have sparse decoration. All the domes rest upon the arches springing from the stone pillars. At the four

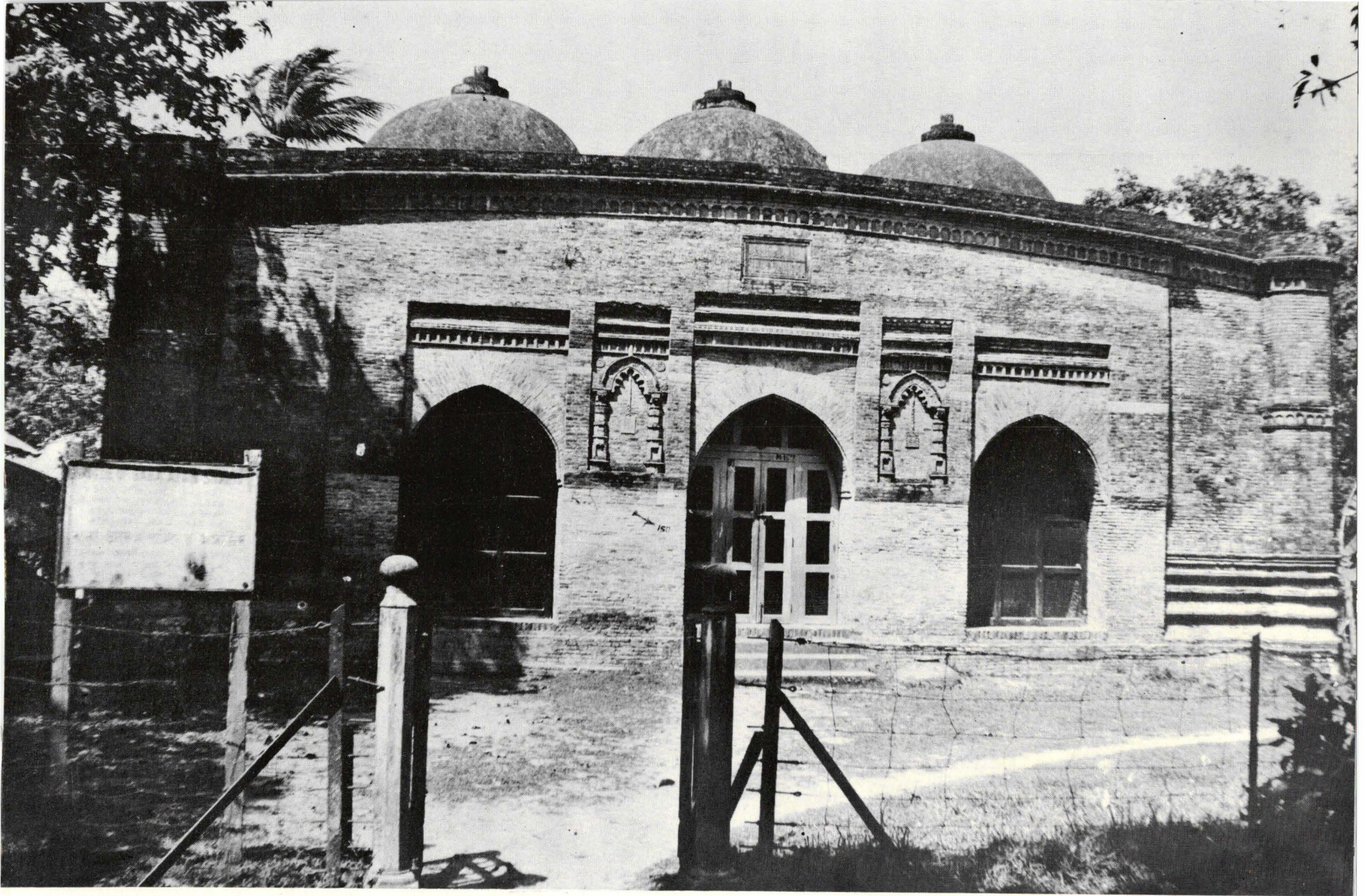
corners, there are four massive circular towers, tapering and topped over with cupolas resembling the hemispherical domes. The eastern two towers contain spiral staircases within leading upto the top of the roof. The frontage has eleven arched doorways while each of the sides has seven. The massiveness of the brick structure along with a passage in the *Qibla* wall in place of a *mihrab* lends weight to the popular belief that the mosque was also used as a *darbar* hall by the leader of the community. There is no inscription attached to this magnificent mosque giving any information as to its date of creation or its builder. But tradition ascribes it to Ulug Khan-i-Jahan, the saint-general of southern Bangladesh who was contemporary to Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah (1433-59 A. D.). It is known from the tomb inscription of Khan-i-Jahan that he passed away on 23rd October 1459.

Khan-i-Jahan is regarded as a builder of more than three hundred mosques in the region of lower Bangladesh, many of which are still visible in various stages of ruins. The single-domed mosque at Ranavijoypur, not far from the 'Shait Gumbaz' mosque, has been renovated recently which is roofed over by a dome, 40 feet in diameter, the largest in Bangladesh (Plate 6).

The part of the historic city of Gaur which is now within Bangladesh offers fewer monuments than the part which is included in India. Gaur was capital of Bangladesh in ancient and mediaeval times. The fortune of the city is well recorded since the conquest by the Muslims. Naudia, from where the last Hindu king Laksmansena was driven out by the forces of Bakhtyar Khalji, was a suburb of Gaur or Lakhnauti. For several centuries the city, along with Hazrat Pandua, was embellished with royal edifices depicting the best works of Muslim artists and craftsmen, and now stands as a mute spectacle occupying a very poorly accessible remote corner of the country. The village of Firuzpur, constituting the southern suburb of Gaur is now included in the Chapai-Nawabganj sub-division 57



16. Rajbibi Mosque, Gaur, view from the east, circa 1490 A. D.



17. Mosque of Baba Adam Shahid, Rampal, view from the east, 1483 A. D.



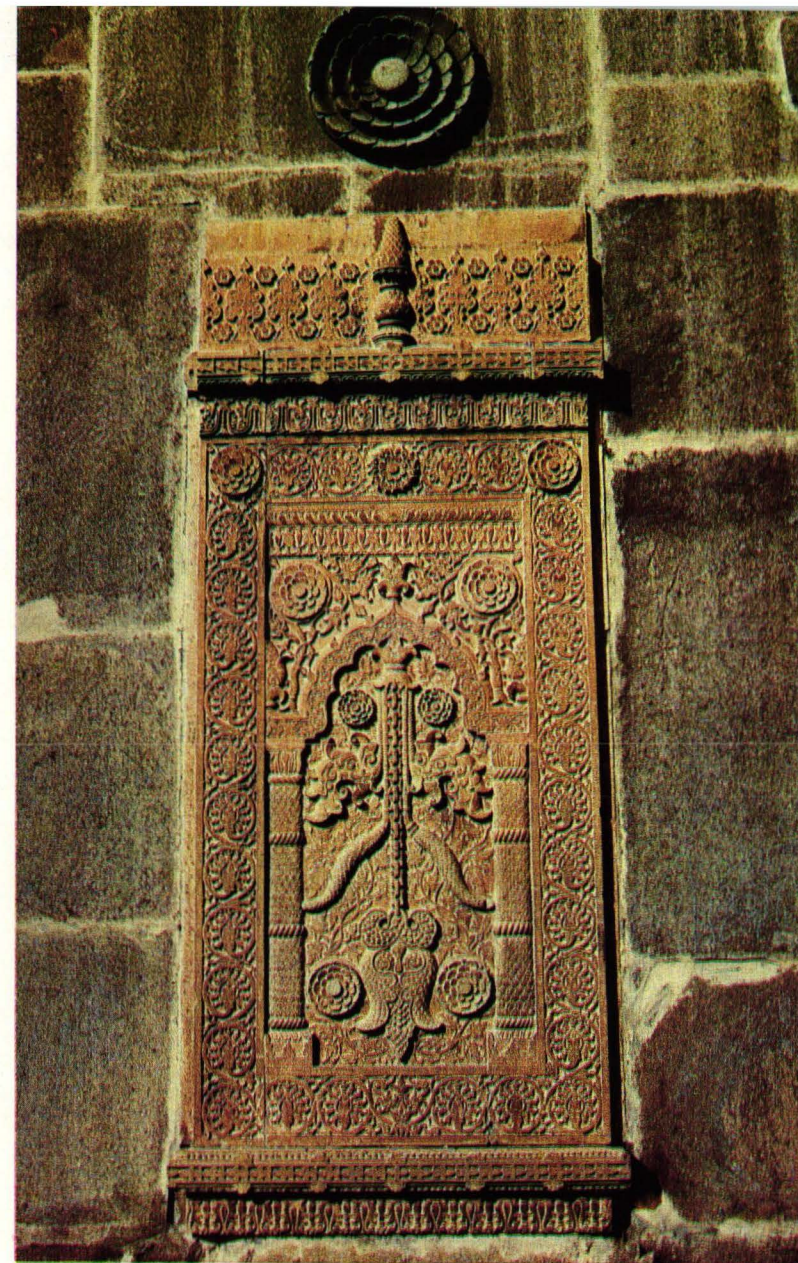


19. Bagha Jami Mosque, Bagha, built by Sultan Nasiruddin Nusrat
18. Left Page Galdi Mosque, Sonargaon, view from the south-east, 1519 A. D.

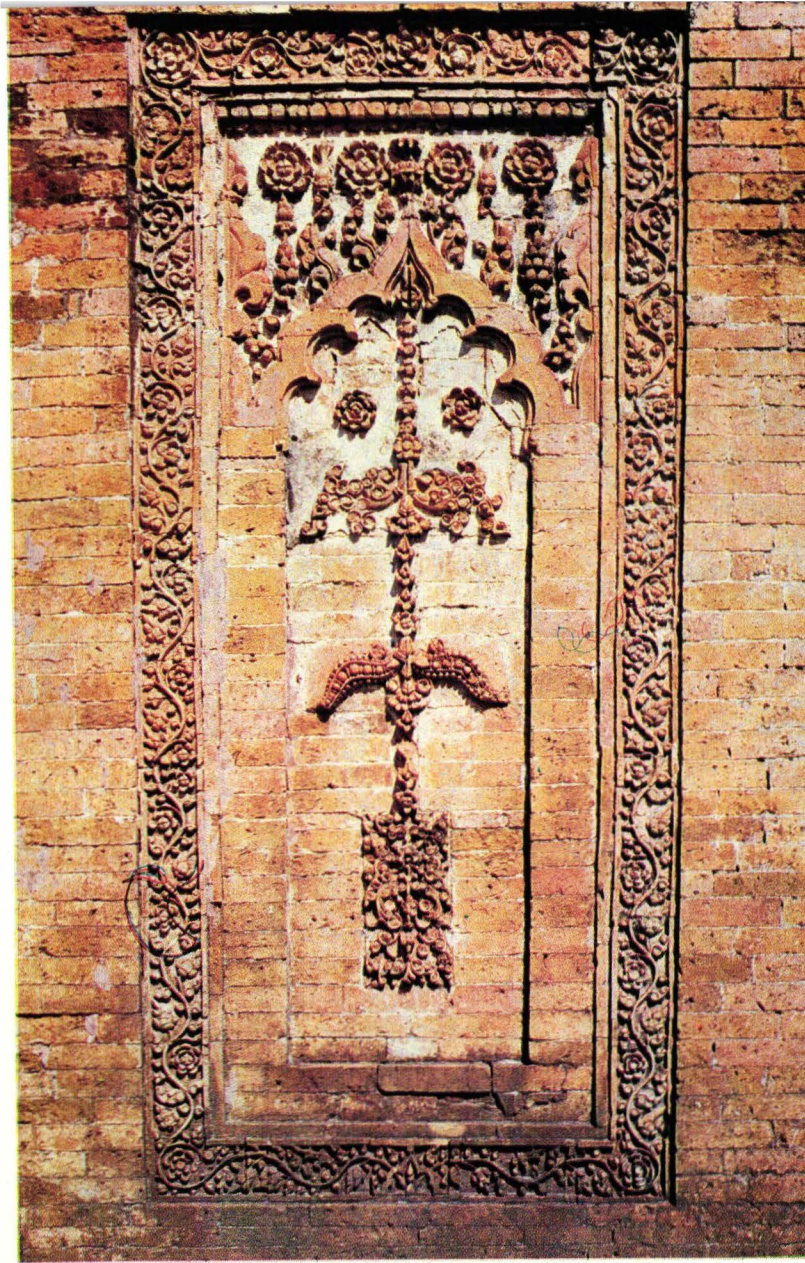
of district Rajshahi. Of the so many remains of Firuzpur, the important ones are the Chhoto Sona Mosque (Small Golden Mosque), the Mosque and Madrassa of Darasbari, and the Mosque of Rajbibi.

Widely acclaimed as "the gem of Gaur", the Chhoto Sona Mosque was created by one Wali Muhammad during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1519 A. D.), the exact year being lost from the extant inscription (Plates 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 & 14). It received its popular name of *Golden Mosque* from the fact of gilding employed in its ornamentation of which some were actually seen by the archaeologists of the 19th century. The appellation of Small Golden Mosque is used in comparison to the 'Great Golden Mosque' (168 feet by 76 feet) built in the Indian part of the same city in 1526 by Sultan Nusrat Shah (1519-33), son of Sultan Hussain Shah. It is an oblong building measuring 82 feet by 52½ feet and is 20 feet high. It has octagonal towers at the four corners. The splendid facade is richly decorated with designs carved on stone. The eastern side has five arched doorways, each arch having multiple cusps. The spandrels are embossed with prominent rosettes. The north and the south sides have three doorways each. On the northern side, there is a flight of steps leading upto a door at an upper level to enter the second storey platform of what has been called the 'Ladies Gallery' or at times *Badshah-ka-Takht* (i. e. special place for the King). The back of the western side shows the striping of stones exposing a portion of the core wall of bricks. Each of the doors is enclosed within a rectangular frame richly decorated with scroll work, the middle one being crowned with the stone tablet bearing the inscriptional record.

62 The interior of the mosque is divided into three longitudinal aisles and five bays by chamfered pillars of black basalt. The central bay is 14'-5'' wide in contrast with the side ones which



20. Decorated stone panel, Chhoto Sona Mosque, Gaur.



21. Decorated terracotta panel, Bagha Mosque.

are 11'-4" broad. The mosque is roofed over with 15 domes. Among them the three domes on the central bay being of Bengali *chauchala* shape and the rest hemispherical. There are five *mihirabs* in the western wall and an extra small one on the second storey. The alcove of the *mihrab* as well as many other panels are carved with 'chain and bell' motif, the composition being bordered with richly ornamented scroll work. With all its embellishments and the scheme of decorations, the Chhota Sona Mosque is regarded as one of the best representations of the stone cutter's art of the Muslim period in Bangladesh.

In the Umarpur area of Gaur, a little away from Firuzpur, is situated the Darasbari Mosque built by Sultan Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah in 1479 A. D. 'Darasbari' means an abode of lesson, i. e. *madrassa*. In fact, extensive ruins of the *madrassa* along with further epigraphic evidence have been discovered recently. Darasbari Jami Mosque was in extremely dilapidated condition till it was partially renovated recently (Plates 10 & 11). The entire roof and all the corner towers are no more visible. The oblong prayer chamber measuring 99-5" by 38-9" have three aisles and seven bays with a verandah 10'-7" wide on the east. The central bay is wider than the side ones being roofed over by four Bengali *chauchala* shaped domes. The other 24 domes were hemispherical. A platform exists in the north-western corner of the mosque over dwarf but massive pillars, perhaps to accommodate a ladies gallery. There are seven *mihirabs* in the western wall formed by multicuspded arches. The interior of the *mihirabs* and the tympanums above show rich floral and other decorative motifs. The entire mosque was adorned with designed terracotta panels. Adjacent to the central *mihrab*, there is a raised canopied *mimbar* for the use of the *Imam* to address the congregation.

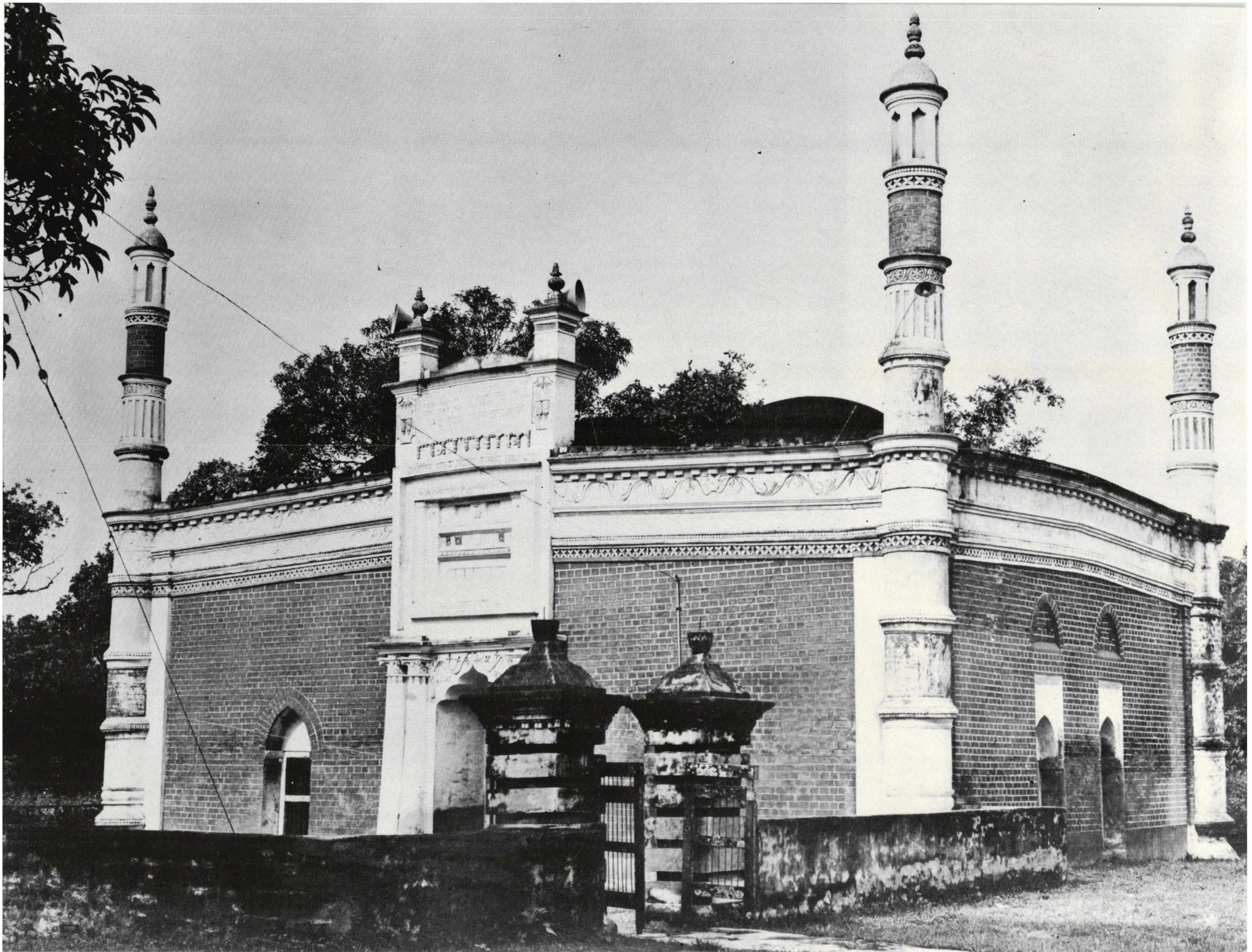
Not far from Darasbari is situated the Rajbibi Mosque (mosque built by the royal lady) of c. 15th century A. D. The mosque measures 62 feet by 42 feet with a central square 63



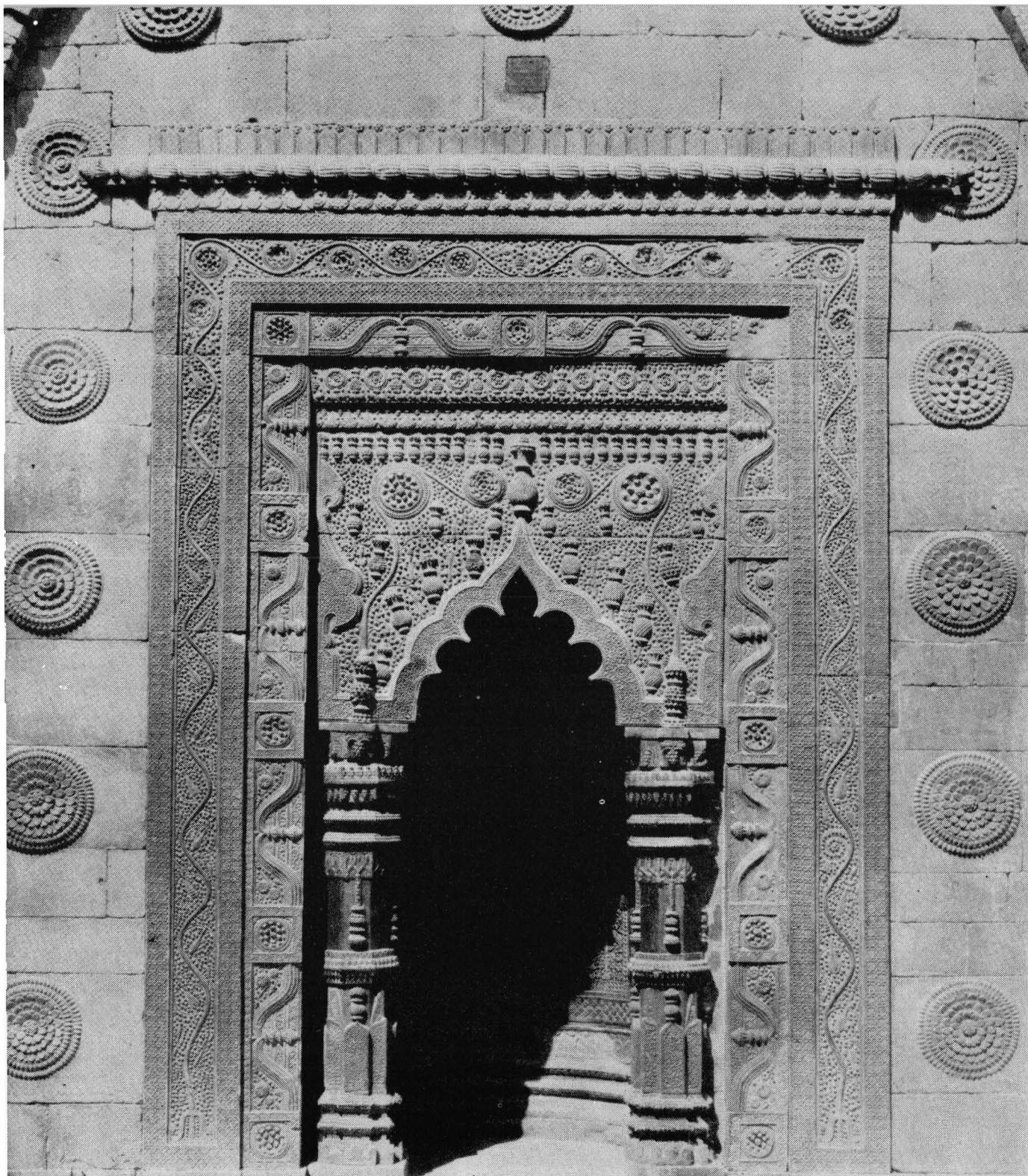
22. Details of dome, Bagha Mosque.



23. Details of central *mihrab*, Bagha Mosque.
24. Next Left Page Jami Mosque, Saikupa, view from the north-east, *circa* 1520 A. D.
25. Next Right Page Kusumba Mosque, Kusumba, view from the east, 1558 A. D.







26. Kusumba Mosque, Kusumba, *central mihrab*.



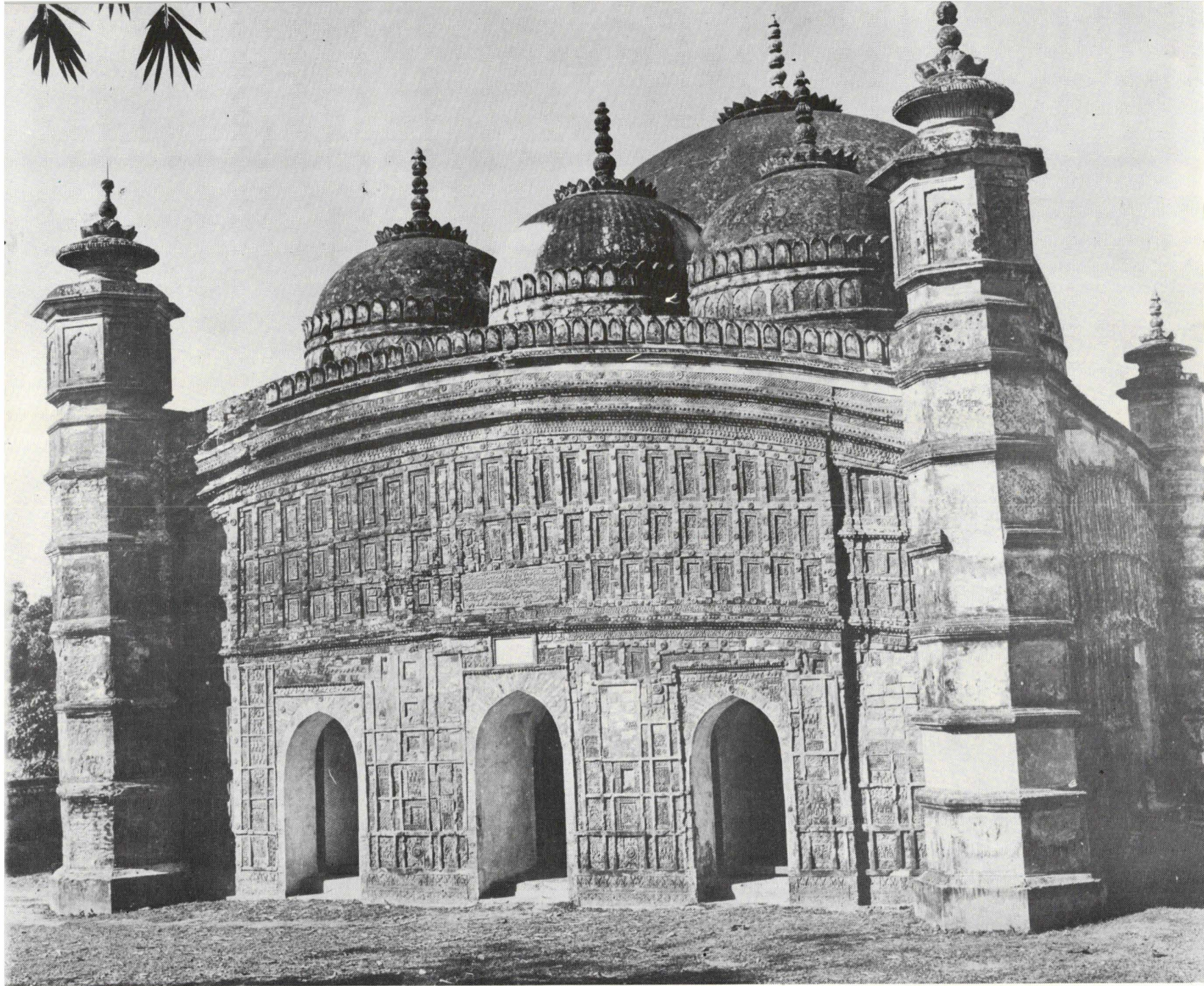
27. Kusumba Mosque, Kusumba, Ladies gallery.

28. Kherua Mosque, Sherpur, view from the east, 1582 A. D.





29. Qutb Shah's Mosque, Ashtagram, view from the east, circa 1590 A. D.



30. Atiya Jami Mosque, Atiya, view from the north-east, 1609 A. D.



31. Saadi's Mosque, Egarasindur, view from the south-east, 1652 A. D.

chamber topped by a huge dome. The rectangular verandah on the east has three arched doorways topped with three small domes. With the recent renovation work done the mosque now presents a quite attractive look (Plate 16).

The mosque at Bagha, 25 miles south-west of Rajshahi town, offers one of the best preserved brick-built structures with profuse terracotta decorations (Plates 19, 21, 22 & 23). The mosque was erected in 1523 A. D. by Sultan Nusrat Shah. It is oblong in plan measuring 75-8'' by 42-2'' with octagonal towers in four corners. The mosque is entered through five arched doorways on the east. The battlements and cornice are gently curved. The interior is divided into two aisles and five bays by stone pillars and roofed over by ten hemispherical domes. The western wall shows three *mihirabs* in the three southern bays, a panelled design in the fourth and a smaller *mihrab* in the second storey level of the fifth. Perhaps, originally there was a ladies gallery in the north-west corner of the mosque. The decorations of the *mihirabs*, particularly the central one, show the excellence of the terracotta panelling of the period. The floreate frames round the *mihrab* niche along with the cusped arch is delicately set to accommodate the hanging motif which develops here as a superb pendent decorated with various gems.

Another multidomed pre-Mughal mosque is situated at Rampal in the Vikrampur area of Dhaka district (Plate 17). The mosque was built by Malik Kafur in 1483 A. D. during the reign of Sultan Jalaluddin Fateh Shah. It is an oblong structure measuring 43 feet by 36 feet and roofed over by six hemispherical domes. There are octagonal towers at the four corners and the battlements and cornice are curved. In spite of the mosque being a much renovated structure, some of the original mouldings and decorations can still be seen in the three *mihirabs* in the western wall with the hanging motifs in the alcoves and the

74 rosettes in the spandrels.

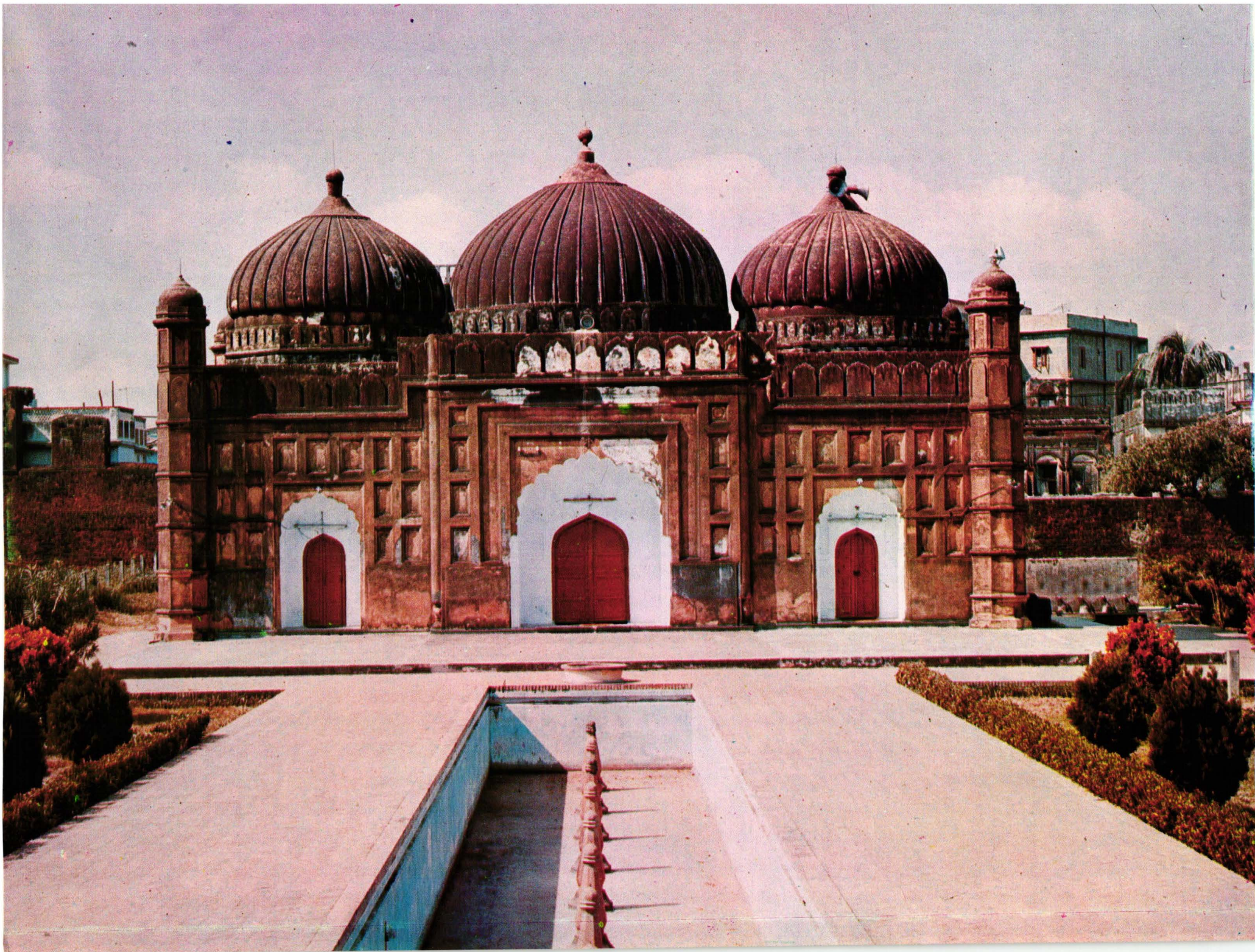
Sonargaon, literally meaning "Golden City", situated 14 miles south-west of Dhaka city, was capital of Bangladesh for several centuries prior to the firm establishment of the Mughal rule in this area. It was also called Suvarnagram. The first definite reference to this capital city is recorded in Ziauddin Barani's the *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* when it was agreed between Rai Danuj of Sonargaon and Sultan Ghyasuddin Balban of Delhi to cooperate in the pursuit of the latter to capture the rebel Tughril. Balban visited Bangladesh in 1281 A. D. The two hundred years of unbroken independent Sultanate of Bangladesh was first established by Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah in 1338 A. D. making Sonargaon his capital. Ibn Batuta visited Sonargaon in 1345 A. D. The Chinese ambassadors to Bangladesh in the 15th century recorded about Sonargaon to be "a walled place with tanks, streets, bazars and which carries on business in all kinds of goods". The English traveller Ralph Fitch visiting the place in 1586 A. D. mentioned of its finest cotton cloths. When Mughal Governor Islam Khan Chisti transferred the capital from Rajmahal to Jahangirnagar (Dhaka) in 1608 A. D., the importance of Sonargaon diminished fast and the passage of time reduced it to an insignificant village and, strangely, left it with incredibly few monuments worth its past glory.

Of the pre-Mughal mosques in Sonargaon, the small single-domed square one in the village of Galdi is noteworthy (Plate 18). It was built by Mulla Hizabar Akbar in 1519 A. D. during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah. The usual features of the Hussain Shahi architecture with curved cornice, corner towers, decorated *mihirabs* and panels with various ornamental motifs make the mosque an attractive one.

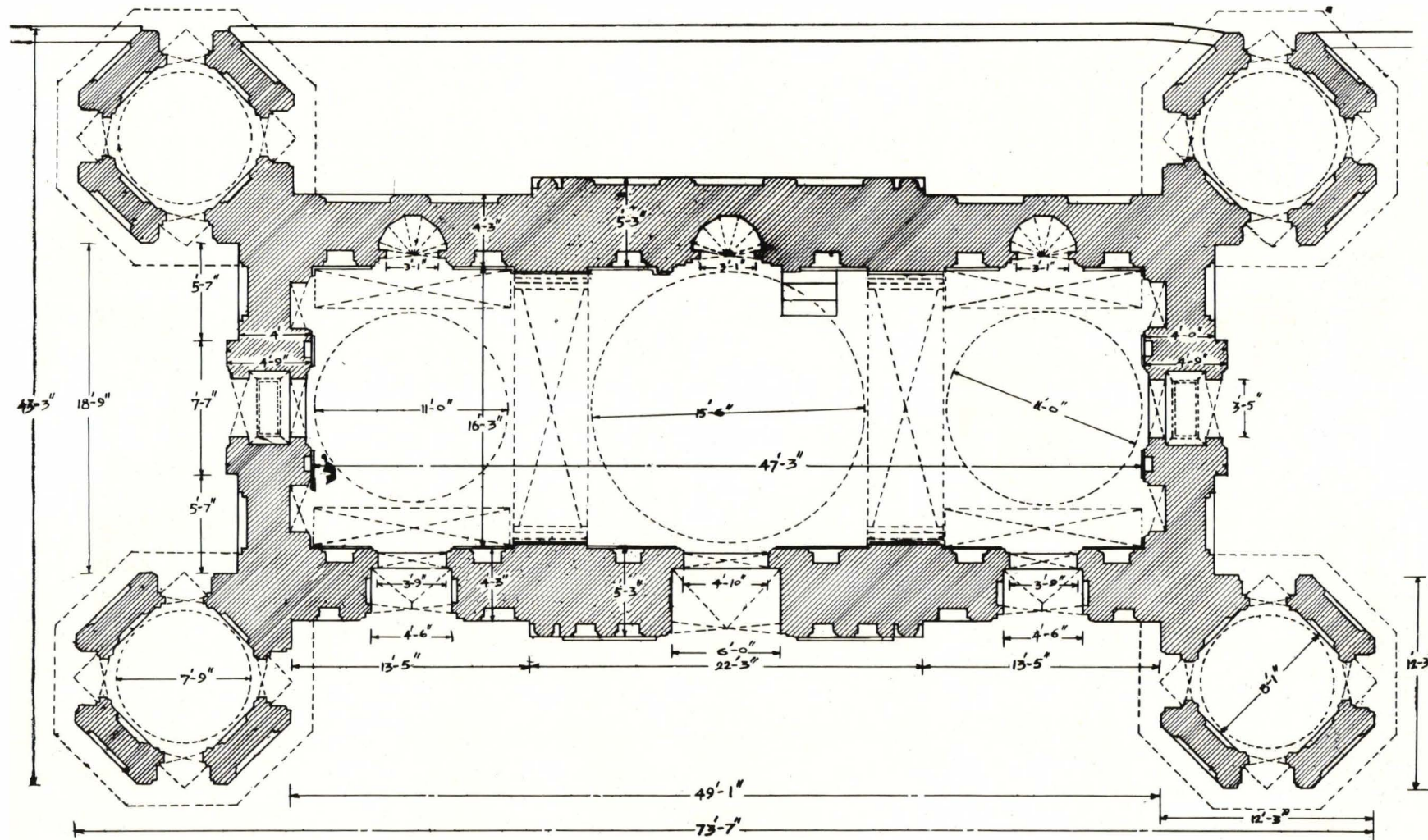
Another pre-Mughal single-domed mosque in Sonargaon is to be found in the village of Mograpara (Plate 15). The square chamber can be entered by three arched doorways in the east. The outer wall is plastered and is relieved with

32. Next Left Page Shah Muhammad's Mosque along with the *dochala* gateway, Egarasindur, circa 1680 A. D.
33. Next Right Page Lalbagh Mosque, Lalbagh Fort, view from the east, circa 1680 A. D.





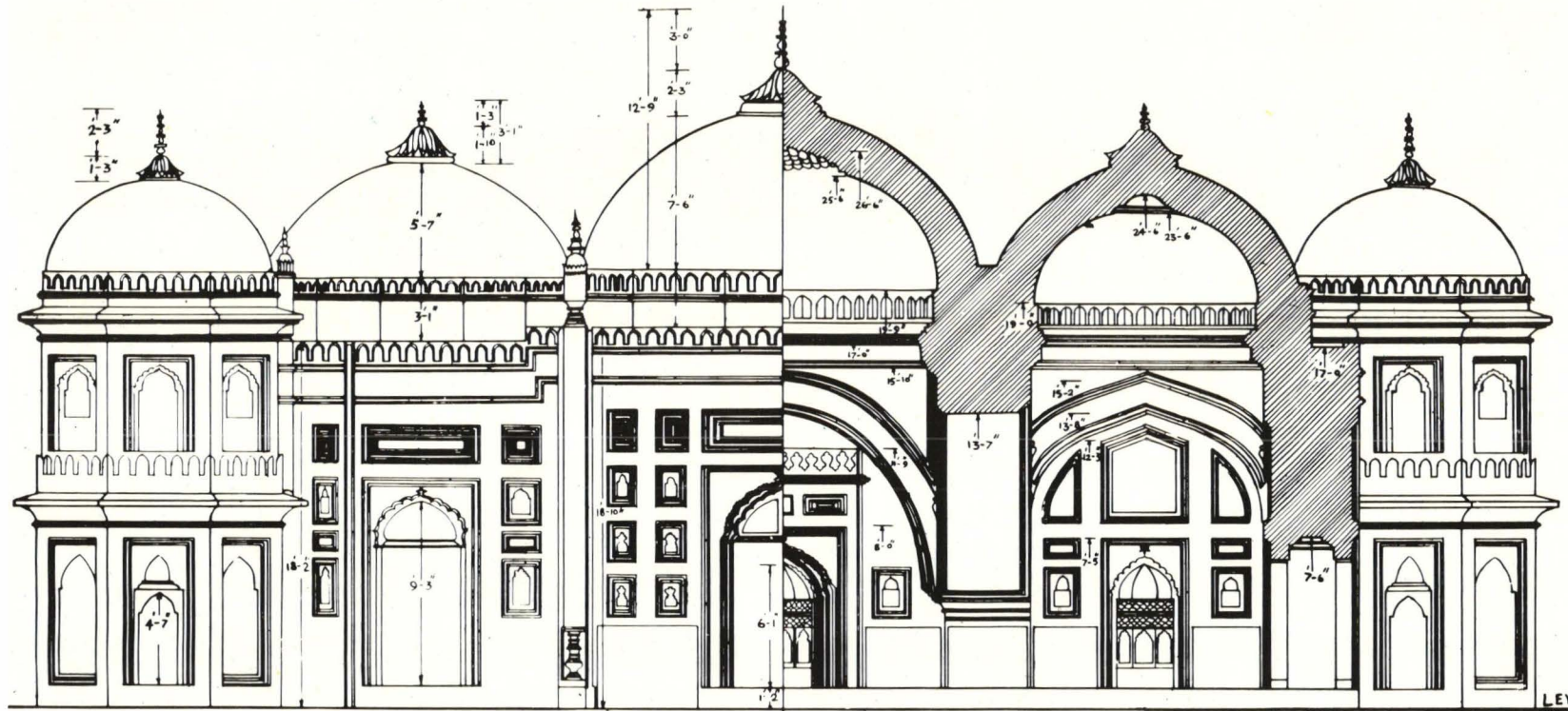




35. Sat Gumbaz Mosque, ground plan.

34. Left Page Sat Gumbaz Mosque, Mohammadpur, Dhaka, view from the south-east, circa 1680 A. D.

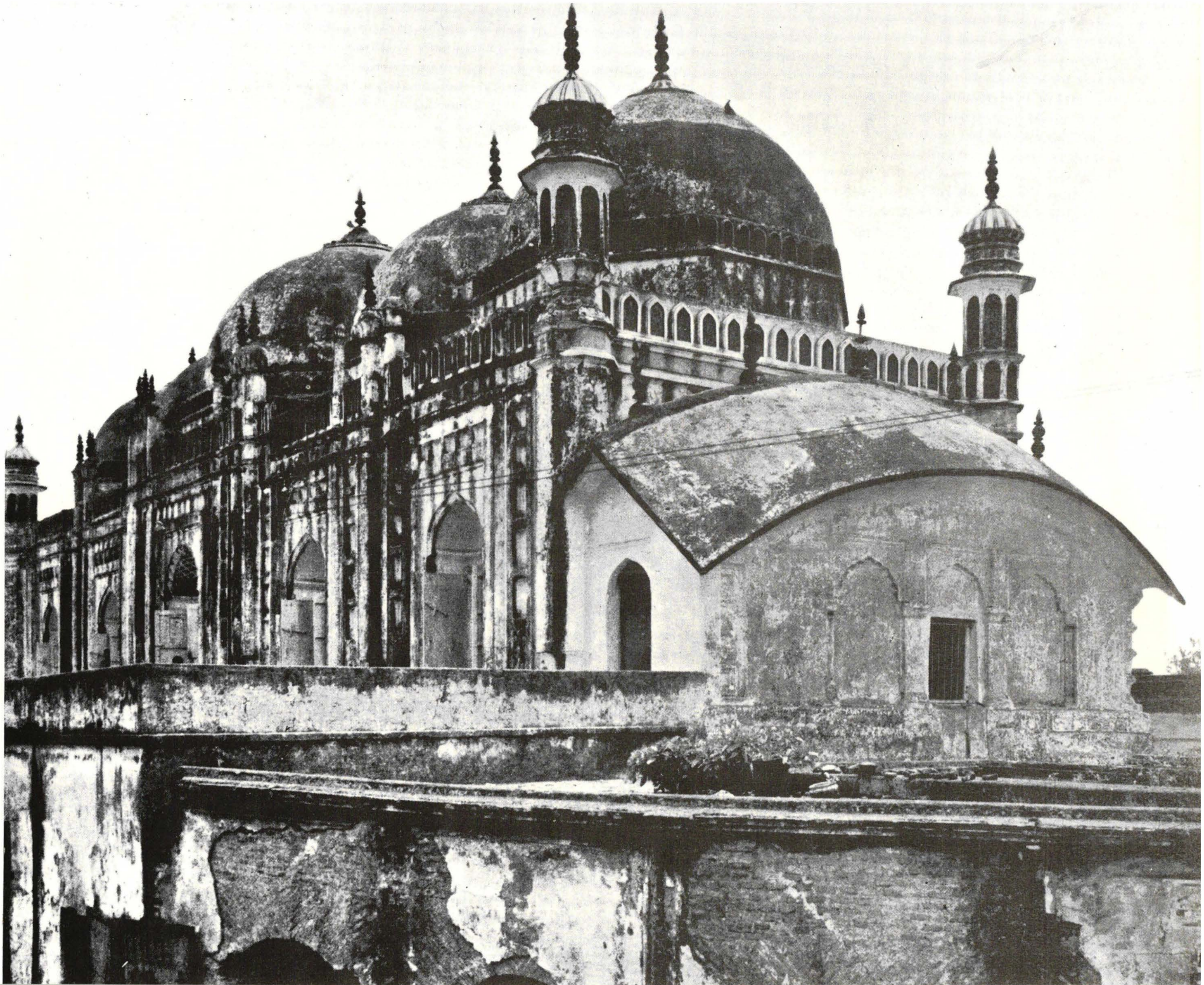
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HALF ELEVATION ON AB. HALF SECTION ON CD.

36. Sat Gumbaz Mosque, elevation.

37. Kartalab Khan's Mosque, Begumbazar, Dhaka, view from the north east, 1704 A. D.



recessed panels. The panel at the top of the central entrance bears an inscription dated 1700 A. D. There is no doubt that the mosque is a reconstructed one as there are two more stone slabs connected with the mosque. One stone slab is fixed to a compound wall in front of the mosque stating the construction of it in 1484 A. D. during the reign of Sultan Jalaluddin Fateh Shah. Another loose stone slab is kept inside the mosque stating its construction during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah in 1513 A. D. Either these inscriptions are relics belonging to some other mosques and kept here as souvenirs or they truly belonged to this mosque which has been successively rebuilt after the original structure collapsed for some reason. To the south of this mosque can be seen the tombs of Hazrat Ibrahim Danishmand, a Sufi saint of 15th century, and his descendants, having three square canopied structure each showing Bengali *chauchala* hut-shaped roof of a local style.

The Jami Mosque at Sailkupa in the district of Jessore presents a rather unusual sight (Plate 24). Built in *circa* 1520 A. D., the main chamber is 32 feet by 21 feet and has three entrances on the east and two on the north and south. Although much renovated, the mosque with its tall slender towers at four corners and six low-height domes, is still considered as a distinctive example of pre-Mughal architecture.

A few more mosques of this period can be named for their architectural features, e. g., the 15-domed mosque at Shahjadpur in Pabna district, the single-domed mosque at Navagram in Pabna district built in 1526, the mosque at Shankarpasha in Sylhet, mosque of Majlis Awlia at Pathrail Dighirpar in Faridpur district, brick-and-stone mosque at Sura in Dinajpur district, Jami mosque at Kusumba in Rajshahi district, Kherua mosque at Sherpur in Bogra district and Qutb Shah's mosque at Ashtagram in Mymensingh district.

82 Of the mosques built during the period between the fall

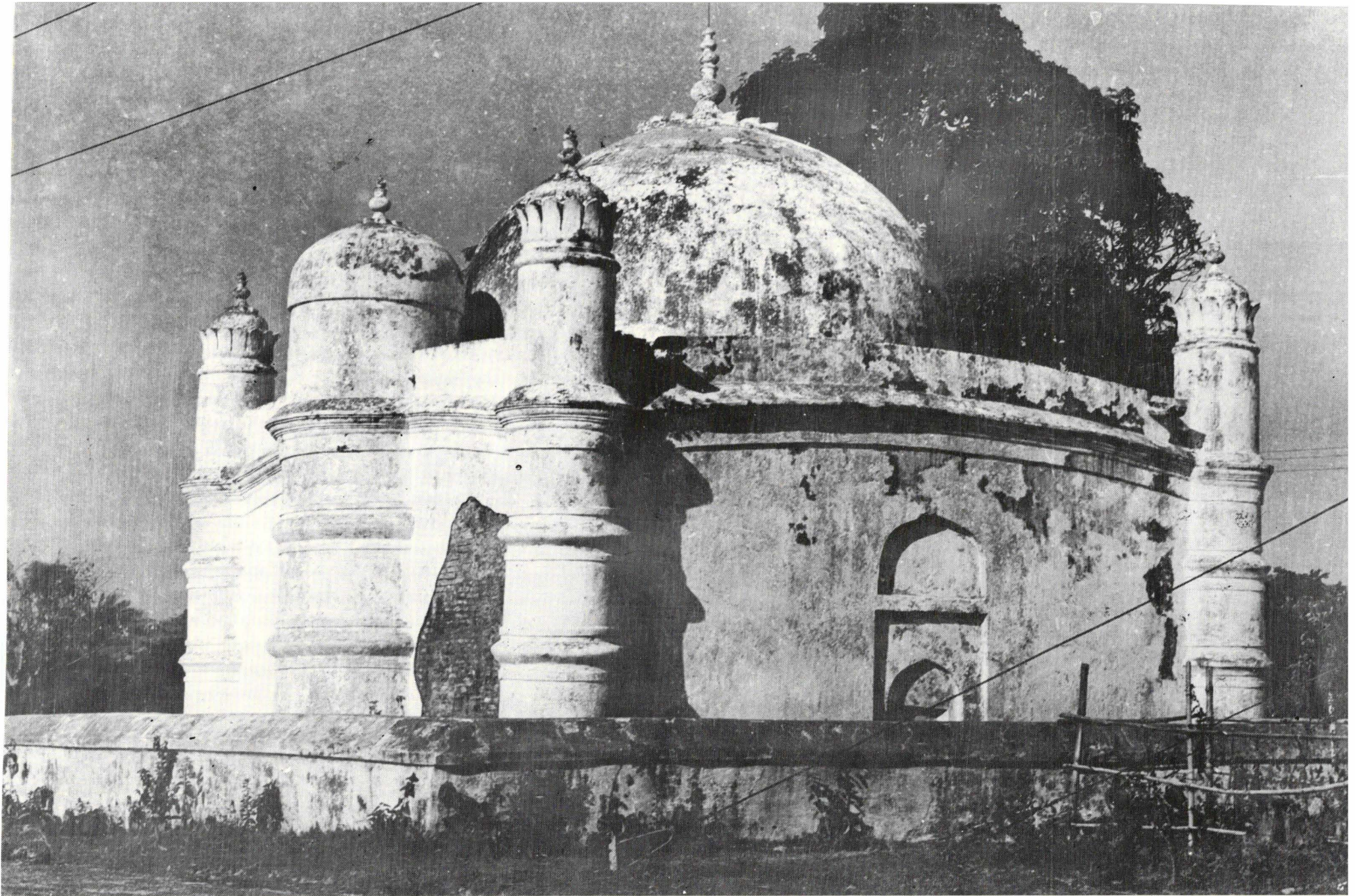
of the independent Sultanate and the firm establishment of the Mughal rule in Bangladesh, the most outstanding is the one at Kusumba in Rajshahi district. The oblong mosque with 58 feet by 42 feet chamber has two aisles and three bays (Plates 25, 26 & 27). There are octagonal towers at the corners. The mosque is entered through three multi-cusped arched doorways each separated by carved designed double panels. The roof is topped by six hemispherical domes. In the northeast is the platform for the ladies gallery. The most noticeable architectural element in this mosque is its decorated *mihirabs*. The creeper designs with conventionalised grape trees and the rosettes are the last examples of such delicate stone engraving in Bangladesh. The mosque was built by one Solaiman in 1558 during the reign of Sultan Ghyasuddin Bahadur Shah.

The brick-built Kherua mosque at Sherpur in Bogra district was built by Mirza Murad Khan in 1582 during the reign of Emperor Akbar (Plate 28). The oblong chamber is 57 feet by 25 feet, topped by three hemispherical domes and has towers at its four corners. A moulded band runs round the middle of the wall outside. The Qutb Shah's mosque (Plate 29) at Ashtagram in the Mymensingh district was built in *circa* 1590 A. D. The oblong chamber is 36 feet by 17 feet with the two aisles and three bay. It is topped by a big hemispherical dome in the centre flanked by four smaller ones at each corner. The curvature of the battlements and cornice are rather over-emphasied.

When by the beginning of the 17th century the Mughals finally crushed the refractory chieftains of eastern Bangladesh and consolidated their rule, a new era of building activities started. But it took quite some time, and not before nearly half a century elapsed, to evolve a fully recognisable Mughal architecture in Bangladesh. This transitional period from the pre-Mughal to the Mughal was not without monuments showing remarkable features.



38. Khan Muhammad Mirdha's Mosque, Lalbagh, Dhaka, view from the east, 1706 A. D.



39. Hamid Khan's Mosque, Kumira, Chittagong, view from the southwest, *circa* 18th century.

The Jami Mosque at Atiya in the district of Tangail is an illustrious example of the transitional period (Plate 30). The mosque was built by Sayid Khan Panni in 1609 A. D. It is oblong in plan measuring 69 feet by 40 feet. The main chamber is square and topped by a single dome with a tall finial and the attached verandah on the east has three smaller domes. The mosque has three arched doorways on the east and one each on the north and south sides. There are four huge octagonal towers at the corners having several horizontal mouldings. The entire eastern facade is decorated with numerous terracotta panellings showing creepers and scrolls. The northern facade is also covered by terracotta designed plaques. The two other sides are plastered, possibly applied at a subsequent date. The cornice is heavily curved. The domes rest on battle-mented drums and have basal ornaments.

There are two important mosques at Egarasindur in the district of Mymensingh. The Saadi's Mosque built in 1652 A. D. (Plate 31) is a square structure topped by a single high dome. It measures 27 feet on each side and has three arched doorways. The corner towers are slender and have prominent mouldings. The curved cornice is maintained below the horizontal parapets. Terracotta decorations with creeper device adorning the main entrance and the ornamental *mihirabs* in the western wall are noteworthy features.

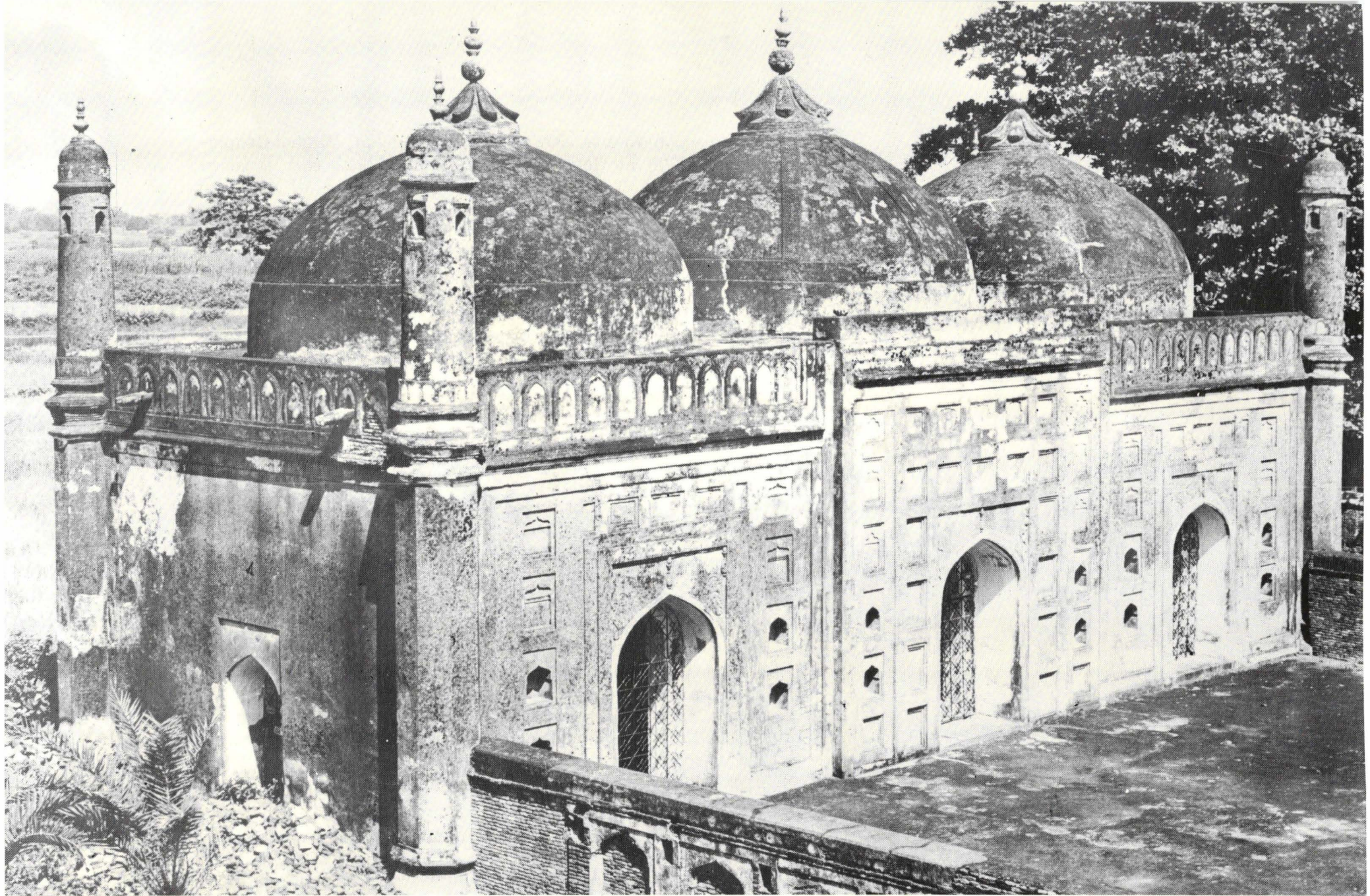
The Shah Muhammad's Mosque (Plate 32) is the other remarkable monument at Egarasindur. It was built in *circa* 1680 A. D. and is also a square single-domed structure measuring 32 feet on each side with three entrances on the east. The corner towers are crowned by plastered kiosks. The most distinguishing feature of the mosque is its gateway, a detached oblong building 25 feet by 13½ feet and topped by a Bengali *dochala*-shaped roof. The facade is decorated with panelled niches showing terracotta work as also are the *mihirabs* inside.

When Dhaka was chosen as the capital of Mughal Bangladesh in 1608 by Governor Islam Khan Chisti and renamed Jahangirnagar, it at once entered the front rank of cities of the world. Numerous magnificent and impressive structures of various types were constructed. Stylistically, the central dome became more dominant and the central entrance inset in a half-dome of the projected bay. The two-centred arch gave way to the four-centred pointed arch with frequent use of multiple cusping. Plastered panels replaced the terracotta decorations of earlier period. The curved cornice was discarded and straight horizontal parapet adopted.

Of the several hundred mosques built in and around Dhaka during the Mughal period a few may be named for their elegance and architectural features. These are the Lalbagh Fort Mosque, Sat Gumbaz Mosque, Hazi Khwaja Shahbaz's Mosque, Musa Khan's Mosque, Kartalab Khan's Mosque, Khan Muhammad Mirdha's Mosque, Bibi Mariam's Mosque, Allakuri's Mosque etc. We may illustrate and briefly notice a few of them.

The Lalbagh Fort Mosque (Plate 33) is situated inside the fort, a few yards west of the tomb of Bibi Pari. It is an oblong building 65 feet by 32½ feet with octagonal towers at corners rising above the straight parapet wall with their plastered kiosks. The roof is topped by three fluted domes, the central one being bigger than the side ones. The eastern facade is decorated with rectangular panels each containing multicuspded arches. In the absence of any epigraphic record, it is generally believed that the Mosque was built by Prince Muhammad Azam, the then Viceroy, in 1679 A.D. when the fort itself was constructed.

The Sat Gumbaz Mosque (Plates 34, 35 & 36) in the Mohammadpur area of the city is a unique example of Mughal architecture. The oblong chamber measures 58 feet by 27 feet and stands on a 15 feet high buttressed platform at the



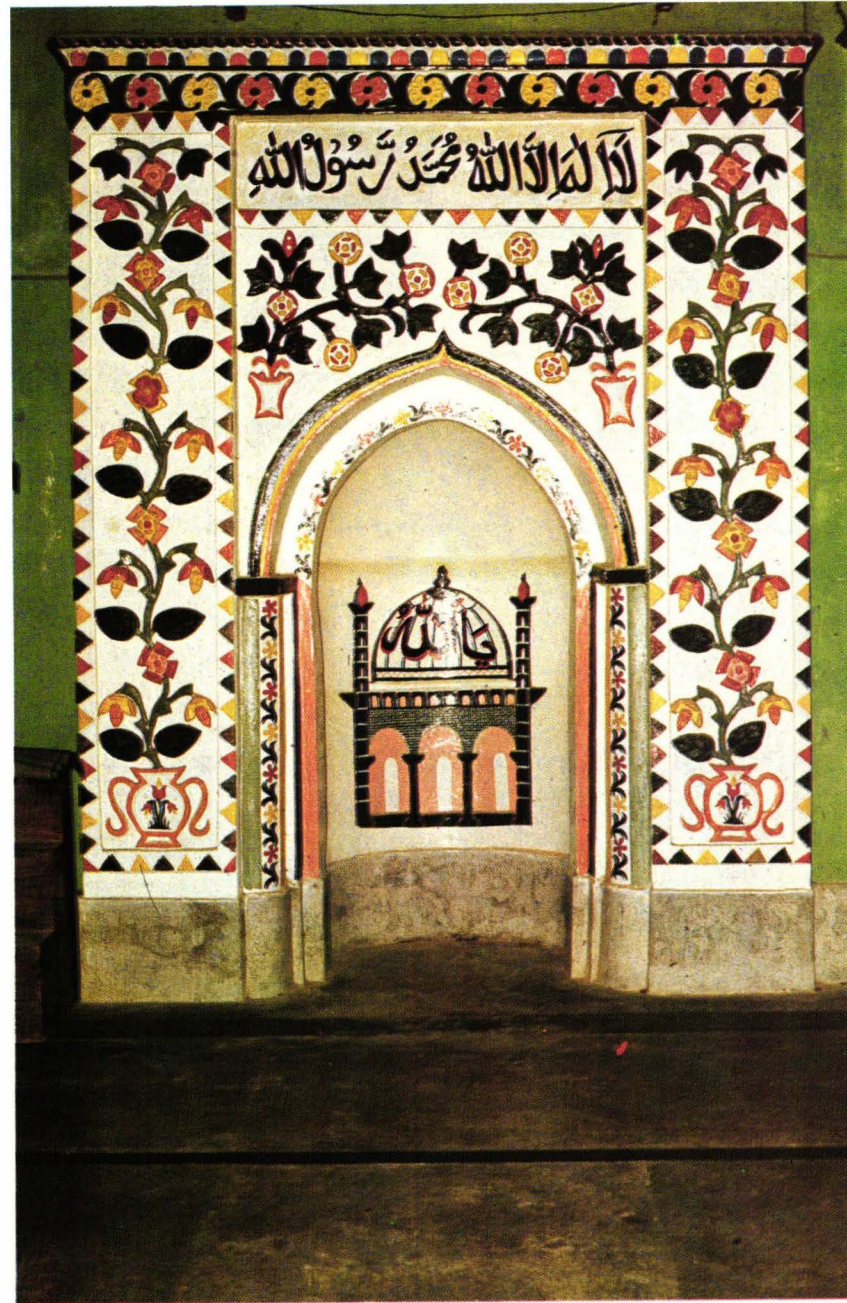
40. Shah Niamatullah's Mosque, Firuzpur, Gaur, *circa* 1650 A. D.



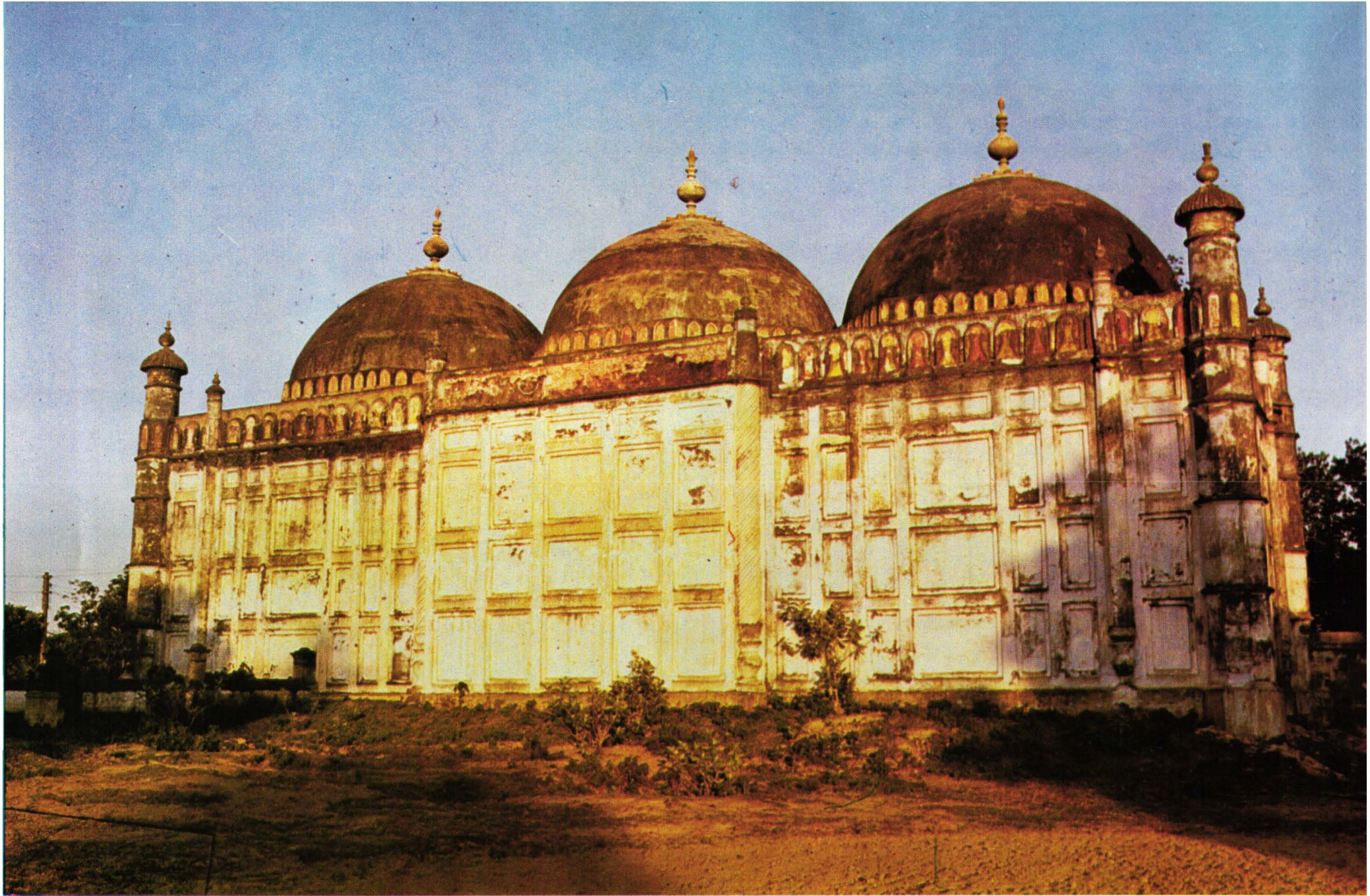


42. *Mihrab*, Qadam-i-Mubarak Mosque, Chittagong, 1719 A. D.

41. Opposite Page Chandanpura Mosque, Chittagong, view from the east, *circa* 19th century A. D.



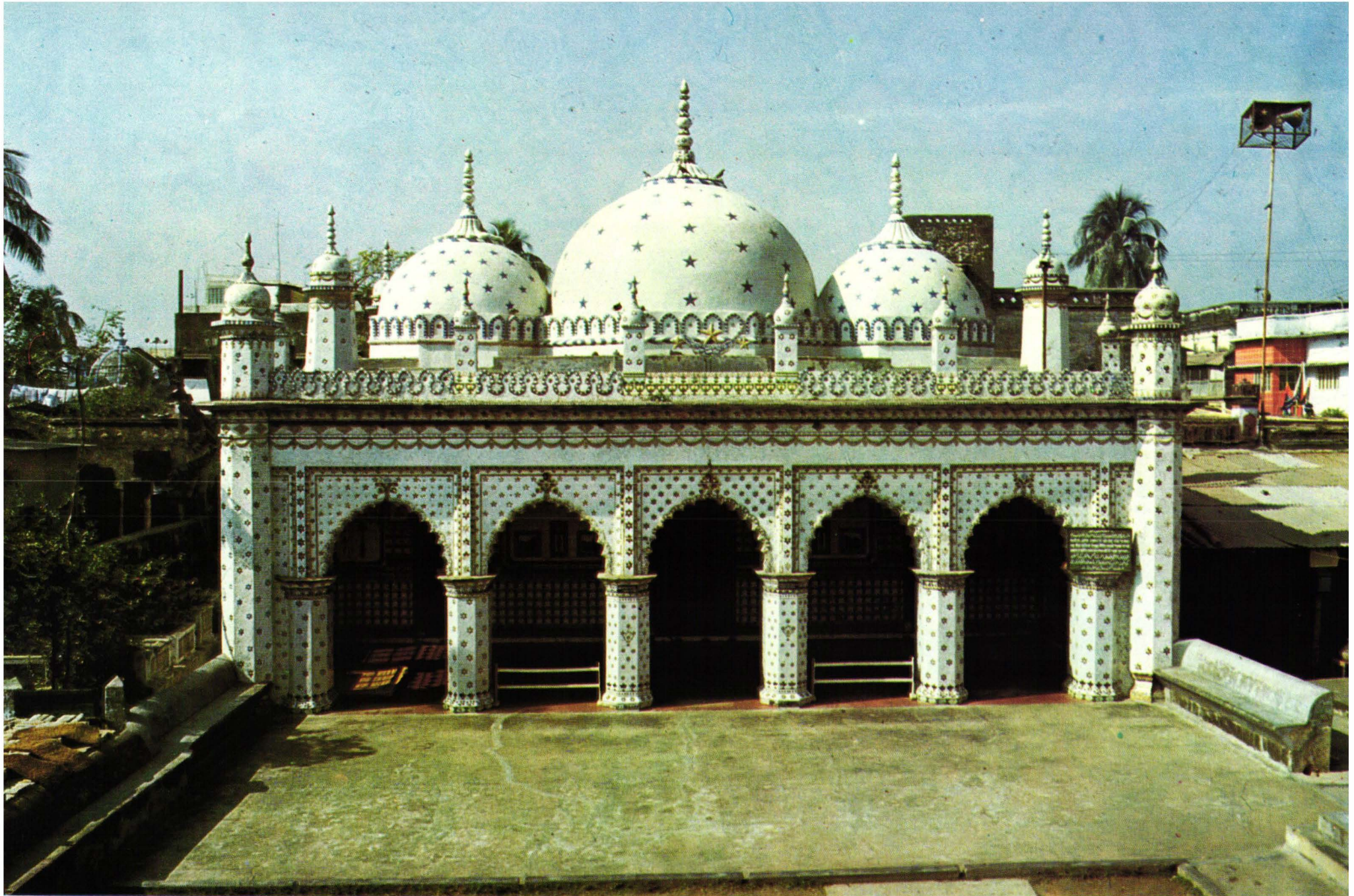
43. *Mihrab*, Wali Khan's Mosque, Chittagong, 1790 A. D.



44. Sarail Mosque, Sarail, Comilla, 1670 A. D.



45. Bajra Shahi Mosque, Bajra, Noakhali, 1741, A. D.



46. Sitara Mosque, Armanitola, Dhaka, *circa*, 18th century A. D.



47. Kashaitully Mosque, Dhaka, circa 19th century A. D.



48. Baitul Mukarram Mosque, Dhaka, 1962 A. D.

edge of what was once a stream of river Buriganga. Although the popular name 'Sat Gumbaz' suggests it to have seven domes, but actually the mosque is roofed over by three domes, the four corner towers being hollow and built in two stages with canopies of the shape of a dome. Hence the popular name of 'Sat Gumbaz' or Seven-Domed Mosque. As usual the central dome is bigger than the side ones and the eastern facade is decorated with plastered recessed panels. Again, in the absence of epigraphic record, the mosque is believed to have been built by Governor Shaista Khan in *circa* 1680 A. D.

The Kartalab Khan's mosque (Plate 37), popularly known as the Begambazar Mosque, was built by Murshid Quli Khan alias Kartalab Khan in 1704 A. D. The main chamber is built higher up on a terrace below which are constructed a number of vaulted rooms to accommodate shops. The five domes have basal leaf ornamentation with tall finials and the five arched doorways are separated from one another by slender minarets. To the north of the mosque is added a *dochala*-roofed room with drooping eaves probably for the *Imam*.

The three-domed mosque of Khan Muhammad Mirdha is situated to the north-west of Lalbagh fort (Plate 38). It was built in 1706 A. D. It also stands on a high platform. The oblong chamber measures 48 feet by 24 feet. The corner towers end above the parapet in a ribbed cupola. The eastern facade is profusely decorated with plastered panels and ornamental merlons.

Away from Dhaka, all over Bangladesh, Mughal mosques depicting imperial as well as local characteristics are many. But, as has been mentioned earlier, their extensive renovation and expansion have taken away much of their aesthetic appeal and are, therefore, being ignored here. However, the mosque of Hammad or Hamid Khan built in 18th century A. D. at Kumira in the district of Chittagong has retained most of the earlier

features (Plate 39). It is a single-domed square chamber with circular corner towers and curvilinear cornice. The *mihrab* is prominently projected outside. The entire facade is plastered.

Two other mosques of 18th century in Chittagong are well known. They are the Qadam-i-Mubarak mosque (1719 A. D.) and Wali Khan's mosque (1790 A. D.). The central *mihrabs* in both the mosques have colourful decorations (Plates 42 & 43). Although Gaur ceased to be a capital city during the Mughal period it still retained some importance in the middle of 17th century being the abode of saint Shah Niamatullah Wali, the spiritual mentaur of Viceroy Prince Shah Shuja, who mostly stayed in nearby Rajmahal. The mosque (Plate 40), adjacent to the tomb of the saint, measures 63½ feet by 25 feet, has three domes and panelled facade. The mosque according to the tradition, is said to have been built in *circa* 1650 A. D. by Shah Niamatullah Wali himself.

Very few mosques of the Mughal period are now left untouched by the hands of devotees. Noteworthy among them are the mosque at Sarail in the district of Comilla built in 1670 by the wife of one Nur Muhammad (Plate 44), the Shahi Mosque at Bajra in the district of Noakhali built by one Amanullah in 1741 (Plate 45), the mosque of Mirza Ghulam Pir in Armanitola area of Dhaka city which is popularly known as Sitara Mosque built in 18th century (Plate 46) and Kashaitully Mosque (Plate 47) near the Sitara Mosque also built in 18th century. The last named three mosques although originally built with plastered surface, subsequently were profusely decorated with China clay tiles. Glazed tile ornamentation was first introduced in this region in the Ekhlakhi tomb of Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah (1414-31) which is now in the Indian part of Gaur. Eversince, for quite some time the use of glazed tile was in much demand, particularly in the Gaur area. But this method of decoration ultimately gave



49. Tomb of Khan-i-Jahan, Bagerhat, view from the south-east, 1459 A. D.



50. Tomb of Khan-i-Jahan, Bagerhat, sarcophagus with names of Allah.

51. Tomb of Khan-i-Jahan, Bagerhat, head of the sarcophagus with burial inscription.





52. Tomb of Khan-i-Jahan, Bagerhat, encaustic tiles at the feet of the tomb platform.

53. Tomb of Shah Niamatullah Wali, Firuzpur, Gaur, view from the south, circa 1650 A. D.



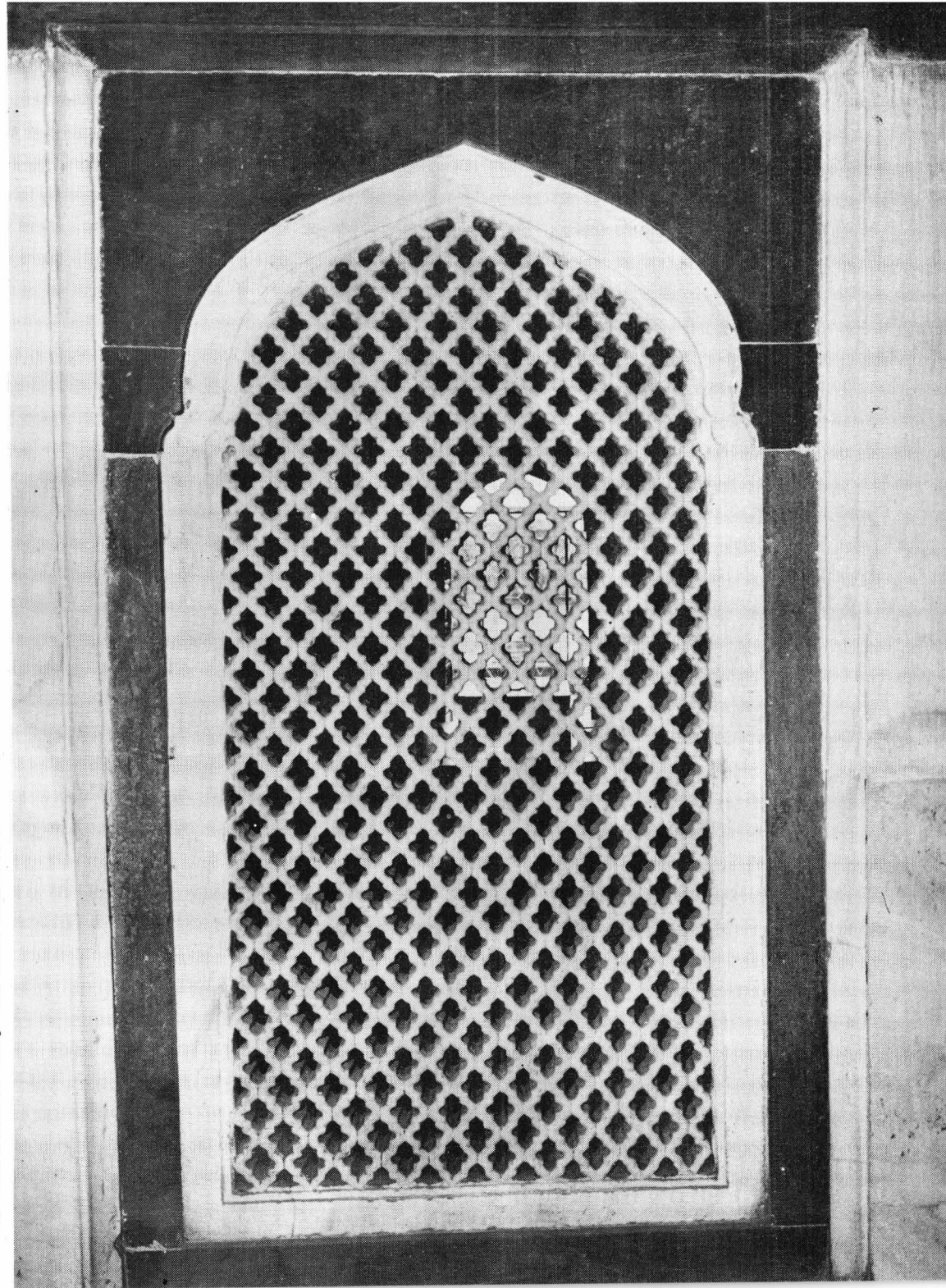
way to the more widely practised terracotta ornamentation and thereafter to painted plaster. But it must be mentioned that this glazed decorations fall into two categories. In some area of the mosque, in the walls of the interior chamber in case of the Sitara Mosque, rectangular imported tiles with different designs have been used. In other areas, piece China plates have been embedded in white cement with a variation of colour producing different designs, e. g. , numerous stars on the domes in case of Sitara Mosque. This later method of mosaics has been locally known as works of *Chinitikri*, i. e., works of broken China porcelain pieces.

Building of mosques in Bangladesh is naturally a continuous process. The use of new building materials and techniques have fundamentally influenced the design of the mosque. The Chandanpura Mosque at Chittagong built in the 19th century depicting features of south-east Asian architecture (Plate 41), the Education Extension Centre Mosque at Dhaka built in 1959

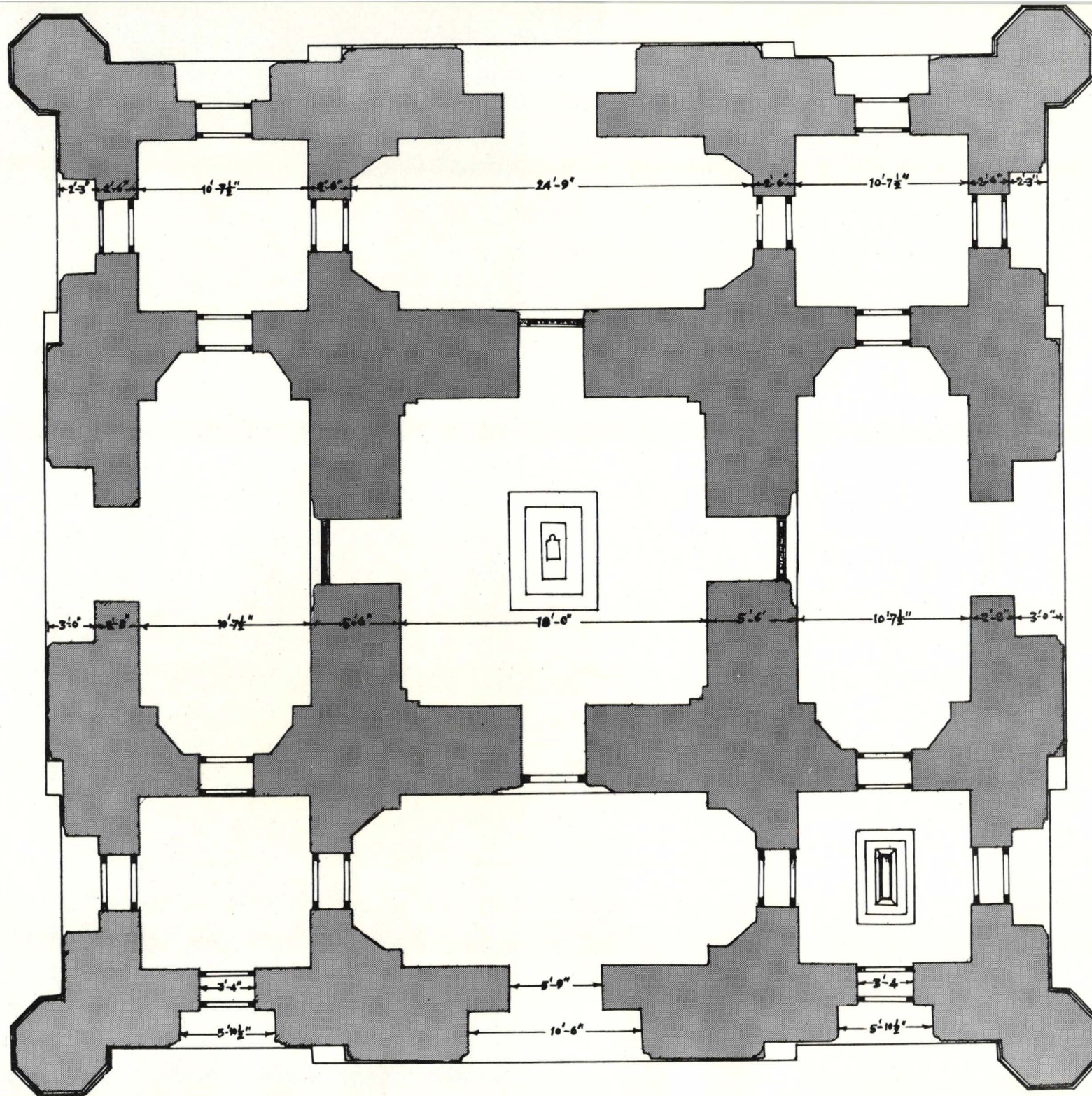


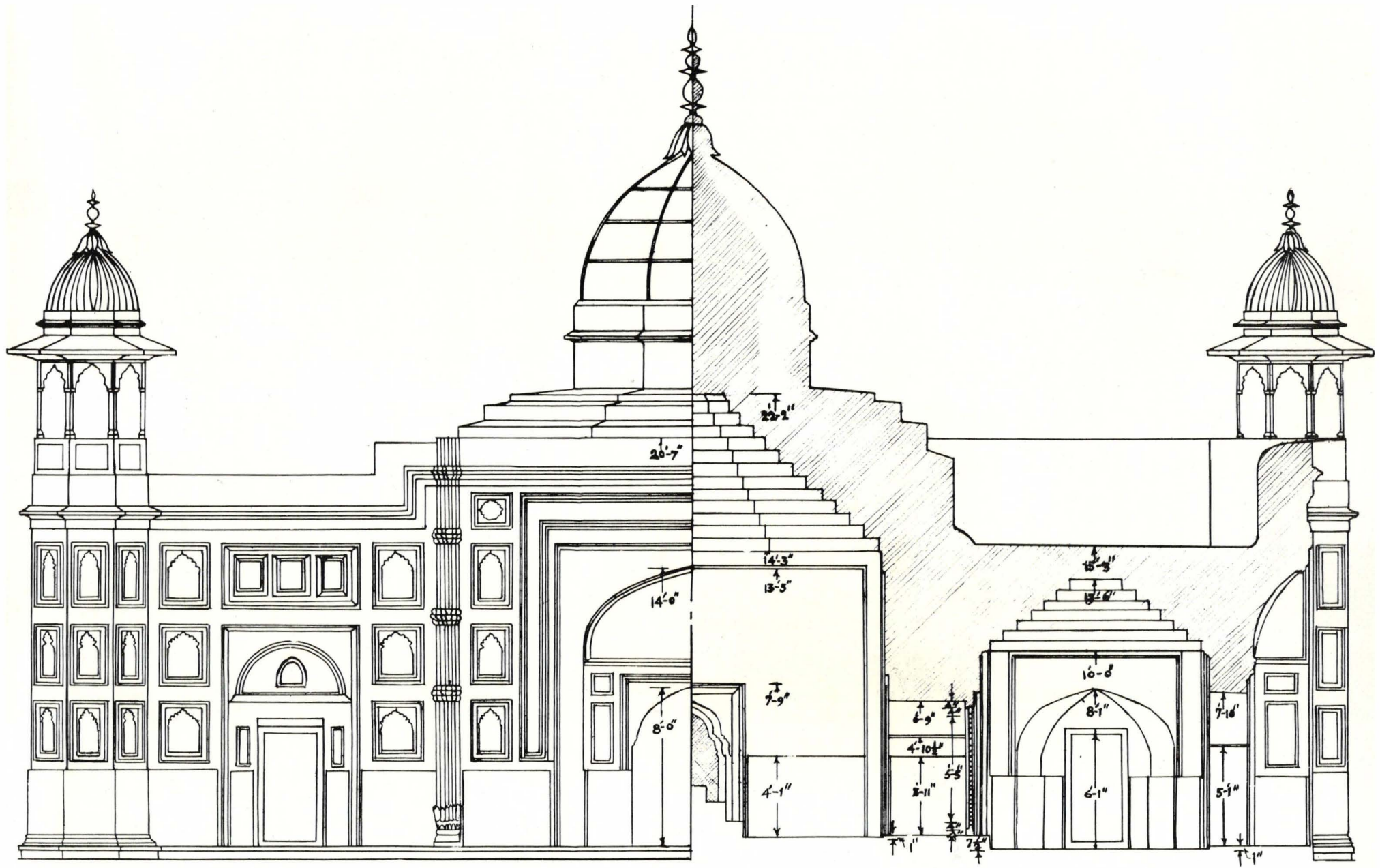
54 Left Page Tomb of Bibi Pari, Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka, view from the south,
circa 1684 A. D.

55. Tomb of Bibi Pari, Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka, details of marble screen.



56. Tomb of Bibi Pari, ground plan.



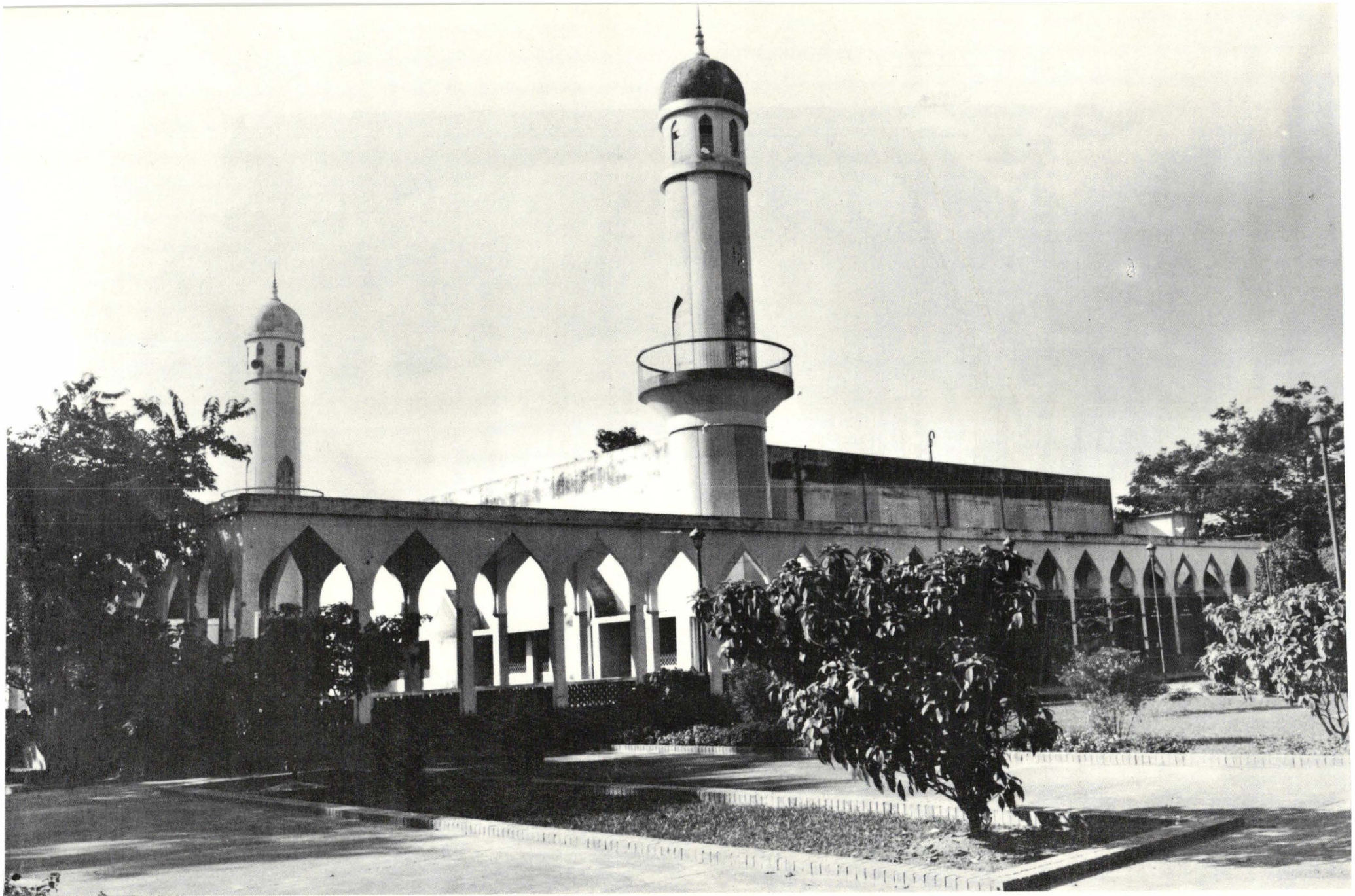


57. Tomb of Bibi Pari, section



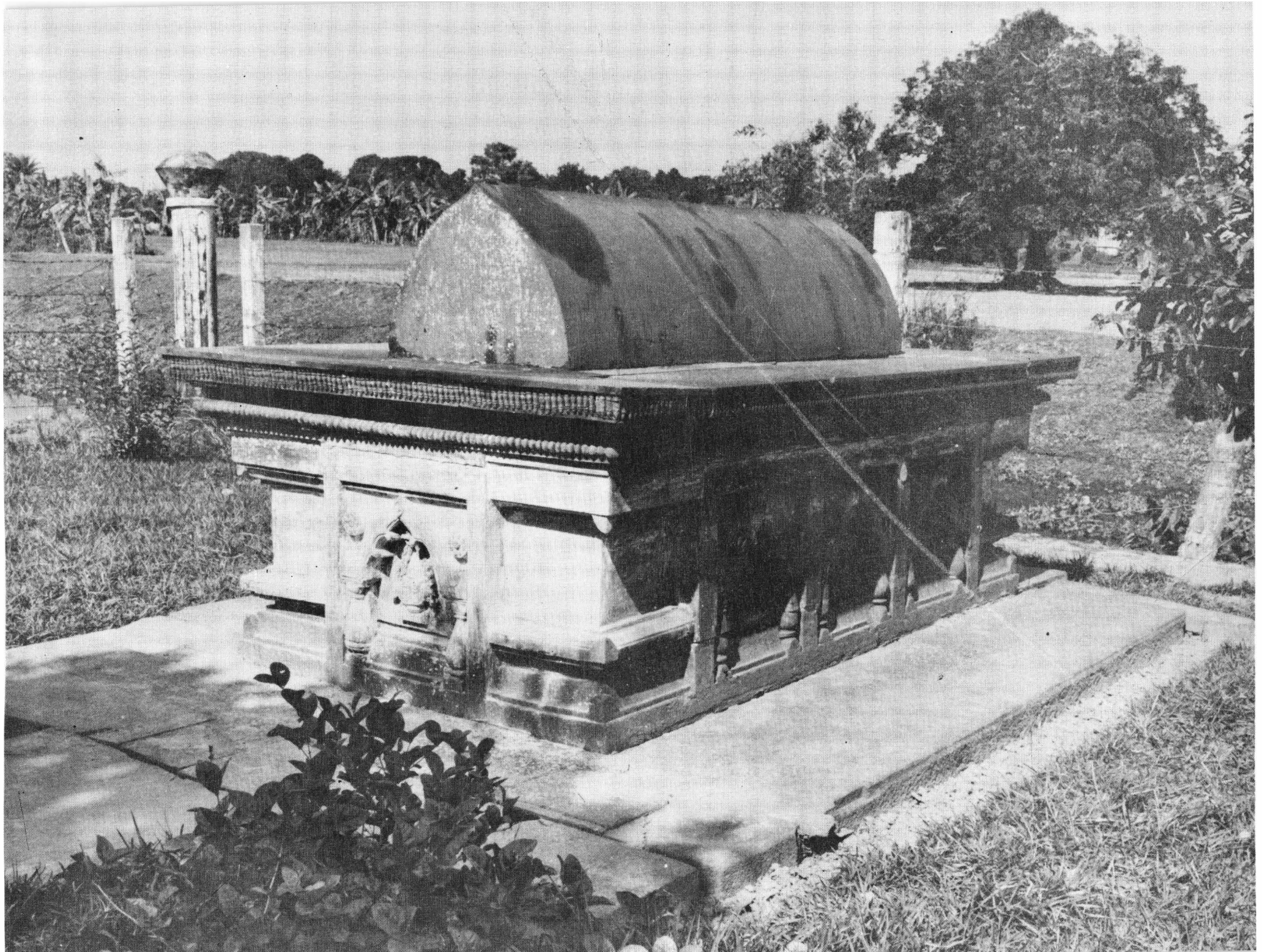


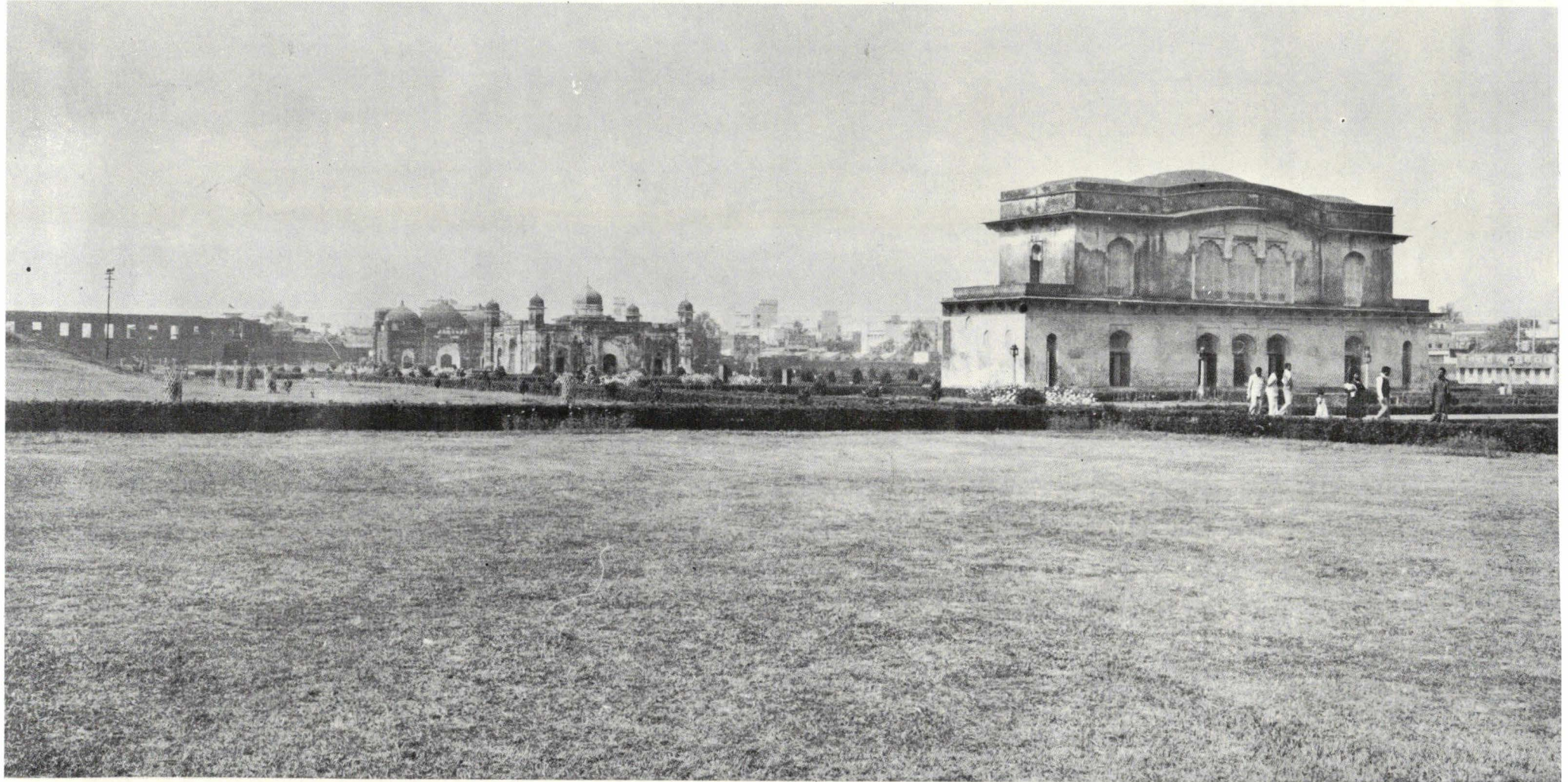
59. Dhaka Education Extension Centre Mosque, Dhaka, 1959 A. D.
58 Left Page Tomb of Bibi Pari, cenotaph



60. Dhaka University Mosque, Ramna, Dhaka, 1966 A. D.

61. Right Page Tomb of Sultan Ghyasuddin Azam Shah, Shahchillapur, Sonargaon, view from the south-east, 1410 A. D.





62. Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka, general view from the east.

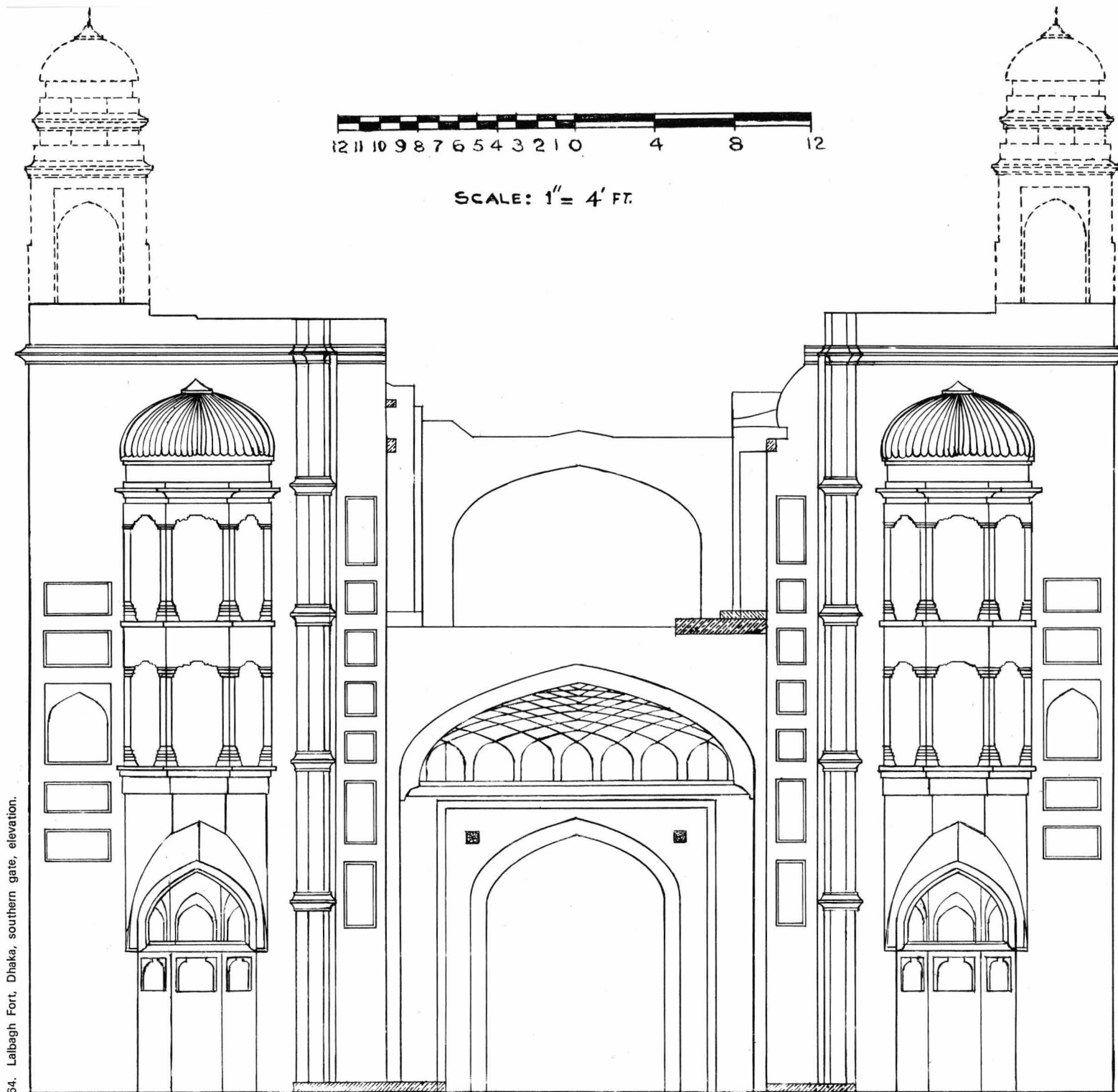
63. Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka, southern gate, view from the north.



(Plate 59), Baitul Mukarram Mosque at Dhaka built in 1962 (Plate 48), and the Dhaka University Jami Mosque built in 1966 (Plate 60) are a few of the examples of recently constructed mosques.

Just as the mosques are inseparable elements of the Muslim society of Bangladesh, so are the tombs. Tombs of Sultans, saints, *subahdars*, generals and otherwise important persons were often built with elaborate enclosed chambers, vaults, domes, arches and all sorts of embellishments. However, in general, the tombs of the saints have survived well due to the care taken by their devotees and descendants. For others the situation in most cases is not a happy one.

The tomb of Sultan Ghyasuddin Muhammad Azam Shah (1388-1410) at Shahchillapur village of Sonargaon in the district of Dhaka is believed to be the earliest Muslim monument of Bangladesh (Plate 61). The tomb, now open to the sky, consists of a huge sarcophagus made of a single block of black basalt of inverted keel shaped and rests on a table of the same material. Archaeologists of the 19th century thought it to be surrounded by an enclosure of stone pillars supporting a canopy on the top. Even now a half-buried stone pillar at the head of the tomb can be seen, being used as a *Chiragdan* or a niche for lamp. The cornice of the table is adorned with billet decoration. Below on the surface of the eastern side wall are three panelled niches each showing a cusped arch with a lamp hanging from its apex. Recently during renovation work, this motif has been repeated on all sides of the tomb. Sultan Ghyasuddin Azam Shah is known for his patronage of Bengali literature. He invited poet Hafiz of Iran to Bangladesh and the poet honoured him by sending a *ghazal*. He also exchanged ambassadors with China and excavated canals and built madrassas in the holy cities of Makkah and Medina.



64. Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka, southern gate, elevation.

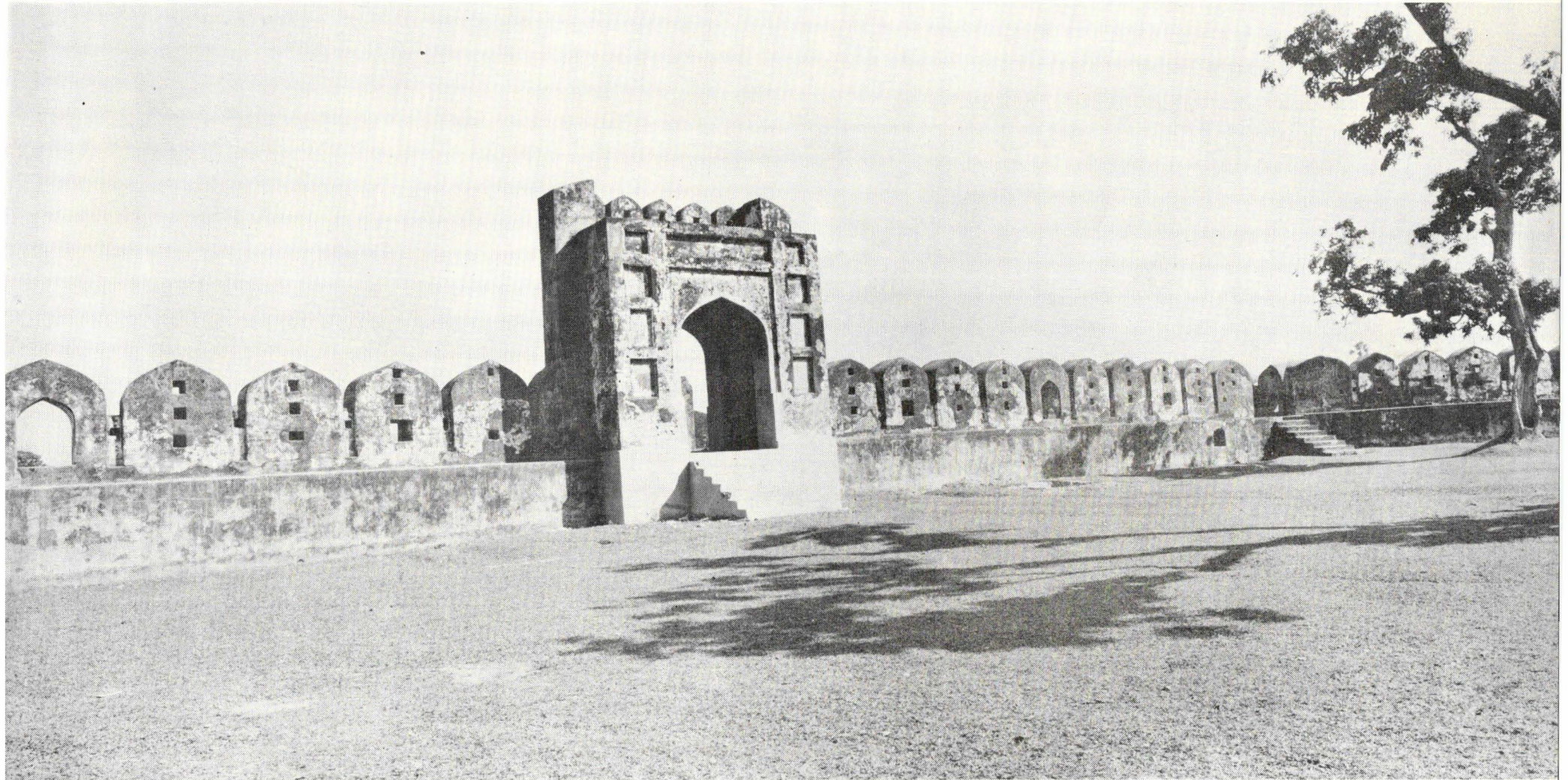
Three miles to the north-east of 'Shait Gumbaz' mosque at Bagerhat stands the imposing brick-built tomb of Khan-i-Jahan, within a walled compound, entered through arched gateways (Plates 49, 50, 51 & 52). The tomb chamber is a single domed square building measuring 45 feet each side with curved cornice and circular towers at the four corners. Evidence of later application of plaster is visible. The splendid keel-shaped sarcophagus made of stone and inscribed with Allah's names is 6 feet long and rests on a platform with two terraces. The stone slabs making the terraces are decorated with Arabic and Persian inscriptions. The immediate floor at the feet of the grave is covered with square and hexagonal encaustic tiles of various colours. The tomb inscription gives the following information :

"The great (Ulugh) Khan-i-Jahan (peace and blessings be on him), a helpless slave, who is needy of mercy and the blessing of the Nourisher of both the worlds (God), who is a lover of the descendants of the Leader of the Prophets (Muhammed), who is sincere towards the pious scholars (Ulama), who is an enemy of the non-believers and who is a helper of Islam and Muslims, left this worldly abode for the eternal one (i. e. died) in the night of Wednesday, the 26th of Zil-Hijjah, and was buried Thursday, the 27th of the same month in the year 863 (i. e. 23rd October, 1459 A. D.)"

The southern facade of the tomb stone bears the following inscription within a circle enclosed by a square band :

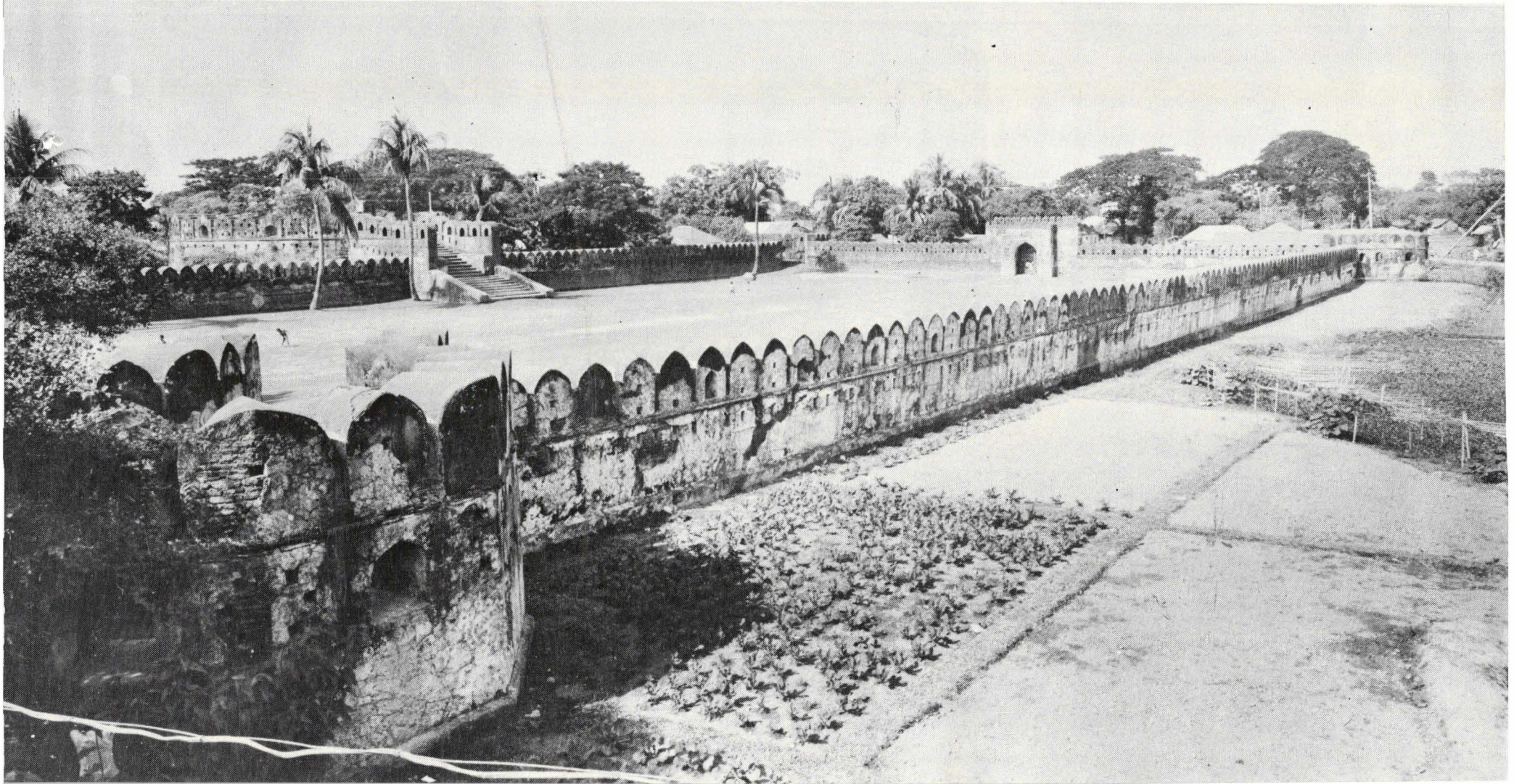
"This is the blessed tomb (*Rawza*), out of the gardens of the paradise, of Khan-al-Azam (great Khan) Khan Jahan (peace and blessing be on him). Written on the 26th of Zil-Hijjah, the year 863 (i. e., 1459 A. D.)."

Attached to the tomb, there is a single-domed square mosque depicting the same style. To south of the tomb lies the spectacular tank called Thakurdighi, also excavated by

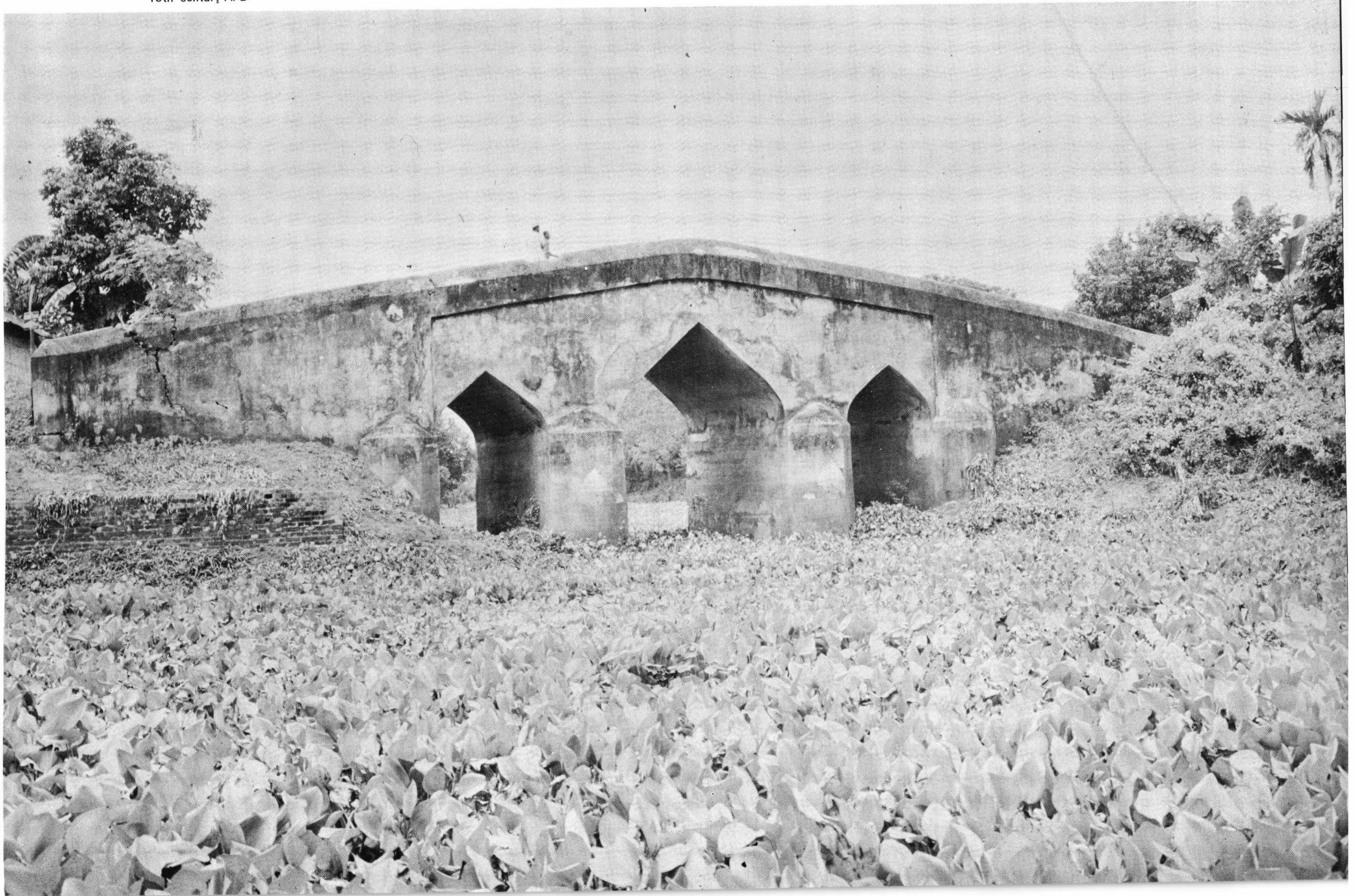


65. Hajiganj Fort, Narayanganj, Dhaka, view of main entrance from the south, *circa* 1660 A. D.

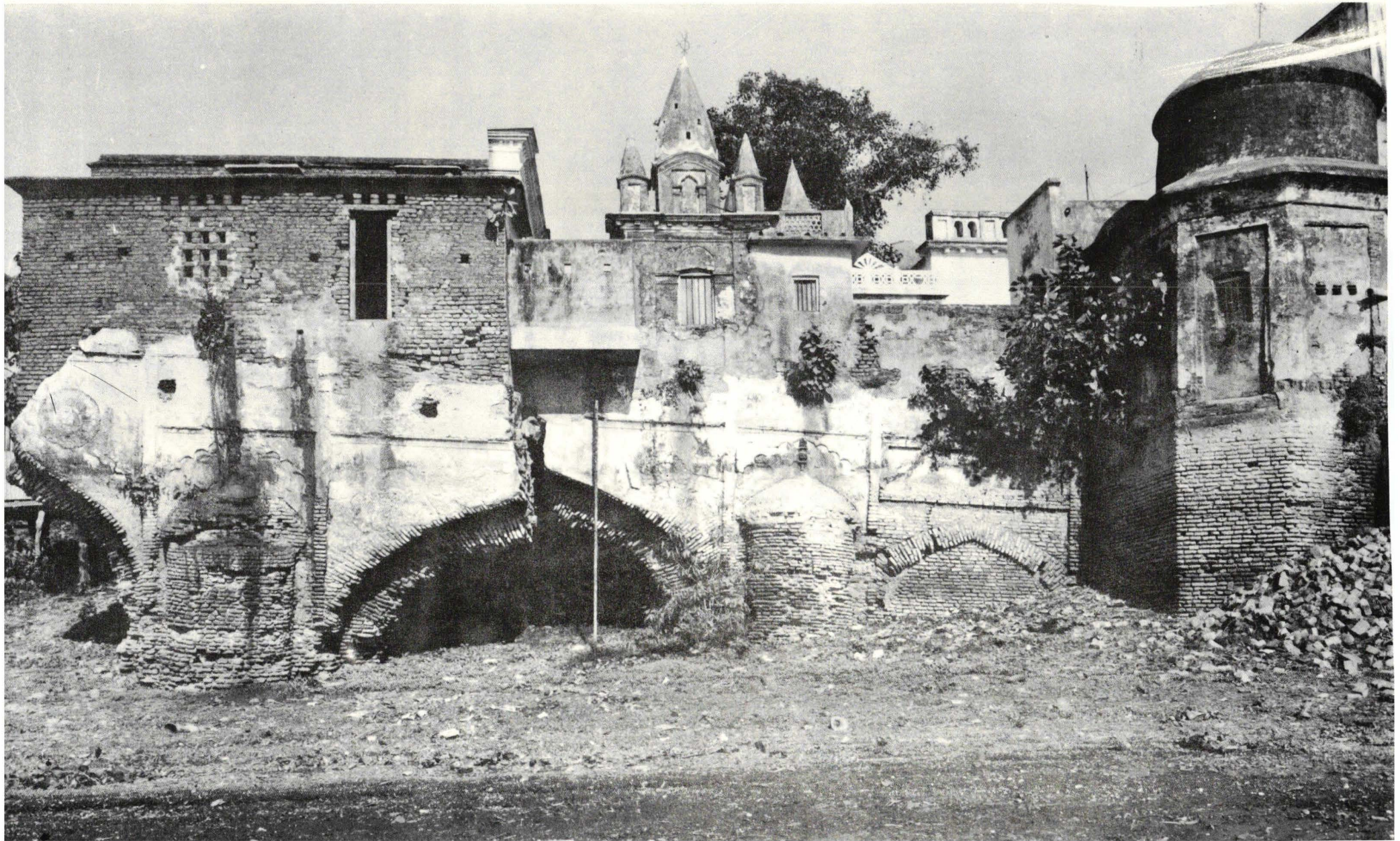
66. Sonakanda Fort, Sonakanda, Narayanganj, Dhaka, view from the south-east, *circa* 1660 A. D.



67. Panam Bridge, Panam, Sonargaon, Dhaka, view from the west, *circa* 15th century A. D.



68. Pagla Bridge, from Buriganga river side, Pagla, Dhaka, circa 1661 A. D.



69. Qadam Rasul Gateway, Nabiganj, Narayanganj, Dhaka, 18th century
A. D.



The tomb of saint Shah Niamatullah Wali (Plate 53) at village Firuzpur in Gaur is situated, as stated earlier, near to the mosque he built himself. The tomb stands on a raised stone platform consisting of a single-domed central tomb chamber, $21\frac{1}{2}$ feet square, and a vaulted verandah running round the central chamber. Externally it is 49 feet square. There are octagonal towers at four corners. Each facade is decorated with plastered panels and shows three arched entrances. The only dome is bulbous and crowned with a prominent lotus finial.

Perhaps the most magnificent of all the mausoleums in Bangladesh is that of Bibi Pari situated in the middle of Lalbagh Fort (Plates 54, 55, 56, 57 & 58). Bibi Pari is generally believed to have been a daughter of Governor Shaista Khan and was betrothed to Prince Muhammad Azam. The present monument was built in *circa* 1684 A. D. The well-preserved tomb stands on a raised platform of stone pavement. At the four corners of the 60 feet square building are octagonal minarets topped over with plastered kiosks having ribbed cupolas as the crowning element. The facade on each side is centrally projected under a halfdome, the door having stone archway. The side openings have rectangular stone door jambs and lintels. The roof is topped by a false copper dome with a tall finial which was once gilt. The interior of the mausoleum is divided into nine rooms. The tomb chamber in the centre is 19'-2" square, the corner rooms being 10'-4" square and the passage rooms 24'-9" by 10'-9". This elaborate division of space recalls the more famous edifices of similar nature at Delhi and Agra. The tomb chamber is entered by the southern door, the other three doors being fitted with screen of white marble. The inner walls are also faced with white marble. The cenotaph of three steps is made with the same marble and bears foliage designs in shallow relief. The floor is laid with geometric patterns of black marble. The ceiling of all the rooms is made of overlapping black basalt stone giving the appear-

ance of a stepped pyramid from below. Such predilection for pre-Muslim mode of construction at such a late stage of Mughal rule is peculiar to this tomb which has already been referred to above.

Of the utility buildings of the Muslim period a selection of forts, *katras*, bridges and gateways may be mentioned. Bangladesh being a riverine tract, required forts of a kind quite different from those of seize forts usually seen in other parts of the subcontinent. There are only two kinds of forts e. g., the palace forts and the river forts. The Fort Aurangabad at Dhaka, a palace fort and commonly known as the Lalbagh Fort (Plates 62, 63 & 64), was begun by Governor Prince Muhammad Azam in 1678-79 A. D. but was never completed as he was called back within a year to Delhi by his father Emperor Aurangzeb. His successor Shaista Khan appears to have ignored it. The ruins presently show only portions of long fortification wall on the southern and western side with a three-storey gateway at the south-eastern corner decorated with typical Mughal embellishments. The lofty central archway is emphasised by slender octagonal minarets. The elevation shows semi-octagonal alcove on each side of the entrance topped by a oriel window in two stages crowned with a cupola. On the top at the corners are pillared kiosks. The centre of the gateway is a domed square hall with side rooms for guards facing south towards the river Buriganga, the river now receding further south beyond sight.

The Mughals had to construct forts at important junctions of rivers, particularly near the capital city, in order to build up their defences against the Portuguese marauders. As such river forts were built at Hajiganj on the right side of the Lakhya, at Sonakanda on the left side of the same river, and at Idrakpur, Munshiganj, on the bank of now dried up Ichhamati river. All these three forts are generally attributed to Governor Mir Jumla who built them in *circa* 1660 A. D.

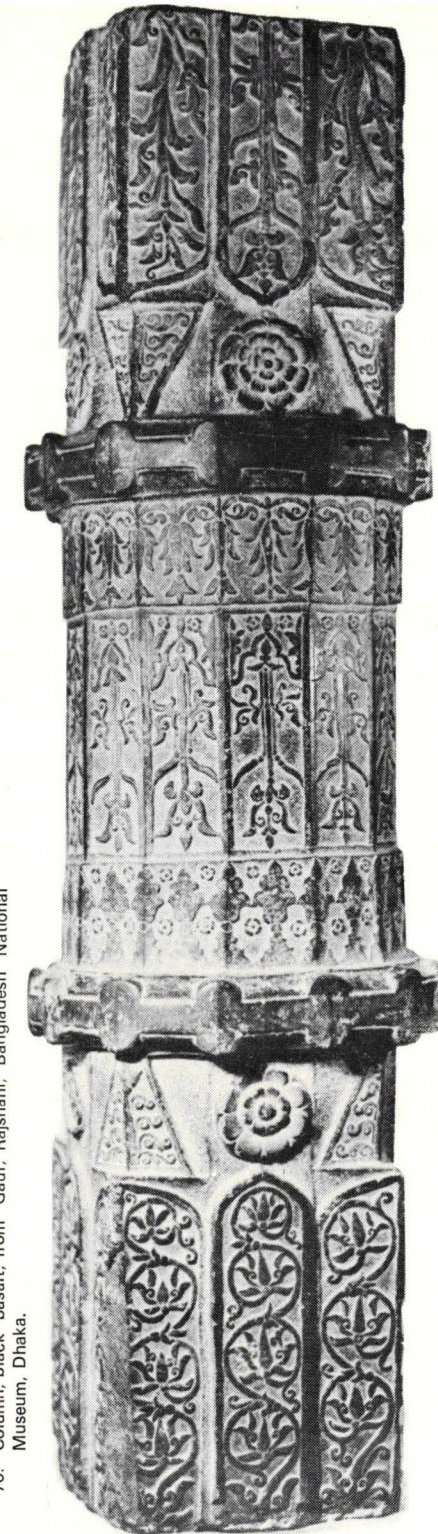
The fortification of the Hajiganj Fort (Plate 65) consists of a pentagonal buttressed wall with rounded bastions at the angles. The wall has a walkway on the inner side at a higher level than the ground and each merlon is pierced with one or more holes for musketry. There is a stepped entrance on the north side with attached guard rooms.

The Sonakanda Fort (Plate 66) is a rectangular structure 300 feet by 208 feet and has its entrance on the northern side. Its curtain wall is 10 feet high and a huge staircase leads up to a rounded bastion on the western side, obviously meant for mounting long range guns.

The bridges in the alluvial soils of Bangladesh are very vulnerable structures and very few have survived the ravages of time. Bridges built during the Mughal rule can be seen in Dhaka city, though much renovated and modified. They are usually of camber type. The Pagla Bridge built by Mir Jumla in 1661 A. D. evokes wonder even in its ruins (Plate 68). The Bridge on the Pankhiraj canal between the villages of Panam and Dulalpur in Sonargaon appears to be a pre-Mughal one (Plate 67).

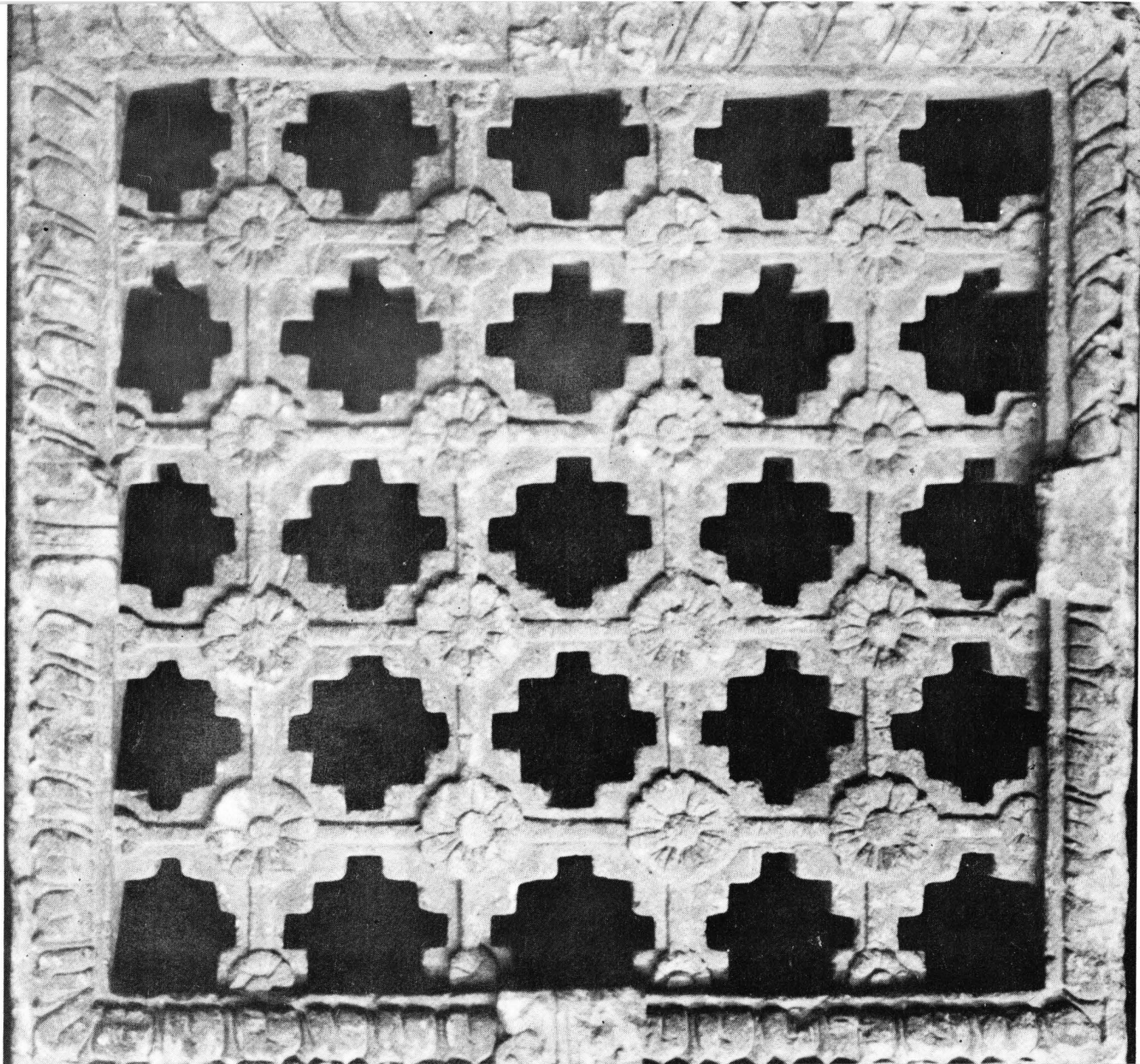
The famous *Bara Katra* and *Chhota Katra* of Dhaka are now so much altered and their approaches so much hindered that they no more can be viewed with any fruitful purpose. It was as customary to build gateways to cities as to the mansion houses. Most of these have now disappeared. The gateway to the Nimtali Palace built in 1765 in the old Dhaka Museum premises has survived. But one of the best preserved gateways is the three storeyed one at Qadam Rasul, Nabiganj, on the left side of the Lakhya (Plate 69). The gateway leading to the shrine was built by Ghulam Muhammad in 1814 and stands for an example of decadent Mughal style.

124 Detached architectural pieces made of stone collected from historic sites are preserved in different museums of Bangladesh.



70. Column, black basalt, from Gaur, Rajshahi, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

71. Screen, sandstone, from Mahi Santosh, Rajshahi, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



Some of them are noteworthy for their decorative features and ornamentations. The black basalt column of *circa* 14th century A. D. from Gaur in the Bangladesh National Museum (Plate 70), 45½" ht., is an attractive piece. It is divided into three sections by raised bands. The upper and lower sections are square. The middle section forming the octagonal shaft is carved with stylised floral and hanging bell-and-chain motifs. The sandstone screen, 31¾" × 21", from Mahi Santosh, Rajshahi (Plate 71), shows the frame with raised foliage pattern. There are five rows of perforations, having five holes in each row. Bands of floral motifs hold the opposite decorated frames.

The Muslim nobilities of the 19th and 20th centuries erected many edifices, mostly palacious buildings, for their residential purposes. Often they were truly contemporary buildings following European conception and designed more to satisfy their European masters. Even then, some traditional elements of decoration continued to be used by the masons in such buildings. Some form of domes, kiosks, arches etc. betrayed their obligation to Islamic art heritage. The Ahsan Manzil (Plate 79) on the riverfront of Dhaka is one of such examples. The grand palace of the Dhaka Nawabs was originally built in 1872 A. D. and later on modified. The two storeyed building stands on a high plinth with a crowning dome above. The triple arched portals with fluted pilasters and cornice mouldings along with the grand staircase from the riverside present a picturesque view of the palace where important events took place at the beginning of this century which changed the history of not only the Muslims of Bangladesh, but that of all the people of the subcontinent.

The monuments briefly described or illustrated here are random selections and cannot be considered as representatives of all styles or periods of Islamic influence. However, unlike the movable objects of arts which travel long distances from their



72. Ahsan Manzil Palace, Sadarghat, Dhaka, view from the south, 1872 A. D.

places of origin and may pose problems for their proper evaluation, the architecture of any place is the product of human ideas and skill expressed *in situ*. More than any other art form, architecture proclaims the faith and culture. Therefore, through these monuments it is possible to discover the relative time it may have taken the Muslims to create an art that can be distinctively identified as their own. Hence, these monuments are rightly regarded as the principal elements of the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh.

Manuscripts & Calligraphy

With the establishment of the Muslim administration in Bangladesh the diffusion of religious education became the principal preoccupation of the learned Sufi saints. Various *madrassas*, *khanqas* and academic seminaries were established and they produced scholars who advanced the study of theology, mysticism and Arabic and Persian literature. But the patronage of the Muslim rulers were not only confined to such classical but alien subjects only. Soon, the merit and necessity of studying indigenous language and literature were recognised. The independent Sultans of Bangladesh, and occasionally their viceroys, particularly during the pre-Mughal period, engaged themselves in the building of a sound foundation for the Bengali language by promoting original writing, compilation and translation. Thus literary activities during the Muslim rule can be visualised as a sufficiently respectable vocation as is evident from the innumerable extant manuscripts of books on varied subjects.

Books were regarded as very precious and more than just texts in the Islamic world. Supreme of all books was the *Quran*. From the ordinary scribes to the mighty kings, all copied this book throughout the ages. It was often produced as a sumptuous object with masterly calligraphy and set in artful design and construction. So, were many other books of poetic, historical or scientific merit. Even in an ordinary manuscript, besides the calligraphy, the paper, the binding, the illumination etc. were reflective of the painstaking craftsmanship. While the imperial commissioned ateliers produced elaborate courtly manuscripts, literary activities transpired at other levels of society and manuscripts were produced without much embellishments.

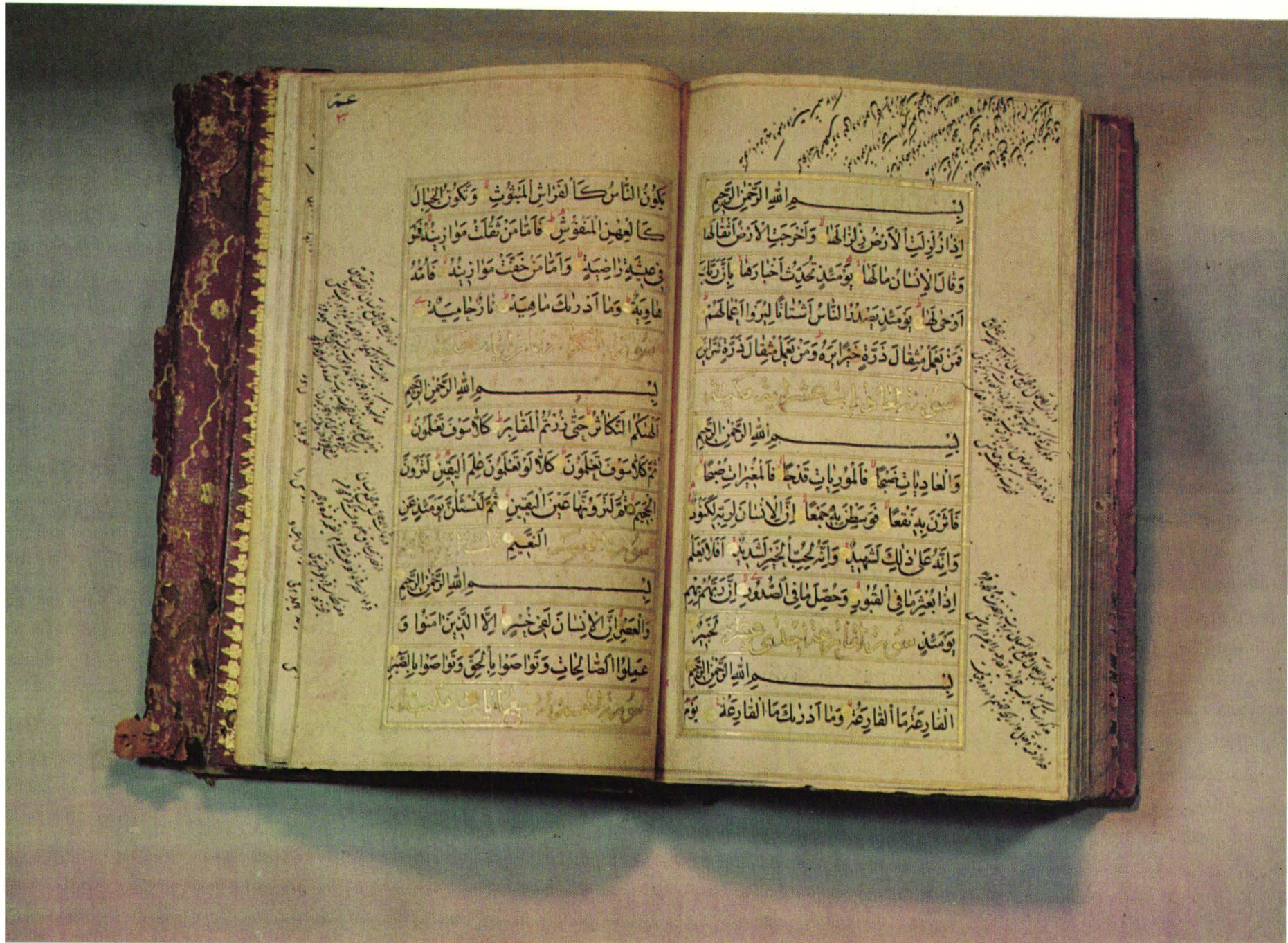
In the hierarchical order of the Islamic arts architecture occupies the central position as its function is not only building of religious sanctuaries but also because many other forms of arts are dependent on it. Notwithstanding, the art of calligraphy, 129

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
 الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا
 لِنُؤْمِنَ بِهِ وَلَا نَحْمَدُهُ إِلَّا
 أَنْزَلَنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِنَعْلَمَ
 أَلَّا نَحْنُ آلَ عَادٍ إِنَّ إِلَهَنَا
 لَعَلِيمٌ بِمَا كُنَّا نَعْمَدُ الْعَادَ
 وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
 الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا
 لِنُؤْمِنَ بِهِ وَلَا نَحْمَدُهُ إِلَّا
 أَنْزَلَنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِنَعْلَمَ
 أَلَّا نَحْنُ آلَ عَادٍ إِنَّ إِلَهَنَا
 لَعَلِيمٌ بِمَا كُنَّا نَعْمَدُ الْعَادَ
 وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

73. Left Page Manuscript *Quran*, 7¼"×5", copied by Khawajah Shaikh in 1091 A. H./1680 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

74. Manuscript *Quran*, 10¼"×6½", circa 17th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

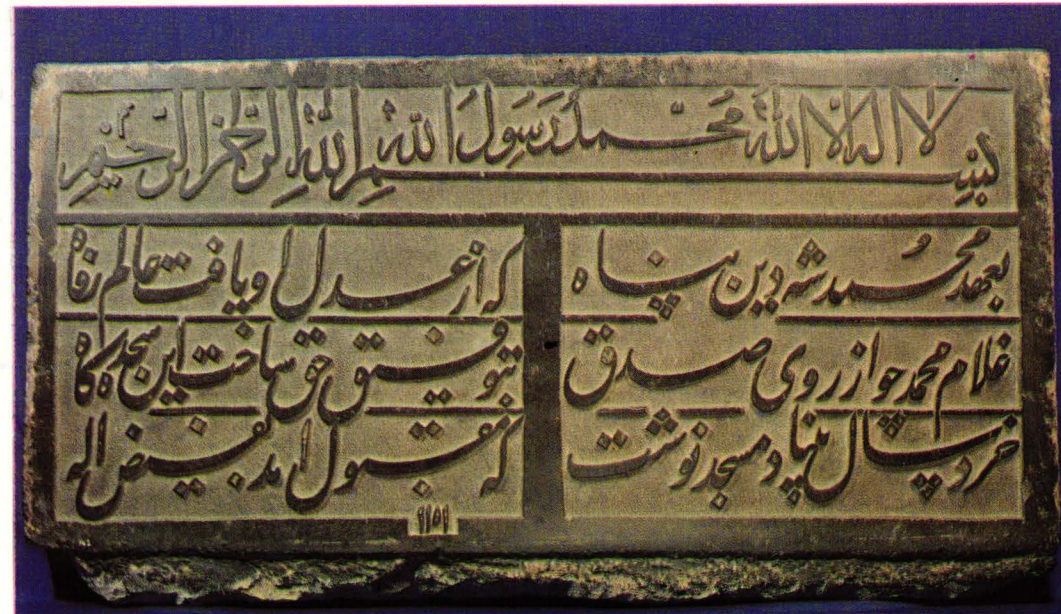
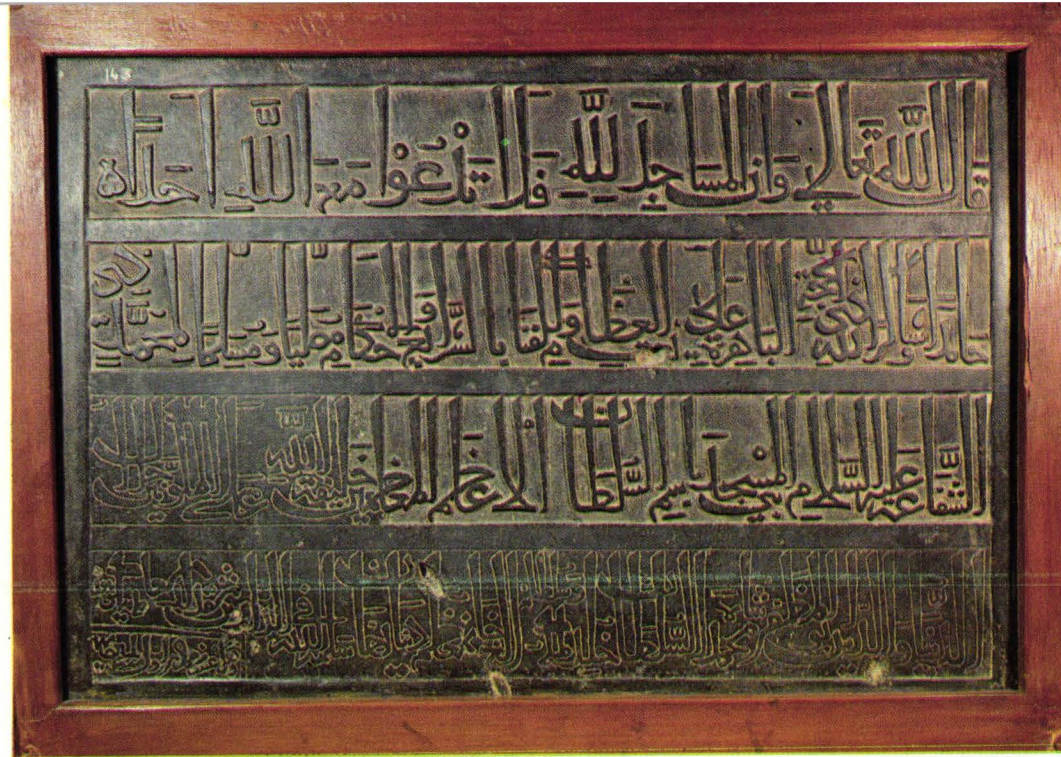


শিখিও ফিহা মসল...
چله عاين نكح شيخه كيتايت بله تين دين
حذت كير ديش دين بعوه اجاره بهب
چله جان شيخه لعوه نك وبدا حذت كير دين
حذت شيخه شب او در حذت لعوه نيكليل
حاذت نكح تا و جانح شش پتا قميلدم روي
ميت ليتاب بيستاه شب كير ناپا كيت قير كير
نياسه من و پيامه مان شونح تماره
حاذت حاله تماره قلدن پويت نياسه
مسجيد داخيل هم حيت قراب كيرت ناسه
بيت الامياره نيو شواهي شنه فارسه
كير نياسه دو كرت ناپيك حاضمان
ششاپه مسجيدك بشقل كيرم تعال كير

بنال

نيالك پيتاير شنه كيريل سينكاره پوناسه
شنه زين قيرل پير داسه حاذت نيت ناسه
حاذت نياسه ششاپه نيت سرف كيرم خياد
پيراه سرف كيرم كير حذت حاذت ما روي
جانسه نيو قير قيرنا حرم حذت حرم
مانا كير يا حبيب احمره داخه مس نيك عك حينا
بيت حال ناكله حجازه ششقل نياسه قلدن
پير نياسه نياسه مسجيد حيت داخيل نياك
ششقل كيرت مشقل احاطت جاهاسه وشو
تاكلي شيخه كاسته شخه شب قران سو شيت
ناپيه درمت حذت نيش غيلا و مار تاكلي
قلدن سو نيت پاسه تمالك ساشتره سيدن
نيالك زت رجا قلدن كير اصرو عر حاند

75 Manuscript of *Maqtul Husain*, 12" x 7", Bengali text written in Arabic script, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



76. Mandra inscription of Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah, 21'' × 30½'', 830 A. H./1427 A. D., from Mandra, Dhaka. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
77. Sutralur inscription of Emperor Muhammad Shah, 16½'' × 32½'', 1151 A. H./1738 A. D., from Sutralur, Barisal. Bangladesh National Museum.



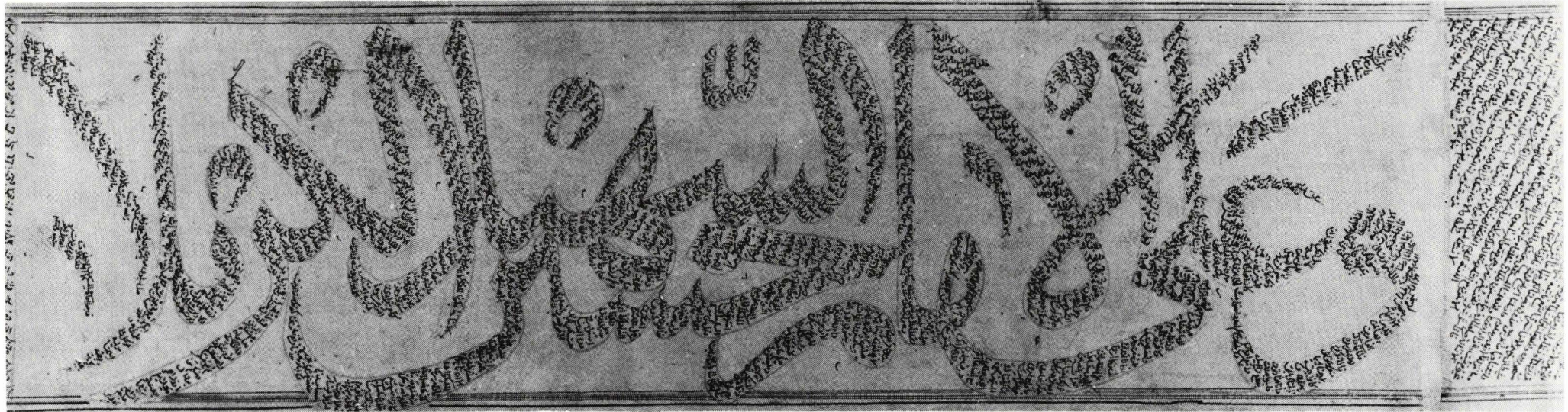


79. Ceremonial Umbrella, 48" dia., from Dhaka, 18th century A. D.,
Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

78. Left Page Wooden Partition, 94" x 111", from Faridpur, 19th century A. D.
Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



80. Fez cap with jewelled funna, believed to be belonging to Nawab Bahadur Salimullah of Dhaka, 19th century A. D.



81. Manuscript *Quran* in scroll, 35' 1" x 4", copied by Abul Fath, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

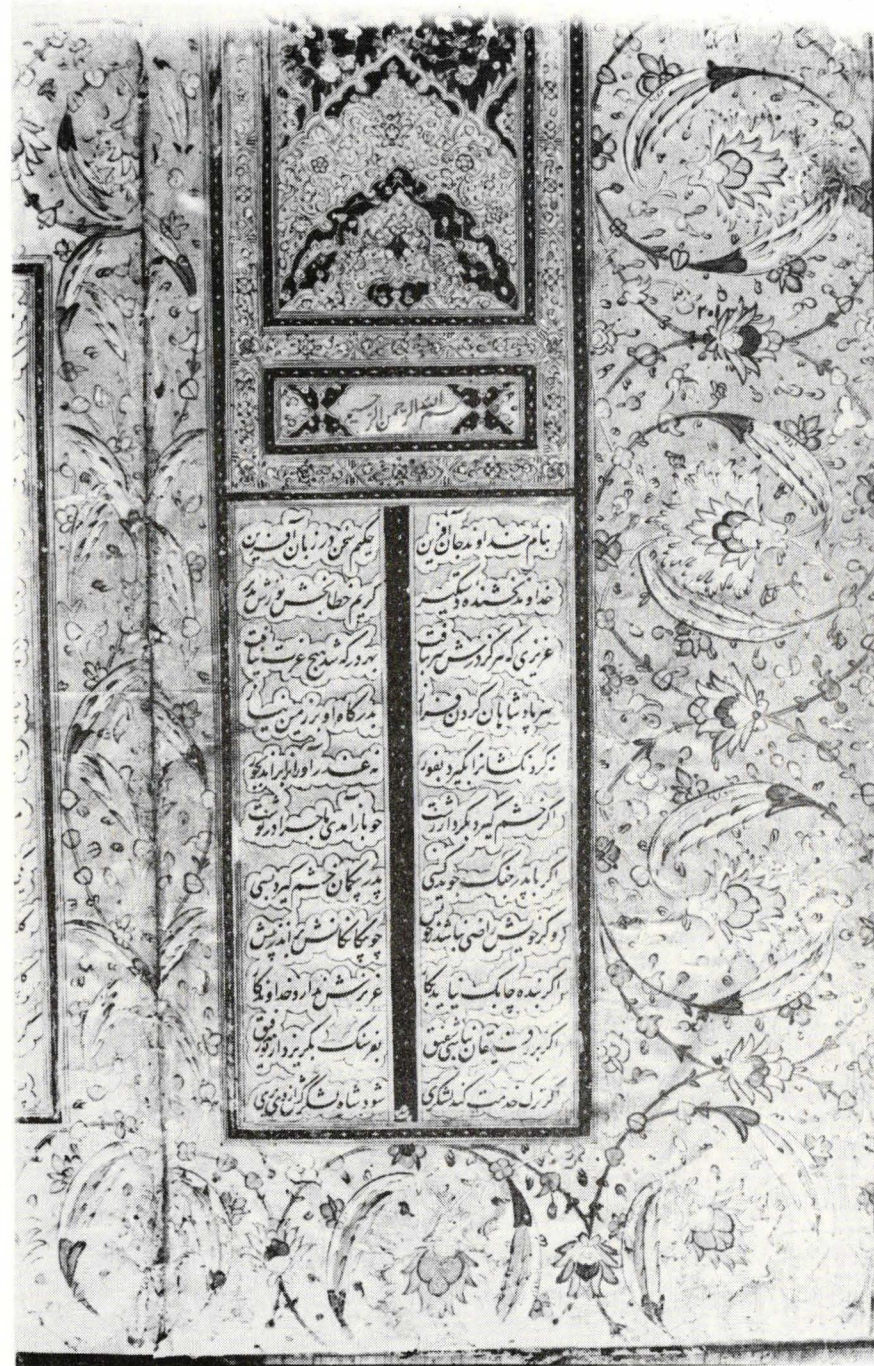
writing in Arabic, is universally accepted as a nobler expression of Islamic art heritage. Arabic script, being the vehicle of Arabic language in which the *Quran* is transmitted has been accorded an unique status and stressed both as a bond uniting all Muslims in all periods and the most desirable language for artistic decoration.

The art of calligraphy originally arose from the necessity to give clear and artistic form to the words of the *Quran*. Thus, the alphabet with which it is recorded is inscribed with both accuracy and beauty. Being invested with religious significance, the calligraphy developed as an architypal art and its visual potential was demonstrated through a wide range of styles. The achievement of calligraphy in Bangladesh is of such excellence and skill that it can rightly claim to have a most covetable place in the very wide world of Islamic art. As is well known from numerous specimens, calligraphy was not confined to manuscript alone, but was employed on the buildings, coins, fabrics and objects of all conceivable kinds. From the point of view of artistic consideration, the most remarkable and amazing development in calligraphy is the *Tughra* style of Bangladesh. The calligrapher had the full freedom of a creative artist to render the words in straight lines, circles, squares, or in interlaced patterns. Individual letters could be twisted or expanded to accommodate long texts in a comparatively restricted space. They could be embellished with floral forms, braided into knots or animated into wishful zoomorphic figures. These sculptured alphabets formed an inexhaustible repertoire of decorative motifs in the Islamic art.

On the basis of various styles and subtlety of arrangements, the *Tughra* in Bangladesh has been generally divided into several categories based mainly on the delineation between the letters with curvatures of various shapes. Sometimes, the intricacy of the *Tughra* defies easy reading. But the delicacy retains the visual impact undiminished.

82. Manuscript of *Shahnama*, 9 1/2" x 5 1/2", colophon of the first volume, illustrated, 1007 A. H./1599 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

83. Manuscript of *Bustan*, Emperor Shahjahan's personal copy, 11" x 7", circa 1650 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



Handwritten marriage registry document in Arabic script, dated 1133. The document is written on aged, slightly stained paper. At the top, there is a date '1133' and a reference number '150'. The text is arranged in vertical columns, with some parts written in a larger, bolder script. The document includes a title, names of the bride and groom, and a detailed account of the marriage ceremony and the presence of witnesses. The text is written in a cursive style typical of historical Arabic documents. There are some marginalia and corrections throughout the document.

84. Kabin Namah, marriage registry document, 12½" × 8½", 1823 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

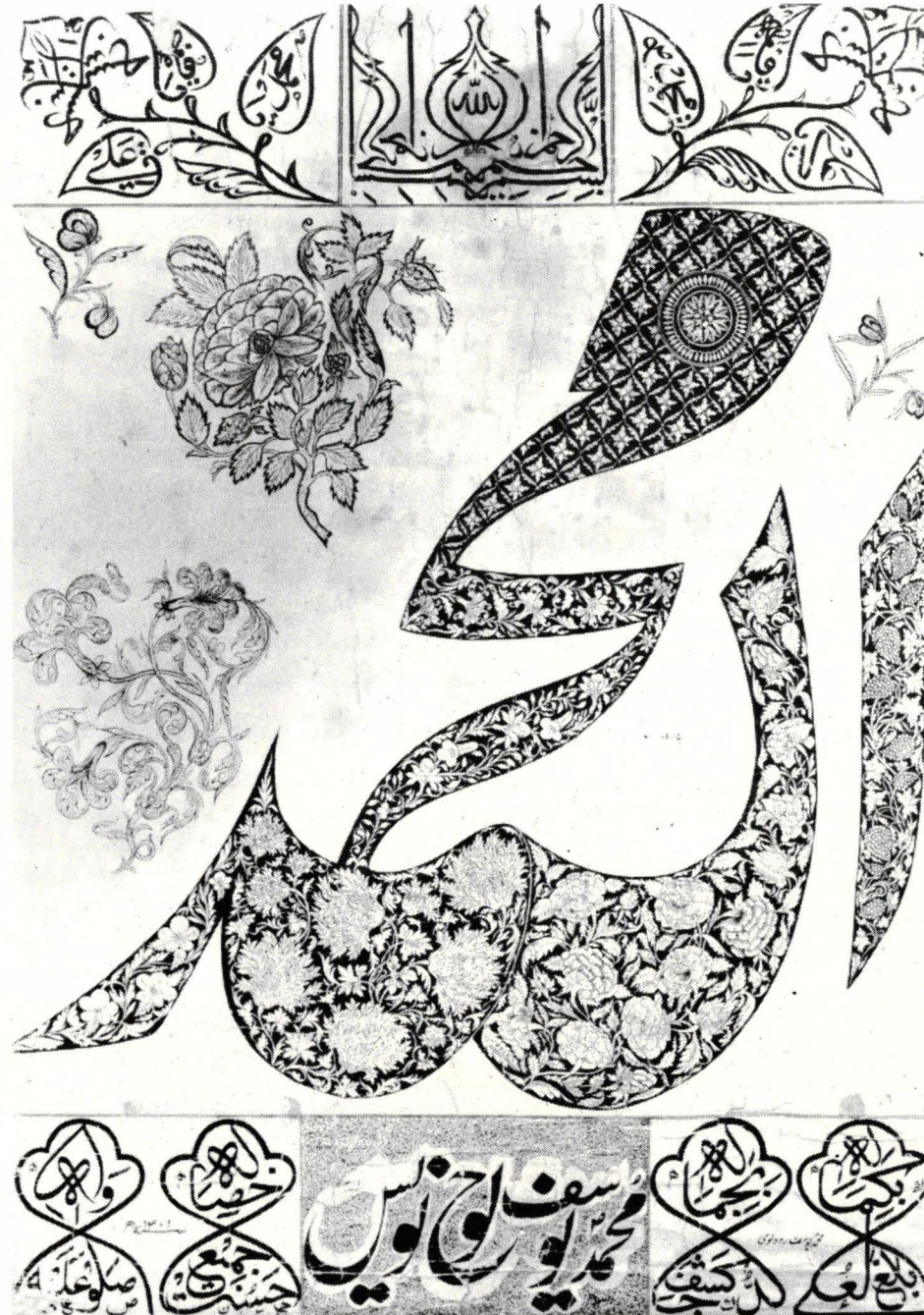


85. Specimen of calligraphy, $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 12\frac{1}{2}''$, *Gulzar* type of *Nastaliq*, by Mirza Bahadur Husain of Dhaka. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



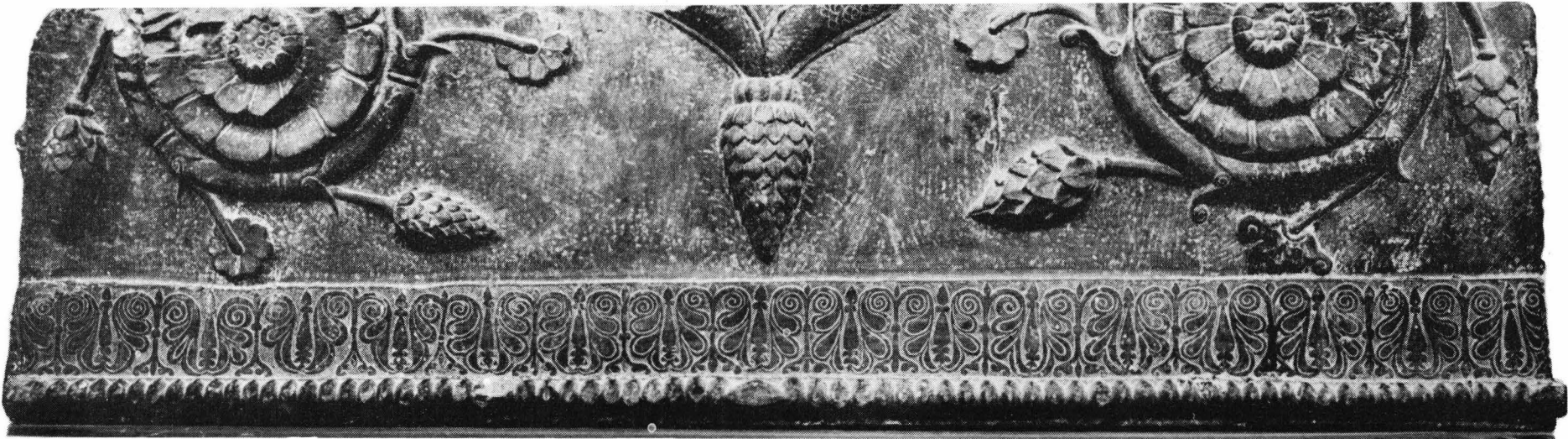
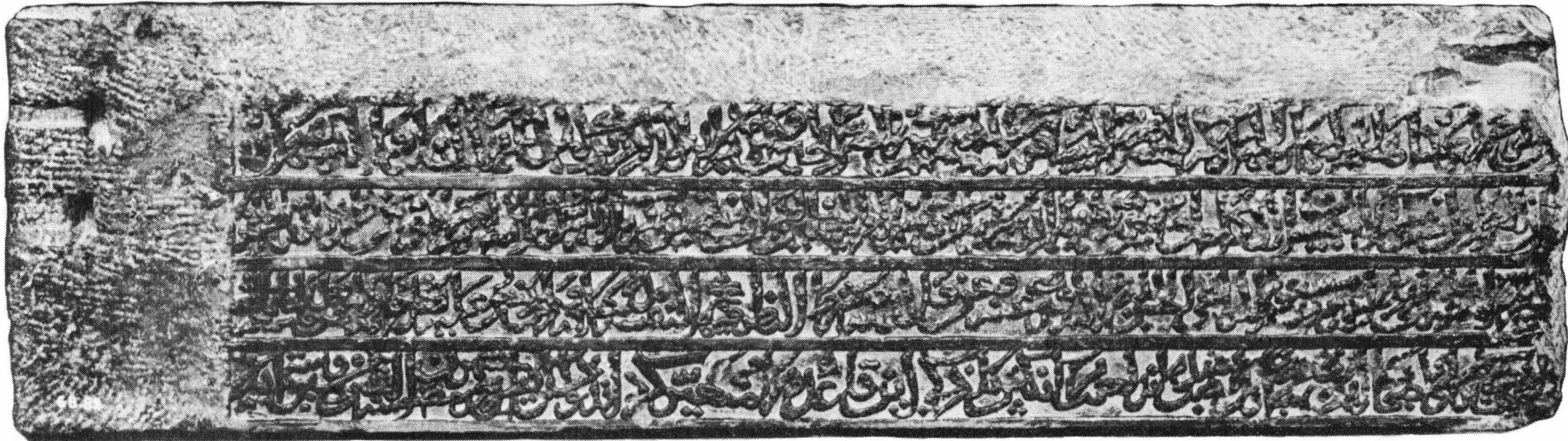
86. Specimen of Calligraphy, 5½" × 9½", *Nasta'liq*, by Ilahi Buksh.
Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

87. Specimen of Calligraphy, 25" × 18½", *Nastaliq*, by Muhammad Yusuf, Dhaka.



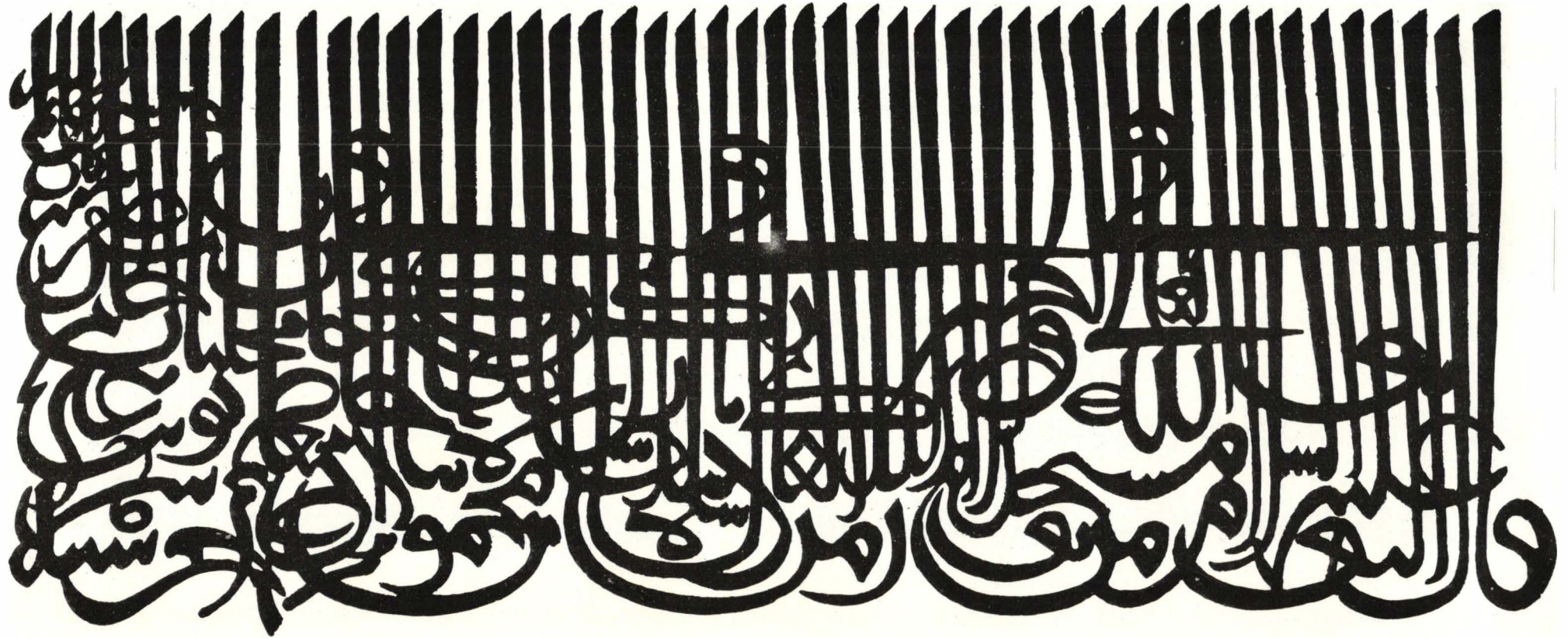
Except the discovery of two coins with *Kufic* script found during excavations, one from Paharpur belonging to Khalifa Harun-al-Rashid and the other from Mainamati, belonging to Khalifa Al-Mustasimillah, there is no evidence of *Kufic* writing in Bangladesh. *Naskh* was the most common script used in Bangladesh till the Mughals introduced *Nastaliq* and, more laterly, *Shikasta*. The earliest written document in Arabic from Bangladesh is the stone inscription in the Bangladesh National Museum from Sitalmath in the district of Rajshahi (Plates 88a & b) dated 652 A. H./1254 A. D. The rectangular black basalt slab measuring 45½" by 11½" records in early *Naskh* the erection of a sacred structure for pious people engaged in prayers by order of Abul Fath Yuzbak al-Sultani. On the back of the slab is carved a rectangular design containing rosettes enclosed by a raised beaded band, indicating that the slab might have belonged to some Hindu structure. The Arabic inscription of Sultan Barbak Shah at Hatkhola, Sylhet (Plate 89), of 1460 A. D., 12" by 27"; as well as the inscription of Sultan Husain Shah from Kusumba, Rajshahi (Plate 90), in the Varendra Research Museum, 10" × 23", are two of the finest examples of *Tughra* style of Bangladesh. The inscription of Sultan Jalaluddin Mohammad Shah, from Mandra, Dhaka, 21" × 30½", 1427 A. D. (Plate 76), the inscription of Sultan Nusrat Shah from Sonargaon, Dhaka, 15¾" × 47", 1522 A. D. (Plate 91) and that of prince Shah Shuja from *Bara Katra*, Dhaka, 17" × 50", 1644 A. D. (Plate 92), all now in the Bangladesh National Museum, show the gradual development of *Naskh* in this region. The last one is perhaps the best executed among the monumental epigraphs of Bangladesh. The inscription from Fulchowki, Rangpur, 53" × 13¾", 1772 A. D. (Plate 93), the inscription of Ghulam Mohammad from Satalur Barisal, 16½" × 32½", 1738 A. D. (Plate 77), and the one from Bandar, Narayanganj (Plate 94), again all in the Bangladesh National Museum, show use of *Nastaliq* at a late period of

144 Mughal rule.

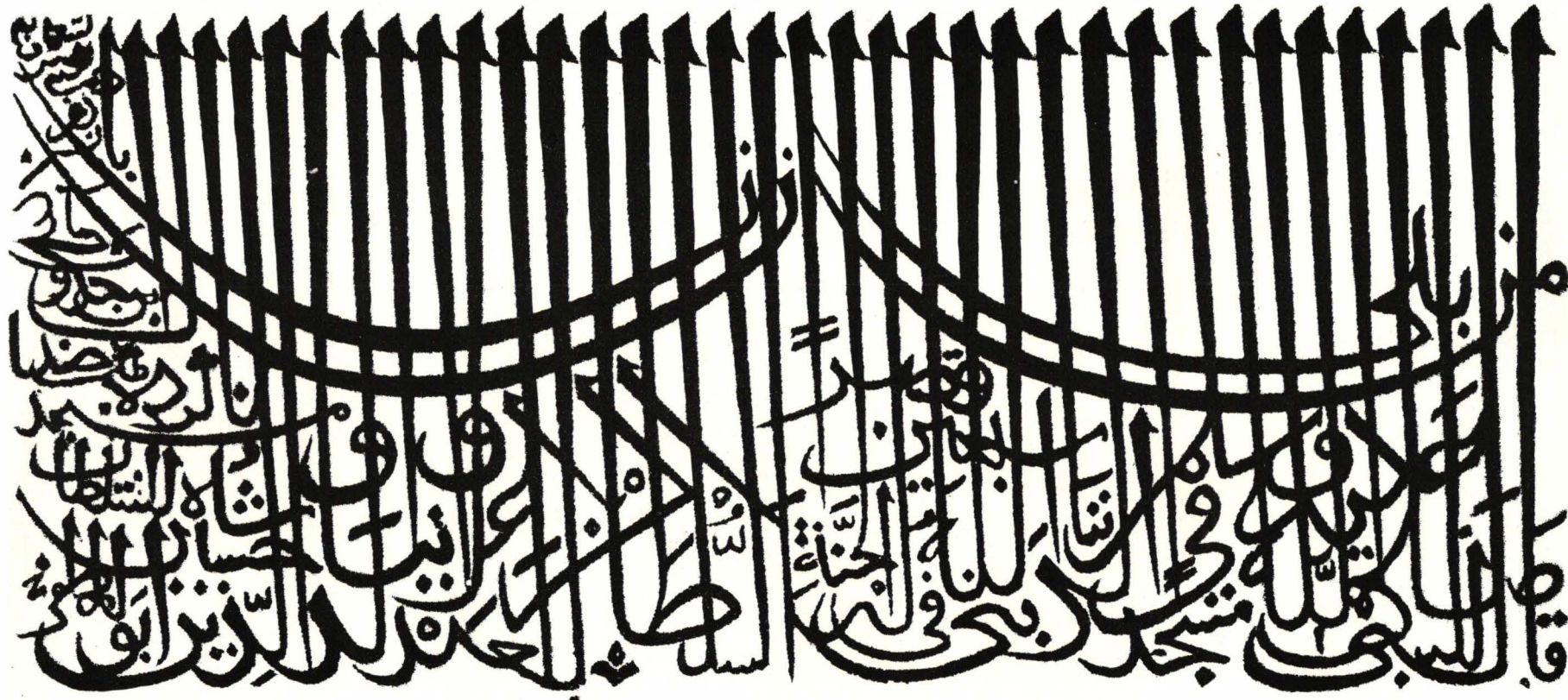


88a. Sitalmath inscription of Abul Fath Yuzbak, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 53 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 652 A. H./
1254 A. D., from Sitalmath, Rajshahi. Bangladesh National Museum,
Dhaka.

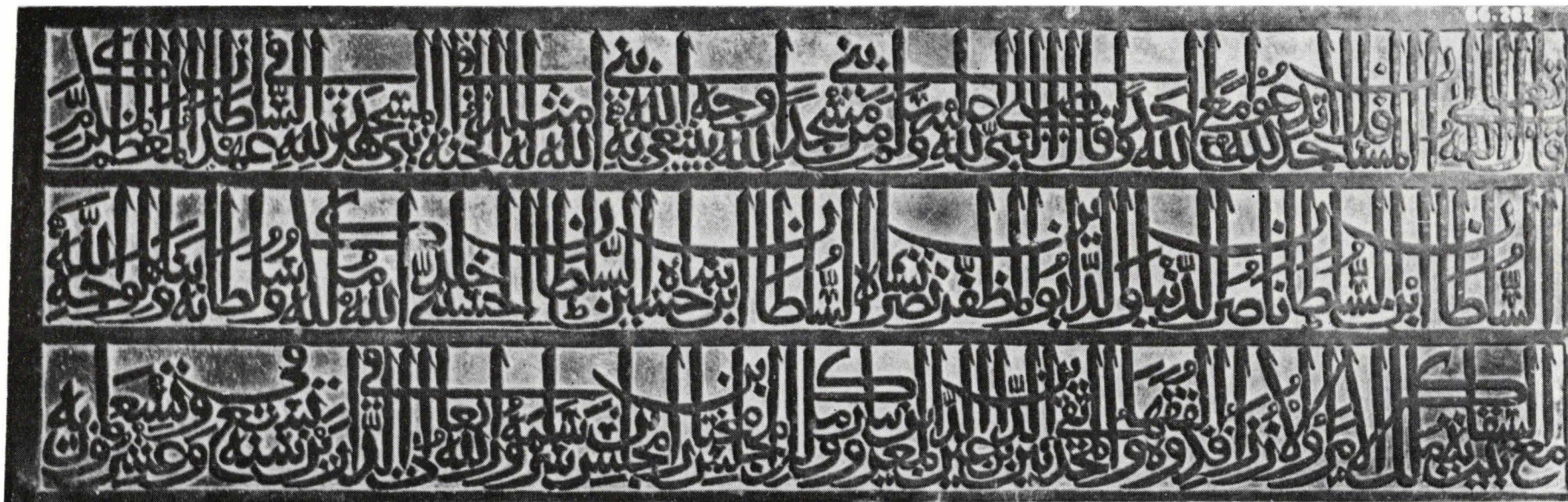
b. Reverse of above.



89. Hatkhola inscription of Sultan Barbak Shah, 12"×27", 868 A. H./
1460 A. D., *in situ* at Hatkhola, Sylhet.



90. Kusumba inscription of Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah, 23"×10", 904 A. H./1498 A. D., from Kusumba, Rajshahi. Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.



91. Sonargaon inscription of Sultan Nurat Shah, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ "x47", 929 A. H./1522 A. D., from Sonargaon, Dhaka. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



92. Bara Katra inscription of Shah Shuja, 17"×50", 1644 A. D. from Bara Katra, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



93. Fulchowki inscription of Emperor Shah Alam, 53"×13½", 1186 A. H./1772 A. D., from Fulchowki, Rangpur. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

94. Qadam Rasul inscription of Ghulam Nabi, 22" × 15", 1191 A. H./ 1777 A. D., from Nabiganj, Dhaka, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



It is natural that copies of excellently calligraphed *Quran*, produced locally as well as brought from outside, have survived in Bangladesh. Three copies of the holy book are being illustrated here, all belonging to the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka. The first one, H. 7¼" by 5", is copied in *Naskh* by Khawaja Shaikh in 1091 A. H./1680 A. D. (Plate 73). The opening pages are ornamented with broad abstract designs in gold on a deep blue ground and the punctuations and headings are picked up in gold. The second one, belonging to 17th century A. D. is also written in *Naskh* (Plate 74). Its opening four pages are richly illuminated in gold, green, blue and red. The borders of third and fourth pages are beautifully decorated in floral and vegetal designs. Each page contains nine line each line being bound in separate cusped panel bordered with gold. Sub-sections are indicated within pendants of round, lozenge-shaped and eight-pointed stars. Chapter headings are inscribed in white on gold and orthographical notes in the margin are in red. The third one is a *Quran* in scroll, 35'1 by 4", copied in *Naskh* in 19th century by Abul Fath on cloth-backed paper (Plate 81). The opening portion is illuminated in gold. The scroll proceeds with the verses on arabesque in light gold as background. The verses are calligraphed intelligently to produce at intervals *tasmia*, name of Prophet Muhammad (sm.) and names of eleven *Imams* of the Shia sect. The names are outlined with *Gulzar* type of *Naskh* and filled up by the text of *Quran* written in minute *Naskh* scripts.

Besides *Quran*, many other important manuscripts are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka. Among them may be mentioned a halograph manuscript of *Sharh-i-Rubaiyat* of poet Jami copied in *Nastaliq* in 1477 A. D., *Makhzan-ul-Asrar* of poet Nizami copied in *Nastaliq* in 1513 A. D., *Shahnamah* of Firdausi copied (Plate 82) and illustrated in 1599 A. D., another *Shahnamah* copied and illustrated in 1677 A. D., *Akbarnamah* of Abul Fazl copied in *Naskh* in 1641 151

A. D., Emperor Shahjahan's personal copy of *Bustan* by Shaikh Saadi copied by Muhammad Murad in *Nastaliq* (Plate 83) in circa 1650 A. D., *Lataif-i-Ashrafi* compiled by Gharib-al-Yamini in 1753 A. D. and the *Fatwa-i-Alamgiri* copied in *Naskh* in 1827 A. D. Attempts were also made to write Bengali text in Arabic scripts particularly in Chittagong area, from late 18th to mid-19th century A. D., but the tradition did not last long. Many Bengali literary and liturgical works were produced in Arabic script. The *Maqtul Husain*, copied in mid-19th century A. D., is illustrated as an example (Plate 75).

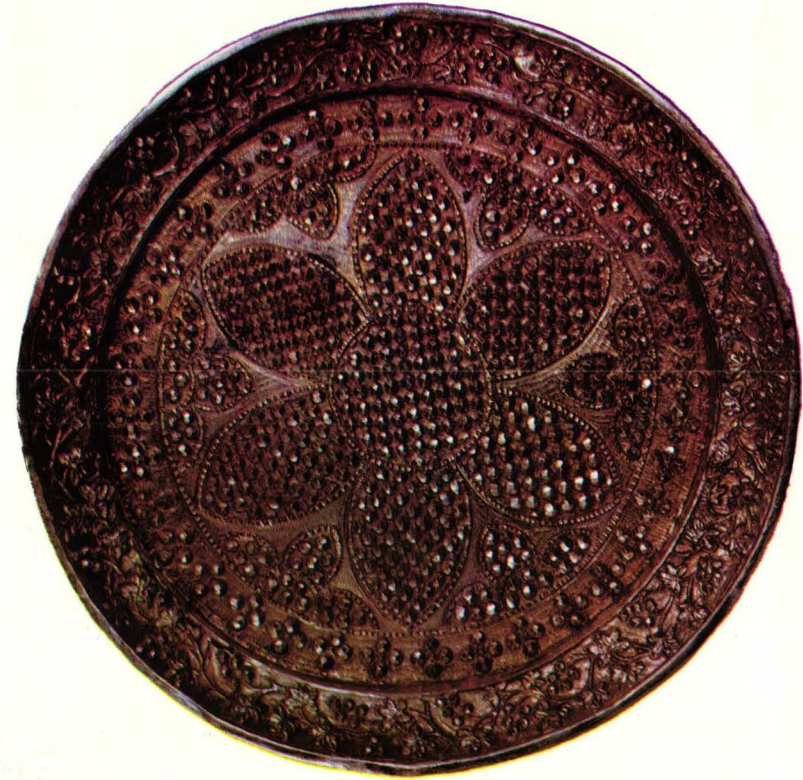
Samples of calligraphy by eminent contemporary masters were collected and treasured throughout the Islamic world. A number of specimens are preserved in Bangladesh National Museum (Plates 85, 86 & 87) all showing *Gulzar* type of *Nastaliq*. In one of them (Plate 85), the letters have been employed to produce an outline for various designs which fill the blank spaces within. The detail shows human and animal figures along with varieties of plants and flowers. Documents related to state subjects or personal affairs also demonstrated the calibre of calligraphy. A *farman* of Emperor Shah Jahan in *Tughra* about the reinstatement of a dismissed *Qanungo* in 1656 A. D. and a *Kabin Namah* (Plate 84) in *Nastaliq* dated 1823 A. D., both preserved in Bangladesh National Museum, are noteworthy. The last named document sets some conditions of marriage, one of them requires that the husband is allowed to beat the wife for her fault but on condition that no scar mark should be left on her body. During the Muslim period, needless to say that the calligraphy in Bengali scripts also prospered (Plate 178). The above specimens speak much of the development of calligraphy which is always regarded, as elsewhere, as a very subtle and demanding aspect of the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh.



95. *Aftaba*, H. 36", brass, 19th century, from Dhaka.



96. Tray, D. 12", brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



97. Tray, D. 9", brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



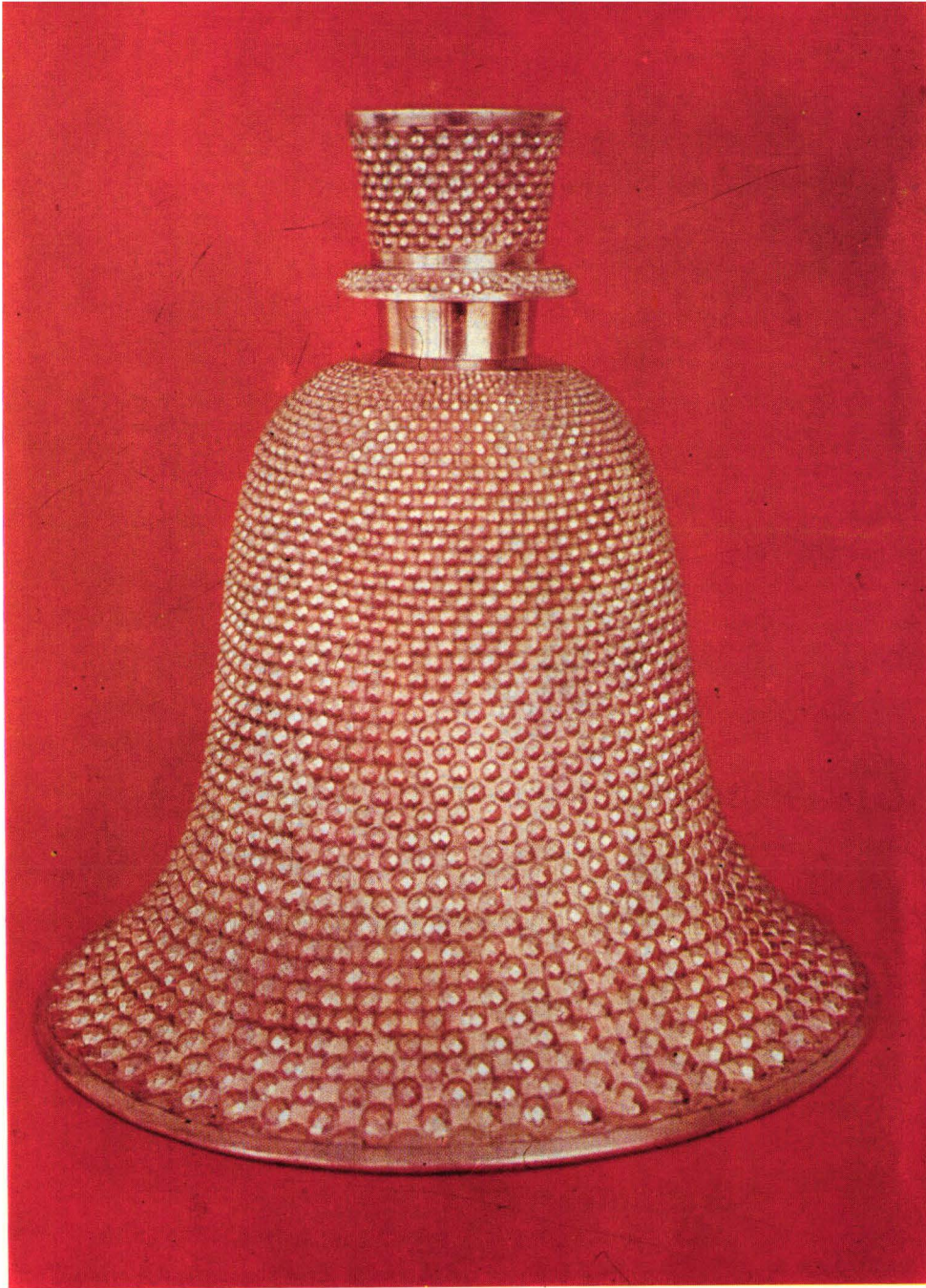
98. Tray, D. 5½", brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



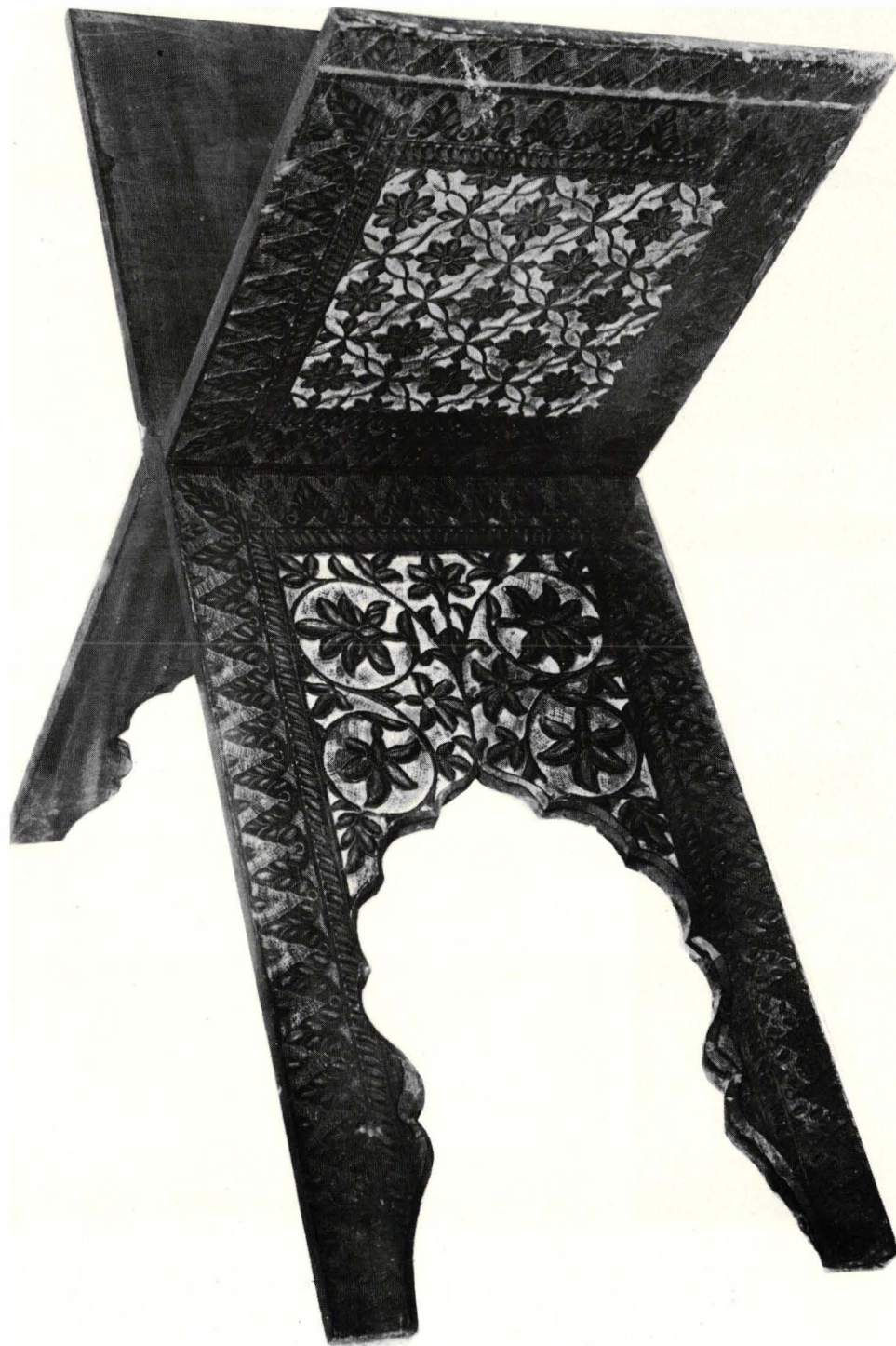
99. Tray, D. 24¼", brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



100. *Hukka* bowl. H. 8¼", Silver, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



101. *Hukka* bowl, H. 8", Silver, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



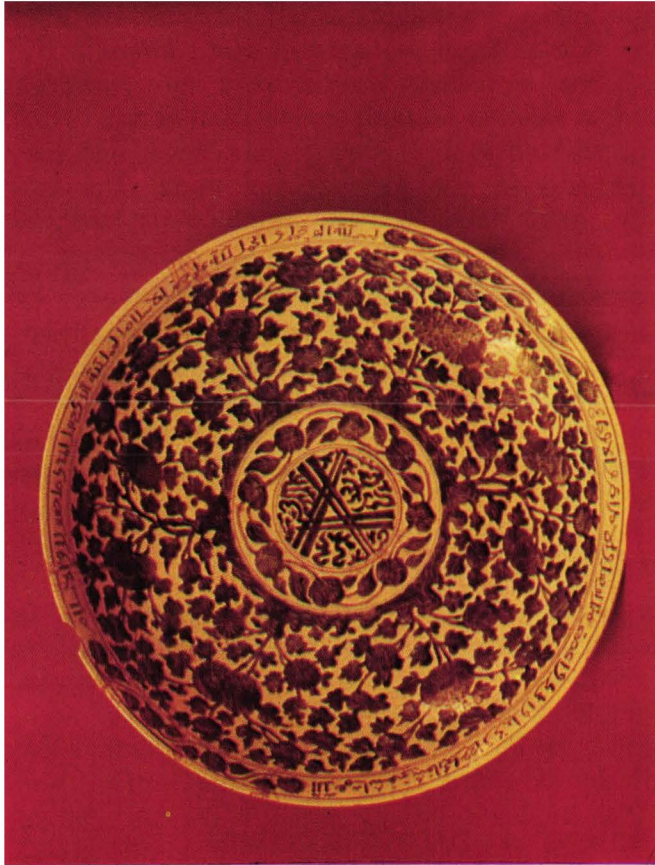
102. *Rihl*, H. 30"; wood, from Jangalbari, Mymensingh, 19th century.

Metalworks

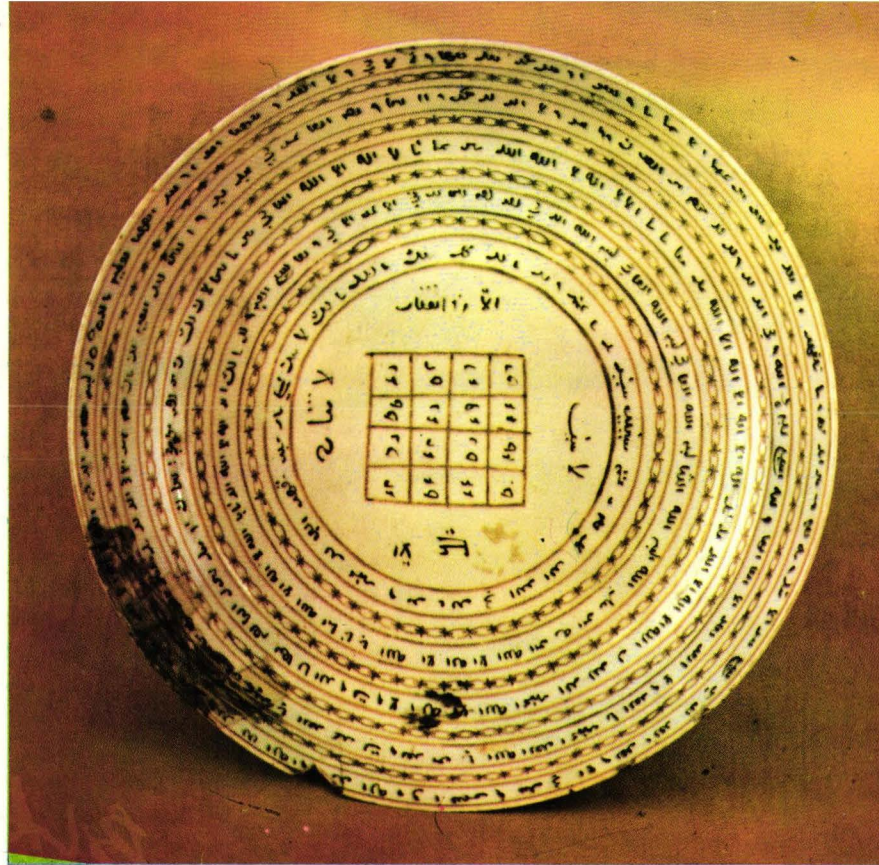
Metalwork has always enjoyed a prestige in the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh. Although, in the world of Islam, artisans embraced styles and techniques of earlier civilisations or neighbouring cultures, yet the workmanship displayed recognisable decorative motifs. Even the objects of an intimate and personal nature were embellished with rich ornamentation which raised the most modest product to the level of art. Their elegant designs contributed to their commercial success and they were in much demand in the international trade. The fact of their durability gave them a high standing as well as impressive appearance.

None of the most commonly used metals in the works of art in Bangladesh namely, the gold, silver, copper, tin, lead, bronze, brass, iron etc. are normally available within the country. Therefore, the metals were imported as also some of the metal wares. It appears that brass was the popular medium of metal works in Bangladesh which demonstrated adornment of at least five main types, often two or more of which were found in combination. The types are engraving, inlay, filigree, repousse and casting.

Almost all the metal wares noticed here are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka. The household utensils of ordinary use are mostly decorated with engraving of brass. Some of the examples are the high-necked *Aftaba* or ewer with spout (Plate 95), H. 36", *Pikdan* or spitoon (Plate 135), H. 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", a pair of *Surahi* (Plate 183) with floral motifs, and the rectangular tray of brass (Plate 134), 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", all of 19th century A. D. The workmanship employed in the above pieces is often called *Moradabadi* after the famous centre of Moradabad in India for such work. Actually *Moradabadi* craft is practised widely in remote localities of the subcontinent where the surface of the metal is chased and loaded with lac or other pigments producing interlaced arabesque, floral or

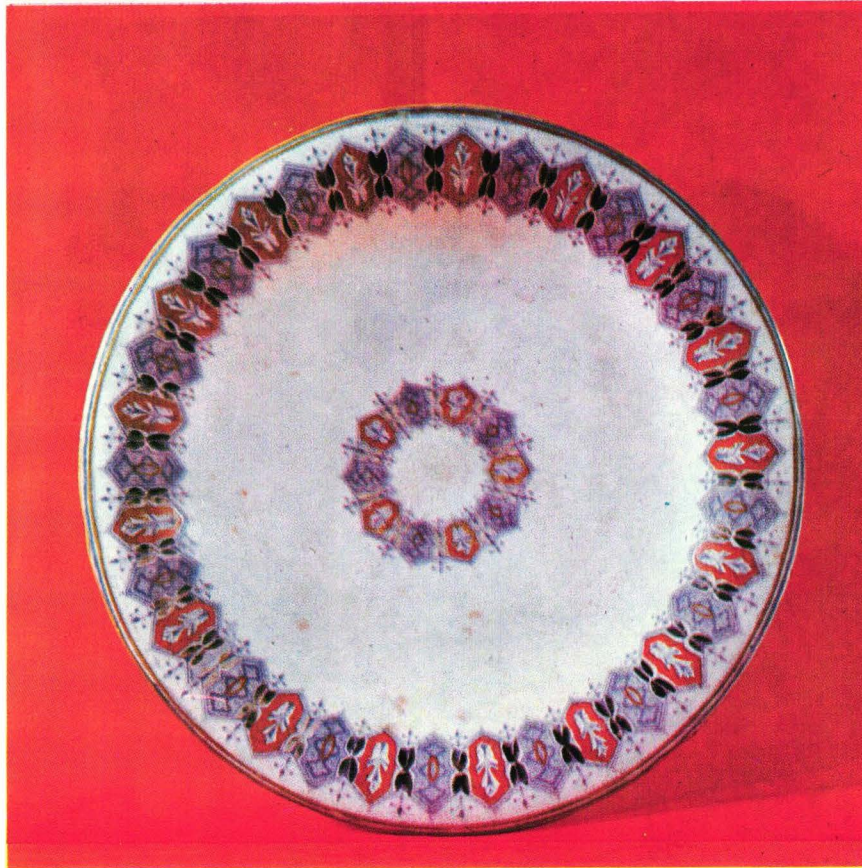


103. Dish, D. 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ "', Chinese porcelain, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

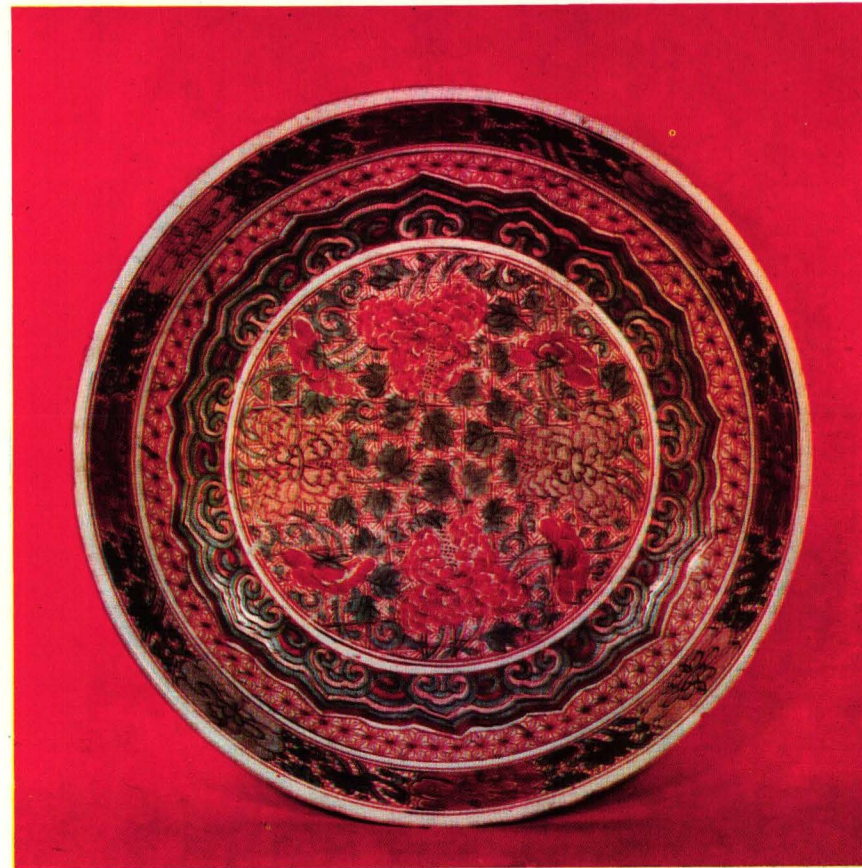


104. Plate, D. 8"', Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

105. Plate, D. 9", Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

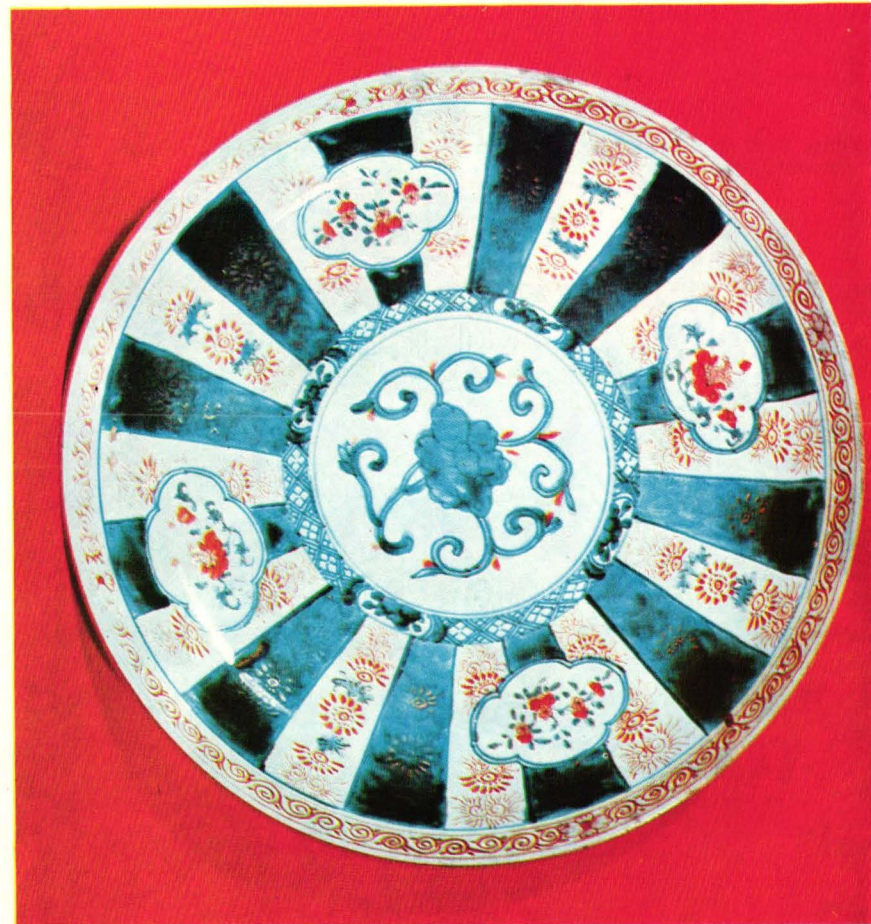


106. Plate, D. 13", Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



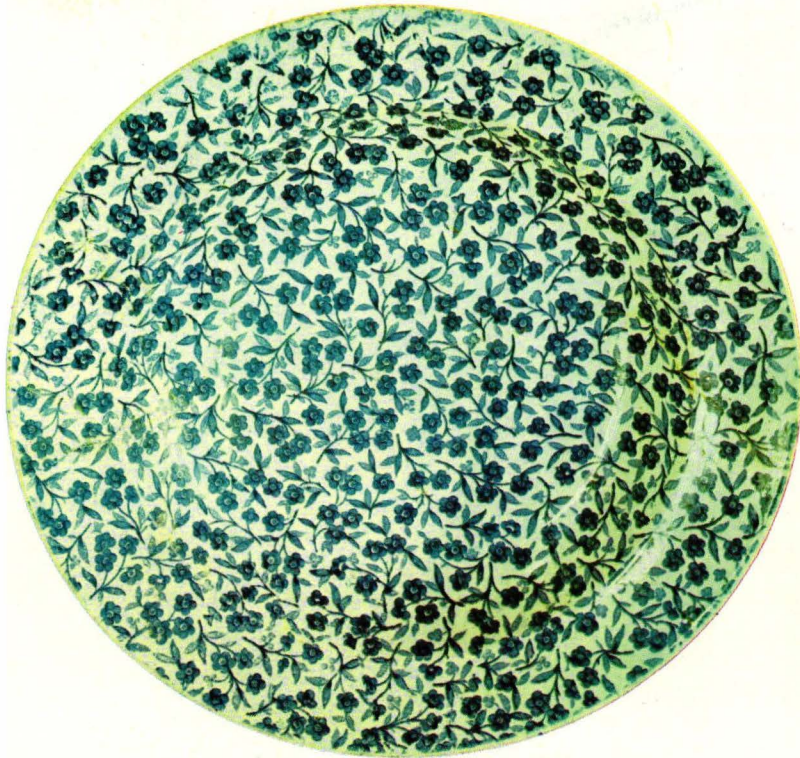


107. Plate, D. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



108. Plate, D. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

109. Plate, D. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



110. Plate, D. 10", Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

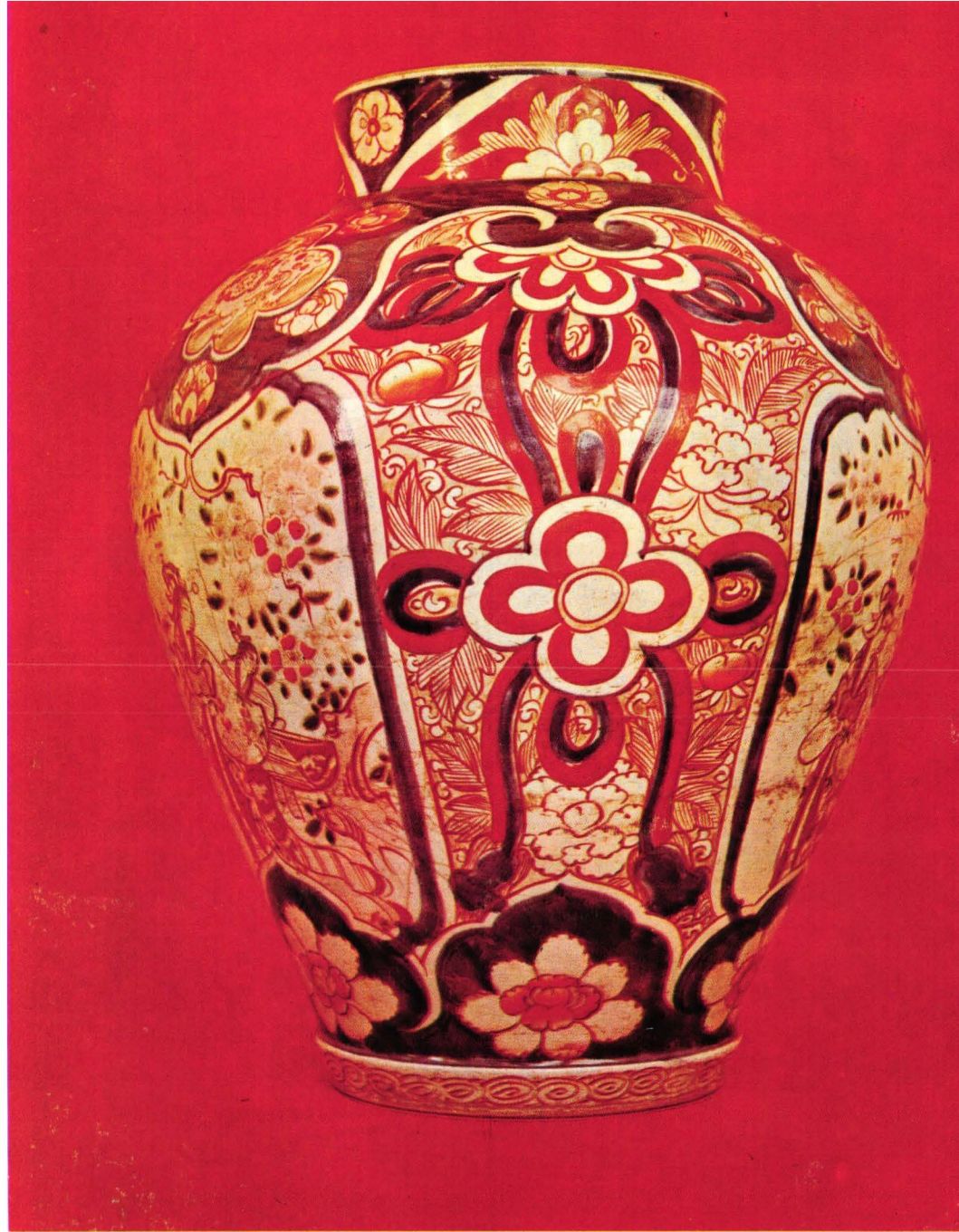




111. Plate, D. 18", Chinese celadon, 17th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

112. Dish, D. 14½"; Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

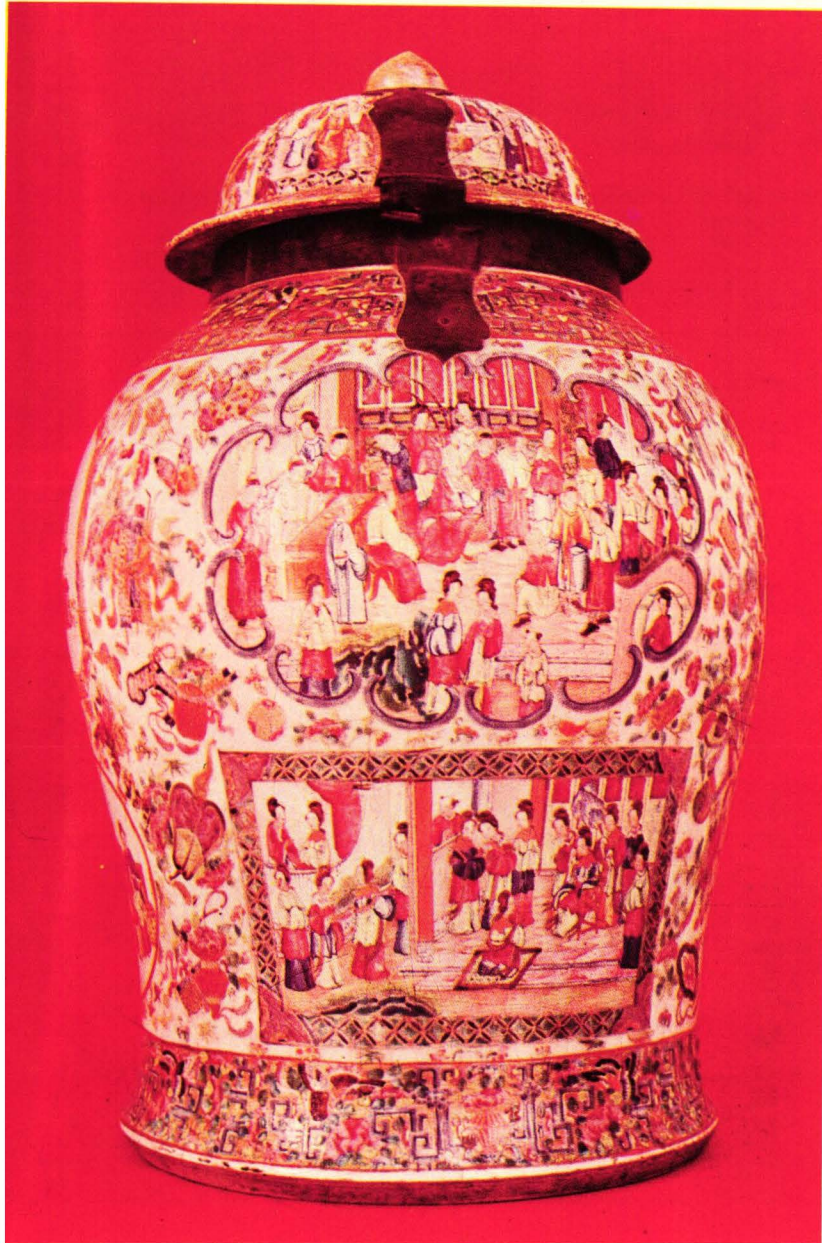




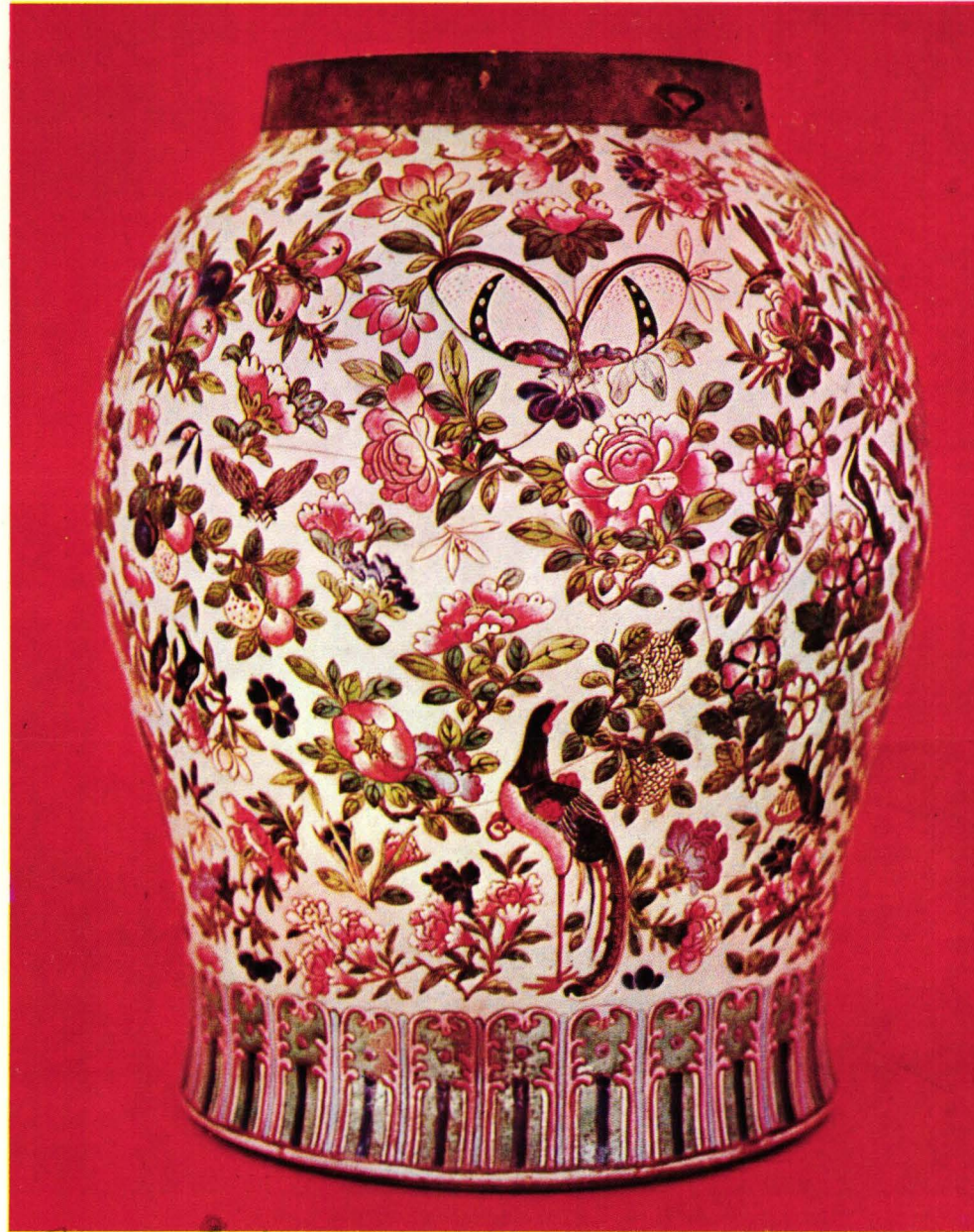
113. Storage jar, H.15½", Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



114. Storage jar, H. 11¼", Chinese porcelain, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



115. Storage jar, H. 24", Chinese porcelain, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



116. Storage jar, H. 19", Chinese porcelain, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



117. Cups and Saucers, inscribed and dated porcelain, 1292 A. H./1875 A. D., belonging to Khan Bahadur (Later Nawab Bahadur) Abdul Latif, H. (cup) 2", D. (Saucer) 5½". Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

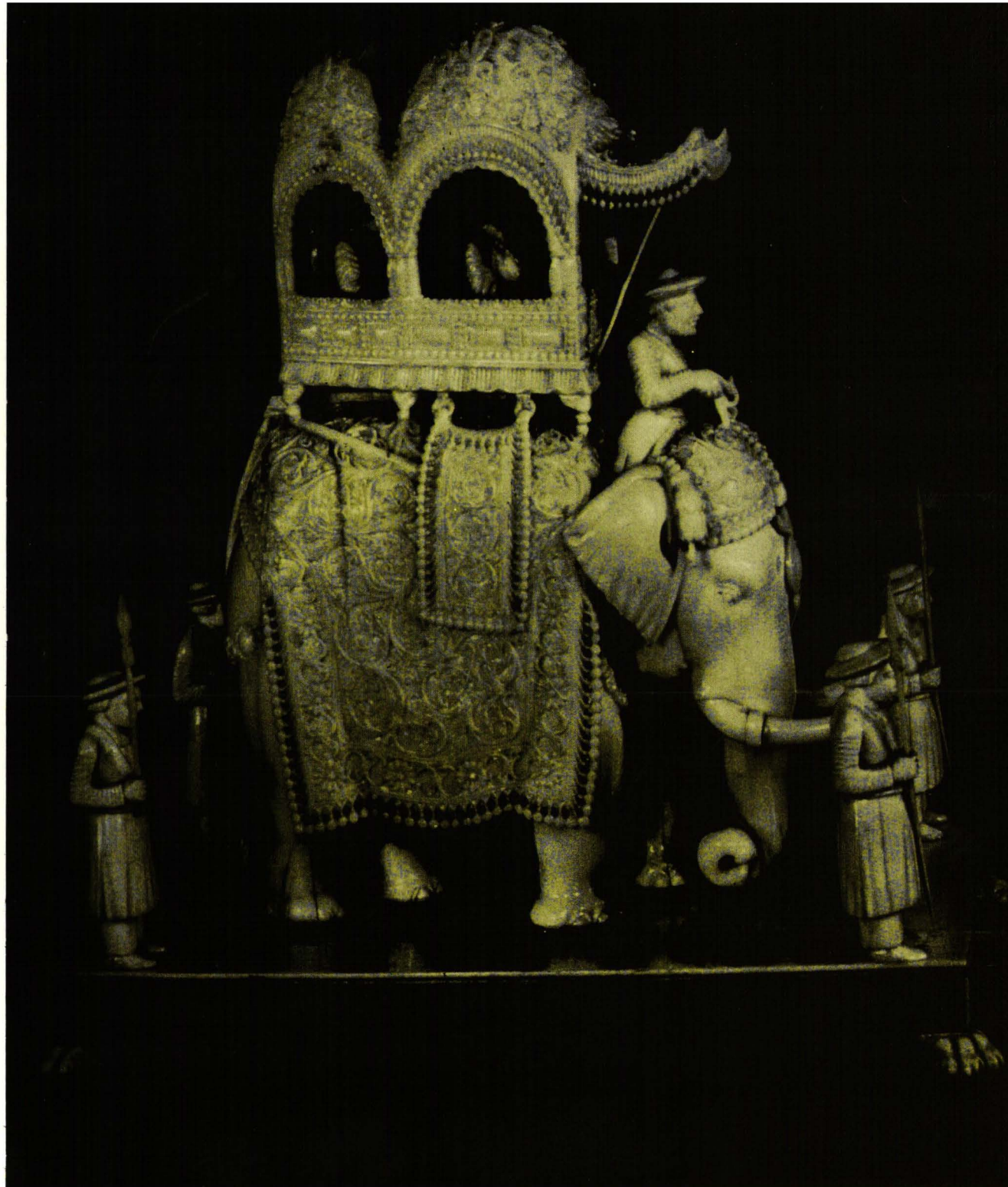


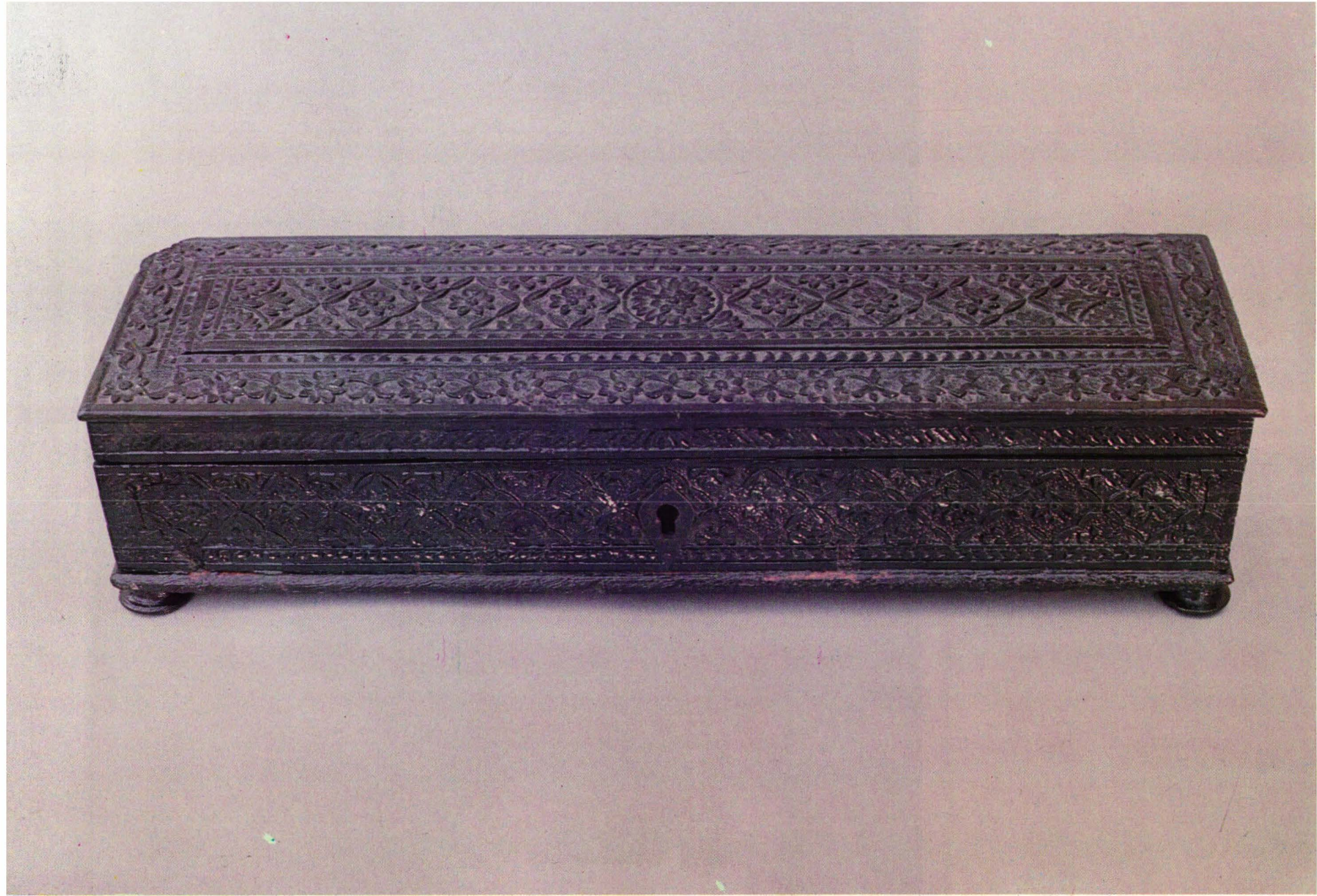
118. Legs of throne, ivory, H. 11", 18th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



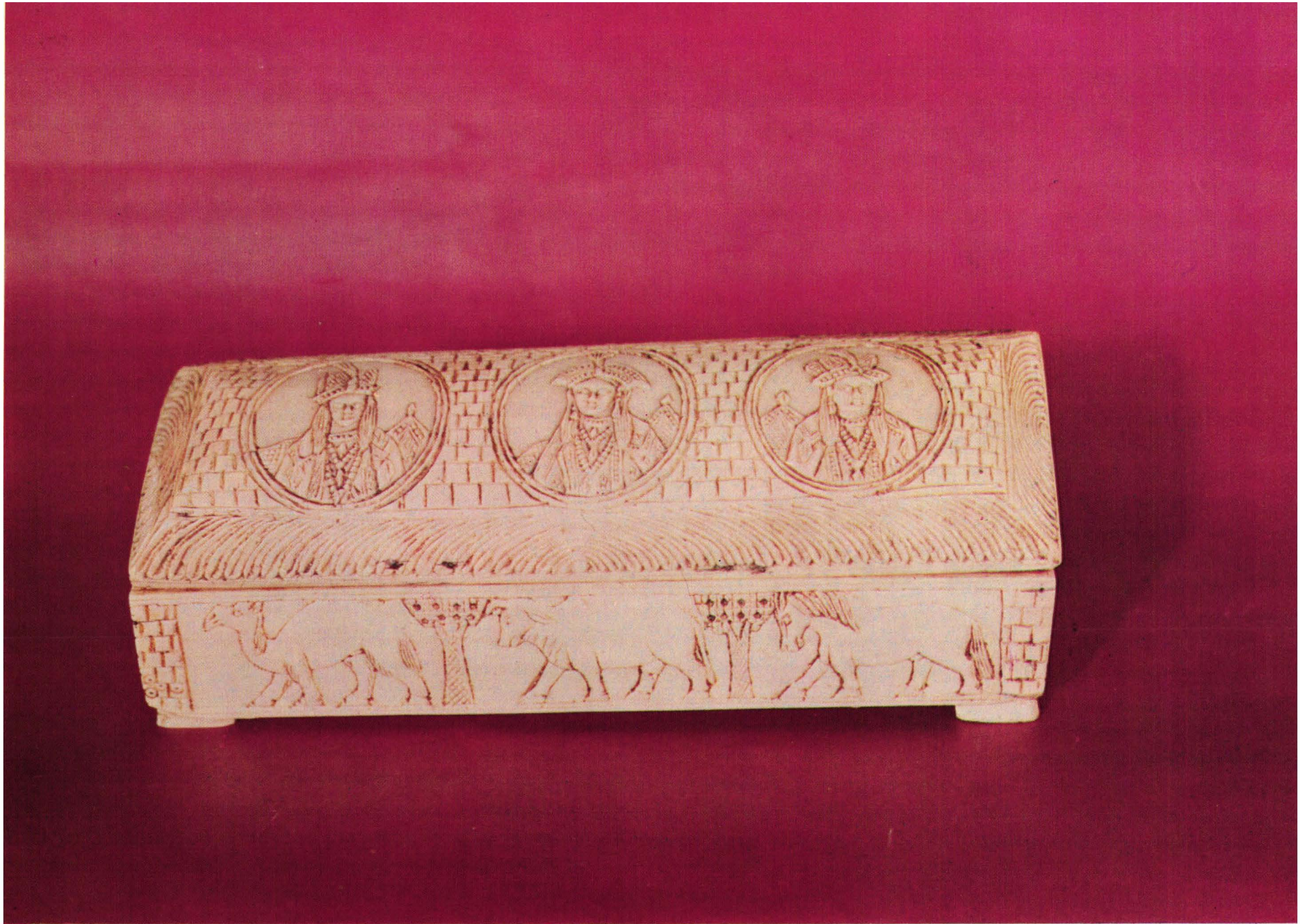
119. Miniature *Darbar* of Emperor Shah Alam, ivory, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

120. Caparisoned elephant, ivory, 18th-19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.





121. *Kalamdan*, pen-case of sandal wood, L. 10", 19th century A. D.
Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



122. *Kalamdan*, pen-case of ivory, L. 8", 19th century A. D. Bangladesh
National Museum, Dhaka.





124. Swords, 18-19th centuries A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

123. Left Page Daggers, 17-18th centuries A. D. Bangladesh National Museum Dhaka.



125. Knives, ivory, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

126. *Atardan*, perfume pot of silver filigree work of Dhaka, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.





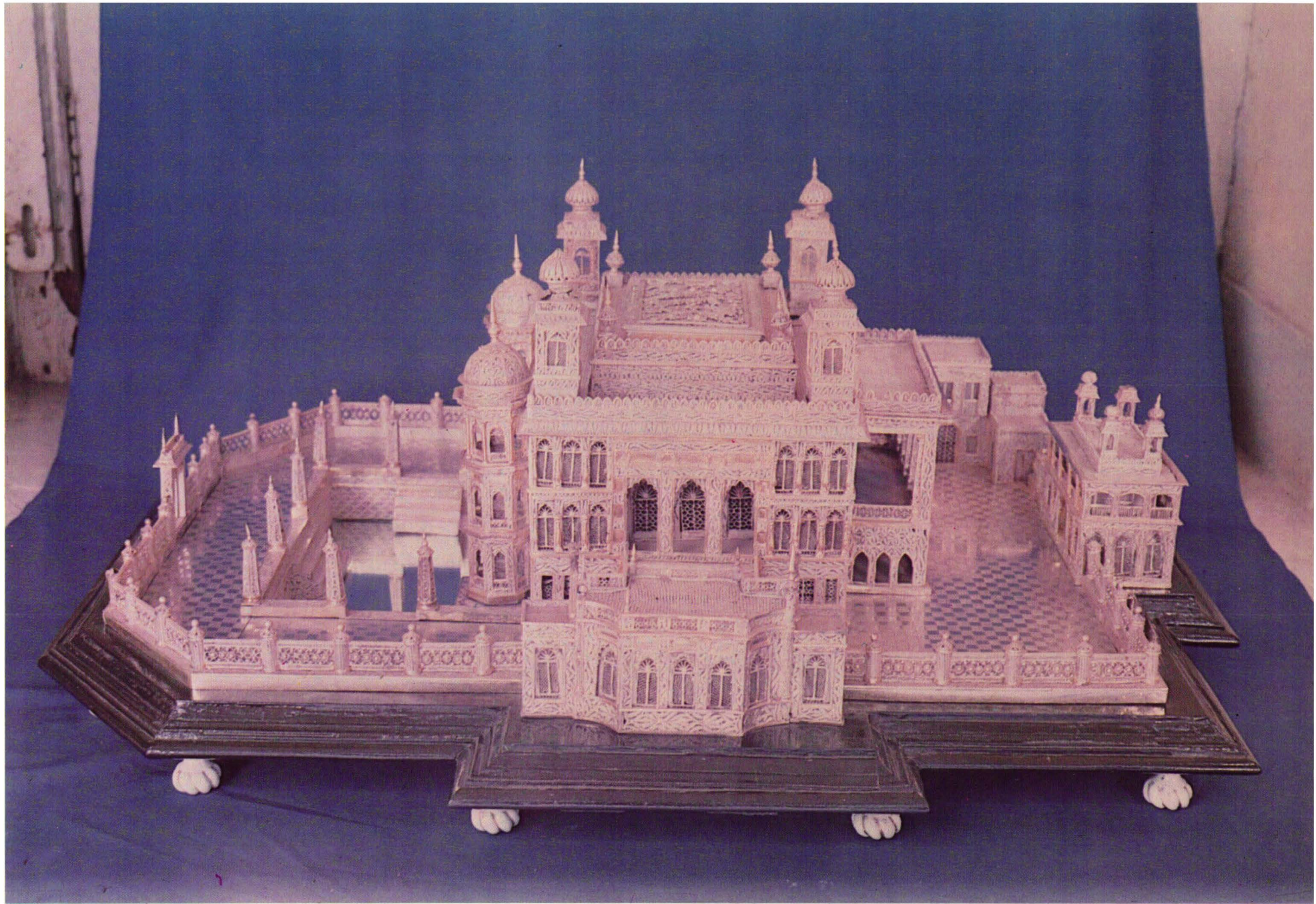
127. *Golabpash*, rose water sprinkler of silver with decoration produced by chasing, H. 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ "', 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

128. *Golapash*, rose water sprinkler of silver filigree work of Dhaka, H. 14", 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

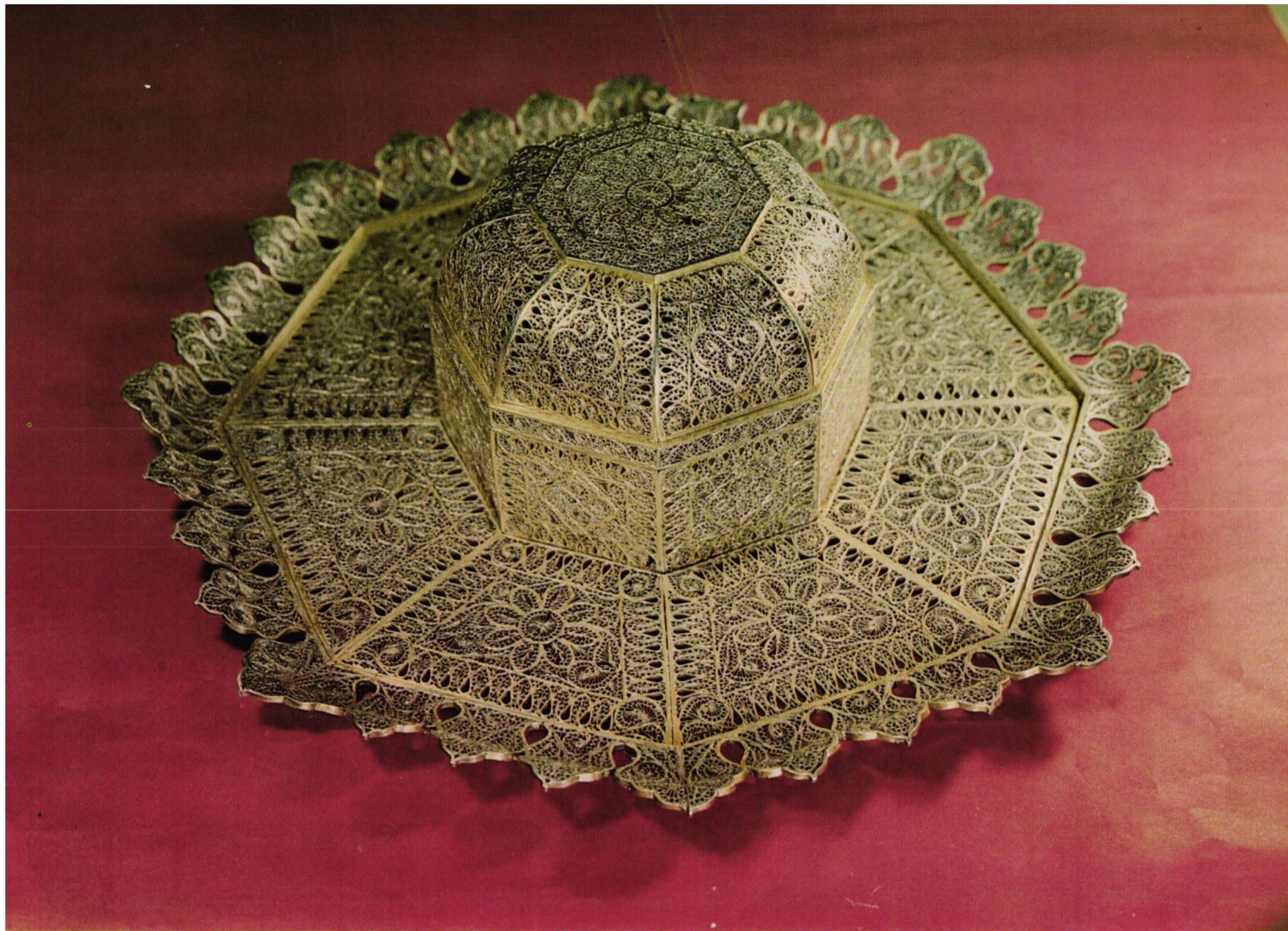




129. Model of Ahsan Manzil, gold and silver filigree work of Dhaka, L. 18", W. 20", H. 15", made in 1905 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

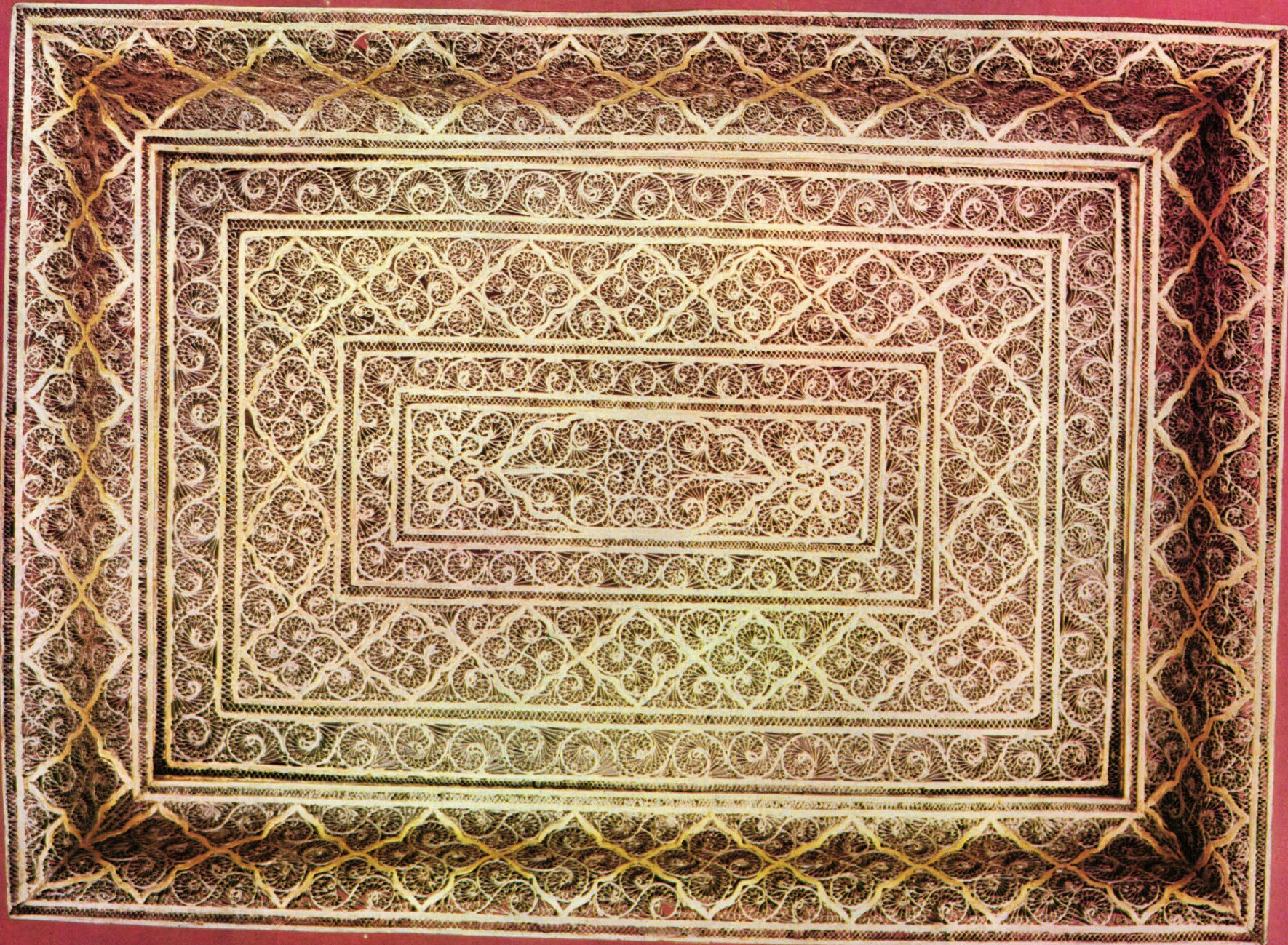


130. Model of Husaini Dalan, gold and silver filigree work of Dhaka, L. 30½", W. 24½", H. 13", made in 1905 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



131. *Khasdan*, casket of silver filigree work of Dhaka, 19th century A. D.
Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

132. Right Page Tray, silver filigree work of Dhaka, $9\frac{1}{2}'' \times 7\frac{3}{8}''$, 19th century A. D.
Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.







134. Tray, $17\frac{1}{2}'' \times 11\frac{1}{2}''$, brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

133. Left Page 'Jewellery Box, silver filigree' work of Dhaka, 19th century A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



135. *Pikdan*, H. 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ "', brass, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

136. *Surahi*, H. 11½", silver *bichri*, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



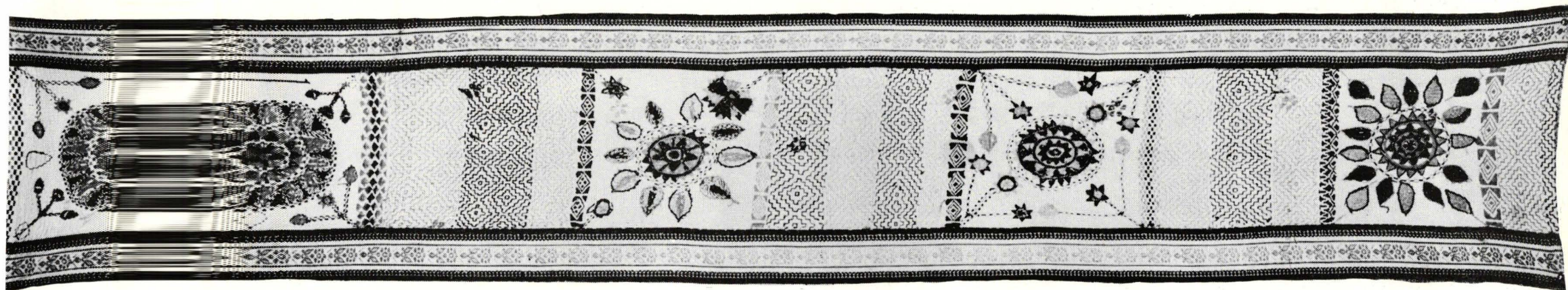
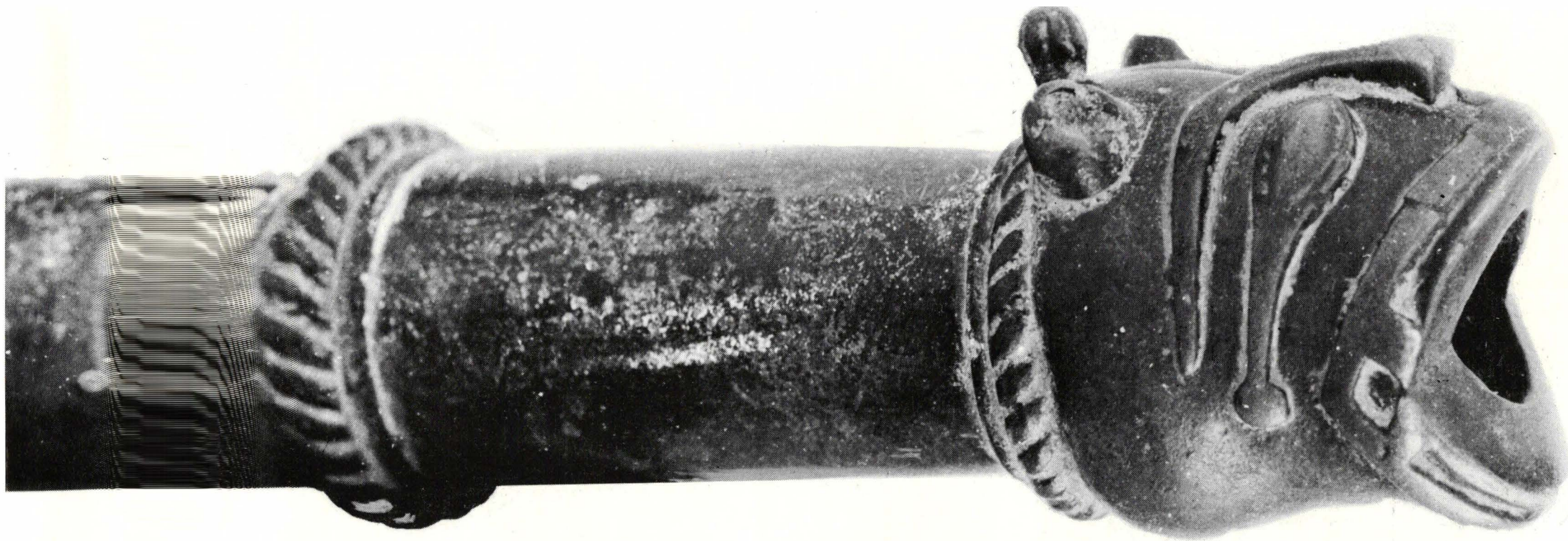
vegetal designs. Engraving by simple incision with elaborate designs but without application of any further treatment were also produced extensively (Plate 99). Examples of engraving where the design is raised by chasing the metal can be found in round shaped trays of brass (Plates 96 & 97), *Hukka* bowls of silver (Plates 100 & 101) and *Golabpash* of silver (Plate 127).

The inlay work consists of a system of ornamentation where decorative metals, such as gold, silver or copper, are hammered into an area previously grooved or hollowed with designs. This encrustation is also called damascening or *Koftgari* work. This is widely practised on the iron or steel base of mediaeval Indo-Persian arms and armours. Examples can be found in the shields (Plates 166 & 171), and the helmet (Plate 172), H. 21", the last one reportedly belonging to Emperor Shah Abbas the Great of Persia (1587-1628) and now in the collection of Bangladesh National Museum. *Kalamdans* or pen-cases of brass (Plates 175 & 176) decorated in one with beautiful calligraphy and arabesque and in the other with floral *koftgari* work, were much sought after items among the nobilities till they went out of fashion in this century. Mediaeval weapons, such as, swords, daggers, *Katars* etc. had either their blades or hilts or both decorated with *koftgari* work (Plates 123, 124 & 173). Such decorations were often with geometric and floral motifs, or calligraphed inscriptions from the *Quran*, or human and animal figures showing prowess.

Weapons of cast iron or bronze are also noteworthy examples of metalwork. The cannon of Mughal Governor Mir Jumla (Plate 192) L. 11 feet, now placed at the Gulistan end of the D.I.T. Avenue of Dhaka, is a remarkable piece of cast iron weapon. Popularly called as 'Bibi Mariam' its bore at the breach is 19" and at the muzzle 6". Mir Jumla is said to have placed two big cannons, one in the front of *Bara Katra* and other on a small island called Mughlany Chur in the Buriganga. The second cannon, which is now lost into the river, was 22'10½" long with



137. Ewer, H. 12', silver, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



138. Cannon, L. 57", brass, 1542 A. D., from Dewanbagh, Dhaka. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

139. *Dastarkhan*, 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times 112", *Nakshi Kantha*, from Faridpur, early 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



140. Coins, silver, of Sultans of Bangladesh and Delhi emperors, 14th-17th centuries, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

39'' diameter at the breech and 15'' bore. It was called 'Kalu Jham Jham'.

There are quite a good number of cannons in Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka. Among them, several pieces belonged to Emperor Sher Shah (1540-1545 A. D.). Marked by their muzzles shaped like a yawning tiger's head (Plate 138), these cannons were discovered in Dewanbagh in the district of Dhaka. These were cast by Syed Ahmed Rumi in 1542 A. D. as is revealed by an inscription recorded on the entire length, 57'', of a cannon. The inscription also refers to Fazal Ghazi of Bhawal, one of the *Bara Bhuiyas*. The weight of the cannon is recorded on its body: *two maunds* and *seven seers*. A few cannons, belonging to Isa Khan, were also discovered from Dewanbagh. One of them, L. 48½'', bears an inscription in Bengali which reads *Sarkar Sriyut Masnadalvi san hizar 1002*.

Specimens of metal work with inlay technique known as *bidri* are also preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka. The *Surahi* (Plate 136) or the high-necked pot, H. 11¼'', and the *Hukka* bowl (Plate 182), both done in *bidri* with *zar nashan* work had their extensive background chased or punched away thus leaving the floral ornamentation in relief. The depressions were then filled up with black lac producing a liberal background in black.

The technique of repousse, where the design is hammered out from behind to appear in relief on the surface was quite popular and usually employed in making trays, flower pots, ornaments etc. The round shaped tray of brass (Plate 98), D. 12'', having the cavetto decorated by repousse and perforation with fish motifs is an attractive piece of metalwork.

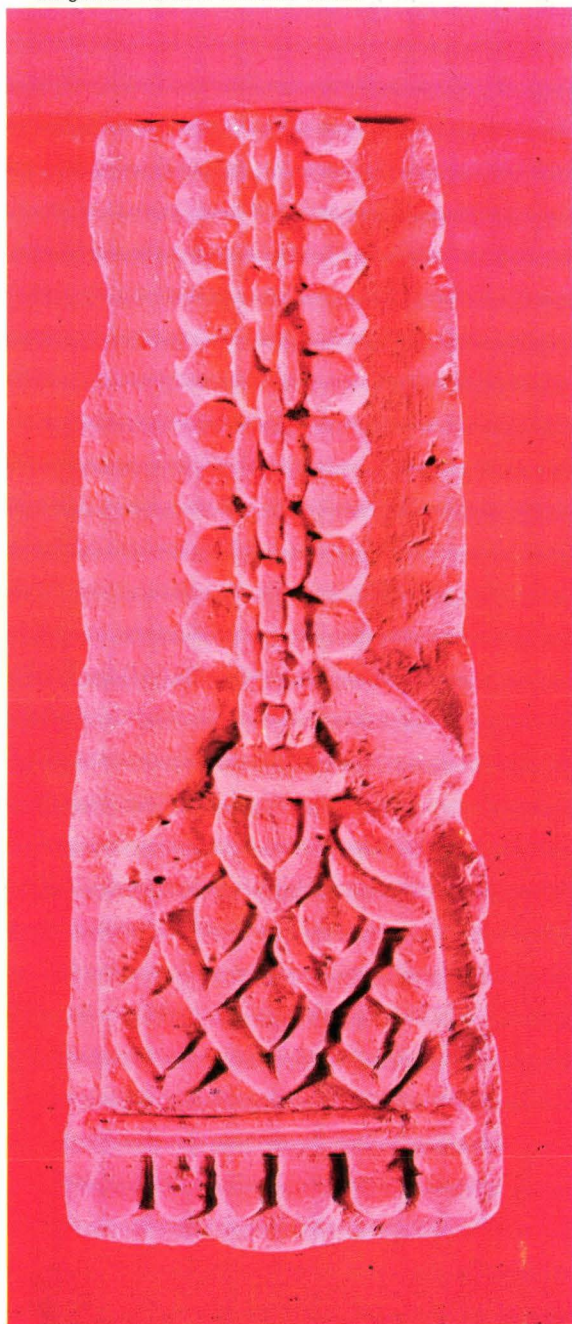
Of all the metal works patronised by the Muslims of Bangladesh the foremost in delicacy and refinement are the filigree works of gold and silver. Dhaka is particularly famous for a superior type of filigree work, called *mandila*. Although

objects produced with filigree are with functional purpose, yet they often exhibit imaginative and appealing designs. The Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, has quite a rich collection of silver filigree works. Important among them are an *Atardan* on a leaf platform with a peacock-lid (Plate 126), a pair of *Atardan* representing bouquet (Plate 177), a pair of *Golabpash* (Plate 128), a model of Ahsan Manzil (Plate 129), a model of Husaini Dalan (Plate 130), a *Khasdan* (Plate 131), a tray (Plate 132) and the jewellery box (Plate 133). Gold filigree is often used in making ornaments as is seen in a *Painchhi* (Plate 165) or stringed wristlet from Dhaka.

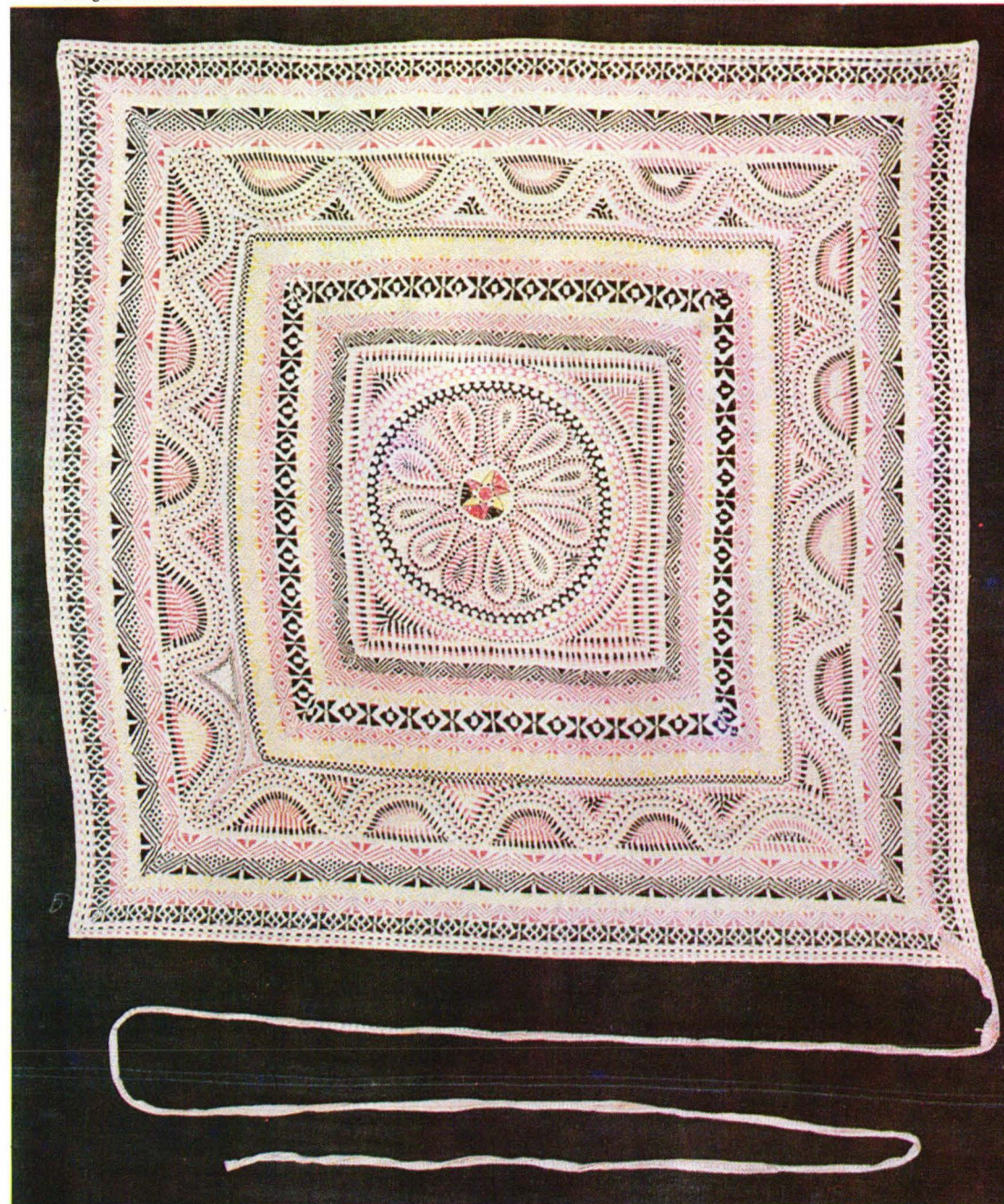
Coins, besides performing their normal function of commercial nature, are also numismatic records of events mirroring the history of a country. Coins were struck in Bangladesh during the Muslim period in gold, silver and copper and ornamented with calligraphy, a typical practice in Islam. Often the political aspirations or inclinations of rulers were expressed in the minting of coins (Plate 140).

Metalworks offered enough scope to the craftsmen to demonstrate their artistry and technical expertise. If in some aspects of this art Bangladesh lagged behind, in some other aspects it excelled. Whatever perfection was achieved in this field did not necessarily derive from the richness of the metal used. The extant specimens of the metalwork of the Muslim period surely forms a significant part of the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh.

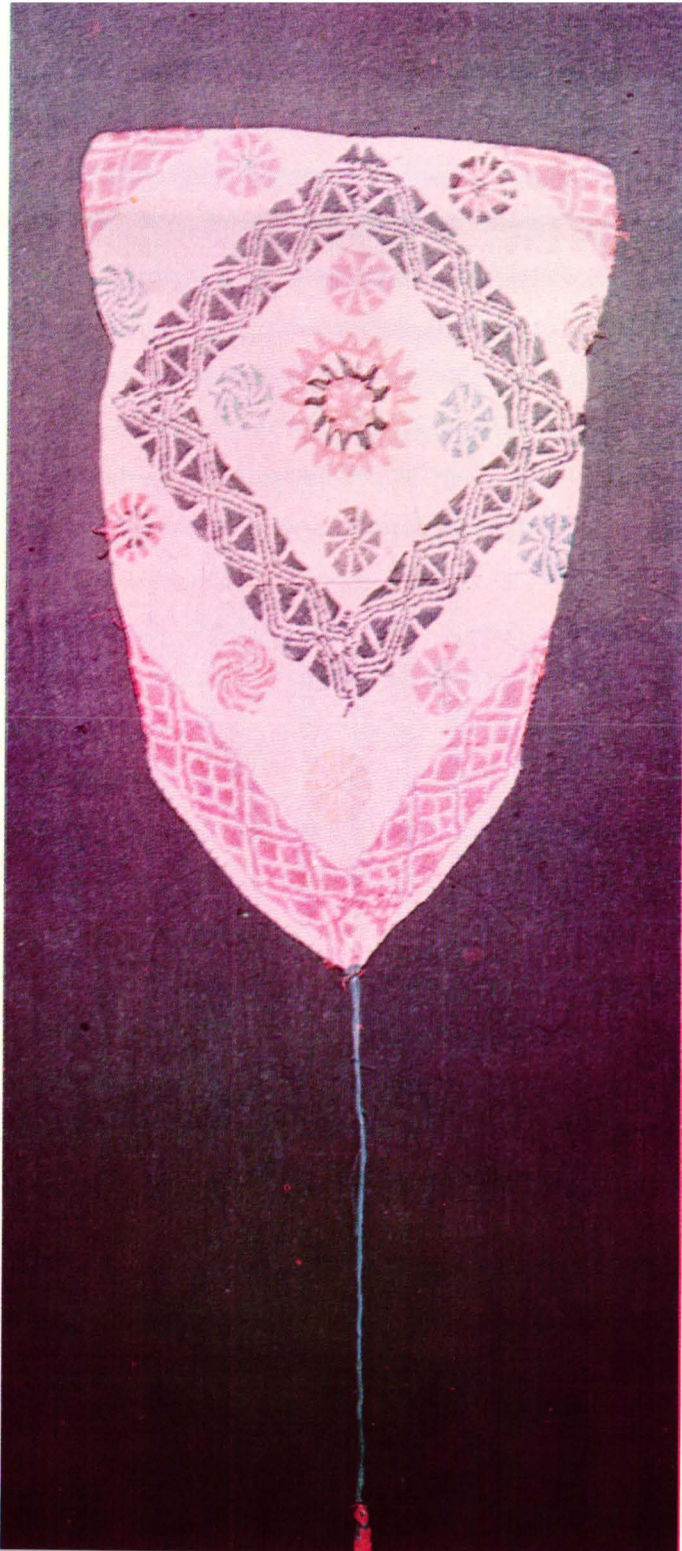
141. Designed brick, $9\frac{1}{4}'' \times 3\frac{3}{4}''$, circa 1450 A. D., from Bagerhat, Khulna. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



142. *Nakshi Kantha*, L. 30" x W. 30", from Faridpur, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

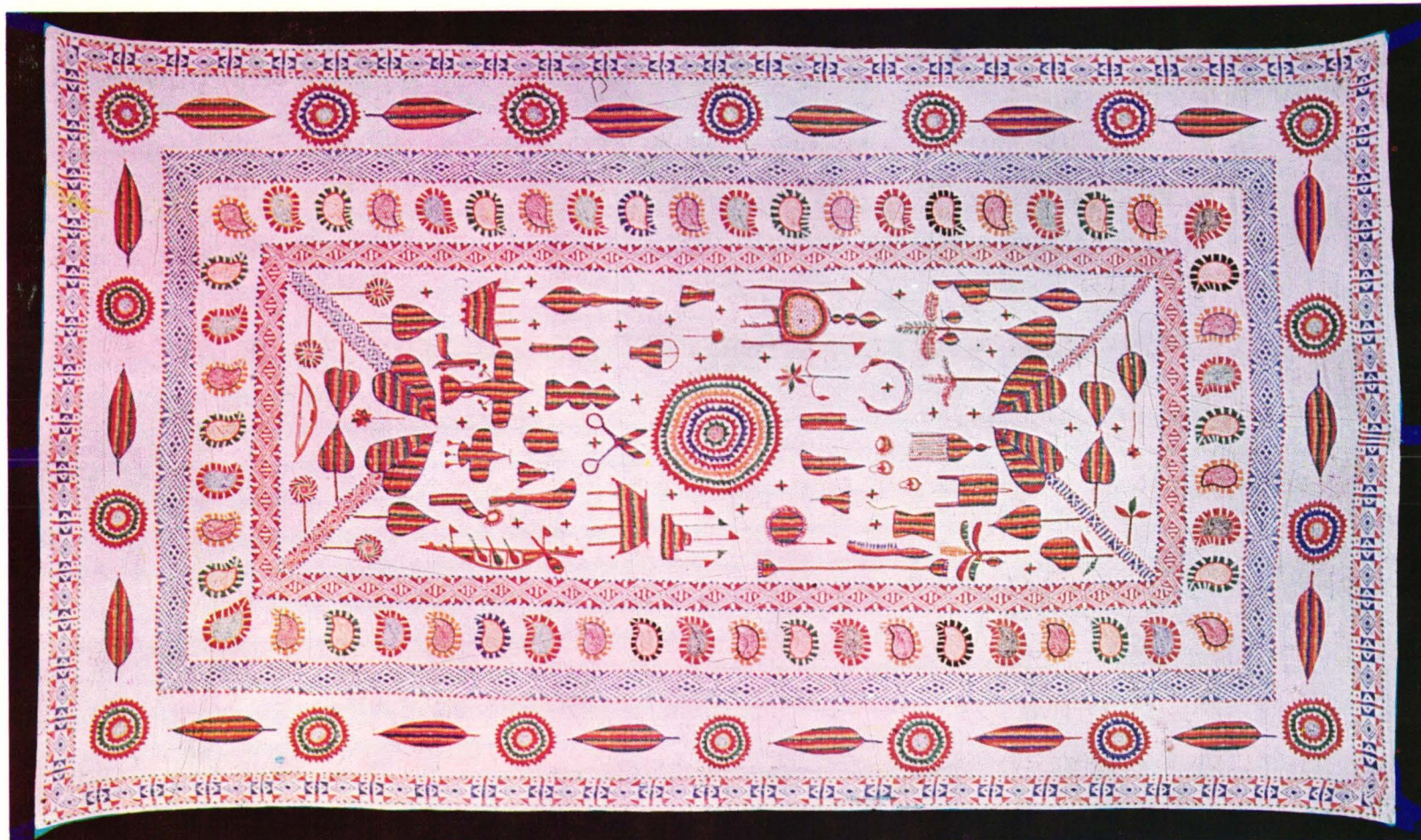


143. *Ghilef*, cover for *Quran* of *Nakshi Kantha*, L. 11" x W. 6 1/2", from Faridpur, early 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
144. *Nakshi Kantha*, L. 22" x W. 10 1/2", from Faridpur, early 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

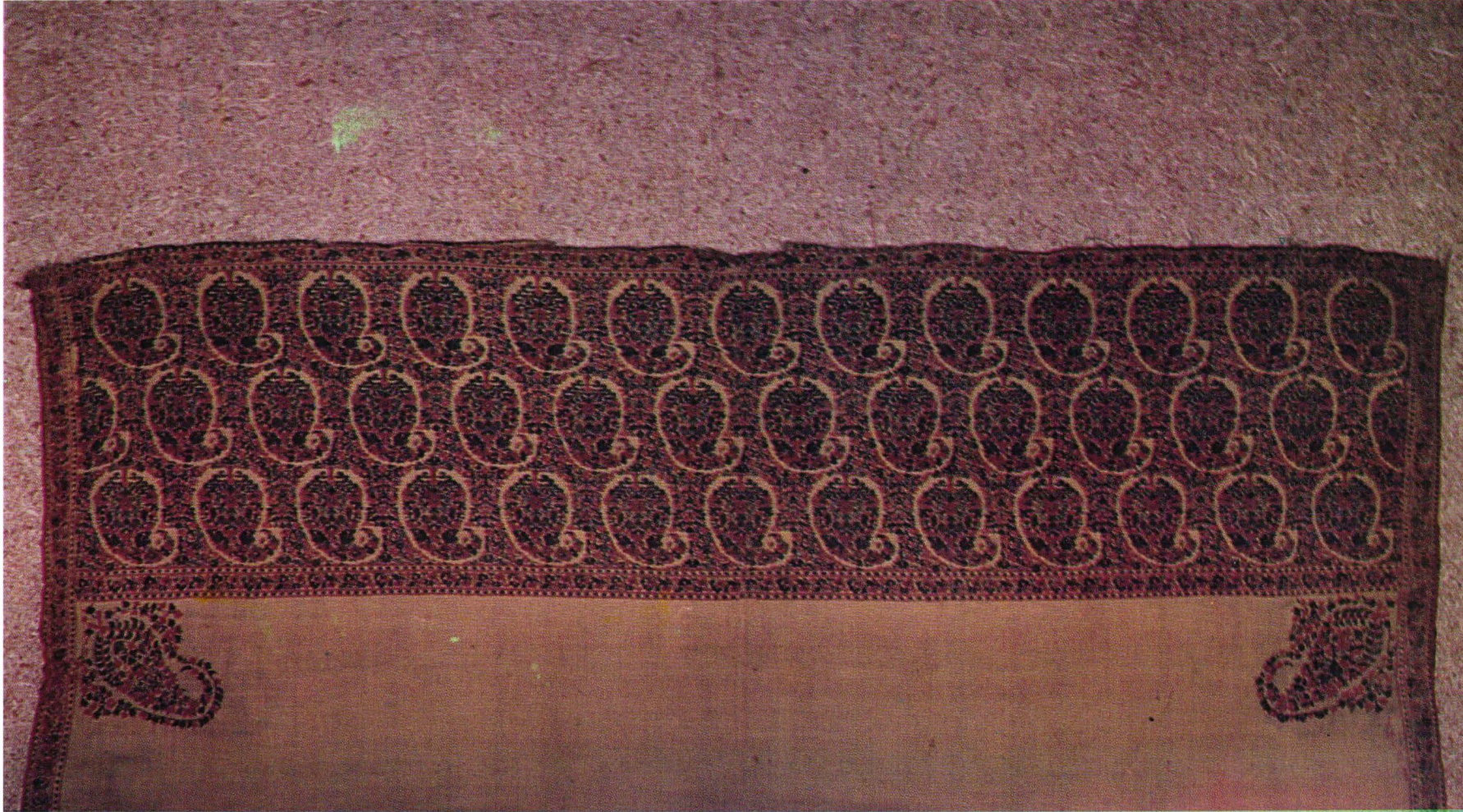




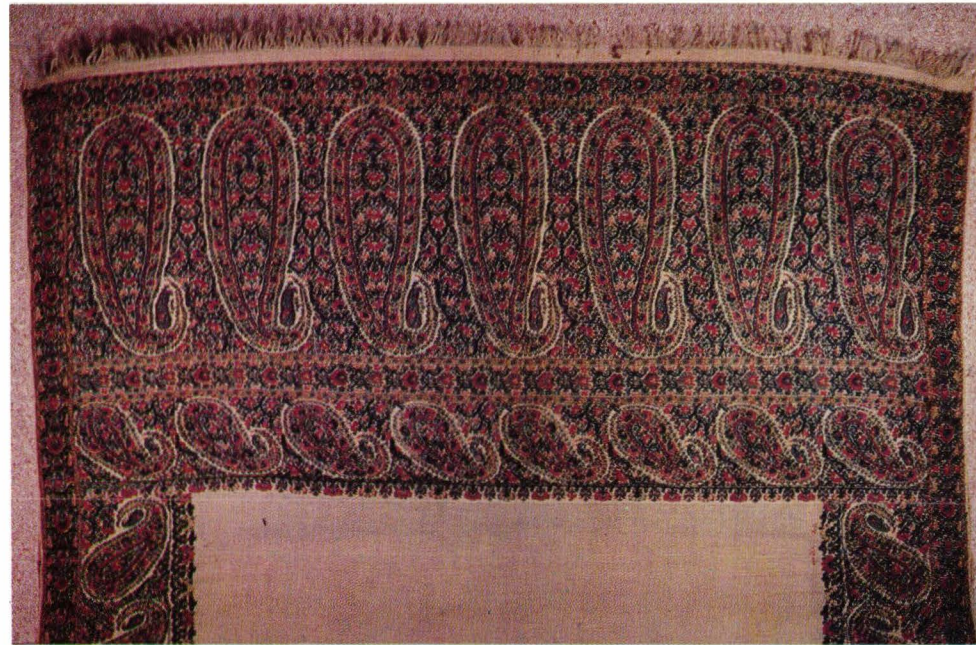
145. *Nakshi Kantha*, L. 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times W. 22", from Faridpur, 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



146. *Nakshi Kantha*, L. 72" × W. 42½", from Faridpur, 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



147. Shawl, L. 106" × W. 51", 19th century, from Kashmir, Bangladesh
National Museum, Dhaka.

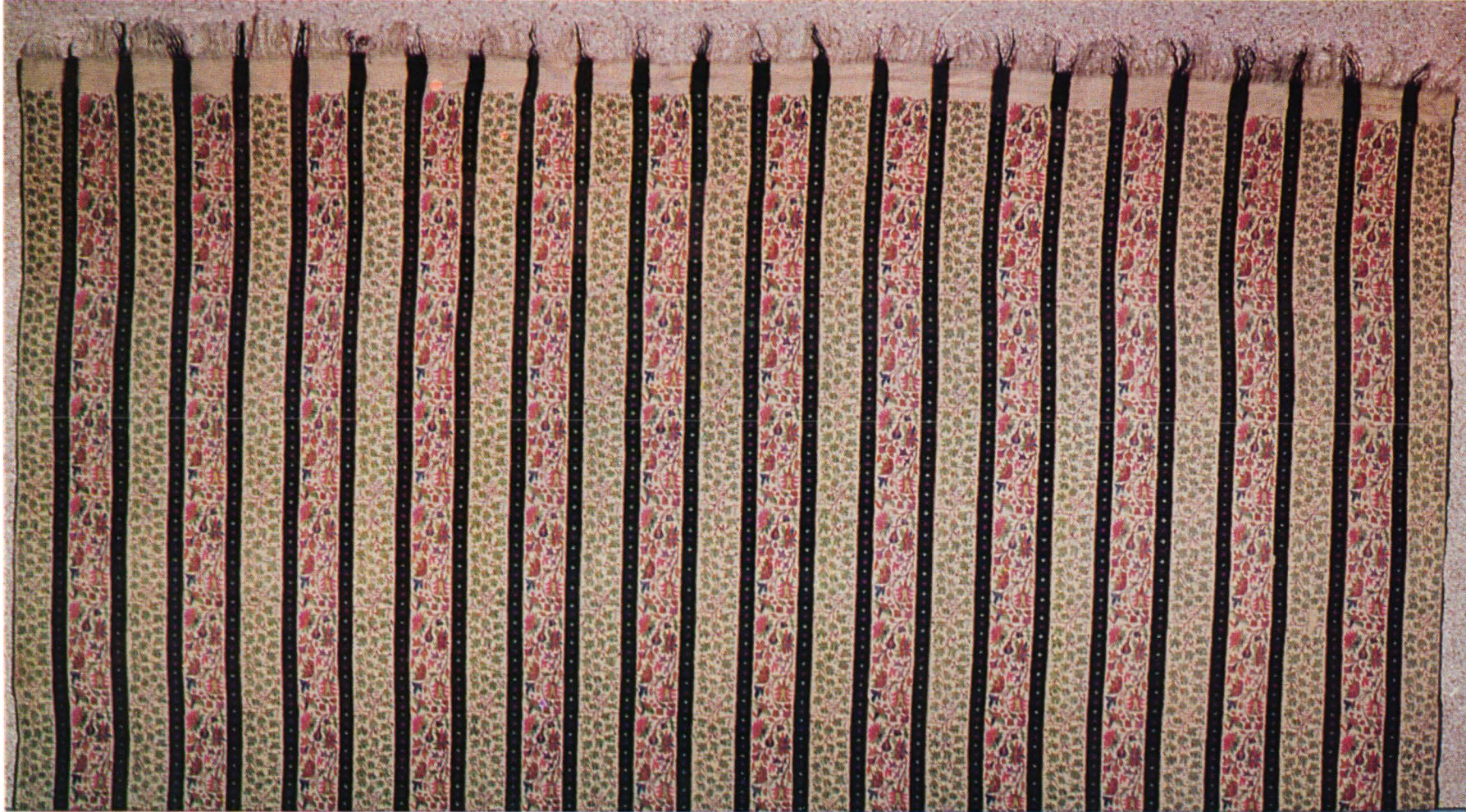


148. Shawl, L. 112" × W. 54", 19th century, from Kashmir, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



149 Shawl. L. 114" × W. 45", 19th century, from Kashmir, Bangladesh
National Museum, Dhaka

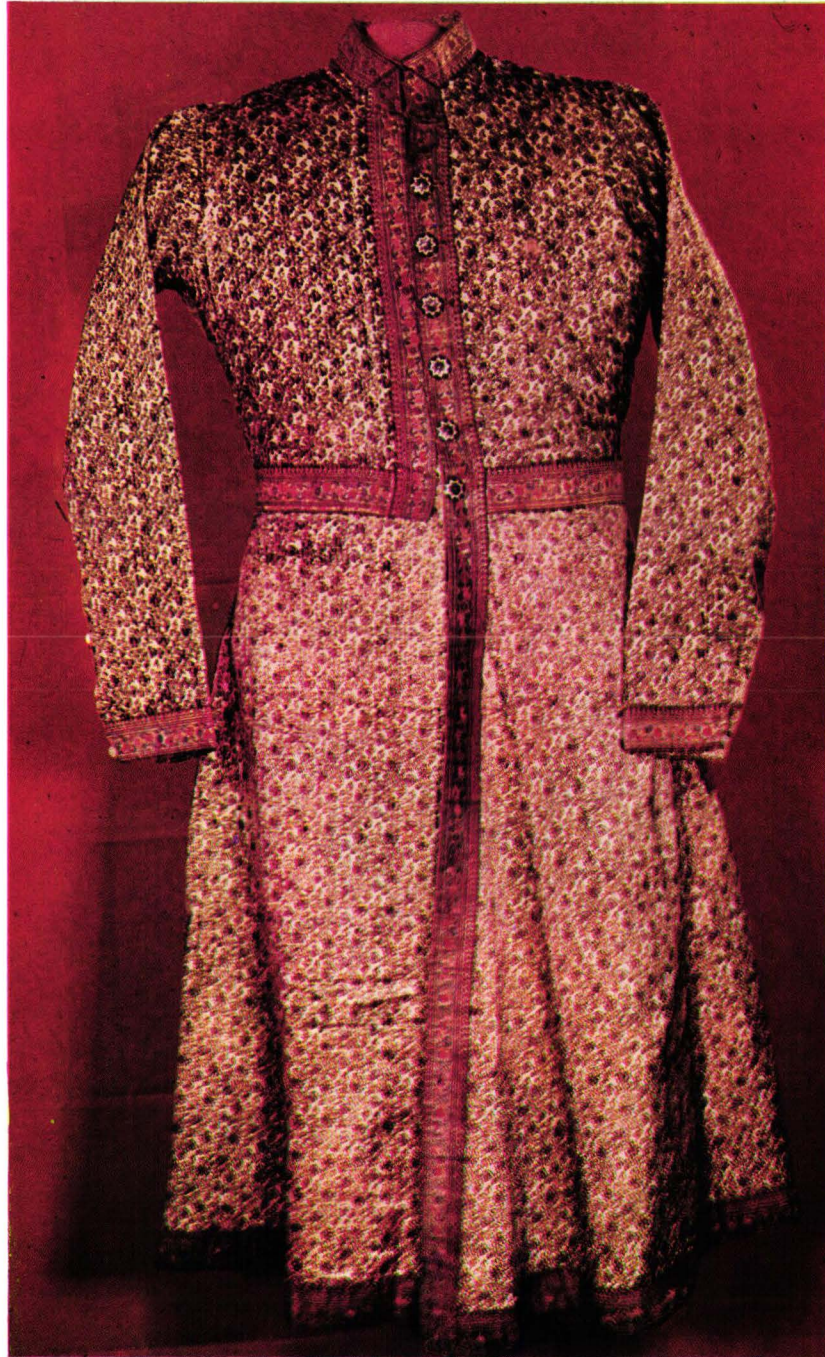
150. Left Page Details of 149.



151. Shawl, L. 120" × W. 56 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 19th century, from Kashmir, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



152. Ceremonial Fez cap, H. 3", *Karchob* work, from Murshidabad, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



153. *Achkan*, H. 43", satin printed with floral design, 19th century.
Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



154. Ceremonial Choga, H. 52", *Karchob* work, belonging to Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif (1828-93). Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



155. *Kurta*, H. 16", velvet with *Karchob* work, from Dhaka, early 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

Wood & Ivory

Wood being of perishable nature, not many specimens of much antiquity have survived in this country of extreme heat and humidity. Wood is a practical and versatile material. It is normal to visualise that Bangladesh having a large tract of heavily forested area produced good quality timber which had been employed largely for architectural purpose. A wooden house must have been preferable to the early Muslim settlers who came from the arid zones. The absence of any masonry palatial buildings of the time of the Sultans or *Subahdars* of Bangladesh when seen alongside many of their extant mosques and other edifices strongly suggests the existence of wooden palaces in mediaeval time. But such structure must have disappeared due to vandalism, or natural calamity of a few hours of conflagration or even a few years neglect.

All over the world, the woodwork forms an essential part of the Islamic art heritage. It shows a very high level of artistic and technical accomplishment sharing a stylistic vocabulary in common with other decorative arts patronised by the Muslims. In Bangladesh, varieties of woodwork have survived, namely, carving, inlay, veneered, lattice etc. These are always utilitarian objects, but often with pleasing aesthetic appeal. They include door-shutters, door-jambs, screens, partitions, furnitures, bed-chests (*Khat-Sindhuk*), *Kalamdans*, *Rihls*, boxes, thrones, combs, knives, mats, fans, chess pieces etc. The wooden partition (Plate 78) from Faridpur in the Bangladesh National Museum, 111" x 94", late 19th century A. D., is an elaborately carved specimen with a central arched doorway framed by double-column on each side of the door-jamb. Each shutter of the door is panelled, each panel showing vegetal motif, the top ones show full grown date-palm tree, usually identified as an Islamic symbol. On each side of the tympanum is depicted a stylised 3-domed miniature mosque with tall finials. The *Kalima* in Arabic is inscribed just below the lintel. Tall slender projected columns with variously designed shafts, three on each side of the door, support the para-



156. *Angarkha*, H. 29", wool with *butis*, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



157. *Jamdani*, cotton, design of a border of a *sari*, from Dhaka, 20th century.



158. *Kurta*, H. 17", velvet with *Karchob* work, from Dhaka, early 20th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

کي ترک روي آهنيز بر سرش بشرو در آمد جوشير دمان جوانفادر دشمن دران باي لغز خود دالي ديما بختان کورني	که يكبار سين بختا ز پلکش دنيا نبادش ز باي آمان بنتم خندش ماليد مغذ مه کرون هاما که کردن زني	تبا وزن بر نشن تا با ر جان شمشير را بد بشيريد بني کرد انرا ز کردگان بسخيد و بيرايه چک سخوات	جوشيمار و شن جوشيم ايلار کزان شير شرک بر کرد کرد ز داز سر دهنه بچين نشان بسيج شدن کرد در چک رانت
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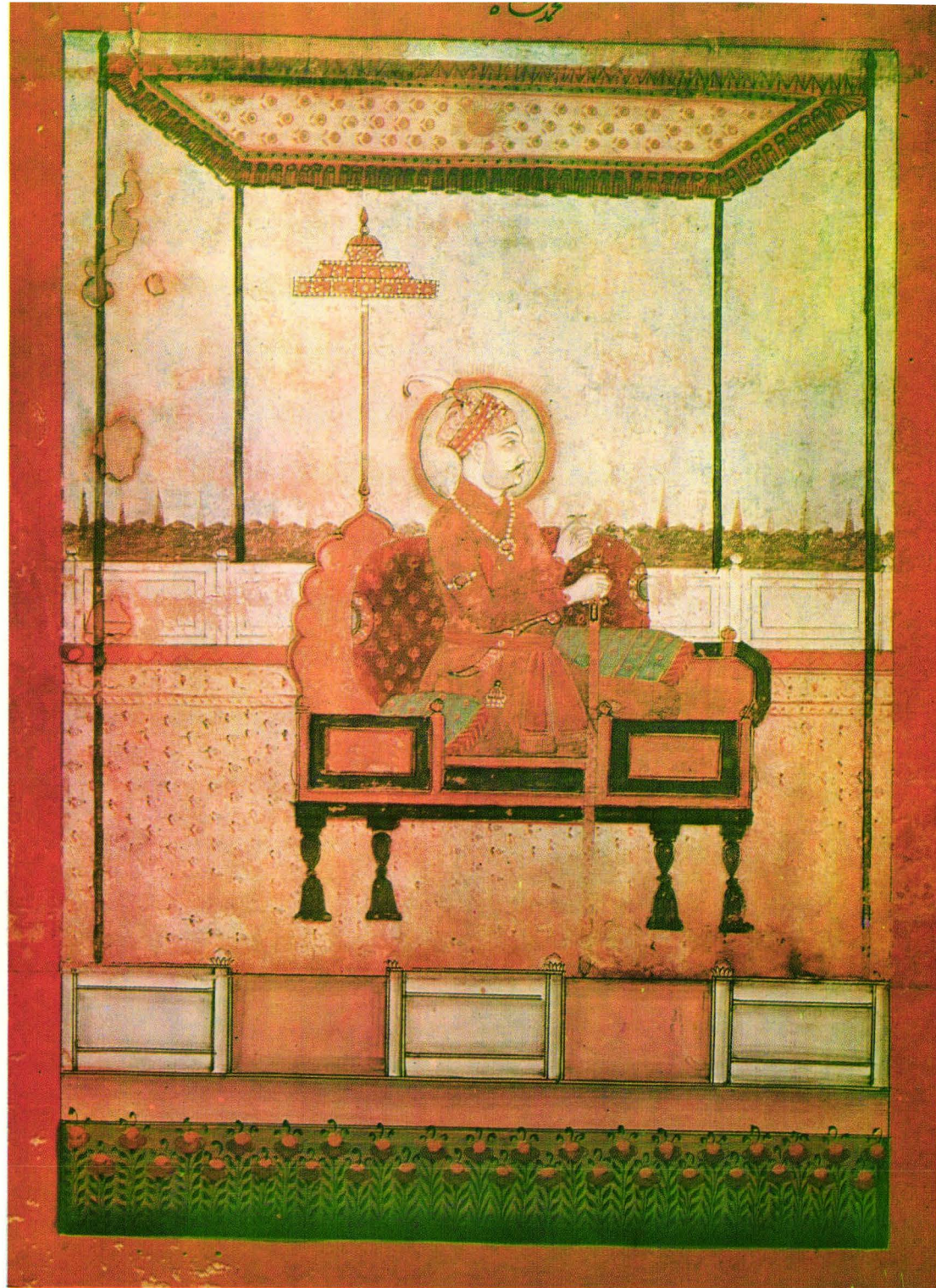
بتارک بر آورد رو آهنيز فوش را بر آفند بر کت خوم چون دران شير درک بکورد دالي در آمد دليم	يکي ترک سننه زيولا دجين ن آمد در آمد جوكوه روان ز چک شير از شكيده ديه دوالک هي بخت ائتد شير	حمايل يکي تنغ زهر ايلان سوي دشمن ايد جانان ريك ويگان نروش در ايلان دوالي زيجي ايد شكال	کندي جوزان تان ايلار کطال از دنا ريد ايلار بناچار برك دستان کشت بسيجيد بر جوشيم زور دال
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159. Alexander defeats the Russians, scene from Iskandarnamah of Nizami, 94" x 51", 1531 A. D., reproduced from Indian Painting by Colnaghi, London, 1978.



160. Scene from *Shahnameh*, 12" x 7 3/4", 1677 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

161. Portrait of Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719-48),
11 1/4" x 18 1/2", 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

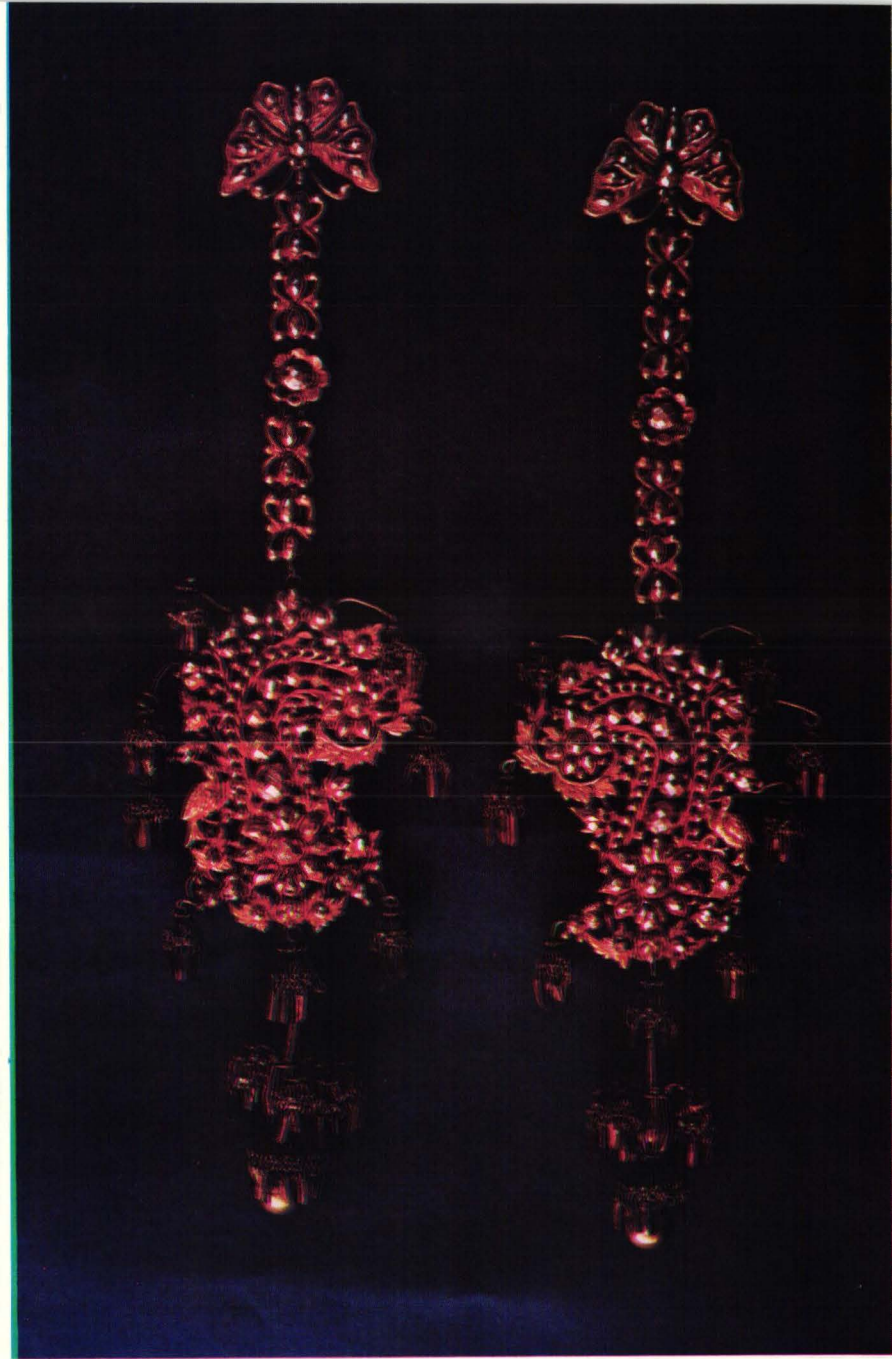




162. Scene from *Id* procession at Dhaka, water colour, 24" x 18",
circa 1820 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



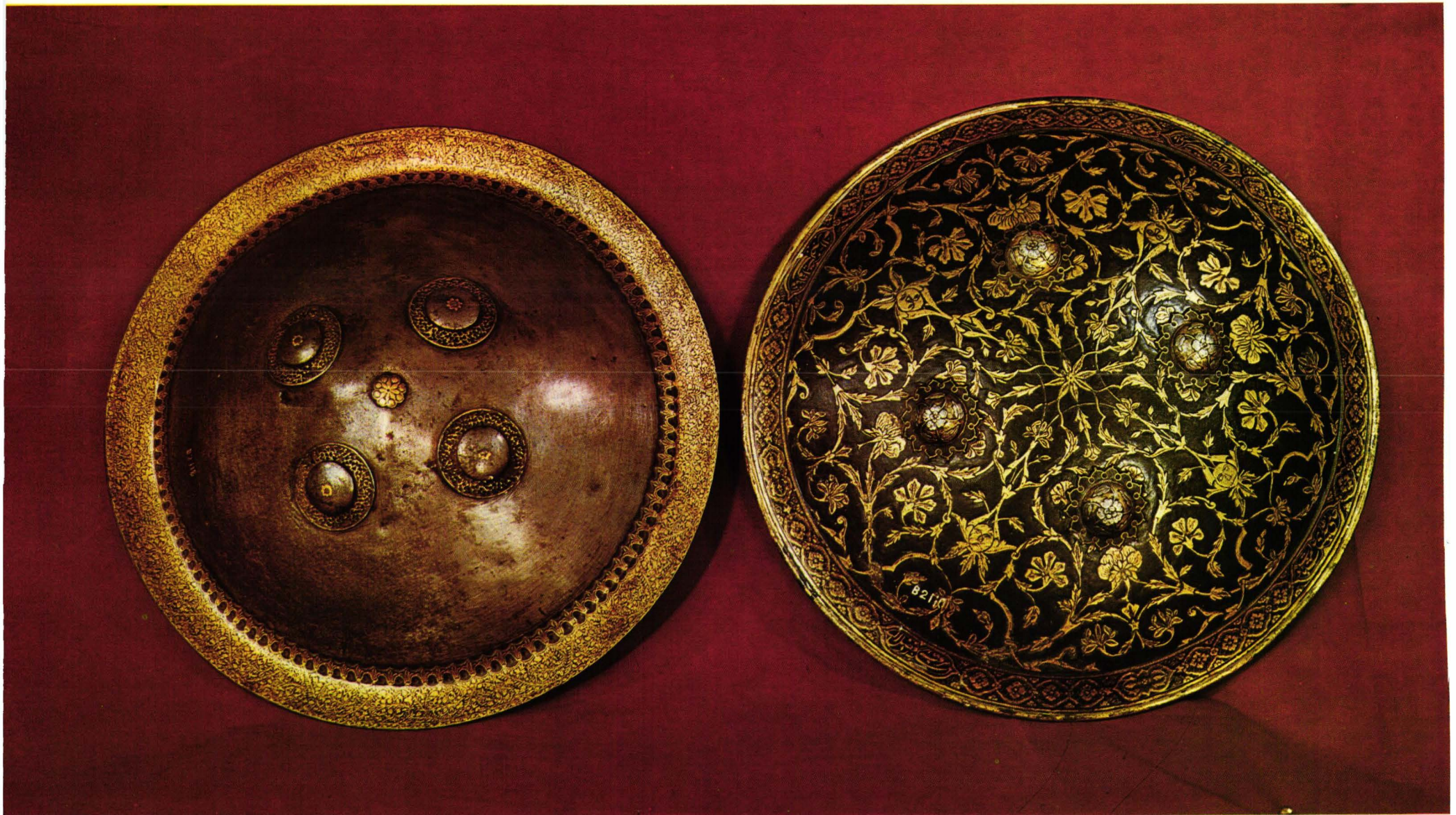
163. Scene from *Muharram* procession at Dhaka, water colour, 24" × 1
circa 1820 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



164a. *Kanpata*, gold ornament, from Dhaka, 20th century.
164b. *Kanpata*, gold ornament, from Mymensingh, 19th century.



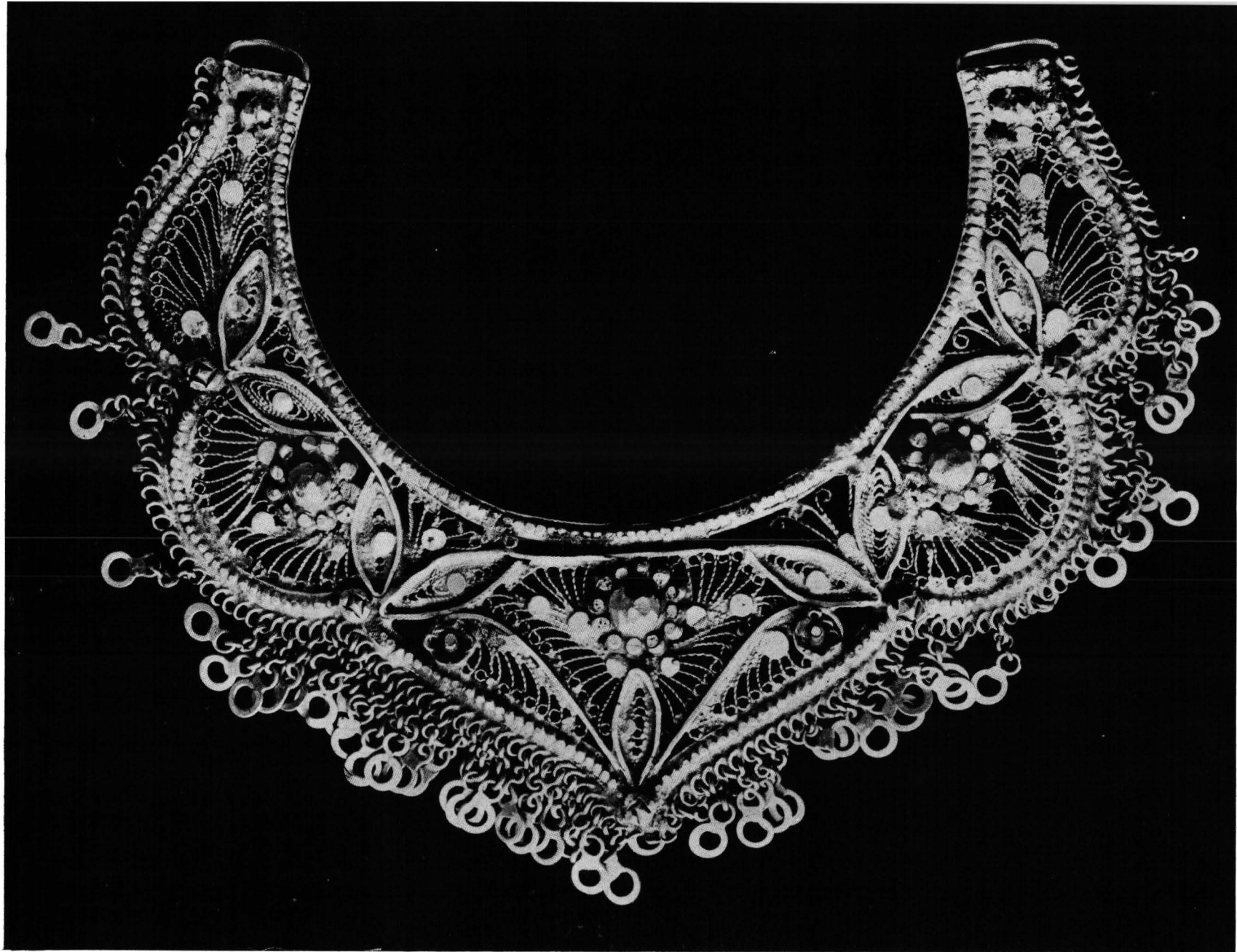
165. *Painchi*, gold ornament, from Dhaka, 19th century.



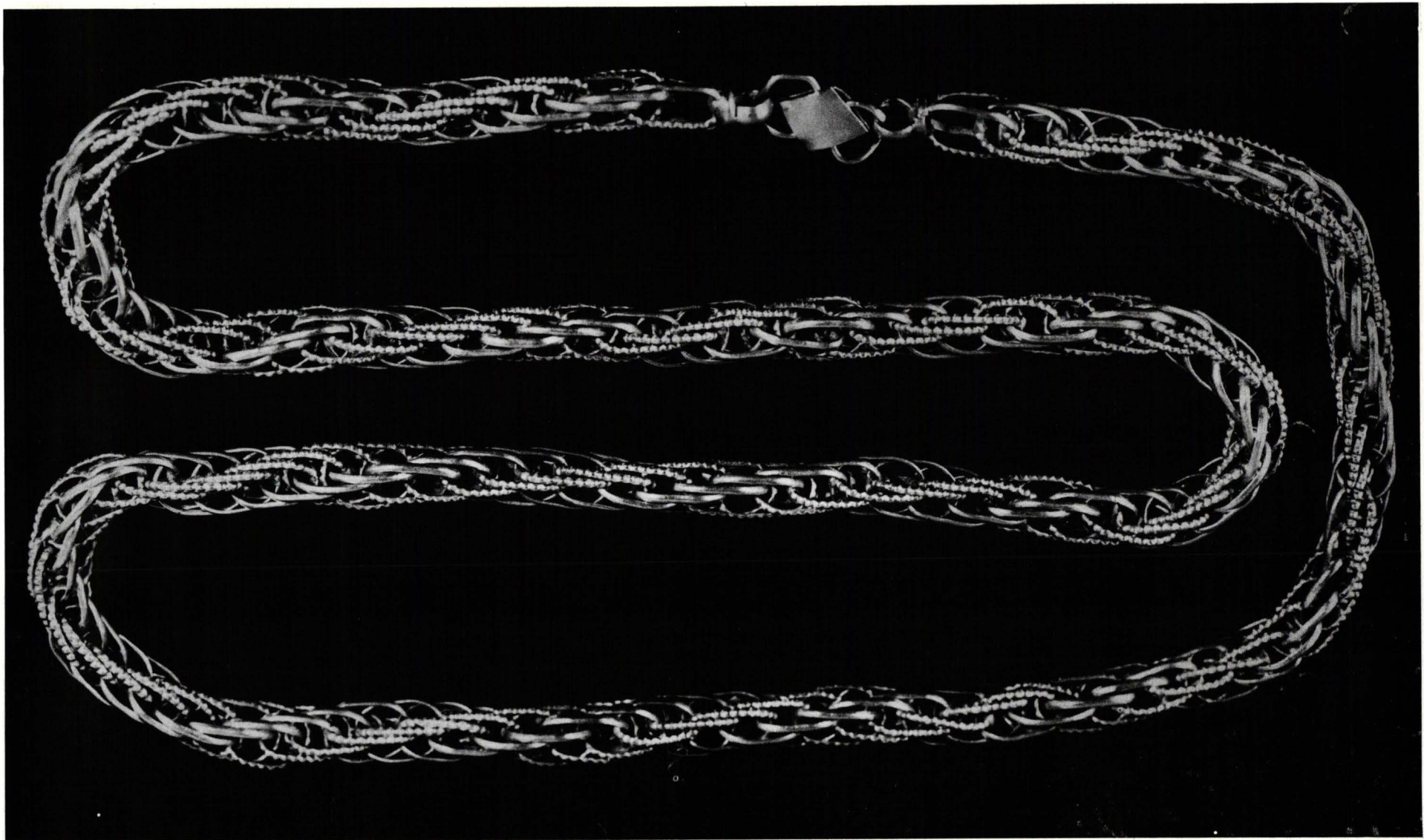
166. A pair of Shields with *Koftgari* work, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

pet which is carved with delicate creepers running horizontally. The facade is divided into series of panels with vegetal & floral motifs, the top ones being set in cusped niches. Altogether, the wooden partition displays work of a very mature craftsmanship. The *Rihl* or the *Quran* stand (Plate 102) and the *Kalamdan* (Plate 121) of sandal wood, both in the same Museum, are profusely carved with floral and geometric designs in relief.

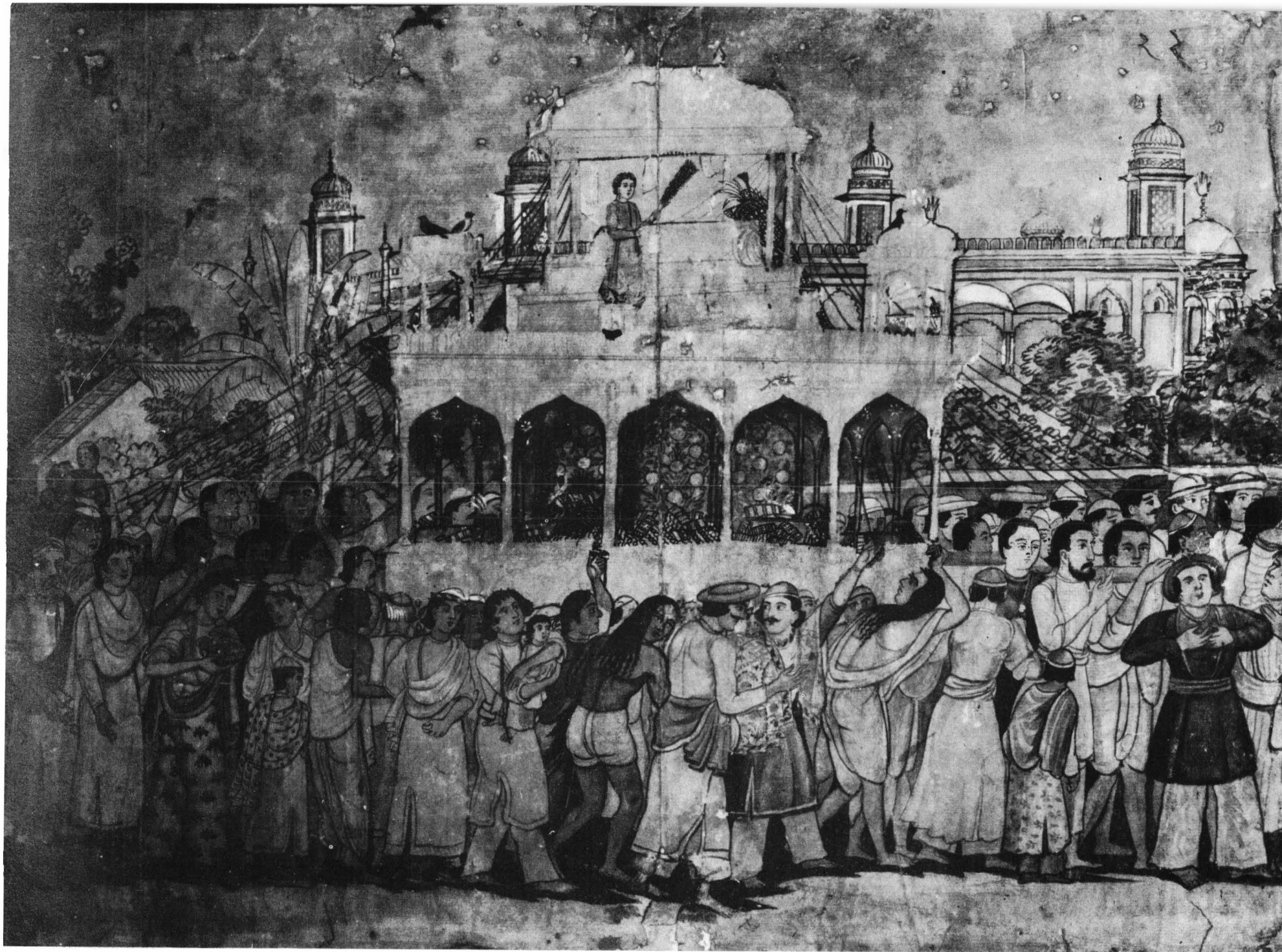
Bangladesh being one of the few natural abodes of elephants, ivory was always within easy reach. A very precious but adaptable component for embellishment, ivory was often used along with wood for small decorative panels or inlay work. During the Muslim rule, ivory-working centres were also active in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh National Museum has a good collection of ivory works. There is a rare ivory mat, 91"×51", from Sylhet made of thin ivory strips woven along with gold foils producing a design at the border. An interesting group of four legs of a throne (Plate 118), believed to have formed part of the throne of Bahadur Shah, the last Mughal emperor of Delhi, show the bust of the crowned emperor and his queen carved in low relief on each of the four legs. There is also a miniature *darbar* of the same monarch (Plate 119). A caparisoned elephant (Plate 120), a *Kalamdan* (Plate 122) with carved vegetal and animal figures, and varieties of knives (Plate 125) are some of the ivory items which go well with the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh.



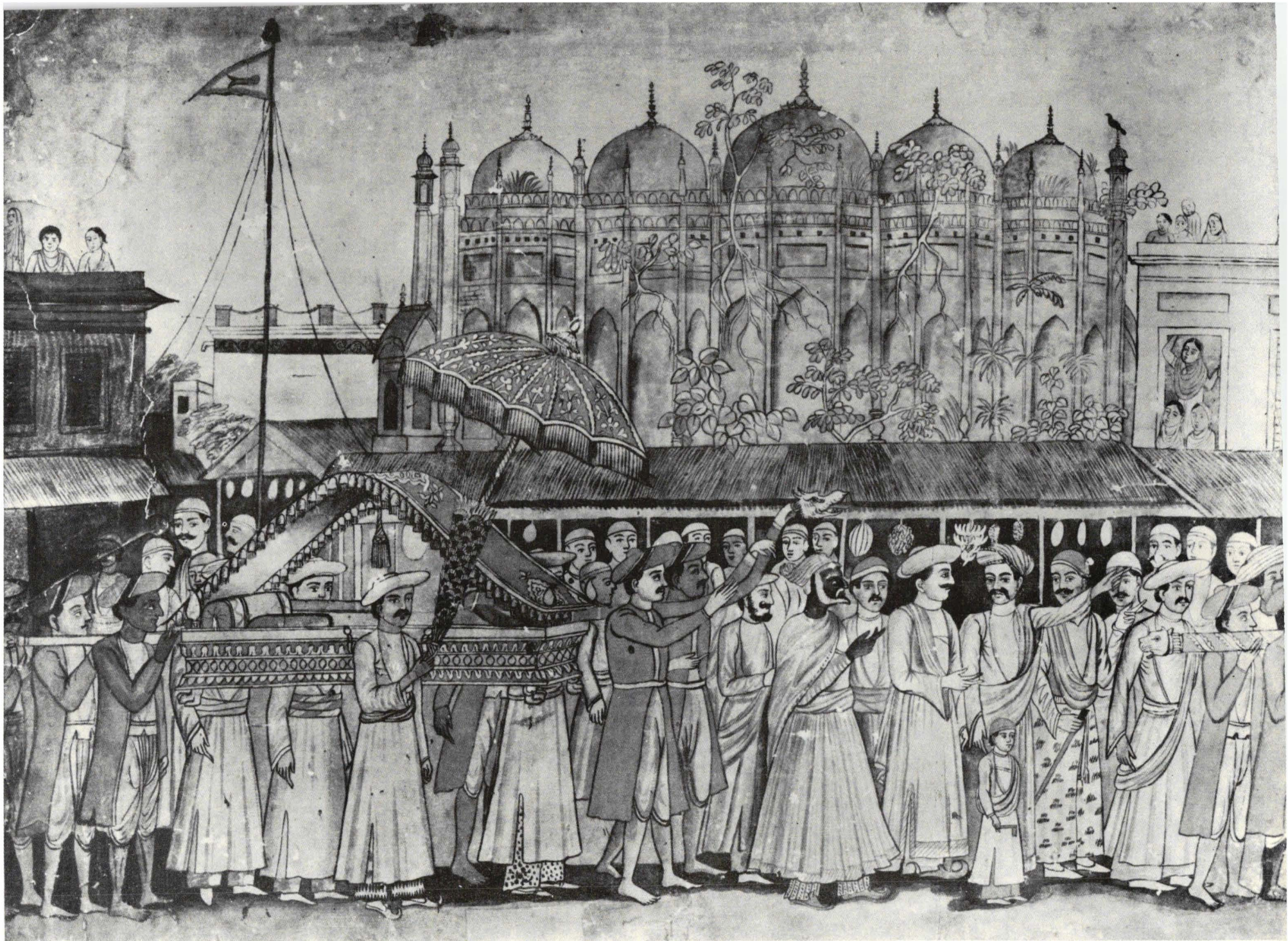
167. *Hasuli*, silver ornament in filigree. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



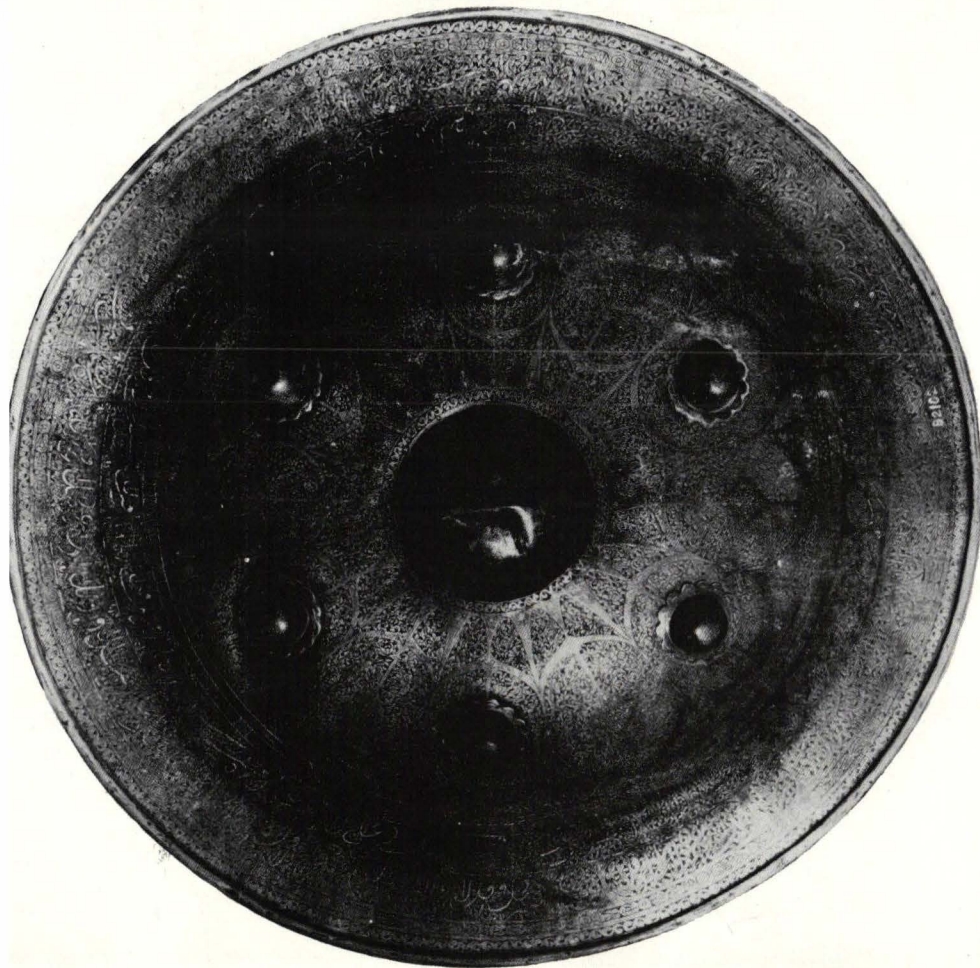
168. *Bichha*, silver ornament, 19th century Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



169. Scene from *Muharram* procession with Husaini Dalan in the background, water colour, 24", x 18", circa 1820 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



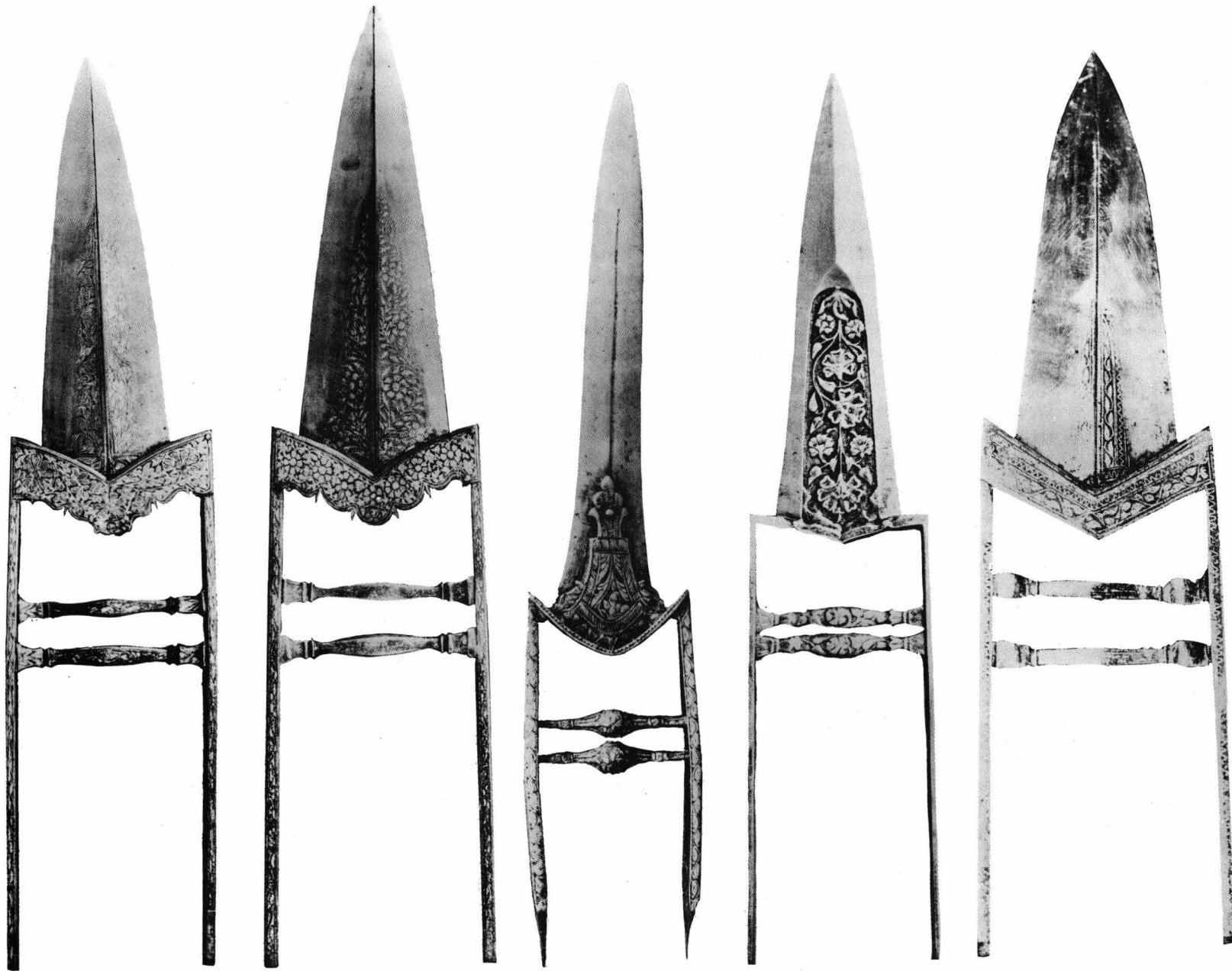
170. Scene from *Id* procession passing by Begambazar Mosque, water colour, 24" x 18", circa 1820 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



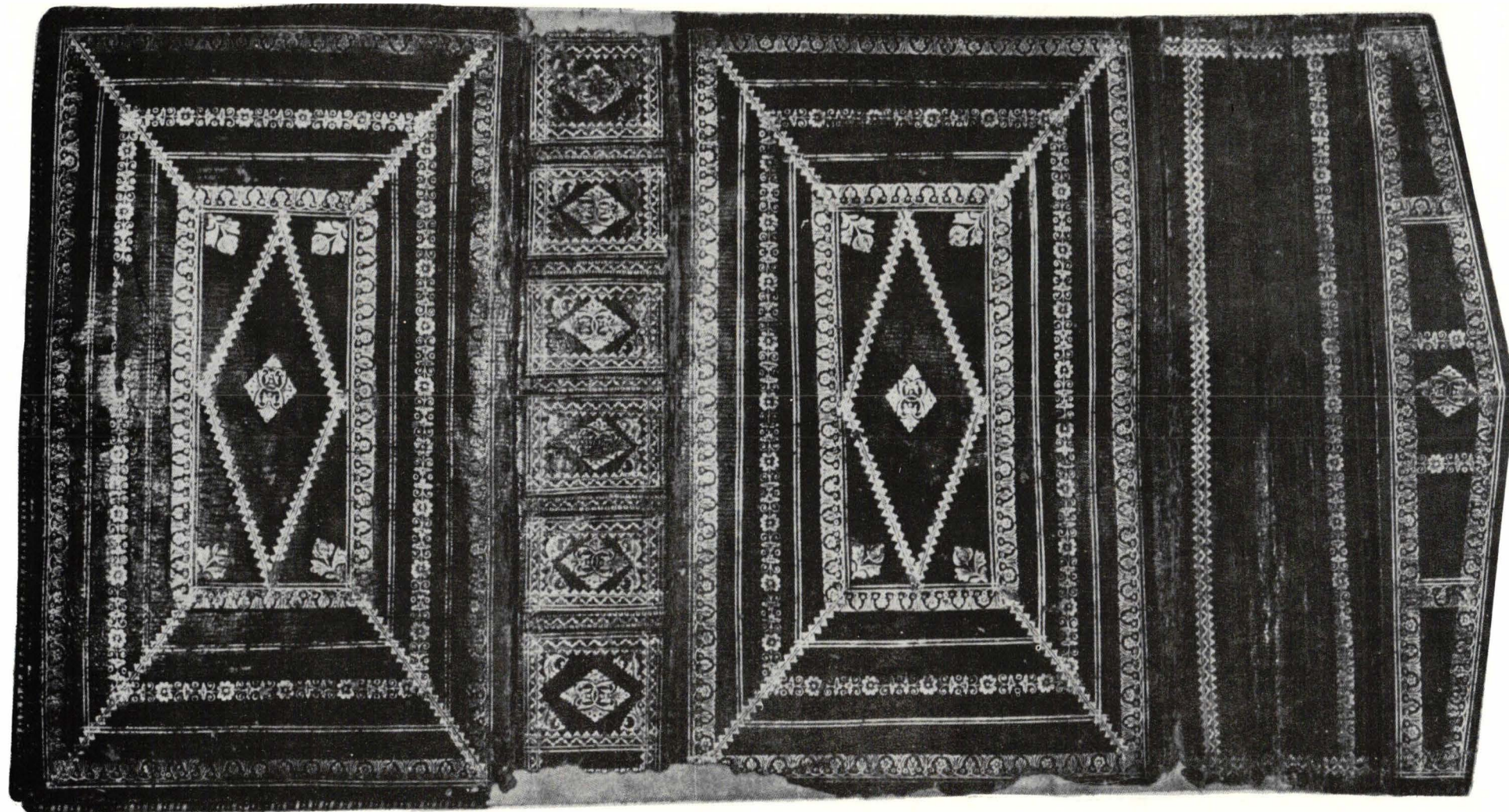
171. Shield of Emperor Shah Abbas of Persia (1587-1628), D. 30½",
17th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



172. Helmet of Emperor Shah Abbas of Persia (1587-1628), H. 21"
D. 12¼", 17th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



173 *Katars*. H. 13"-18", 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



174. Cover of *Quran*, Leather, $18\frac{1}{2}'' \times 9\frac{3}{4}''$, 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

Textiles

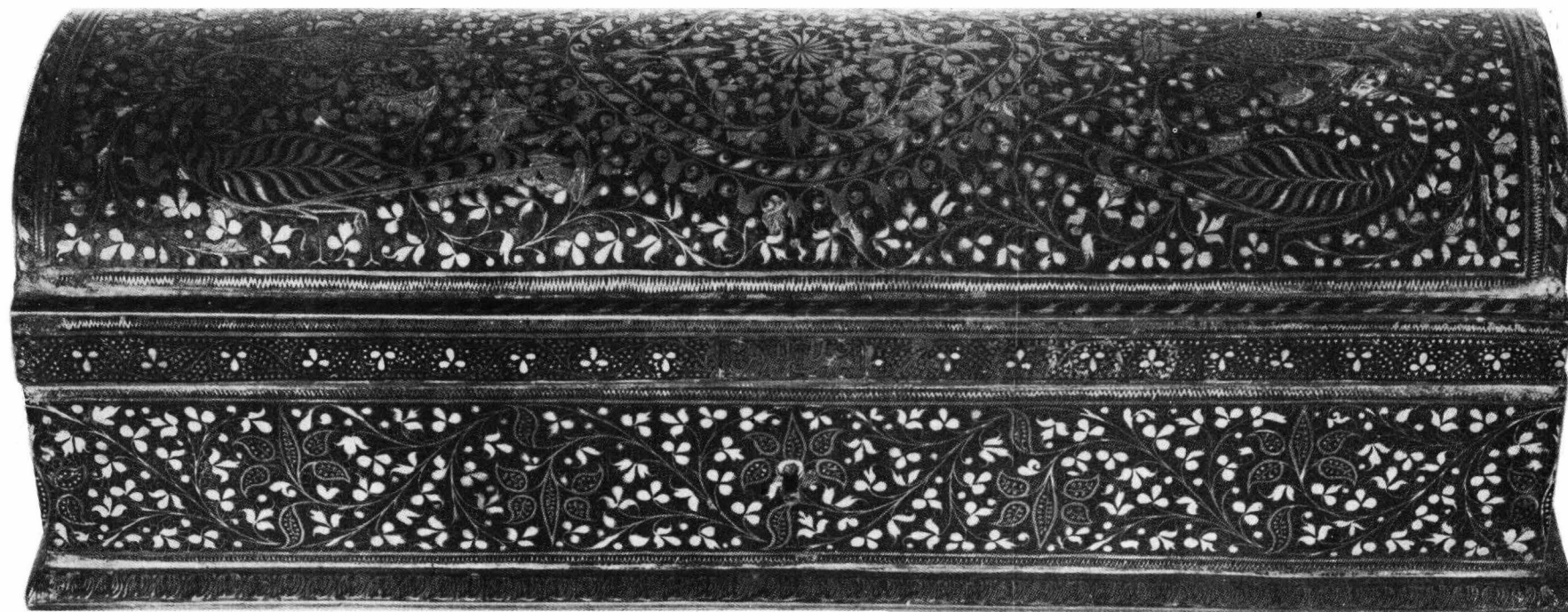
Bangladesh is known for its fine quality textiles since very ancient time. During the Muslim period its manufacture received royal patronage and developed to be a work of art along with a legend which has hardly been equalled in any part of the world. Unfortunately, we are left with so few complete garments that it becomes difficult to reconstruct the fashion of the past. In royal or courtly circle, clothing must have been opulent and even extravagant. Woven, printed or embroidered cotton, silk or velvet with bright colours and exquisite designs can be imagined. From the few extant specimens as well as what has been seen in some paintings or described by a few travellers the high place of clothes and fabrics in the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh can be recognised. Besides producing its own textiles the then prosperous Bangladesh also attracted materials of other regions. The spectrum of personal tastes and artistic accomplishments or the social and political status may be judged on the basis of assortment of such textiles used by the Muslims. Apart from the personal garments of *sari, shalwar, kamiz, orna, chadar, lungi, pagri, tupi*, shoes *kurta* etc., other utility items such as, carpet, *satranji, palang-posh, khanposh, masland*, horse breast-cloth, umbrella, *dastar - Khan ghilaf* etc. of textile have survived. These are adorned with the work of dyeing, embroidery or applique of various kinds, often emphasising the characteristics of the region of origin.

The muslin of Dhaka has remained till today to be the most famous of all products of cotton. It was given many poetic attributes to denote their great beauty and delicacy. A few of them were *mulmul khas* or king's muslin, *abrawan* or running water, *baft hana* or woven air and *shabnam* or morning dew. The Bangladesh National Museum has one piece of plain muslin 30 feet by 3 feet weighing only 7 *tolas*.

In almost all finest textiles created by the Muslims, the pattern is not added to the cloth with the needle after weaving. 225

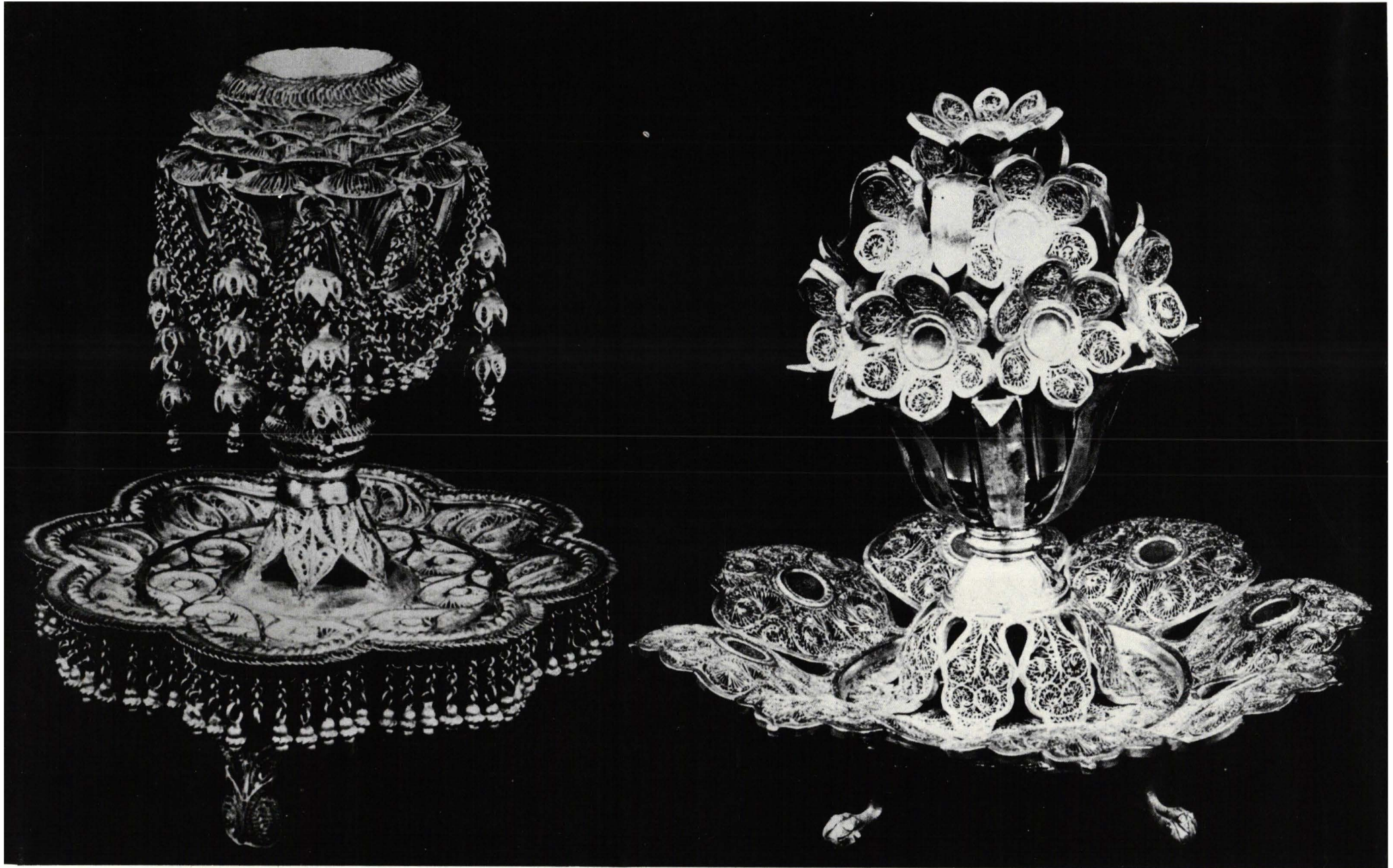
The design is incorporated by the weaver during the process of weaving. The popular and famous of such artistic cloth has been the *Jamdani* or figured muslin (Plate 157). *Jamdani saris* usually have at their ends large bold corner pieces of *buti* and the field with sprays of flowers. When the sprays of flowers are connected together like the settings of a jewel it is called *panna hazara* or thousand emerald. With larger flowers the *Jamdani* is called *toradar*. The *butis* can be of various shapes such as, *Kalka buti* or mango patterned, *chameli buti* or jasmine flowered, *gul daudi buti* or chrysanthemum flowered, *ghenda buti* or marigold flowered, *pan buti* or betel-leaf flowered, *tara buti* or star shaped *buti* etc. The *Jamdani* can be ornamented with brightly coloured cottons and gold or silver threads. It is interesting to know that the tradition of *Jamdani* has been taken to Nepal and survived very well. The celebrated *Dhaka tupi* worn by all Nepalese is made of locally produced cotton *Jamdani*.

Dhaka was also known for its *Kasida* and *Chikan* embroideries. But the most widely acclaimed embroidery of Bangladesh had been the *Nakshi Kantha* or embroidered quilt. Each *Kantha* is an individual creation reflecting the vision and skill of the rural woman. The patched cloths of discarded *saris*, *lungis* etc. when embroidered with coloured threads using varieties of stitches, produce an article of legendary beauty. *Nakshi Kantha* has its various uses. The pieces reproduced here are from the collection of Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, representing the Islamic heritage of textiles in Bangladesh. The geometric, vegetal and stylised floral motifs dominate these pieces. The narrow rectangular *arshilata* (Plate 144) is for holding personal toilet goods. The square *durjani* (Plate 142) is for bundling up miscellaneous articles. The *ghilaf* is for wrapping of the *Quran* (Plate 143). The bed-size *lep-kanthas* (Plates 145 & 146), one with *kalkas* and the other with all kinds of objects seen in daily life such as, spoons, scissors, betel-nut cutters, knives,



175. *Kalamdan*, brass with *koftgari* work, L. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ "', 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

176. *Kalamdan*, brass with *koftgari* work, L. 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ "', 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.



177. A pair of *Atardans*, silver with filigree work, H. 5" & 5½", 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

মনয়া স্মিরি হৈয়া কাগরপদাতি° —
থকলিত কষ্ট নত বৃষ্টি বন সম্পত্তি° —
হুস্মিত কৈশিক মদ্রন বনামল° —
স্বকলিত স্বপ্ন রাস বৃষ্টি ববন° —

পদ্য বতি মনে বশে কহিনে নুর্নতি° —
নির্জরাজ্যে শুনে লেভ নাহি চিন্তা যতি° —
স্বভিনতি আশ্মেট জে বেরুত্ত বর্জী° —
বাথি কৈনে কনা শুষ্ক পদ্য বতি মর্জী° —

নানারহি নানা ভাষা নানা চুম্ব কৌলো° —
সরন নাহি গণ আপনার দেলে° —
ধাননে স্বচয় নাগ মতি কিনা কেপ্পা° —
কন মতে হেন মতি লোক পাশাবিনা° —

মর্জীর আদশ তান শ্রুনি হুত্ত হনে° —
পথ্যার রাছি আ কহে হৈন আনাওলে° —
চিত্তাওর থাকি নপ চুরি নাগ মতি° —
মোর কর্ম দোষ কিসি নাই নপত্তী° —

পরিণে আনরাকার নাগবির বশ° —
চিত্ত হুত্তে দর কষ্ট মোর স্বেমরশ° —
পুয়া কাল হুয়া মোর নইনে নরাজ° —
পতি বিনে না বের জীবন নাহি কাজ° —



179. Alexander receives Dara's messenger, scene from *Iskandarnamah* of Nizami, 9th × 5⁷”, 1531 A. D., reproduced from *Indian Painting* by Colnaghi, London, 1978.



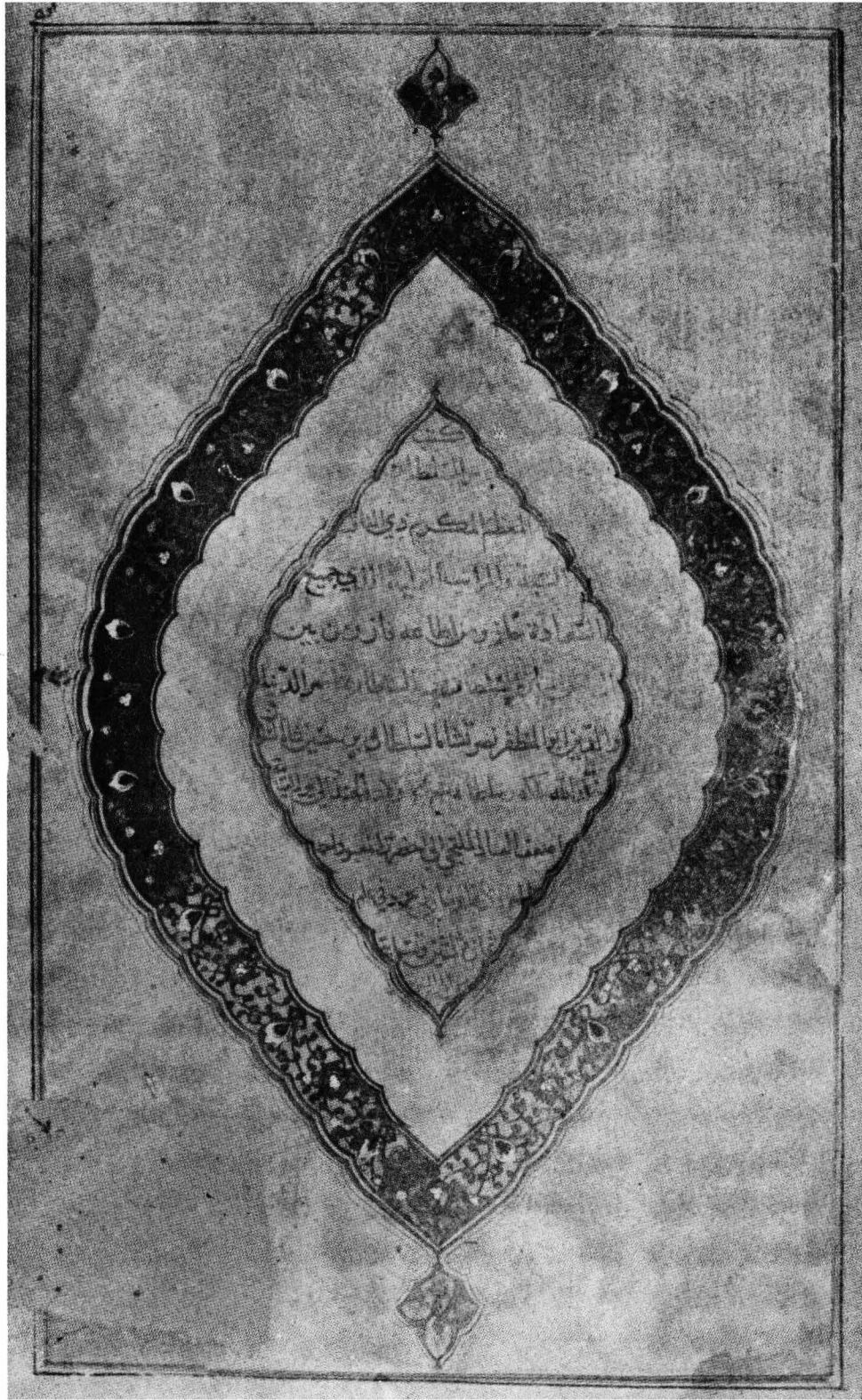
180. Queen Nushaba shares her throne with Alexander, scene from Iskandarnamah of Nizami, 9th c., 1531 A. D., reproduced from Indian Painting by Colnaghi, London, 1978.

choppers, drums, *hukka*, fish-knives, bows, fish traps, ornaments, boats, *dochala*, mosque, trees, creepers, mango, air planes, kites, and of course, *kalkas* at the border and *satadal padma* in the centre. *Suzni Kantha* with cross stitch and *Lahari Kantha* from Chapainawabganj area of Rajshahi district and *Dastarkhan kantha* (Plate 139) or long table mat from Faridpur are other useful household textile pieces.

The use of *karchob* work or embroidery with silver threads on velvet was much patronised by the Muslims. The ceremonial Fez cap (Plate 152) of red velvet with *funna* in gold threads, H. 3", 19th century, the ceremonial umbrella used by the *Naib Nazims* of Dhaka (Plate 79), D. 48", circa 1800 A. D., showing dragon motifs set with pearls, the *Kurtas* (Plates 155 & 158), H. 16", 17", early 20th century, all in the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, are few of the examples. The ceremonial *Choga* (Plate 154) of Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif (d. 1893 A. D.), H. 52", with *karchob* work on light green silk, the *Achkan* of creamy velvet (Plate 153), H. 43", with printed floral design and the *Angarakha* of wool (Plate 156), H. 29", with stylised floral motifs are some of the best preserved costumes of the Muslims of 19th century. The Fez cap of felt (Plate 80) with *Karchob* work and pearl-studded *funna* belonged to Nawab Bahadur Salimullah of Dhaka (d. 1915).

The textiles made of wool were extensively patronised by the Muslim nobilities of Bangladesh. The chief woolen fabrics of artistic merit were the *Doshalas* (Plates 147, 148, 149 & 151) mainly brought from north-western areas of the subcontinent with variegated use of *kalkas* which were rather very popular. The shawl of the variety *Pashmina Alwans* (Plate 151) with their stripes filled with series of stylised flowers were also attractive specimens. The woolen pile-carpet (Plate 188), 211"×193", reportedly from the court of Nawab Serajuddowla (d. 1757) of Murshidabad and now preserved in the Bangladesh

181. Colophon of *Iskandarnamah* of Nizami, 9½" x 5½", 1531 A. D.
reproduced from *Indian Painting* by Colnaghi, London, 1978.



National Museum, Dhaka, is the earliest surviving example of such items in Bangladesh. A horse breast-cloth of mixed velvet and wool (Plate 190), H. 51", with *guldar* and *karchob* works, also in the same Museum, shows an example of the decorative clothes for animal.

The Islamic character of the textiles of Bangladesh expressed through the extant fabrics communicate the flavour of contemporary life and personal experience. The elaborate weaving or embroidery combined with the colours and designs have left behind a rich chapter of Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh.

Paintings

When paper was introduced in early centuries of Islam, its potential was at once recognised as a means of diffusion of literature. In the wake of such dissemination, the Islamic world was quite conscious about the development of calligraphy to the exclusion of figural painting. But gradually it walked out of that prohibition and beginning with depiction of medical subjects, it soon reached a situation where almost everything could be painted. Bangladesh is known for illustrated manuscripts of pre-Muslim time done on palm-leaf and country made paper. Thereafter, nothing has survived from the first four centuries of the establishment of the Muslim administration in Bangladesh. By then poetic manuscripts were quite popular and the illustration what is known as miniature painting became elaborate full-page composition. The great Persian epic, the *Shahnamah* or 'Book of Kings' of Firdausi and laterly, many lyric and romantic poetries, especially the *Khamsa* or 'Quintet' of Nizami, were extensively illustrated till the last century. These miniatures focussed images which were intensely felt by the artists. They were men and women, kings and soldiers, animals and plants. They depicted palaces, forts, gardens, boats, and warfares as well as love making.

Till recently, there was no evidence of painting in Bangladesh contemporary to the Sultanate or Great Mughals. But with the recent discovery of the illustrated manuscript of Nizami's *Iskandarnamah* (Plates 159, 179, 180 & 181) a new chapter has been added to the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh. This is a royal copy made in 938 A.H./1531 A.D. for Sultan Nusrat Shah and shows clear affinities with 15th century Persian paintings. It describes the conquest of Alexander the Great and is illustrated with nine paintings. It has a double-page frontispiece in gold and colours and the couplets are written in *Naskh* in four columns marked by gold, black and blue rules on a gold-sprinkled paper. In some pages couplets have been written diagonally on decorations created by triangles



132. Hukka bowl, silver *bidri* with *jar nashan*, from Murshidabad, 19th century. Bangladesh National Museum Dhaka.

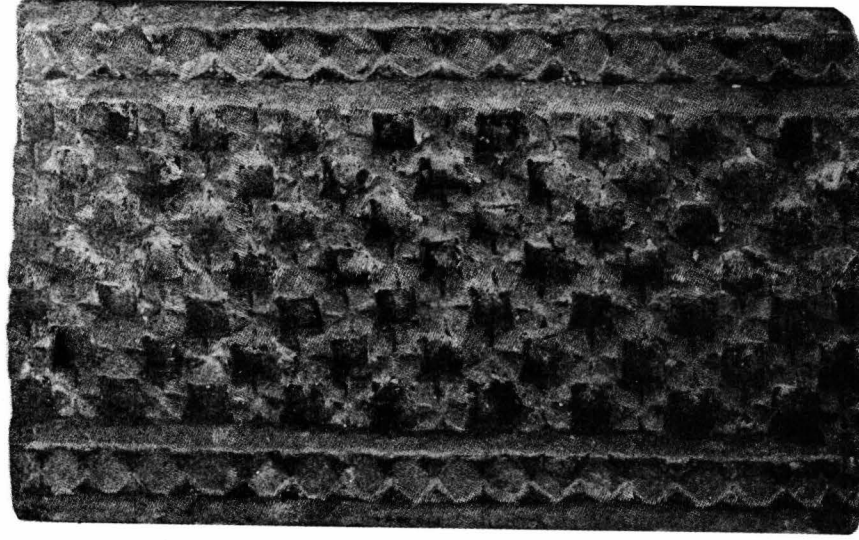
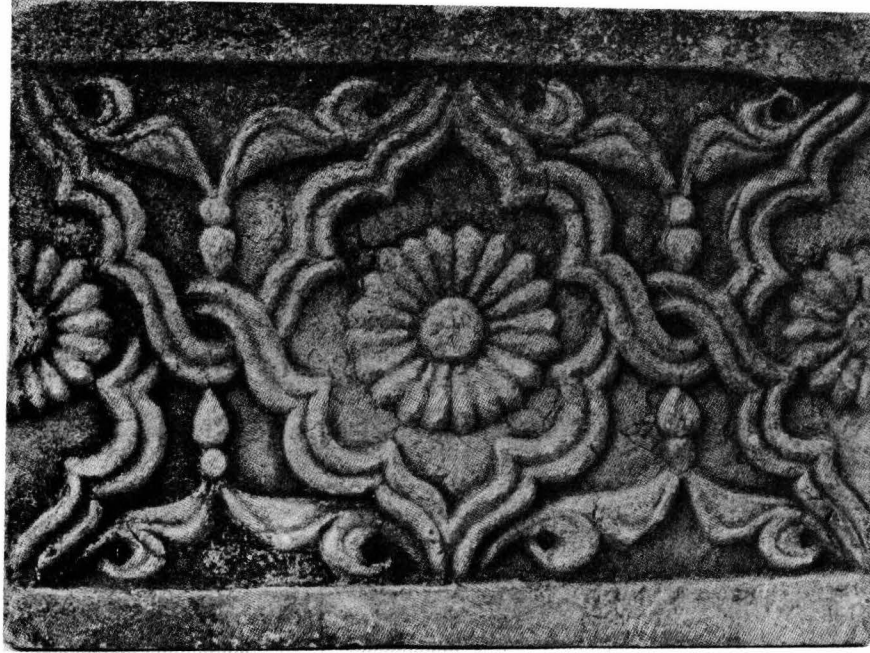
183. A pair of *Surahi*, brass, H. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ "', carving with floral designs, 19th century. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

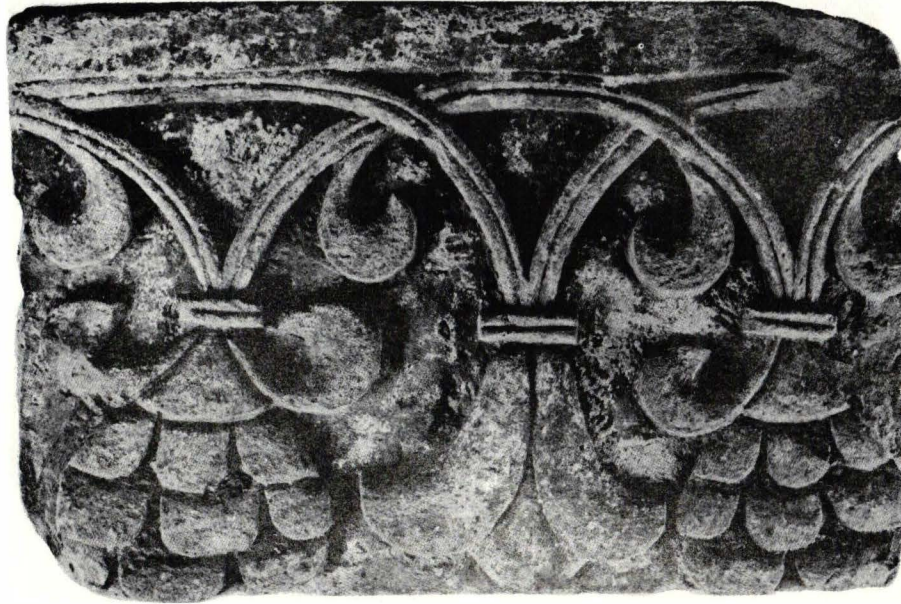


across the openings. The last page has an ogival medallion (Plate 181) made with arabesque border enclosed within a cusped band containing the important inscription giving the name of the Sultan, that of the copiest Hamid Khan and the date. The Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, has a number of illustrated manuscripts of the Mughal period. The *Shahnamah*, 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ "x5 $\frac{1}{8}$ ", copied in 1599 A.D., contains 19 illustrations dove-tailed into the text (Plate 189). Another copy of the *Shahnamah*, 12" x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ ", copied in 1677 A.D., containing 11 illustrations (Plate 160), lean heavily on the Persian idiom of Safavi period. There are several portraits also. The one of Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719-48), 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", represents the falling style of the late 18th century (Plate 161).

The most remarkable of the artistic works done by the local Muslims are perhaps the two sets of water-colour paintings of ceremonial *Id* and *Muharram* processions in Dhaka of the early 19th century during the time of *Naib Nazim* Nusrat Jung (1796-1823) and now preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka. These are painted by one Alam Musavvir. There are 39 pieces of paintings constituting these two processions. Artistically, they represent a decadent Mughal style heavily influenced by European realism. But they have considerable historical value being the pictorial documents regarding the people, costumes, buildings and other aspects of the contemporary society. Each of the paintings is, on an average, 24" x 18" in size and done on country made paper with liberal use of red, green, yellow, brown and black (Plates 162, 163, 169 & 170).

184. Terracotta plaque, with geometric designs, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.
185. Terracotta plaque, with floral designs, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.





186. Terracotta plaque, with arabesque design, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

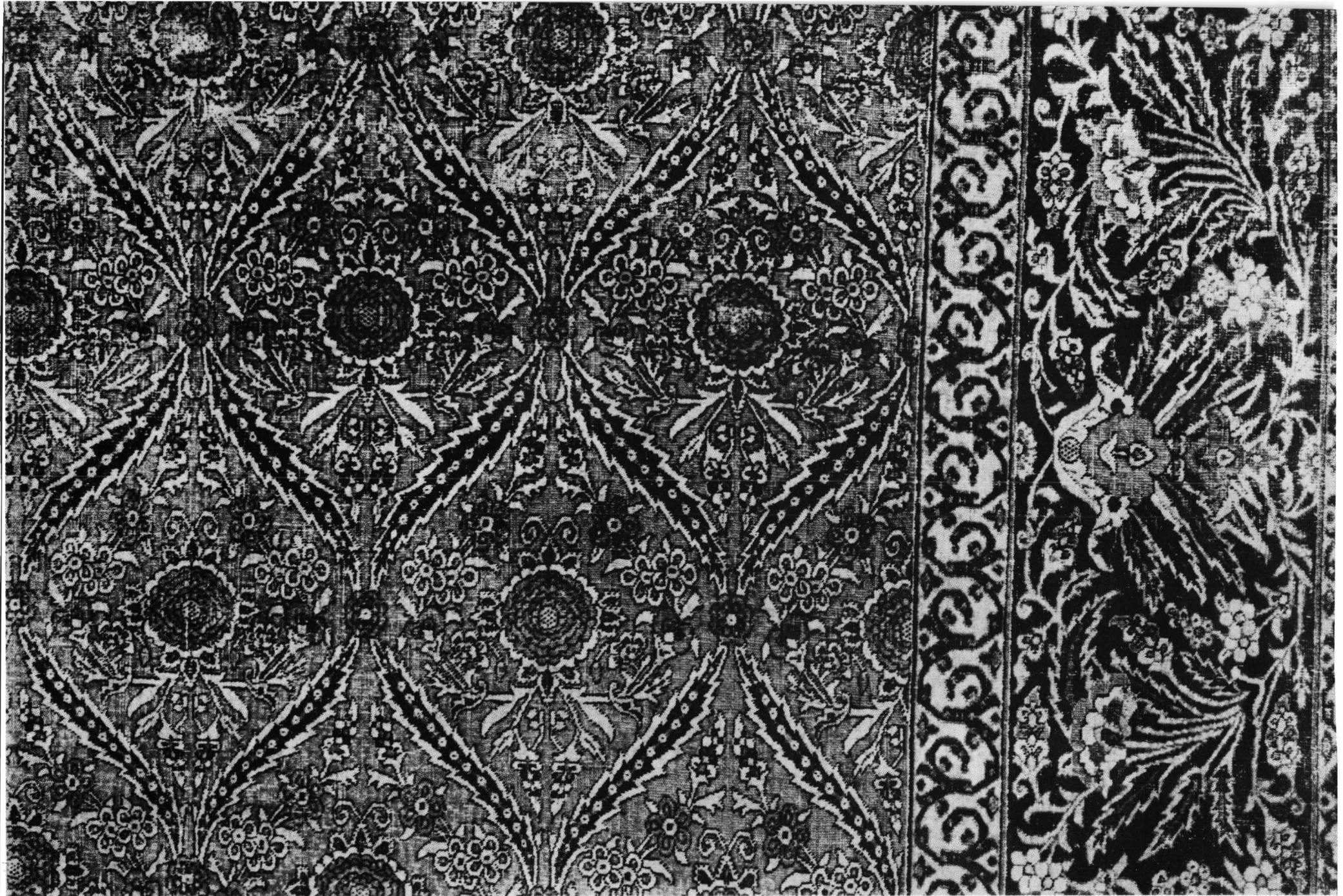


187. Terracotta plaque, with stylised fruit design, 18th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

Other Arts

The use of glazed tiles and potteries during the Muslim rule in Bangladesh is a well known fact. The Chinese porcelain of artistic and utilitarian value were also highly appreciated in Bangladesh. Although brought here as a commercial merchandise yet to satisfy the taste of the Muslims, many of them were inscribed with Arabic script on the rims and bodies. There is a modest collection of porcelain vessels in the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka. The shallow bowl of celadon (Plate 111), D. 18", of early 17th century, is of a sea-green tint with fluted lines radiating from the circular bottom to the heavy rim. The porcelain dish of Sino-Persian class (Plate 103) with blue and white, D. 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", belongs to Chieu Lung period (1736-95 A. D.). Its inner rim is inscribed with Arabic script written in *Naskh* and the inner bottom designed with *Kufic* and geometric patterns. There are porcelain plates with various charms and incantations in Arabic (Plate 104). A few more plates (Plates 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110 & 112) of 19th century in green, blue, yellow, orange, rose and white are decorated profusely with floral and vegetal motifs.

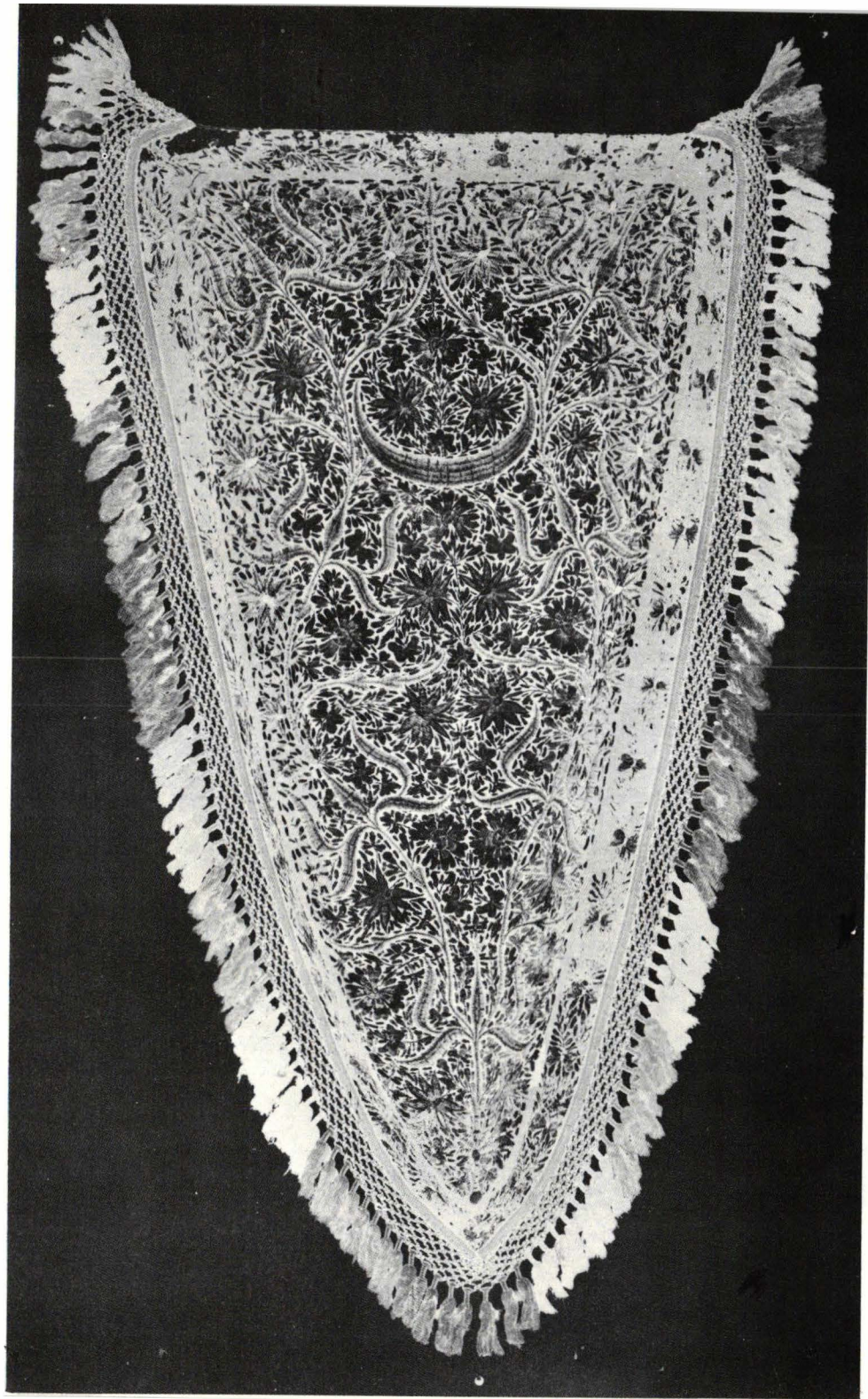
The two storage jars (Plates 113 & 114), show panelled decoration in red and black with prominent floral designs. The larger storage jars (Plates 115 & 116) show polychrome decoration with brightly enamelled and colourful glaze. In one of these jars with lid, H. 24", the decoration is in Canton style utilising favourite themes, such as, peacocks, quails, Chinese ladies and children. An elaborate Chinese landscape together with buildings and human figures can be seen within cusped medallion and a rectangular frame. The other jar, H. 19", shows in a pale green background a profusion of flowers, fruits, birds, butterflies and other flying insects. The base of the jar is decorated with stylised merlons of blue, turquoise and rose. Inscribed and dated porcelain for personal use were produced locally, as can be seen from a set of four pairs of cups and



188. Carpet, wool, 211"×193",18th century, from the court of Nawab Serajuddowla (1756-57) of Murshidabad. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

189. Fight between Turanian king Afrasiab and Rustam's grandson Barzu, from *Shahnamah*, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ ", 1599 A. D. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.





190. Horse Breast-cloth, velvet and wool, H. 51", W 29", 19th century, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.

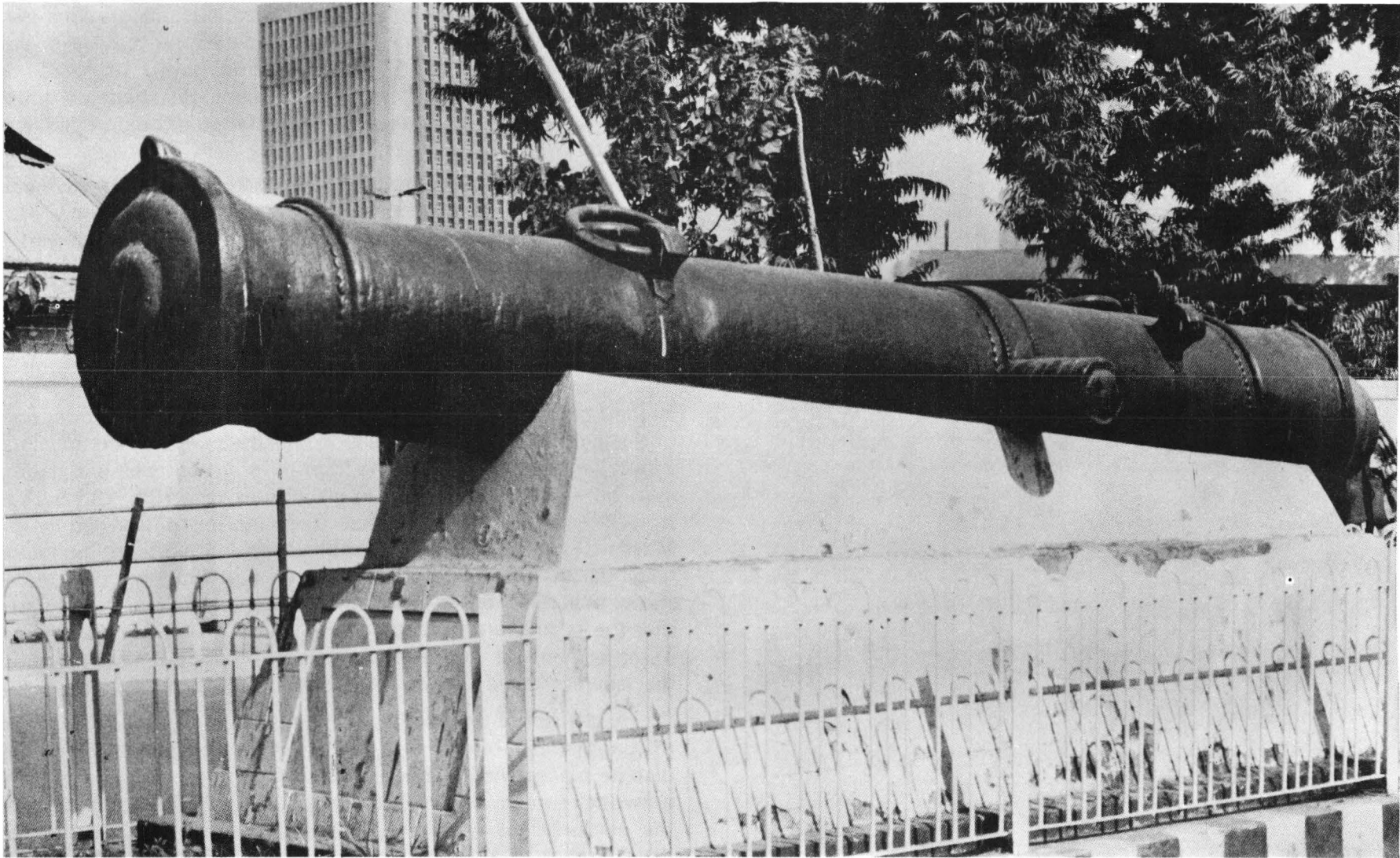
saucers belonging to Khan Bahadur (later on Nawab Bahadur) Abdul Latif (Plate 117).

Book covers done in leather with various decorations were another art in which the Muslims excelled. A cover in dark brown leather (Plate 174) stamped with gold, $18\frac{1}{2}'' \times 9\frac{3}{4}''$, of 19th century, shows four diminishing rectangles made of double ruled lines. The back edge has six rectangular boxes filled with arabesque.

Ornaments of precious and semi-precious metals have been designed in the Muslim period in Bangladesh with new ideas and tastes. Ornaments done in filigree have been referred to earlier (Plate 165). A combination of filigree and repousse can be seen in the *Jhumka* (Plate 164 b) of 19th century from Mymensingh. Jewellery of gold set with pearls and different gems were also very popular as in the *Kanpata* (Plate 164 a).

Although, terracotta ornamentations have already been alluded to in the chapter on architecture, a few reproductions of the stylised hanging bell-and-chain motifs, and geometric, floral, vegetal and arabesque designs from different parts of Bangladesh may be worthwhile to look at (Plates 184, 185, 186 & 187). It is interesting to know that these motifs, patronised by the Muslims, were universally applied on all sorts of buildings, religious or non-religious, Muslim or non-Muslim. This would show, as in many other forms and expressions of artistic activities, that the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh was not for the use or enjoyment of Muslims alone, rather, as in many parts of the Islamic world, it was appreciated by others as well.

A perusal of the objects belonging to the Islamic art heritage of Bangladesh brings out the axiomatic truth that Islam links distant places and diverse peoples. Caravan routes and maritime networks served as conduits of goods and ideas. Through out the centuries of Muslim supremacy in Bangladesh, with the development of the society, the arts which were not without



191. Bibi Mariam', Cannon of Mir Jumla, L. 132", *circa* 1660 A. D.
Dhaka.

quite rich and distinctive traditions, responded quickly to accommodate new demands of styles and technology. Thus, assimilating the indigenous as well as imported thoughts what the artists, builders and craftsmen created and bequeathed to us, have certainly added to our pride.

Index

[Common words repeatedly used, such as, Bangladesh, Dhaka, Islam, Muslim etc. have been excluded.]

Abdul Latif, Nawab Bahadur 22, 35, 232
Abdus Sadek 13
abrawan 225
Abul Fath 18, 151
Abul Fath Yuzbak al-Sultani 18, 144
Abul Fazl 151
Abyssinia 37
Achkan 22, 232
Afghanistan 37
Aftaba 19, 159
Agra 50, 122
Ahsan Manzil 17, 126, 192
Akbar 83
Akbarnamah 151
Alam Musavvir 239
Alauddin Husain Shah, Sultan 19, 62, 75, 82, 144
Alexander 23, 24, 235
Allakuri's Mosque 87
Al-Mustasimbillah, Khalifa 144
Amanullah 98
Angarakha 23, 232
Ankor Vat 33
Arabia 37
Arabic 129, 138, 144, 152, 205, 241
Armanitola 16, 98
arshilata 226
Asafuddowlah, Mohammad 13
Ashoka 32
Ashtagram 16, 82
Atardan 24, 192
Atiya 16, 86
Aurangabad, Fort 123
Aurangzeb, Emperor 123

Baba Adam Shahid, Mosque of 15
Badshah-ka-Takht 62
baft hana 225
Bagerhat 15, 16, 17, 56, 116
Bagha 15, 74
Bahadur Shah, Emperor 217
Baitul Mukarram Mosque 16, 114
Bajra Shahi Mosque 16, 98
Bakhtyar Khalji 33, 57
Bandar 144
Bangalah 31
Bangladesh National Museum 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18,
19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 124, 144, 151, 152,
187, 191, 192, 205, 217, 225, 226, 232, 239, 241
Bangladesh 31
Bara Bhuiyans 34, 191
Bara Katra 19, 124, 144, 187
Barbak Shah, Sultan 18, 144,
Barisal 18, 144
Bay of Bengal 31
Begambazar Mosque 23, 97
Bengali 18, 129, 152, 191
Bhakti Movement 34
'Bibi Mariam', Cannon 25, 187
Bibi Mariam's Mosque 87
Bibi Pari 17, 51, 122
Bichha 23
bidri 24, 191
Bogra 32, 82
Borobudur 33
Brahmaputra 31
Brahmi 32
British 31, 35

Buriganga 17, 97, 123, 187
Bustan 18, 152
buti 226

Calligraphy 9, 13, 18, 138, 152
Caparisoned elephant 20, 217
Carpet 25, 225
Cenotaph 17, 122
Central Asia 37
Ceramics 9, 13
Chadar 225
Chaitanya 34
Chandanpura Mosque 16, 103
Chandras 33,
Chapai-Nawabganj 57, 232
Chauchala 15, 50, 56, 63, 75
Chhota Katra 124
Chhota Sona Mosque 15, 51, 62, 63
Chikan 226
China 36
Chinese Porcelain 19, 20, 241
Chinitikri 103
Chiragdan 114
Chittagong 16, 97, 103, 152
Choga 22, 232
Coins 22, 192
Comilla 33, 98

Daggers 21, 187

249

- Damascus 50
 Dara 23
 Darasbari 15, 62, 63
darbar 20, 57, 217
dastarkhan 22, 225, 232
 Delhi 50, 122, 217
 Department of Archaeology 14
 Dewanbagh 191
 Devas 33
 Dhaka Education Extension Centre Mosque 17, 103
 Dhaka Museum 12, 124
 Dhaka Nawabs 126
Dhaka tupi 226
 Dhaka University Jami Mosque 114
 Dinajpur 82
dochala 16, 50, 86, 97, 232
Doshalas 232
 Dulalpur 124
durjani 226
- East Africa 36
 East Pakistan 36
 Egarasindur 16, 86
 Ekhlakhi tomb 98
 Enamul Haque, Dr. 9, 10
 Ewer 22
 Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah, Sultan 75
farman 152
 Faridpur 18, 22, 82, 205, 232
 Fathepur Sikri 50
Fathwa-i-Alamgiri 152
 250 Fez cap 18, 232
- filigree 21 23, 24, 159, 191, 192, 245
 Firdausi 151
 Firuzpur 16, 57, 63, 122
 Fulchowki 19, 144
funna 232
- Ganesa, Raja 34
 Gangaridai 31
 Ganges 31
garbhagriha 49
 Gaudadesh 31
 Gaur 15, 16, 17, 57, 63, 98, 122, 126
 Gharib-al-Yamini 152
ghilaf 22, 225, 226
 Ghyasuddin Bahadur Shah, Sultan 83
 Ghyasuddin Balban, Sultan 75
 Ghyasuddin Muhammad Azam Shah, Sultan 17, 114
 Ghulam Muhammad 124, 144
 Ghulam Nabi 19
 Goaldi Mosque 15, 75
Golabpash 21, 187, 192
 Great Golden Mosque 62
Gulzar 18, 151, 152
 Guptas 32
- Hajiganj 17, 123
 Hajiganj Fort 124
 Haji Khwaja Shahbaz's Mosque 87
 Hamid Khan, Copiest 239
 Hamid Khan's Mosque 16, 97

hammam-khanas 49, 56
 Harikela 31
 Harun-al-Rashid, Khalifa 144
Hasuli 23
 Hatkhola 19, 144
 Hazrat Ibrahim Danishmand 15, 82
 Hazrat Pandua 57
 helmet 24, 187
 Himalayas 31
Hukka 19, 24, 187, 191, 232
 Husaini Dalan 23, 192
 Husain Shah, see Alauddin Husain Shah, Sultan

 Ichhamati 123
Idghas 56
 Idrakpur 123
Id procession 23, 239
 India 56
Iskandarnamah 23, 24, 235
 Islam Khan Chisti 75, 87
 Ispahan 50
 ivory 205, 217

 Jadu 34
 Jahangirnagar 75, 87
 Jalaluddin Fateh Shah, Sultan 74, 82
 Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah, Sultan 18, 34, 98, 144
Jamdani 23, 226
 Jami 151

Jashoraj Khan 34
Jhumka 23, 245

Kabin Namah 18, 152
Kalamdan 21, 24, 187, 205, 217
Kalima 205
Kalka 226, 232
 Kalu Jham Jham 191
Kamiz 225
Kanpata 23, 245
Kantha, see *Nakshi Kantha*
Karchob 23
 Kartalab Khan's Mosque 16, 87, 97
 Kashaitully Mosque 16, 98
 Kashmir 22
Kasida 226
Katars 24, 187
Katras 123
 Khadgas 33
Khamsa 235
 Khan-i-Jahan, Ulug 16, 57, 116
 Khan Muhammad Mirdha's Mosque 87, 97
Khanposh 225
Khanqas 11, 49, 129
Khasdan 192
Khat-Sindhuk 205
 Khawaja Shaikh 17, 18, 151
 Kherua 16, 82
 Khulna 56
Koftgari 23, 24, 187
Kufic 144, 241
 Kumira 16, 97

Kurta 23, 225, 232
 Kusumba 15, 16, 19, 51, 83

Lahari Kantha 232
 Lahore 50
 Lakhya 123, 124
 Lakhnauti 57
 Laksmanasenadeva 33, 57
 Lalbagh Fort 16, 17, 87, 97, 122, 123
 Lalbagh Mosque 16
Lataif-i-Ashrafi 152
 Legs of throne 20, 217
Lep-Kantha 226
liwan 49
lungi 225, 226

madrassas 11, 49, 63, 129
 Maghrib 37
Mahabharata 34
 Mahasthanghar 32
 Mahi Santosh 126
 Mainamati 33, 144
 Majlis Awlia 82
makhdums 11
 Makkah 114
Maktabas 11
 Maladhar Basu 34
 Malik Kafur 74
 252 *mandila* 191

Mandra 18
Maqtul Husain 18, 152
masland 225
 Maurya 32
 Medina 114
mihrab 15, 16, 56, 57, 63, 74, 75, 83, 86, . 98
 Mir Jumla 25, 123, 187
 Mirza Ghulam Pir 98
 Mirza Murad Khan 83
 Mogradpara 15, 75
 Mohammad Mohsin 13
 Moradabad 159
Moradabadi 159
 Mughals 34, 51, 56, 75, 83, 87, 123, 124, 144, 187, 217, 235, 239
 Mughluny Chur 187
 Muhammad Azam, Prince 122, 123
 Muhammad Murad 152
 Muhammad Shah, Emperor 18, 23, 239
 Muhammad Yusuf 18
Muharram, Precession 23, 239
 Mulla Hizabar Akbar 75
mulmul khas 225
 Munshiganj 123
 Murshidabad 232
 Murshid Quli Khan 97
 Musa Khan's Mosque 87
 Muslin 225
 Mymensingh 23, 82, 83, 245

Nabiganj 17, 19, 124
Nakshi Kantha 22, 226

Naib Nazims of Dhaka 232, 239
Narayanganj 17, 144
Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, Sultan 57
Naskh 144, 151, 152, 235, 241
Nastaliq 18, 144, 151, 152
Naudia 57
Navagram 82
Nepal 226
Nepalese 226
Nimtali Palace 124
Nizami 23, 24, 151, 235
Noakhali 98
Nur Muhammad 98
Nusrat Jung, *Naib Nazim* 239
Nusrat Shah, Sultan 15, 19, 62, 144, 235

Organisation of Islamic Conference 10
Orna 225
Ornaments 245

Pabna 82
Padmavati 24
Pagla Bridge 17, 124
Pagri 225
Paharpur 32, 144
Painchhi 23, 192
Painting 9, 13
Pakistan 35
Pala 32, 33

Palangposh 225
Palassey 35
Panam Bridge 17, 124
Pankhiraj canal 124
Panna hazara 226
Pashmina Alwans 232
Pathrail Dighirpar 82
Permanent Settlement 35
Persia 24, 187
Persian 129, 144, 235, 239
Pikdan 21, 159
Portuguese 123
Pundranagar 32
Pundravardhana 31

Qadam-i-Mubarak Mosque 16, 98
Qadam Rasul 17, 19, 124
Qanungo 152
Qibla 57
Quran 17, 18, 22, 24, 38, 39, 129, 138, 151, 187,
217, 226
Qutb Shah's Mosque 16, 82, 83

Radha 31
Rai Danuj 75
Rajbibibi, Mosque of 15, 62, 63
Rajmahal 75, 98
Rajshahi 17, 18, 19, 51, 62, 74, 83, 126, 144, 232
Ramayana 34
Rampal 74

- Ranavijaypur Mosque 15, 57
 Rangpur 19, 144
 repousse 159, 191
Rihl 19, 205, 217
 Russians 23
- Sadi's Mosque 16, 86
 Safavi 239
 Saikupa Mosque 15, 82
 Salimullah, Nawab Bahadur 18, 232
 Samatata 31
 Sarail Mosque 16, 98
 sarcophagus 16, 114, 116
sari 23, 225, 226
 Sasanka 32
Satadal padma 232
satranji 225
 Sat Gumbaz Mosque 16, 87, 97
 Sayid Khan Panni 86
 screen 17, 126
 Serajuddowla, Nawab 35, 232
Shabnam 225
 Shah Abbas the Great, Emperor 24, 187
 Shahchillapur 114
 Shahjadpur 82
 Shahjahan, Emperor 18, 51, 152
 Shah Muhammad's Mosque 16, 86
Shahnamah 18, 23, 25, 151, 235, 239
 Shah Niamatullah's Mosque 16, 98
 Shah Niamatullah Wali, tomb of 17, 122
 Shah Shuja 19, 98, 144
 254 Shaikh Saadi 152
- Shaista Khan 97, 123
 Shait Gumbaz Mosque 15, 56, 57, 166
shalwar 225
 Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah, Sultan 63
 Shamsul Huq, Muhammad 10, 13
 Shankarpasha Mosque 82
Sharh-i-Rubayat 151
 Shawl 22
 Sherpur 16, 82
 Sher Shah, Emperor 191
 Shia 151
 shields 23, 24, 187
Shikasta 144
 Sitalmath 18, 144
 Sitara Mosque 16, 98, 103
 Solaiman 83
 Sonakanda 123
 Sonakanda Fort 17, 124
 Sonargaon 15, 17, 19, 75, 124, 144
 Sufi saints 34, 129
 Suhma 31
 Sunga 32
 Sura Mosque 82
Surahi 21, 24, 191
 Sotalur 18 144
 Suvarnagram 75
suzni kantha 232
 Syed Ahmed, Sir 35
 Syed Ahmed Rumi 191
 Syed Ameer Ali 35
 Sylhet 19, 82, 144, 217

Tangail 86
Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi 75
Terracotta plaque 24, 25, 245
textiles 9, 13, 225, 232
Thakurdighi 116
toradar 226
tray 19, 21, 159, 192
Tughra 138, 152
tupi 225
Turks 37

Umarpur 63
Umbrella 18, 225

Vanga 31

Varendra 31
Varendra Research Museum 19, 144
Varmans 33
Vijay Gupta 34
Vikrampur 74

Wali Khan's Mosque 16, 98
Wali Muhammad 62
West Pakistan 36
wristlet 192
wood 205, 217

Ziauddin Barani 75
Zulekha Haque, Prof. 14

