

# *KHAN JAHAN (R):* Ruler, Builder and Saint



Khoundkar Alamgir

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## PREFACE

The writing of this monograph was started in 1984 while I was posted at Bagerhat as a Field Officer of the Khulna Divisional Office, Directorate of Archaeology. The first essay of this book 'Location and Antiquity of Bagerhat' was written under the direct supervision and guidance of Professor Muhammad Sirajul Islam, former Vice-Chancellor, Islamic University, Kushtia and Mr. M.A. Qadir, former Director (Current-Charge), Directorate of Archaeology, Dhaka. The second essay incorporated here 'Khan Jahan : A Great Muslim Missionary in Bengal' was written under the inspiration and advice of Professor Syed Sajjad Husain, former Vice-Chancellor, Dhaka University, who helped improve my language. The last essay about the actual location of *Khalifatabad* city was written in consultation with Professor Muhammad Sirajul Islam and under the supervision of Professor Habiba Khatun of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, Dhaka University. Suggestions for the future improvement of the book are invited from scholars, archaeologists, art historians and general readers.

I am grateful to those who inspired me to write this book. I express my gratitude to the Directorate of Archaeology for supplying me with the photographs and drawings of the necessary monuments incorporated. I am also grateful to Mr. Md. Khorshed Alam, Stenographer, for typing the manuscript and to Mr. Tauhidunnabi, Chief Photographer of the Directorate for his help and cooperation rendered in preparing this book.

I am also thankful to Mr. A. K. M. Abdul Hai of Asiatic Press for the care and interest he has taken for printing this book.

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## **DEDICATION**

Those who inspired me in the field of  
Architectural History





*Professor Syed Sajjad Husain*

4 January 1994

*M.A., Ph.D.*

I have read with interest Khoundkar Alamgir's essays on the life and achievements of Khan Jahan of Bagerhat. He has brought to light facts not so well known, and as a result Khan Jahan appears in perspective to have been a great ruler as well as a great builder. He has left an impress on our history which is indelible. I should like to congratulate Alamgir on having painstakingly brought together incontrovertible evidence of Khan Jahan's greatness collected from archaeological sources and presented it in language which all laymen like me also understand. I am sure these essays will be appreciated by scholars and especialists.

*sd.*

Syed Sajjad Husain

## A NOTE ON THE LOCATION AND ANTIQUITY OF BAGERHAT\*

Khan-al-Azam Khan Jahan or Ulugh Khan Jahan was probably of Turkish origin. Very little is known about his pedigree and his relation with the Sultans of Gaur and Delhi. It is probable that he was the Khan-al-Azam Khan Jahan of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah and Ulugh Khan Jahan of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah.<sup>1</sup> There is an inscription in the tomb of Khan Jahan depicting the date of the demise of Ulugh Khan Jahan, 1459 A. D.

Khan Jahan established this small isolated township in the Sundarbans. But the purpose of this city is not definitely known to us. The location of this city in an isolated place is a puzzle. Gaur city is at a distance of about 200 miles to the north-west, Sonargaon about 100 miles to the north-east, Chhota Nagpur 400 miles to the west and Orissa nearly 300 miles to the south-west – all at a crow fly. It was probably a border outpost of the Gaur Sultans. Some scholars think that this area of Bengal was conquered first during the early Ilyas Shahi dynasty. But during the turmoil of the house of Ganesha, it was not under complete control of the Gaur Sultan. After the fall of the house of Ganesha the Later Ilyas Shahis came to power. During the rule of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah (1442-1459 A.D.) of the Later Ilyas Shahi dynasty Khan Jahan conquered this part of Bengal and founded his Seat of Government here. There is no architectural evidence of Muslim rule here before Khan Jahan.

We do not know what was the name of this ancient city during the time of Ulugh Khan Jahan. The name '*Khalifatabad*' was ascribed to this place at a much later period — in the reign of Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah<sup>2</sup> and it bore this name uptill the end of the 18th century. It has been mentioned in the map of Van Den

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\* First published in Bangla in *Souvenir, 1991*, Alumni Association, Department of Islamie History and Culture, Dhaka University.

Broucke (1660) as *Cuipitavaz*.<sup>3</sup> It is also thought that the name of this place was *Sonargaon* i.e. the Seat of Government of Eastern Bengal.<sup>4</sup> Whether the name of this place was *Mubarakabad* is also a question.

We have mentioned that this city was probably a border outpost of the Gaur Sultans. This city might have been the remotest centre of power of the Sultanate of Gaur. Some scholars think that Khan Jahan is identical with a Khwaja Jahan<sup>5</sup> mentioned in an inscription of Dhaka that he was stationed in the 'frontier territory'<sup>6</sup> during the rule of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah. It has also been mentioned above that its distance from Gaur is about 200 miles as the crow flies and communication between these two places was not very easy. Because of the distance of Bagerhat from Gaur the style of architecture of the former is somewhat different from the latter and Khan Jahan himself apparently seems to have been an independent ruler. Though he was certainly a Viceroy of the Gaur Sultan.

We learn from history that there was prolonged hostility between the Gaur Sultan and the Hindu Kings of Orissa.<sup>7</sup> The Ganga dynasty of Orissa extended its domain as far as the Bhagirathi river before the reign of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah. Kapilendra Deva of the Surya dynasty was his contemporary. It has been mentioned in the history of Orissa that the king of Orissa defeated some Turk Sultans. He conquered some portion of Bengal and assumed the title of Gaureshwar. It should be noted that the Eastern Ganga kings did not use the title of Gaudesvara, though the army of Narasimha I reached the gates of Gaud and defeated Tughril Tughan Khan, the ruler of Bengal. Kapilendra defeated the Sultan of Gaud and assumed the title of Gaudesvara to commemorate his victory. The titles of Gaudesvara and Gajapati were used for the first time in the Jagannath temple inscription of Kapilendra dated April 1450'.<sup>8</sup> It has also been

mentioned that 'strained relations already existed between the Gajapati king and the Sultan of Bengal. A portion of south-west Bengal was held by the king of Orissa, which the Sultan of Bengal was anxious to recover, for the safety of Satgnaw or Satgao (near Hughli). Kapilendra similarly wanted to extend his north-eastern frontier upto the river Ganga. .... In all probability, he won a victory over Sultan Nasiruddin, who reigned from 1442 to 1459, and assumed the title of *Gaudesvara* or overlord of Bengal'.<sup>9</sup>

Bagerhat city was the southern-most centre of power of the Sultanate of Gaur and the purpose of this city was mainly to fight against the Orissan enemies to the west. We learn about some actual fighting as mentioned above with Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and the king of Orissa. At the time of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah the power of the Gaur Sultans revived. From this place the attacks from Orissa were repulsed. This does not mean that any actual fighting occurred near Bagerhat or 'when attacked, it is likely that he retreated into the swamps which would explain why neither townwalls nor a fortress, have so far been discovered, although there is one unexcavated ruin which is supposed to have been his dwelling'.<sup>10</sup> The ruler of this area collected local soldiers and the Turks to fight against the enemies of the Gaur Sultans and protect the outlying borders to the west near Orissa and Chhota Nagpur. It is certain that Khan Jahan owed allegiance to the Sultan of Gaur. He issued no coins in his own name. Some coins of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, his contemporary Sultan of Gaur was discovered from the village of Morga, Bagerhat few years ago. There is no other possible explanation of the growth of this small isolated township in the Sundarbans. This city was founded in the Later Ilyas Shahi period and no remains of a Mughal monument

are found here. The name of a place *Imam Bari*, indicates Shia influence at a much later period. It is said that Khan Jahan established this city with the help of the ruins of an ancient Buddhist city.<sup>11</sup> A. F. M. Abdul Jalil is of opinion that there was probably a little habitation scattered around this place from ancient times.<sup>12</sup> 'The earliest traditions of the district are connected not with an ancient Buddhist or Hindu Kingdom but with a Muhammadan called Khan Jahan Ali or more generally Khanja Ali'<sup>13</sup>

Shait Gumbad mosque or the sixty domed mosque and the tomb of Khan Jahan are very important monuments of Bagerhat. They were declared protected monuments of the government in 1913 A.D. There are eleven (11) protected monuments in Bagerhat. These are: 1. Shait Gumbad Mosque, 2. Tomb of Khan Jahan, 3. Tomb of Pir Ali, 4. Rana Vijoypur Mosque, 5. Reza Khoda Mosque, 6. Singar Mosque, 7. Bibi Begni's Mosque, 8. Chunakhola Mosque, 9. Nine Domed Mosque, 10. Single Domed Mosque attached to the Tomb of Khan Jahan and 11. Sabek Danga Building. There are other ruins, ancient tanks, streets, mounds etc. in this historic city of Bagerhat. Among these Bara Azina Mosque site and the ruins of the residence of Khan Jahan may contain archaeological treasures. The ruins of Sona Masjid, Didar Khan, Nine Domed Mosque near the residence of Khan Jahan are fast deteriorating.

The old Bhairab river played a vital role in the growth of this city and for its transportation and communication with other areas. 'Its situation in the bend of the former Bhairab river implies the location was carefully selected'.<sup>14</sup> The old bed of the river is very much attached to this ancient city. Its new course has receded about one mile to the north. There is a place named *Jahazghata* (port) or *Pathar Ghata* (landing place of stones) beside the old

bed of the Bhairab river. An ancient stone image is worshipped here by the Hindus.

There are other monuments in southern Bengal depicting the same style of architecture. These are:- Masjidkur Mosque, Koyra, Khulna; Aroshnagar Mosque, Dumuria, Khulna; Kasba Allah's Mosque, Gaurnadi, Barisal<sup>15</sup> and Masjidbariya Mosque, Mirjaganj, Patuakhali<sup>16</sup>.

The very name of *Shait Gumbad* or sixty domed mosque is a misnomer. There are actually 70 hemispherical low squat and 7 hut-shaped domes over it. There are sixty pillars in this mosque. A. F. M. Abdul Jalil is of opinion that its name is originated from the word '*Shait Khambaz*' or sixty pillars<sup>17</sup>. In Persian pillars are called *Khambaz*. Locally it was called *Shait Khambaz* or mosque with sixty pillars and the word *Shait Gumbad* was originated in this way — *Shait Gumbaz* is a corruption of *Shait Khambaz*. Some local people here think that it was originated from '*Chhad Gumbad*' or the roof is covered by domes which may also be considered. It is 'the earliest known example of a structure with a *bangla* or hut-shaped roof-line in this part of the sub-continent.'<sup>18</sup> The stone of Gaur and Bagerhat is probably from the same quarry.

Glazed tiles were used in the *Shait Gumbad* mosque, tomb of Khan Jahan and in other monuments of Bagerhat<sup>19</sup>. Some of them are still preserved even today. Terracotta decoration of inanimate objects are found in all of these buildings. There are terracotta designs of leaves, flowers etc. Stylised bell and chain motif is also observed in them. Small irregular bricks were used in the construction of these buildings. Lime mortar and a thin coating of lime was used on the terracottas as well as on the surface of the walls of the buildings. 'An enthusiastic local amateur archaeologist

who is preparing a history of the area, has made an interesting collection of artefacts which have been found during several small excavations carried out in the vicinity of the Khan Jahan Monuments.<sup>120</sup>

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## **KHAN JAHAN : A GREAT MUSLIM MISSIONARY IN BENGAL**

Khan-al-Azam Khan Jahan or Ulugh Khan Jahan is a legendary name in the history of Bangladesh. A person of obscure parentage, he was probably a representative of Gaur, the Seat of the Government of Bengal during the independent Sultanate. He is reputed to be the son of Alaul Huq and the brother of Nur-Qutb-ul-Alam, the saint<sup>2</sup>. His real name is Azam Khan. His presence in Bagerhat coincides with the rule of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah (1442-1459 A. D) of Gaur. The date of the demise of Khan Jahan is 24th October, 1459 A.D. He was married but had no offspring. He was born on Bangladeshi soil but his ancestry is either Turkish or Arab.<sup>3</sup>

He is said to have been the commander-in-chief of the armed forces deployed in the coastal area of Bangladesh. The Sultan of Bengal at that time had continuous warfare and confrontation with the Hindu kings of Orissa<sup>4</sup>. King Kapilendra Deva (1434-1470 A.D.) of the Surya dynasty of Orissa was the contemporary of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah of Gaur. Naval warfare was prevalent at that time in Bengal.

The area of Khan Jahan, so far as we know, is from Jhenidah to Jessore, Satkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat, Barisal, Patuakhali, Mymensingh and Dhaka. It is very interesting that though the history of the man is not clearly known, his works are very remarkable. The monuments and sites associated with the name of Khan Jahan are as follow: 1. Singdaha Auliya Mosque, Jhenidah; 2. Satgachiya Gayebana Mosque, Jhenidah; 3. Gorar Mosque, Jhenidah; 4. Tomb of Garib Shah, Jessore; 5. Tomb of Burhanuddin Shah, Jessore; 6. Shubharada Mosque, Abhoynagar, Jessore; 7. Mosque of Arashnagar, Dumuriya, Khulna; 8.

Masjidkur Mosque, Koyra, Khulna; 9. Shait Gumbad Mosque, Bagerhat; 10. Tomb of Khan Jahan, Bagerhat; 11. Tomb of Pir Ali, Bagerhat; 12. Mosque near the Tomb of Khan Jahan, Bagerhat; 13. Reza Khoda Mosque, Bagerhat; 14. Nine Domed Mosque, Bagerhat; 15. Zinda Pir complex, Bagerhat; 16. Rana Vijoypur Mosque, Bagerhat; 17. Singar Mosque, Bagerhat; 18. Bibi Begni's Mosque, Bagerhat; 19. Chunakhola Mosque, Bagerhat, 20. Ten Domed Mosque, Bagerhat, 21. Kasba Mosque, Barisal<sup>5</sup>; 22. Masjidbariya Mosque, Patuakhali<sup>6</sup>; 23. Mosque of Ghagra, Mymensingh<sup>7</sup> and 24. A Mosque in Dhaka city<sup>8</sup> etc. Thus the works associated with Khan Jahan cover a vast area of southern Bangladesh. Khan Jahan is said to have built roads from Jessore to Satkhira and from Jessore to Bagerhat through Murali Kasba, Paygram Kasba, Dighaliya and Senhati.<sup>9</sup> He also made many streets in Bagerhat. There are many tanks all over this area dug by himself or his followers. There was a gateway at that time erected after his name in Dhaka city. It was located in front of the above mentioned mosque. Thus his area further extends to the east. It is to be mentioned here that the monuments of Khan Jahan do not contain any date of their construction.

He was certainly not a sovereign king of this part of Bengal as we do not get any coin struck in his own name. Khan Jahan probably conquered this part of Bengal in the early Ilyas Shahi period and during the turmoil of the Hindu dynasty of King Ganesha (1409-1442 A.D.) he kept silent. Again during the rule of the Later Ilyas Shahi dynasty (1442-1487 A.D.) he became dominant.

The Seat of the Administration of Khan Jahan was certainly in Bagerhat. He ruled and controlled almost the whole of southern Bengal. But it is very curious that we do not know what was the name of Bagerhat during Khan Jahan's rule. The name of

*Khalifatabad* was ascribed to this part of Bengal at a much later period, during the rule of the Husain Shahi dynasty (1493-1538 A.D.)<sup>10</sup>. According to some scholars the name of this place was *Sonargaon* at the time of Khan Jahan. Whether the name of this place was *Mubarakabad* is also a question. *Shahr-e-now*\* is also a probable name proposed for this ancient city.<sup>11</sup> In the map of Van Den Broucke (1660A.D.) it has been mentioned as *Cuipitavaz*<sup>12</sup>. It may be identical with modern Bagerhat or any other place nearby.

The architecture of Barobazar has close affinity with and resemblance to the architecture of Bagerhat. A little digression about Barobazar may be helpful here. It is 18 Kilometers from Jessore town and 10 kilometers from Kaliganj, Jhenidah. Situated on the bank of the old Bhairab river Barobazar is a historical place. It was a prosperous city during the Hindu and Buddhist period. Some scholars think that it was the capital of the Gangaridae<sup>13</sup> kingdom mentioned in the '*Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*' — a Greek history of the 1st century B. C. Barobazar is also associated with the name of Khan Jahan. There are many ancient mounds and tanks. An inscription, now in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi, of the time of Husain Shah was found here. It is said that it was the Seat of Administration of Raja Ramchandra Khan, a favourite of Raja Mansingh. This city declined in course of time. The siltation of the river Bhairab was probably the cause of the decline of this city. Barobazar is also known as *Bairat Nagar*, a legendary city of ancient Bengal. No architectural evidence before the 15th century is found here.

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
\* The author has ascribed the name of *Shahr-e-now* to Barobazar, Jhenidah District, in another article. See Khoundkar Alamgir: Archaeological Remains at Barobazar, Jhenidah District, *Journal of Bengal Art*, Vol. 3, (Ed. Enamul Haque), Dhaka, 1998, p.264

There are many ancient mounds in Barobazar. Some of these mounds have recently been excavated. These mounds are connected with some tanks. Barobazar area is consisted of villages like Barobazar, Sadikpur, Belat Daulatpur, Satgachiya, Hasilbagh, Mithapukur, Phulbari, Badedihi, Rahmatpur, Gaurinathpur and Kashthabhanga.

Satgachiya Gayebana Mosque<sup>14</sup> of Barobazar helps a great deal to reconstruct the history of Khan Jahan. This mosque has some architectural resemblance with the Shait Gumbad Mosque of Bagerhat. Satgachiya mosque (as explored by recent archaeological excavation) is probably the mosque constructed before the construction of the Shait Gumbad Mosque by Khan Jahan en route to Bagerhat from Barobazar. This mosque with thirty five domes has recently attracted the notice of the scholars of this country. It is to be mentioned that one wing of Shait Gumbad mosque has thirty five domes i. e. seventy domes in two wings and seven *Chauchala* or hut-shaped domes in the middle. There are seventy seven domes in total at the roof of the mosque. Satgachiya Mosque has also a doorway on the northern side of the central *mihrab* as in the case of the Shait Gumbad Mosque.

The style of architecture of Khan Jahan is very much masculine, having some resemblance with the Tughlaq architecture of Delhi. There is a Greek pediment<sup>15</sup> on the top of the central entrance of the Shait Gumbad mosque on the east. There is an underground crypt beneath the sarcophagus of the tomb of Khan Jahan.<sup>16</sup> The same type of crypt is found in the tomb of Iltutmish, Delhi and in many Muslim tombs. There are many Arabic and Persian inscriptions on this underground crypt and on the surface of the sarcophagus. This is a very unique feature of this tomb.

Though the commonly used name of this mosque *Shait Gumbad* means a sixty domed mosque,<sup>17</sup> actually it has seventy

seven domes on its top. The Bengali word *Shat* meaning sixty seems to be a corruption of the Arabic '*Sath*' (roof). *Sath-Gumbad* must have originally been intended to signify a roof of domes. *Sath* in Bengali pronunciation changed to *'shat* or *shait*, and gradually the original senses of the term *Sath Gumbad* came to be lost. This explanation chimes in better with the fact of this existence of seventy-seven domes. (see Hans Wehr: *Arabic-English Dictionary* for  meaning roof.)

There are various types of mosques built in the Khan Jahani style. These are as follow: single domed, six domed, nine domed, ten domed, thirty five domed and seventy seven domed mosques. Their structure is always massive. Irregular sizes of bricks have been used. Mortar is lime and sand. Lime plaster is observed even today in many monuments. These monuments are ornate with rich inanimate terracottas of leafage, floral and geometric designs. Glazed tiles were used in the Tomb of Khan Jahan at Bagerhat<sup>18</sup>. It is conjectured that it was also used in the Shait Gumbad Mosque. The floor of this mosque is the work of the British during their rule in this country. The curved cornice of these monuments is a very conspicuous indigenous feature of these monuments. The corner towers are suggestive of the shape of bamboos.

The Tombs of Khan Jahan and Pir Ali and the Shait Gumbad Mosque were declared protected by the British government in 1913 A.D. Afterwards other monuments were also gradually declared protected in the Pakistani period and in the independent Bangladesh period. UNESCO has a scheme in Bagerhat to be implemented for the protection and beautification of the Shait Gumbad Mosque and its surroundings. It has been put on World Heritage List of UNESCO. The ancient enclosure wall of this mosque has been rebuilt. Many antiquities may be found from excavations in various ruins and mounds of Bagerhat. 'An

enthusiastic local amateur archaeologist who is preparing a history of the area, has made an interesting collection of artefacts which have been found during several small excavations carried out in the vicinity of the Khan Jahan monuments'.<sup>19</sup> The Directorate of Archaeology has established a museum in Bagerhat.

It has already been mentioned that the original name of this place is not known to us. Some people think that this place was inhabited by the Buddhists before Khan Jahan. Others think that there were probably some scattered dwellings and habitations here before Khan Jahan. 'The earliest traditions of the district are connected not with any ancient Buddhist or Hindu kingdom but with a Mahomedan called Khan Jahan Ali'.<sup>20</sup> It was named *Khalifatabad* during the Husain Shahi dynasty. Coins were struck at that time from a mint named *Khalifatabad*. The modern name of this place is Bagerhat. The origin of this toponym is also debatable. Mazharul Islam in his '*A short History of Bagerhat*' writes, 'How Bagerhat derived its name is still a matter of conjecture and no definite conclusion has been hitherto arrived at by any writer on the subject. One opinion is that the Bazar used to sit in a Garden (probably of Khan Jahan) on the bank of the river and hence the name. Another opinion as to its nomenclature is, that this part of the country on the Sundarbans was infested with wild Royal Bengal Tigers and so the name. Some one holds that it was named after one Bhaker, a Muslim saint. Still another opinion is prevalent which holds that the 'hat' was situated on the *bānk* - curve of the river, so it was called 'Bakerhat' and from Bakerhat it became Bagerhat.'<sup>21</sup>

What was the cause of the sudden growth and gradual decline of this city? At first, it is to be thought that the purpose of the

Sultan of Gaur was no longer served from this place. Some people think that Khan Jahan had no offspring and as a result the city declined. But we should not forget that had the Sultan of Gaur considered his purpose served from this place, he would have sent or appointed another representative here. The change of the course of the old Bhairab is an important factor, as may be thought, in the history of this deserted city. The present Bagerhat city is about six kilometers to the east of the place of Khan Jahan. After the abandonment of this city southern Bengal was ruled from another place. What is that place? The Seat of Government was changed from one place to another considering the geographical condition of the country, political purpose and war strategy. It is said by some people that Bagerhat continued flourishing even after the death of Khan Jahan. But this hypothesis is not supported by any substantial proof. Village Alaipur<sup>22</sup> of Khulna is said to have been a later Seat of Government temporarily used for the administration of southern Bengal.

Khan Jahan has deep rooted and far-flung impact in the socio-cultural history of Bengal. Some Hindu Brahmins were converted to Islam during the time of Khan Jahan. They were known as *Pirali* Muslims after the name of *Pirali* Muhammad Tahir, a renegade. Their Hindu relatives were known as *Pirali* Brahmins. These Brahmins were ostracised from their own society. The Tagores of Jorasako in Calcutta were descended from these outcaste Brahmins.<sup>23</sup>

The name of Khan Jahan is also mentionable as the greatest preacher and propagator of Islam in southern Bengal. He cleared the jungles and his followers and the new converts to Islam settled in this newly cleared habitations. This fact is admitted by scholars like Sir Prafulla Chandra Roy, L. R. Focus, L. S. S. O'Malley, Westland *et al.*

There was some Buddhist influence in southern Bengal during the time of Khan Jahan. Dr. M. Nizamul Haque of the Directorate of Archaeology thought that the design of the corner towers of the Probazpur Shahi Mosque, Kaliganj, Satkhira and of Gorar Mosque, Barobazar, Kaliganj, Jhenidah is of Buddhist origin. Local craftsmen were employed to build these mosques and they utilised their hereditary knowledge in these new buildings as they had no iconographic connection with Buddhism. Thus it is a very conspicuous and interesting indigenous element of Muslim architecture of Bengal which resembles the *stupa* architecture of the Buddhists.

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## SHAIT GUMBAD MOSQUE

This historic mosque is located in mauza Sundarbhona Bazeapti 130, plot no 108, Shait Gumbad U. P., Bagerhat Upazila, District Bagerhat. This brick-built mosque is the largest ancient mosque in Bangladesh. It is 'popularly known by its highly misleading name of *Shait Gumbad* (meaning 60-domed) though it is in fact crowned by 77 domes, in addition to another 4, covering the round corner towers'. It was erected in about 1440 A. D.

**General Description:** This is a rectangular building measuring 160' feet by 108' feet with four tall massive corner towers. It has eleven doorways or openings on the east. The central opening is the largest. There are seven openings on each of the north and south sides. The central *mihrab* in the *qibla* wall is projected westward and has a doorway on the north of it. The building has a curved cornice on four sides running through the four corner towers but the cornice over the facade is a slope and takes the shape of a Greek pediment over the central entrance. The mosque has seventy seven domes over it but the seven domes in the centre placed in a east-west row are hut-shaped. These hut-shaped roofs are different from those at Gaur. The roof of the monument is sloped to the corners.

**The Facade:** It has already been mentioned that there are eleven openings on the eastern side. All the openings are set in rectangular recesses. There are pointed arches one above each of the openings. The arches have terracotta floral designs at the keystones and one rosette in each spandrel. Above it there are horizontal rows of various terracotta designs. The central doorway is larger than others and the terracotta designs above it are very conspicuous. The main entrance has one large and three smaller rosettes on either side of it. The height of the facade is 20'-0" at the corner and 23'-2" at the centre with the pediment.

**South Side:** The seven doorways are placed in rectangular recesses. The wall with each doorway is projected from the floor to the roof. The wall has various vertical off-sets and recesses. The second opening from the west is closed. The openings on this side are narrower than those in the facade but the central one is larger. Traces of terracotta ornamentation are observed above the central opening and the side openings.

**North Side:** This wall is almost the same to the south side. Rosettes and terracotta designs are clearly seen in this side. Traces of lime plaster is also observed.

**Qibla Wall:** This wall has alternate vertical off-sets and recesses in the exterior. The rectangular *mihrab* portion is projected westward.

**The Interior of the Mosque:** There are sixty pillars in the interior of the mosque. Most of them are slender pillars but six of them are massive piers. There are five brick piers and one stone pier. There are six north-south rows and ten pillars in each row. The nave is covered by six hut-shaped roofs. Thickness of wall is about 8'-0".

**Eastern Side :** Thickness of the wall at this side is about 8'-2". There are eleven openings on this side – the central one is larger than the side openings. There are diaper designs above each of the pointed arches and one rosette on either side. Above this there are horizontal rows of terracotta floral and other designs. There are engaged pilasters in this wall supporting arches above them.

**Southern Wall :** There are seven doorways on this side. The second opening from the west is closed by grilles of brick. The openings are placed in rectangular recessed area as they are in the eastern wall. There are terracotta diapers above the keystones of the pointed arches and rosettes at the spandrels of the arches .

Above this there are horizontal rows of floral and other ornamental designs. There are small niches on either side of these openings in the interior of the mosque. But there is no niche on the eastern and western sides. There is engrailed facing at the faces of these niches. The staircase leading to the roof is placed at the side of the eastern opening on this side.

**Northern Wall:** This side is almost the same as the south side. The staircase going to the turret is placed on the side of the eastern opening.

**Qibla Wall:** There are ten ornate *mihirabs* in the *qibla* wall. The central stone *mihirab* is larger than the flanking *mihirabs*. Other *mihirabs* are made of brick. On the north of the central *mihirab* there is an opening to the outside – it had probably a connection with the residence of Khan Jahan. All the *mihirabs* are semicircular in shape and they had engrailed arched facing originally in front of them. Only the second *mihirab* from the north still contains this feature. The interior of the *mihirabs* were richly decorated with terracotta ornamentation. There were bell and chain motifs in these *mihirabs*. Each of the *mihirabs* were flanked by two small pillars. The spandrels of the arches here had rosettes encircled by intertwining branches of trees. Above this there are various horizontal rows of terracotta ornamentations. Above the rectangular frames containing the *mihirabs* there are still various horizontal rows of terracotta designs. They are different in various *mihirabs*. There is a horizontal row of terracotta merlons at the top of the *mihirabs*. Above these there are terracotta rosettes – one large and several smaller above each of the *mihirabs* and are placed high in the wall.

It has already been mentioned that the central *mihirab* is made of stone. It is flanked by two pillars. The arch of the *mihirab* is of

multi-cusped pointed order. In the interior of the *mihrab* there is a bell and chain motif. There are various rosettes in the interior. At the spandrel of the arch of the *mihrab* there is a rosette encircled by branches of intertwining trees with leaves and flowers. The whole is placed within a rectangular frame. Above this there are horizontal rows of various designs. At the top of it there is a horizontal row of blind merlons.

There are horizontal rows of bricks placed edgewise and corner-wise in alternate rows at the four corners beneath the domes. There are traces of lime plaster all over the mosque – in the interior as well as on the exterior.

Corner Towers: It has already been mentioned that there are four round corner towers at the four corners of this monument. The two towers on the east are longer and they have entrances from the interior of the mosque through staircases. These turrets have four openings at the top - only one opening leads to the roof. The two turrets on the west are dwarfish and they are without staircases. They have two openings in each of them – one to the roof and the other to the north.

'Of the three monumental gateways, one each in east, north and south, only the eastern one survives in dilapidated condition, although bereft of its original enclosure wall. This gateway has been restored together with its ornamentation as far as it could be worked out on the basis of extant traces.' Another gateway has recently been discovered on the western side of this mosque. A brick-inscription has also been collected from the nearby area.

## THE TOMB OF KHAN JAHAN

We learn from an inscription on the tomb of Khan Jahan that he died in 1459 A. D. His tomb lies on the north bank of a large tank. It measures 42'-10" square externally without the round corner towers. Internally it measures 30'-0" square. There are four round corner towers with bands at the four corners. They have bands at the top of them. There are four doorways at the four sides – the northern one is now closed. The thickness of wall is 8'-0". There are five courses of stones at the base and above it there is a brick wall. The building is set within a boundary wall and it has three gateways. There is no gateway on the north and the western one, originally the main gateway, is now closed. It has three openings to the mosque on that side. The tomb of Muhammad Tahir, a renegade, is on the west of this building.

**Exterior of the Tomb:** The main entrance of the tomb is on the south and it is through a pointed arch. There is a course of stone at the springing line of this arch. There are three horizontal rows of curved cornice and two water - drains or gargoyles on this side.

The arch is placed within a rectangular recess. There are other two gargoyles on the north and west sides but there is only one gargoyle on the east side. Another gargoyle is probably missing. The northern closed doorway is small and different from other three doorways. The round corner towers have circular bands and curved cornices run through these turrets. At the top of them there are *Amalaka* and *Kalasa* designs. There are terracotta diaper designs at the bands of the corner turrets and at the curved cornices. There is a large *Kalasa* motif at the top of the large dome.

**Interior of the Tomb:** Internally it is a square of 30'-0". It had four doorways - the northern one is narrower and is now closed.

There is no engaged pilaster in the interior of the building. The corners are bridged over by pointed arches. There are four extra arches engaged in the four walls. There are triangular spaces in between these arches and they make the base of the dome a circle.

There are eight niches with engrailed arched facing – two niches in each wall of the interior. They are on either side of the doorway. The interior is covered by a huge dome.

The tomb proper is composed of three terraces with inscriptions – at the top of them is the stone sarcophagus. At the north of it there was an opening to a crypt underground where the actual remains of Khan Jahan lie. There are inscriptions on this crypt.

At the lowest terrace (tier) there are hexagonal glazed tiles of different colours. The floor of this building was covered by glazed tiles. On other terraces (tiers) and on the sarcophagus there are Arabic inscriptions.

There is a mosque of the similar type but smaller on the north of this tomb. The tomb and the mosque are again enclosed by a boundary wall with six gateways in it.

## **PIRALI'S TOMB**

Pir Ali or *Pirali* Muhammad Tahir was a converted Muslim. He was a reliable disciple of Khan Jahan and also a commander of his Army. It is said that he died within a short time of the death of Khan Jahan and lies buried in this place. This tomb was built in the 15th century.

The tomb of black stone consists of two terraces and a sarcophagus with Arabic inscriptions on it. The first terrace measures 14'-0" north-south  $\times$  9'-3" east-west. The second terrace measures 11'-3" north-south  $\times$  6'-7" east-west. The sarcophagus measures 6'-5" north-south  $\times$  2'-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " east-west. Total height of the tomb is 5'-5". It is placed under the open sky; there is no roof over it. The tomb of Khan Jahan is located on the east of it and the mosque on the west. There is a legend that there are many other Arabic inscriptions in the interior of the sarcophagus.



## RANAVIJOYPUR MOSQUE

This single-domed mosque is 49'-3" square externally without the round corner towers. Internally it is a square of about 35'-6". There are three openings each on the north, south and east sides. The central doorways are larger and other doorways are narrower and dwarfish. There are four round turrets at the four corners. The curved cornice runs through these massive towers. Thickness of walls is 9'-2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

**The Facade :** The height of the facade is 20'-0" in the centre and 19'-2" at the corner. There are three openings on this side. The central doorway is larger and the side ones are narrower and dwarfish. All of them are placed in separate recesses at the top of which there are horizontal rows of terracotta designs. The southern doorway is 8'-3" high and 4'-4" broad. There are two arches one after another through the entrance and the middle portion is higher like those of the Small Golden Mosque in Gaur.

**North Side:** There are three openings on this side. The eastern one is 7'-6" high and 4'-5" broad. The central one is 8'-6" high and 6'-1" broad. All these doorways are placed in rectangular recesses with horizontal rows of terracottas at the top.

**South Side :** Almost the same of the north side.

**Qibla Wall:** The *mihrab* portion is projected westward here from the ground to the roof. The curved cornice runs through this projection.

**The Interior of the Mosque:** The interior of the mosque is about 35'-6" square and covered by a large dome, probably the largest dome in Bangladesh.

There are three terracotta *mihrabs* in the *qibla* wall. The central one is larger and the flanking ones narrower and dwarfish. All these *mihrabs* are flanked by small pillars with terracottas at the

base and at the capital. There are engrailed arches in the faces of these *mihirabs*. There were terracotta designs at the spandrels of the arches. At the top of the central *mihirab* there is a horizontal row of terracotta blind merlons.

The shape of these *mihirabs* is circular. There are horizontal bands of terracotta leaves, flowers and other designs. There are bell and chain motifs - one in each of these *mihirabs*.

It has already been mentioned that there are three doorways on three sides except the *qibla* wall. These are placed in rectangular recesses. At the top there are horizontal rows of diaper and lozenge in each of them.

There are eight slender pilasters in each of the four walls and arches spring from them. The four corners of the interior are bridged over. At the spandrels of these arches there are triangular areas. These make the base of the dome a circle. Above this the huge dome rests. Bricks are placed in circular rings to compose this dome.

There is only one small niche in the south wall.

## REZA KHODA MOSQUE

This mosque is located in mauza Sundarghona, C. S. plot No 1738, Shaitgumbad Union Parishad, Bagerhat Upozila and in the District of Bagerhat. This rectangular mosque is now in a ruinous condition. Only the four walls and three *mihirabs* in the *qibla* wall are in situ. The mosque measures 39'-10" north-south X 26'-5" east-west internally. Thickness of the wall is 5'-9". The mosque was covered by six hemispherical domes. There are three entrances on the east and two entrances each on the north and south sides. There is a bell and chain motif in the interior of these *mihirabs*. There are four octagonal towers at the four corners of this building. Terracotta ornamentations are observed in some places.

At present this mosque has no roof. It measures 48'-0" × 37'-9" externally. Its salient feature is the high eastern entrances (15'-16'). But at present it is damaged. There were grilles of bricks or *jali* work in the western entrance of the south wall.

Sizes of bricks are irregular and the mortar is lime.

## SINGAR MOSQUE

This mosque is situated in Mauza Sundarghona, plot no 181, Shait Gumbad U. P., Bagerhat Upozila and in the District of Bagerhat.

**General Description:** This mosque is 35'-10" square externally. It has three entrances on the east and one entrance on each of the north and south sides. The *mihrab* portion is projected westward externally. Traces of terracotta ornamentations are still observed on the curved cornice. There are four round turrets at the four corners. Thickness of the wall is about 7'-0". Internally it measures 23'-6" square. The facade is 20'-6" high in the centre. Originally it had a boundary wall with turrets.

**The Facade:** There are three doorways on this side. The central doorway is larger than the side doorways. The central doorway is 6'-0" broad and 11'-3" high and those on the sides 3'-6" broad and have a height of 8'-6". All the doorways are placed in separate rectangular recesses. They lead through pointed arches. Above each arch there were various horizontal rows of terracotta ornamentation. Some of them are still observed above the central doorway.

**North Side:** The wall is almost plain. The doorway on this side is 8'-9" high and 4'-11" broad. It is placed within a rectangular recess at the top of which there were terracotta decorations. Traces of the curved cornice are still observed with terracotta decoration.

**South Side:** Same as the north side.

**Qibla wall:** The central portion of this wall is projected westward from the ground to the roof. Terracotta designs are more clear on the curved cornice on this side. There are separate horizontal rows. At the top there are trees and other designs in separate squares.

The Interior of the Mosque: It has already been mentioned that it measures about 25'-6" square internally. There is only one *mihrab* in the *qibla* wall and there are two small niches at a certain height flanking the main *mihrab*. The central *mihrab* is composed of profuse terracottas. It is flanked by two small pillars and above it there was an arch of multi-cusped facing. There are rosettes in the spandrels. The whole is bordered by a rectangular frame of terracotta geometrical designs. It is topped by a horizontal row of blind merlons. In the interior of the *mihrab* there is a bell and chain motif. There are various horizontal rows of terracotta geometrical designs and trees in squares.

The niches flanking the *mihrab* had engrailed arched facing. It is 2'-9" high and 1'-11" broad. These niches are placed within upright rectangular recesses at the top of which there are horizontal rows of terracotta designs. There are four smaller niches two in the north wall and two in the south wall. They have also engrailed arches above them. These are also placed within upright rectangular recesses at the top of which there are horizontal rows of terracotta designs.

The corners of the prayer-chamber beneath the dome are bridged over and in between two of them there are triangular places of bricks placed edgewise and cornerwise in alternate rows. These eight triangles make the base of the dome a circle.

The round corner turrets of this building have five horizontal bands at regular intervals.

This mosque has been renovated but the cornice and the top of the four corner towers are still incomplete.

## BIBI BEGNI'S MOSQUE

This mosque is situated in mauza Mogra 127, plot no 780, Shait Gumbad U. P., Bagerhat Upozila and in the District of Bagerhat.

**General Description:** This building is 48'-6" square externally with a large dome above it. Internally it is 33'-0" square. Thickness of the wall is 9'-9". The height of the eastern facade at the centre is 24'-8" and 23'-0" at the corner. The mosque has three doorways on the east and one doorway on the north and south sides respectively. The span of the north and south doorways is 5'-6" and that of the doorways on the east is 4'-4", 5'-8" and 4'-3" respectively from south to north. Therefore the central doorway is larger than those on the sides. The height of the side doorways on the east is 7'-10" and that of the central one is 8'-6". It seems that there is some debris deposited on the original floor level because these doorways seem dwarfish and unusual. The doorways on the north and south and the central one on the east are placed in rectangular frames. There are four round turrets at the four corners of the mosque. These turrets have horizontal bands at regular intervals. The *qibla* wall is projected westward externally in the *mihrab* portion. The mosque has a curved cornice and it runs through the four corner towers.

**The Facade:** It has already been mentioned that there are three openings on this side. The central opening is larger and bordered by a rectangular frame. This frame was originally filled up with terracotta ornamental designs. The wall is plain nowadays.

**North Side:** Externally this side is almost plain. The doorway leading to the prayer chamber is bordered by a rectangular frame with some terracotta designs. All the rectangular frames bordering the doorways were originally enriched with terracottas.

South Side: Externally this side is almost the same as the north side. Thickness of the wall on this side is 9'-8". The rectangular frame bordering the doorway contains terracotta geometrical designs on either side. Originally the whole of the frame was covered with this design.

*Qibla Wall*: The *mihrab* portion is projected westward in the middle. The projection is flanked by two engaged small unusual round towers. They have horizontal bands with terracottas.

The Interior of the Mosque: The Interior of the mosque is 33'-0" square and is covered by a large dome. There are three semicircular *mihrabs* in the *qibla* wall – the central *mihrab* is larger than the flanking *mihrabs*. All the *mihrabs* are bordered by rectangular frames. There is a horizontal row of terracotta blind merlons above each of the *mihrabs*. The *mihrabs* are flanked by small pillars and are faced with multicusped pointed arches. There are rosettes in the spandrels. The interior of the *mihrabs* are decorated with terracotta ornamental geometric and floral designs. There is a bell and chain motif in each of them. Central *mihrab* is more richly and profusely decorated than the side *mihrabs*. Terracotta designs are set in separate squares in the rectangular frame bordering it. There are eight engaged round pilasters in this mosque – two in each of the four walls. It has already been mentioned that this mosque is covered by a huge dome. The four corners of the mosque are bridged over like those of the Khaniya Dighi Mosque, Gaur, Chapai Nawabganj and Galdi Mosque, Sonargaon, Narayanganj District. There are two triangular places of horizontal rows of bricks placed edgewise and cornerwise in alternate rows in between these bridges. It makes a complete circle at the base of the dome.

There are four small niches two in the north wall and two in the south wall. The central *mihrab* is flanked by smaller *mihrabs* – one on each side. Lime plaster is observed in several places in the interior.

## CHUNA KHOLA MOSQUE

Chuna Khola Mosque is located in mauza Mogra 127, plot 278, U. P. Karapara, Bagerhat Upozila. At present this single-domed mosque is situated in an isolated place in a crop field. But it is certain that the surrounding area was not originally like this. No tank or well for ablutions is observed near this mosque.

**General Description:** The exterior of this square mosque measures 35' feet by 35' feet without the corner towers. It has 3 (three) openings on the east and 1 (one) opening each on the north and south sides. The central doorway on the east and those on the north and south sides are bordered by rectangular frames. There are 3 (three) *mihrahs* in the *qibla* wall in the interior. This mosque is covered by a single dome. The curved cornice runs through the four round corner turrets. Thickness of the wall is 7' feet 6" inches and height of the facade at the centre is 22' feet 7" inches. This mosque was built in the 15th century.

**The Facade:** It has already been mentioned that there are 3 (three) openings on the east. The central doorway is 9' feet high and 4' feet 4" inches broad. The side doorways are 6' feet 11" inches high and 3' feet 10" inches broad. The central doorway is through a pointed arch. There are rosettes in the spandrels of this arch. It is bordered by a rectangular frame of terracotta geometrical designs. At the top of the frame there is a horizontal row of blind merlons with an ornamental *kalasa* (pitcher) motif in the centre. There are four panels with terracotta ornamentations and they are placed at a height of about 6' feet 5" inches from the ground level.

**North Side:** There is a single doorway through a pointed arch on this side. It is 9' feet 2" inches high from the floor level and 5' feet broad. This doorway is bordered by a rectangular frame of geometrical designs. At the top there is a horizontal row of blind merlons.



South Side: This side is almost the same as the northern side.

*Qibla* Side: The *mihrab* portion of the *qibla* wall is projected westward.

The Interior of the Mosque: The prayer chamber of this mosque is 25' feet 3" inches square. There are 3 (three) semicircular ornate terracotta *mihrabs* in the *qibla* wall of the prayer-chamber. The central one is larger and the side ones are smaller. All the *mihrabs* are flanked by small pillars and faced with an arch of multi-cusped pointed order. All of them are bordered by a rectangular frame with terracotta geometrical designs. At the top there is a horizontal row of blind merlons. In the middle of the row of merlons above the central *mihrab* there is a terracotta *kalasa* (pitcher) motif. The interior of all these *mihrabs* is decorated with various terracotta designs. There are 4 (four) small niches – 2 (two) in the north wall and 2 (two) in the south wall.

The 4 (four) corners under the dome in the interior of this mosque is bridged over and in between each 2 (two) of these bridges there are 2 (two) triangular places of bricks placed edgewise and cornerwise in alternate rows. They make the base of the dome a circle.

It has already been mentioned that there are 4 (four) round corner towers at the four corners of this mosque. These turrets contain circular bands at regular intervals. The curved cornice is composed of several horizontal bands of terracotta ornamentations.

There are traces of lime plaster in some places and lime mortar has been used. Sizes of bricks are irregular.

The diameter of the dome of this mosque is about 25' feet.

## NINE DOMED MOSQUE

This small mosque is located in mauza Thakurdighi, C. S. plot no. 31 and in the village of Dighirpar, Shaitgumbad U. P., Bagerhat Upozila and in the District of Bagerhat. This mosque is situated on the bank of the *Thakurdighi* and to the southwest of the tomb of Khan Jahan.

**General Description:** This is a square mosque of the 15th century. It has three openings on the north, south and east sides respectively. It is covered by nine hemispherical domes. There are three semicircular terracotta *mihhrabs* in the *qibla* wall. The central *mihhrab* is larger and is projected to the west. There are four turrets with bands at regular intervals at the four corners of the mosque. The curved cornice at the top of the four walls of this mosque is very prominent. This mosque measures 49'-9" X 49'-6½" externally without the round corner towers.

**The Facade:** The three openings on this side are through pointed arches. Above these arches there are several horizontal rows of mouldings. The whole is bordered by a rectangular frame. The central opening is broader and the rectangular frame of it is of geometrical design. The height of the facade at the centre is 24'-0" and at the corner 22'-6".

**North Side:** There are three openings on this side. These are through pointed arches. Above these there are various mouldings and horizontal rows of terracotta floral and geometric designs. There are four vertical recesses in this wall. There were diaper designs at the apex of the arches and rosettes at the spandrels.

**South Side:** This side is almost the same as the north side. Thickness of the wall on this side is 7'-7½".

**Qibla Wall:** There are six vertical recesses in the exterior of this wall. At the base of the recesses there are various horizontal bands of mouldings. The central *mihhrab* is projected to the west.

The Interior of the Mosque: This mosque measures 39'-10" north-south X 39'-8" east-west internally. There are four free-standing stone pillars. There are three semicircular *mihirabs* with rich terracottas in the *qibla* wall – the central *mihirab* being larger. The *mihirabs* have engrailled arched facing. There were floral designs at the spandrels. Above this there are horizontal bands of mouldings. The whole is bordered by rectangular frames of terracotta ornamentation. At the top of it there are terracotta blind merlons in the wall. These merlons are of various small trees and floral designs. The nine domes of this mosque are supported by pointed arches. In the interior of these *mihirabs* there are various bands and horizontal rows of floral and geometric designs. There are three bell and chain motifs – one in each of the *mihirabs*.

There are six small niches two in each of the north, south and west walls. Above each of the nine doorways there are various horizontal bands of mouldings and terracotta designs. At the apex of the arches there are diaper designs and rosettes at the spandrels.

The hemispherical domes have pendentives formed by horizontal rows of bricks placed edgewise and cornerwise in alternate rows.

## MOSQUE AND MAUSOLEUM OF ZINDAPIR

This tomb measures 24'-8" east-west X 24'-10" north-south internally and the thickness of the wall is 5'-8". There are four octagonal towers at the four corners of this building. At present only the northern entrance is in situ and walls on other sides exist to a little height. There were four entrances at the four corners of this building.

The Mosque: There is a small square mosque to the north-west corner of the mausoleum. There was a dome above. The mosque measures 16'-2" east-west × 16'-1" north-south. Externally it measures 21'-10" east-west × 21'-6" north-south. Thickness of the wall is 4'-4". There is a semicircular ornate terracotta *mihrab* in the *qibla* wall. On either side of this *mihrab* there are two niches at a certain height – one niche on each side.

The rectangular frame of this *mihrab* is richly decorated with various terracotta geometrical designs. There are pointed arches above the entrances.

The *mihrab* of this mosque is projected to the outside. At present this building has no roof.

## SABEK DANGA BUILDING

This small rectangular building is situated in the village of Sabekdanga, Karapara Union Parishad, Bagerhat Upozila. This is situated near the Shait Gumbad Road Railway Station. It measures 26'-0" north-South  $\times$  20'-2" east-west. Thickness of wall is 4'-1" on the east, 4'-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " on the north and 3'-6 $\frac{1}{2}$ " on the south. Internally it measures 18'-4" north-south  $\times$  11'-7" east-west. There are three doorways one on each of the north, south and east sides. The rectangular *mihrab* in the *qibla* wall seems not to be original. The wall of this building is richly decorated with terracotta ornamentation of floral designs, leaves and trees with pomegranates. Original mortar was lime and lime plaster is also observed even today. Stylistically this building may be placed in the 16th century. Although used as a mosque now, experts differ on whether the building was originally designed as a mosque at all. The roof of the building collapsed and has recently been reconstructed by the Directorate of Archaeology.

## IN QUEST OF *KHALIFATABAD* CITY\*

Present Bagerhat town is considered to have been the ancient city of *Khalifatabad*<sup>1</sup>. Bagerhat is noted for the architectural works of Khan Jahan. Khan Jahan was the son of Alaul Huq of Hazrat Pandua and brother of Nur Qutbul Alam. His architectural works at Bagerhat are contemporary to the later Ilyas Shahi dynasty (1442-1487 A.D) of the fifteenth century A.D. The date inscribed on the tomb of Khan Jahan<sup>2</sup> is its incontrovertible evidence. There was a link between Pandua and Bagerhat at that time. There is no architectural evidence at Bagerhat after Khan Jahan<sup>3</sup>. The monuments of Khan Jahan still found at Bagerhat are: 1. Shait Gumbad Mosque, 2. Tomb of Khan Jahan, 3. Single Domed Mosque attached to the Tomb of Khan Jahan, 4. Ranavijoypur Mosque, 5. Chunakhola Mosque, 6. Singar Mosque, 7. Reza Khoda Mosque, 8. Nine Domed Mosque etc. Excepting these there are his dwelling house and other ruins of various buildings. Though the Ten Domed Mosque is associated with the name of Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah (1493-1519 A.D.) and Mithapukur Mosque is associated with the name of his son Sultan Nusrat Shah (1519-1532 A. D.) no firm decision could be made about the town on the basis of these two monuments.

A portion of the eastern bank of the Mithapukur of Bagerhat is said to have been a mint. But it could also be contemporary to the time of Khan Jahan other than the *Khalifatabad* mint. As we do not know about the ancient name of Bagerhat during the time of Khan Jahan we can propose names of some mint-towns viz. *Shahr-i-now*, *Mubarakabad*<sup>4</sup>, *Mahmudabad*<sup>5</sup>, *Muazzamabad*<sup>6</sup> etc. *Shahr-i-now* is contemporary to the Ilyas Shahi dynasty and

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\* Presented in the National History Conference, Dhaka, 1992

*Mubarakabad* and *Mahmudabad* is contemporary to the later Ilyas Shahi dynasty. Though it has been thought so far that during the time of Khan Jahan the name of Bagerhat was *Khalifatabad* there is scope for differences on this opinion. It is confirmed that there was no town or mint of this name before the Husain Shahi dynasty ( 1493-1538 A.D.), because we do not hear of the name or the existence of any town bearing this name before the time of Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah. Though present day Bagerhat town was under the jurisdiction of the later *Khalifatabad* area, *Khalifatabad* mint town is mentioned as a 'Provincial Headquarters'<sup>7</sup>. During the Mughal period the northern area of the greater Khulna area was known as *Sarkar Khalifatabad*. The aim and object of this note is to locate the mint and town of *Khalifatabad*.

There is mention of some caliphs in the history of the independent Sultans of Bengal. Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah (1418-1431 A.D.), son of King Ganesha, declared himself at first as Caliph in the history of Bengal.<sup>8</sup> Except coins there is mention of *Khalifatul Musta'an* Nasiruddin Mahmud (1442-1459 A.D.) in the Dhaka inscription (1459 A.D.) of Khwaja Jahan<sup>9</sup>. His son Sultan Ruknuddin Barbak Shah (1459-1474 A.D.) also declared himself as Caliph. Sukhamoy Mukherjee has mentioned seven Caliphs in the history of independent Bengal. They are : 1. Sikandar Shah, 2. Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah, 3. Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, 4. Ruknuddin Barbak Shah, 5. Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah, 6. Jalaluddin Fateh Shah and 7. Alauddin Husain Shah. We may attempt to decide about the *Khalifatabad* town from these Caliphs mentioned above. We do not get any mint or town named *Khalifatabad* during the time of Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah and Khan Jahan (i.e. Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and

Ruknuddin Barbak Shah). So, without any hesitation, we can think of the relation of Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah (1493-1519A.D.) with the town of *Khalifatabad*. (It will not be proper to count Khan Jahan as the founder of *Khalifatabad* city on the basis of the fact that there is mention of a Caliph alongwith the name of a place named *Mubarakabad* in the Dhaka inscription of Khwaja Jahan, because, as we have mentioned before, some Sultans of Bengal adopted the Caliph title. Nasiruddin Mahmud was one of those Caliphs).

It has already been mentioned that the name of Bagerhat was not *Khalifatabad* at the time of Khan Jahan. The relation between Pandua and Bagerhat that prevailed during the time of Khan Jahan might have continued afterwards. But due to the change of river course and change of the ruling dynasty the administrative centre of this area might have been possibly and logically shifted to some other place nearby instead of Bagerhat of the Later Ilyas Shahi dynasty. It is to be mentioned that after the Later Ilyas Shahi dynasty the Abyssinians and the rulers of the Husain Shahi dynasty ruled over Bengal. The date of Khan Jahan's demise is 24th October, 1459 A.D. and the map of Van Den Broucke, the most important evidence in support of the *Khalifatabad* town, was prepared in 1660 A.D. So, it cannot be presumed that this town was prosperous after 201 long years after the death of Khan Jahan. For this reason also we can look around the areas nearby.

About 11km. to the north-east of Khulna city and 30km. from Bagerhat there is a historical village named Alaipur situated on the bank of the old Bhairab or *Atharabanki* river. (It may be mentioned that *Atharabanki* river has changed its course and at present flows near the Alaipur Bazar). It is said that there was a small town at Alaipur in the Middle Age. The *Qazis* resided at Chandpur and Alaipur. Two ancient tanks still go by the name of



the tanks of the *Qazis*. The *Pachduary* tank extends north-south. The house of the *Qazis* stood between these two tanks. Many bricks were found from this place. After some days it will have no trace. There is a piece of stone beside the tank near the road. The present (1992) owners of the land are Messers Shaikh Rahmatullah and Aminuddin Paik. Plot no. is 3812, mauza Alaipur, Pargana Belfulia, Upozila Rupsha and Dist. Khulna. It is said that Sultan Husain Shah was brought up in the village of Chandpur adjacent to Alaipur. Alauddin Husain Shah married the daughter of the *Qazi* of this area<sup>16</sup>. It is also to be mentioned that though the parentage of Husain Shah was Syed of the Arab<sup>17</sup> race his mother is presumed to have been an indigenous<sup>18</sup> lady. There are many interesting tales regarding the boyhood of Husain Shah. They are known to all readers of history. Syed Ashraf-al-Husaini al Makki, the father of Sultan Husain Shah, probably came to this country by sea for trade. Though it has been mentioned by Stuart, Blochmann, L.S.S. O'Malley<sup>19</sup> *et al* that Husain Shah was brought up in the village of Chandpur adjacent to Alaipur, Professor Tarafdar differs on this point because there is no legend regarding this in Chandpara of Jessore.<sup>20</sup> But the district of Khulna was created from the district of Jessore in 1882 A.D. So the above mentioned Alaipur and Chandpur is located in Khulna district instead of Jessore district. There is strong legend that the Husain Shahi rulers came to Khulna and Bagerhat. So, it is not improbable that the boyhood of Husain Shah passed in Chandpur of Khulna instead of Chandpara of *Radha*. If we accept this for the sake of history a puzzling problem is solved thereby. As Alaipur is situated only thirty km. away on the bank of the old Bhairab river it has similarity with the map of Van Den Broucke (1660 A.D). The absence of a stone inscription here does not disprove this supposition as it was no centre of administration of

the independent Sultans of Bengal. It may be mentioned that two inscriptions of Alauddin Husain Shah have been discovered afterwards.<sup>21</sup> It is further to be mentioned that the architecture of southern Bengal did not contain stone inscriptions from the earliest period.<sup>22</sup> The recently discovered Satgachiya Mosque<sup>23</sup> did not contain any inscription. But on stylistic grounds it may be conjectured to belong to the Khan Jahani style of architecture. The administrative importance of southern Bengal that prevailed during the rule of Khan Jahan decreased in the later periods. For this reason, though Sultan Husain Shah was born in Khulna his activity was centralised in Gaur and Pandua. Southern Bengal was merely a hinterland to the central government of undivided Bengal.

For good relations with father or for rebellion Sultan Nusrat Shah issued coins during the lifetime of his father Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah and the name of his mint was *Khalifatabad*.<sup>24</sup> Five more princes before Nusrat Shah issued coins in their own name during the reign of the Sultans.<sup>25</sup> Ghiyasuddin Mahmud (1533-1538 A.D.), another son of Husain Shah issued coins from *Khalifatabad* and *Khalifatabad-Badarpur*.<sup>26</sup> But before this Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah issued coins from a nearby mint named *Fatehabad* (present Faridpur<sup>27</sup>). Husain Shah ascended the throne from *Fatehabad*.<sup>28</sup> Being brought up at Alaipur (also named after his name) the nearby village was named Husainpur after his name, his first coins minted from nearby *Fatehabad* and later coins minted from *Khalifatabad*<sup>29</sup> etc. are very interesting and congruous. So present Alaipur village may be considered as ancient *Khalifatabad* city. Further archaeological investigation and excavation may confirm this supposition.

### Notes and References:

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3. Habiba Khatun : Khan-al-Azam Khan Jahan O Ulugh Khan Jahan, *Nibandhamala*, 5th part, Uchchatara Manabvidya Gabeshana Kendra, Dhaka University, June, 1989, p.47.
4. Shamsuddin Ahmed : *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol.4, Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi, 1960, p.63. The author of this paper thinks that if Khwaja Jahan and Khan Jahan was the same and identical person, in that case it can be construed that Bagerhat and Dhaka might have been under the jurisdiction of the same ruler.
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25. Abdul Karim : *ibid.*, p.183.
26. Abdul Karim: *ibid.*, p.165.
27. Abdul Karim: *ibid.*, pp. 108-117.
28. L.S.S.O'Malley : *op. cit.*, p.28.
29. M.R. Tarafdar : *op. cit.*, p.61.

## GLOSSARY

**Amalaka:** '(Fruit of the) Emblic myrobalan tree.' The term is used in architecture to denote the crown of the spire of a temple. It is generally of the shape of a lotus flower.

**Atharabanki :** Name of a river. Literally means 'having eighteen winds'.

**Bridge over :** True squinch is not generally used in Bengal architecture. So this term has been used instead of 'squinch' in the four corners of a square room. The purpose of it is to convert a square into an octagon.

**Caliph :** Religious and political leader of an independent Muslim state. At first it was used to mean the representative of God (*Khalifatullah*). Afterwards it was used to mean the representative of the prophet.

**Cornice :** In classical architecture, the top, projecting section of an ENTABLATURE; also any projecting ornamental moulding along the top of a building, wall, arch etc., finishing or crowning it.

**Course :** A range of bricks or stones on the same level in building.

**Cusp :** Projecting points formed at the meeting of the Foils in Gothic Tracery.

**Crypt :** An underground chamber usually below the east end of a church; in early medieval times used for the burial of martyrs, saints, etc., and called a confessio. An underground cell or chapel.

**Cuipitavaz :** Corruption of *Khalifatabad*, an ancient Muslim mint-town.

**Diameter :** A straight line passing through the side to side and the centre of any body or geometrical figure.

**Diaper :** All over surface decoration composed of a small repeated pattern such as lozenges or squares.

**Engaged** : Attached or partly sunk into.

**Engrailed** : To border with little semicircular indents.

**Facade** : The exterior front or face of a building.

**Gargoyle** : A water spout projecting from a roof.

**Grille** : A lattice, or grating, or screen, or open work of metal, generally used to enclose or protect a window, shrine, etc.

**Hexagonal** : Six-sided.

**In situ** : In the original situation.

**Jali** : Fret-work.

**Kalasa** : 'Water pot, pitcher.' In northern Indian temple architecture, a *Kalasa* is generally placed above an *Amalaka* as the finial.

**Keystone** : The stone at the apex of an arch.

**Khalifatabad** : Lit. the place of the Caliph. A mint town of ancient Bengal. See *Cuipitavaz*.

**Lozenge** : A diamond shape.

**Merlon** : The part of a parapet between embrasures.

**Mihrab** : A niche or slab in a mosque marking the direction of Mecca.

**Mouldings**: The contours given to projecting members.

**Niche** : A recess in a wall.

**Offset** : A reduction of thickness or the (usually sloping) ledge formed where part of a wall, buttress, bank, etc. is set back from the general face.

**Pediment** : A triangular structure crowning the front of a Greek building.

**Pendentive** : A concave spandrel leading from the angle of two walls to the base of a circular dome. It is one of the means by which a circular dome is supported over a square or polygonal compartment.

*Pirali* : Indigenous people both Hindu and Muslims who came in contact with Khan Jahan.

*Qibla* : The direction of Mecca for Muslim prayer.

Quarry : Any source of building stone etc.

Recess : A niche or alcove.

Rosette : A rose-shaped PATERA.

Sarcophagus : A stone coffin esp. one with carvings, a tomb or cenotaph of similar form.

*Sath* : Meaning roof.

*Shika* : Pendant rope tray used in rural areas for storage purpose.

Span : Distance between abutments, piers, supports etc. or the portion of a structure ( e.g. a bridge ) between.

Spandrel : The triangular space between the side of an arch, the horizontal drawn from the level of its apex, and the vertical of its springing; also to the surface between two arches in an arcade.

Spring line : The level at which an arch springs from its supports.

Terrace : Ground or a structure that rises stepwise.

Terracotta : Fired but unglazed clay, used mainly for wall covering and ornamentation as it can be fired in moulds.

Tiers : Row, rank, or layer, esp. one of several placed one above another.

Tomb : A grave, a vault for disposal of dead bodies, a sepulchral monument.

Toponym: A place name.

Turret : A very small slender tower.

Van Den Broucke: Portuguese traveller and cartographer in Bengal in the 17th century.

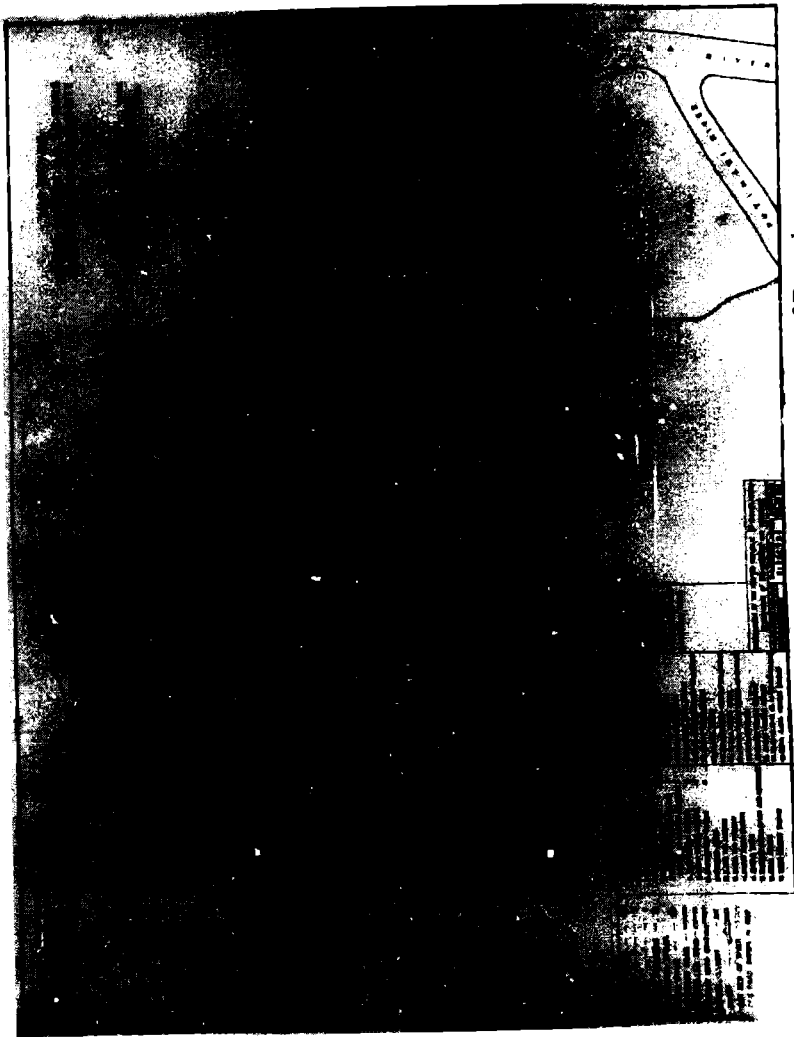


Fig. 1 Map Showing the Ancient Monuments of Bagerhat



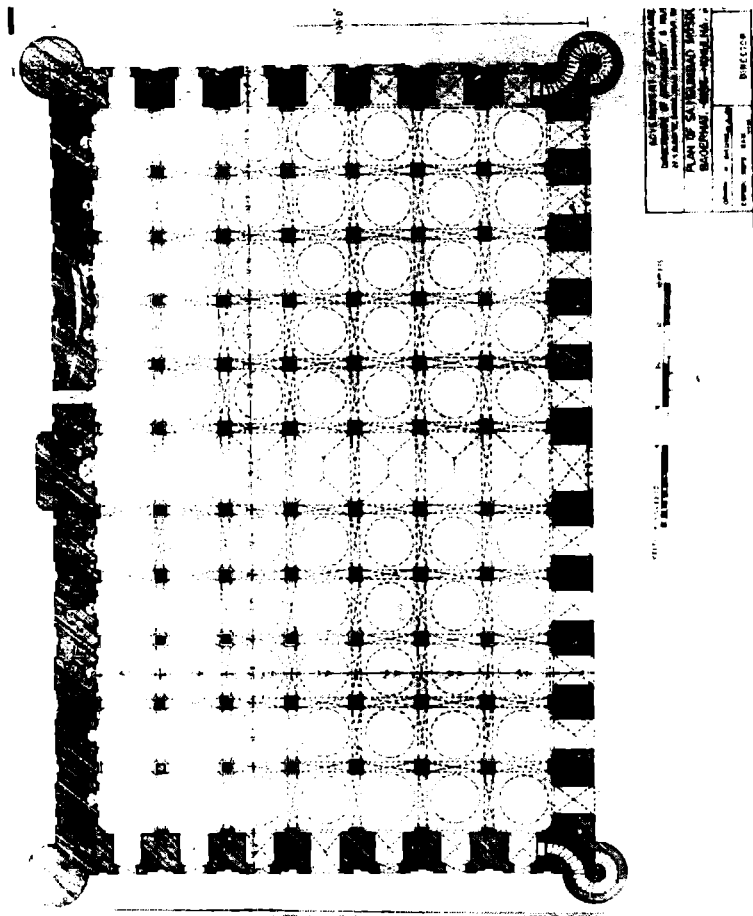


Fig.II Ground Plan of Shait Gumbad Mosque



Fig. III Elevation and Section Drawing of Shait Gumbad Mosque

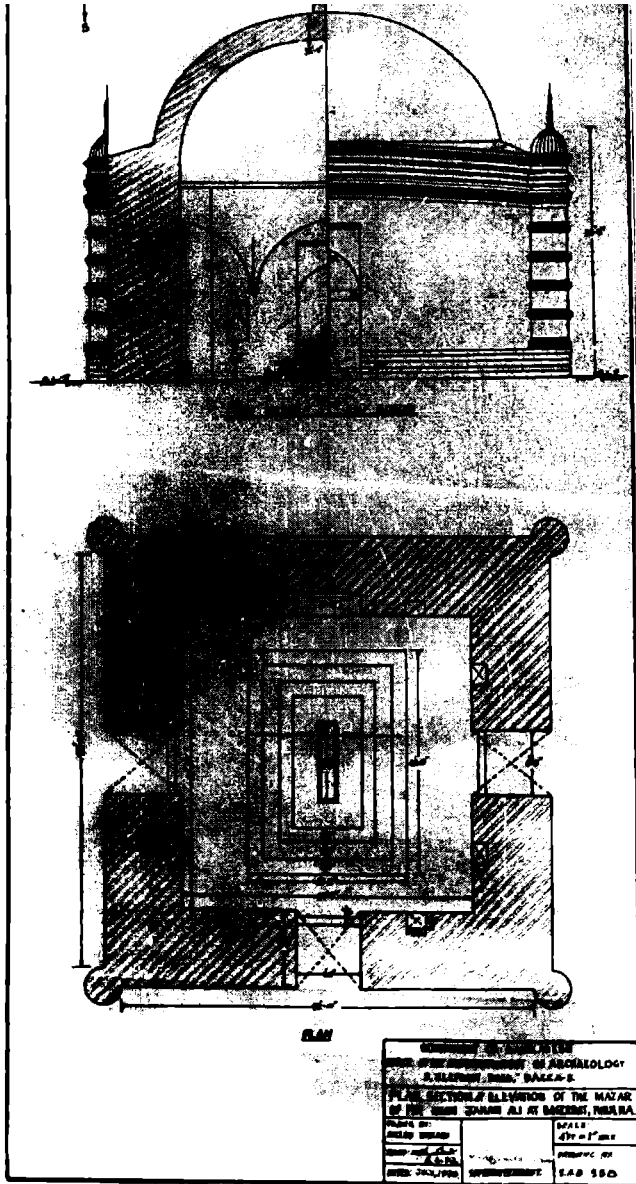


Fig. IV Ground Plan, Elevation and Section Drawing of the Tomb of Khan Jahan (R)



Fig. V Ground Plan, Section and Elevation of Pir Ali's Tomb attached to the Tomb of Khan Jahan (R)

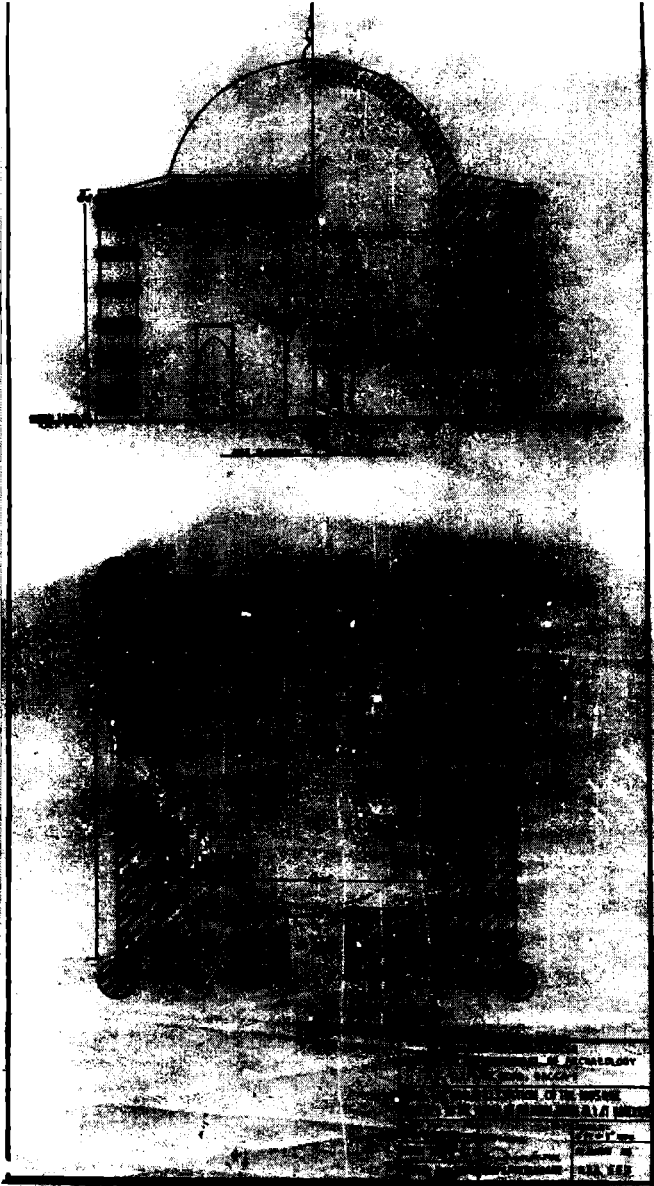


Fig. VI Ground Plan, Elevation and Section Drawing of the Mosque attached to the Tomb of Khan Jahan (R)

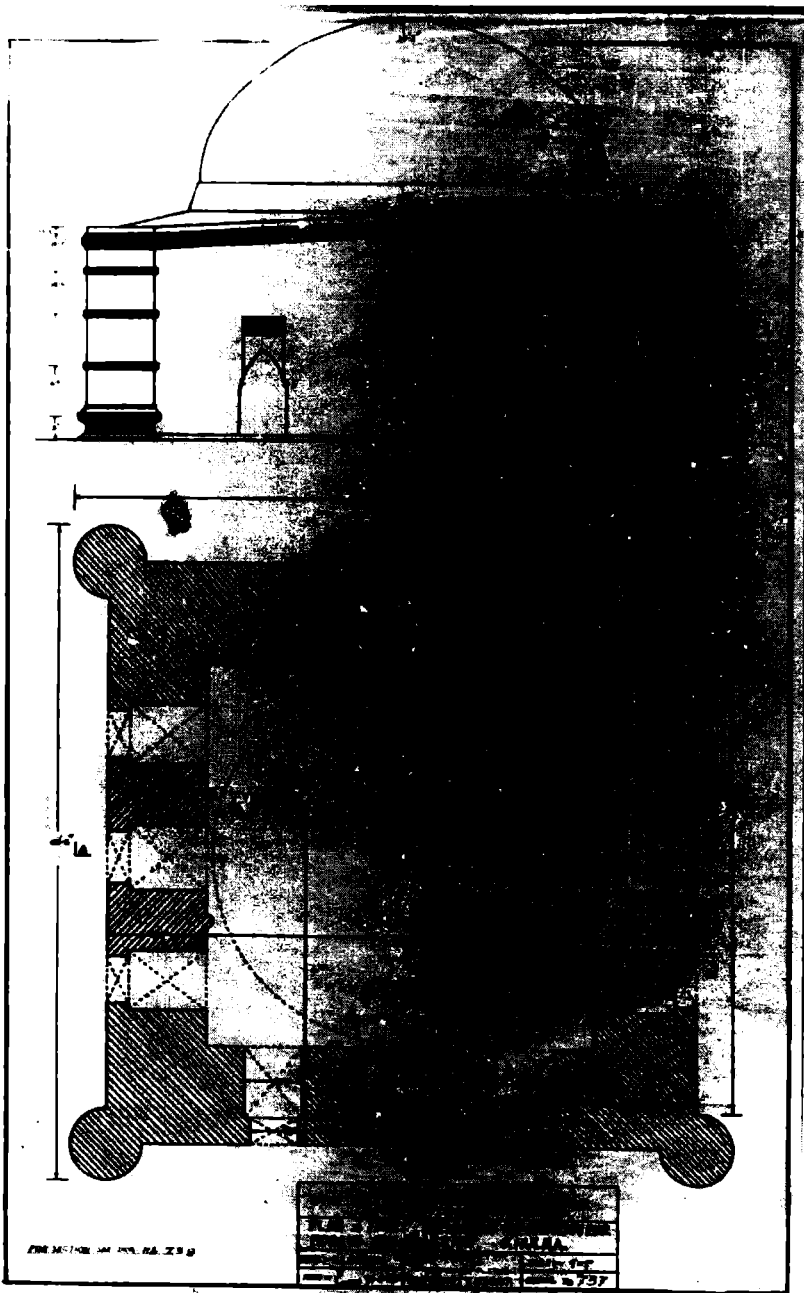


Fig. VII Ground Plan and Front Elevation of Ranaviyoypur Mosque

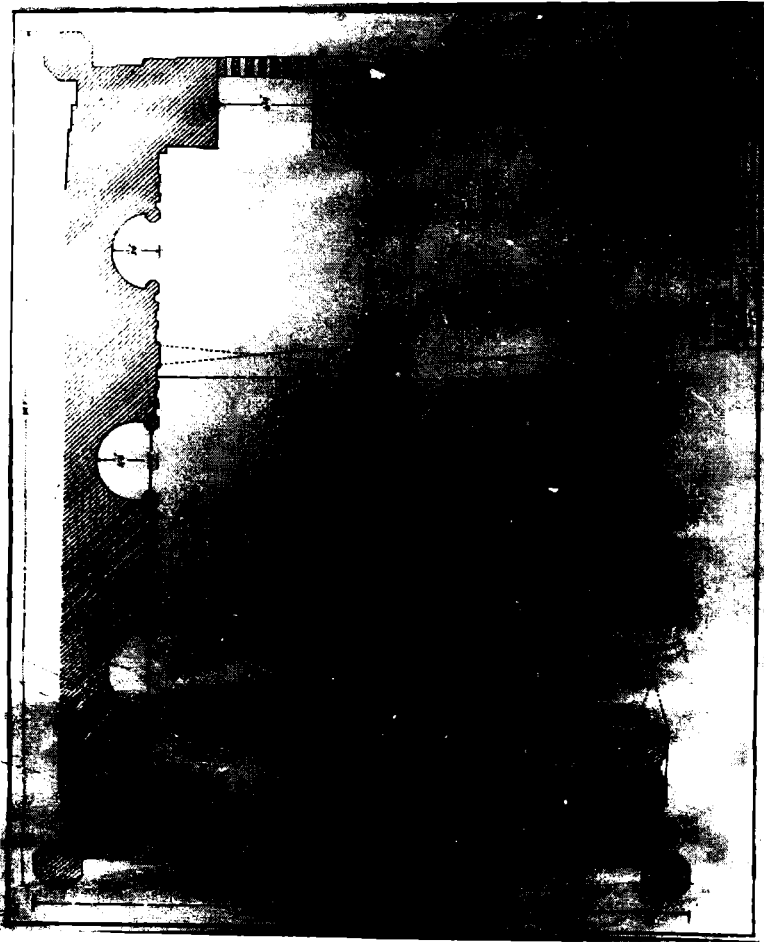


Fig. VIII Ground Plan of Reza Khoda Mosque

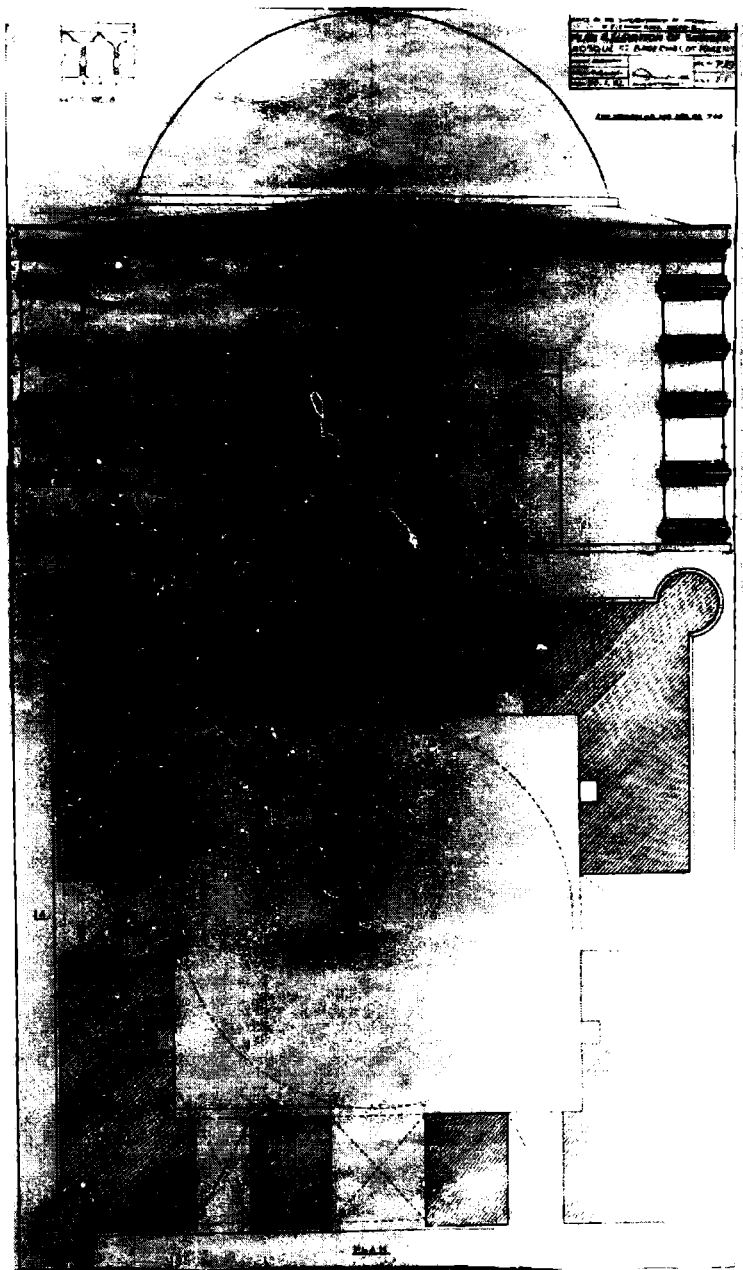


Fig. IX Ground Plan and Elevation of Singar Mosque



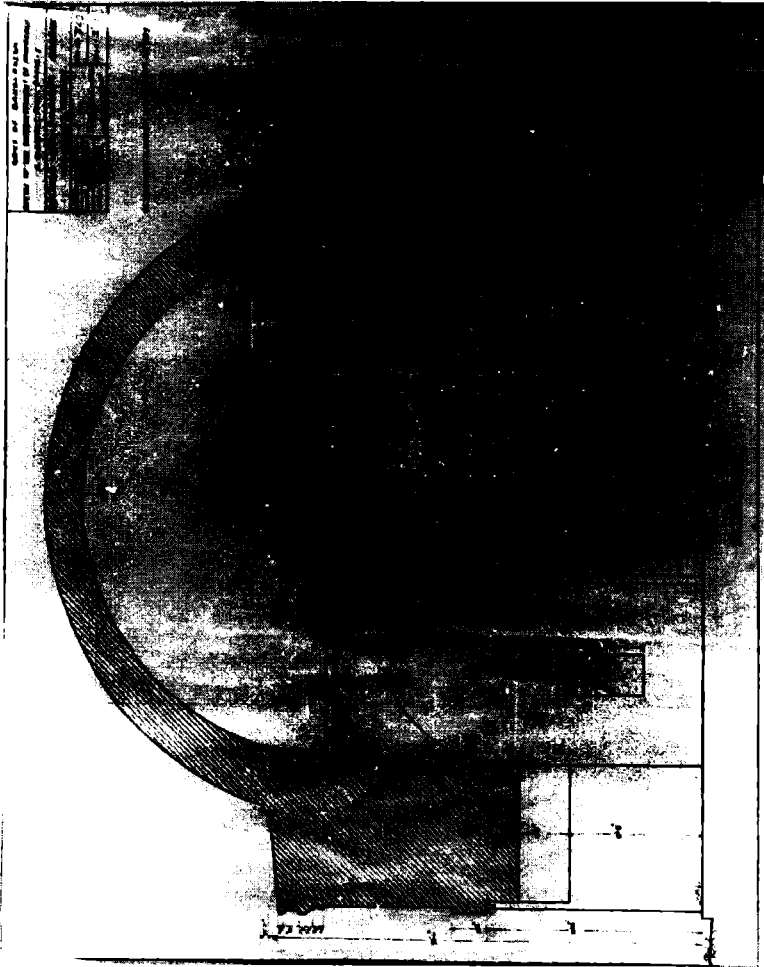


Fig. X Section Drawing of Singar Mosque

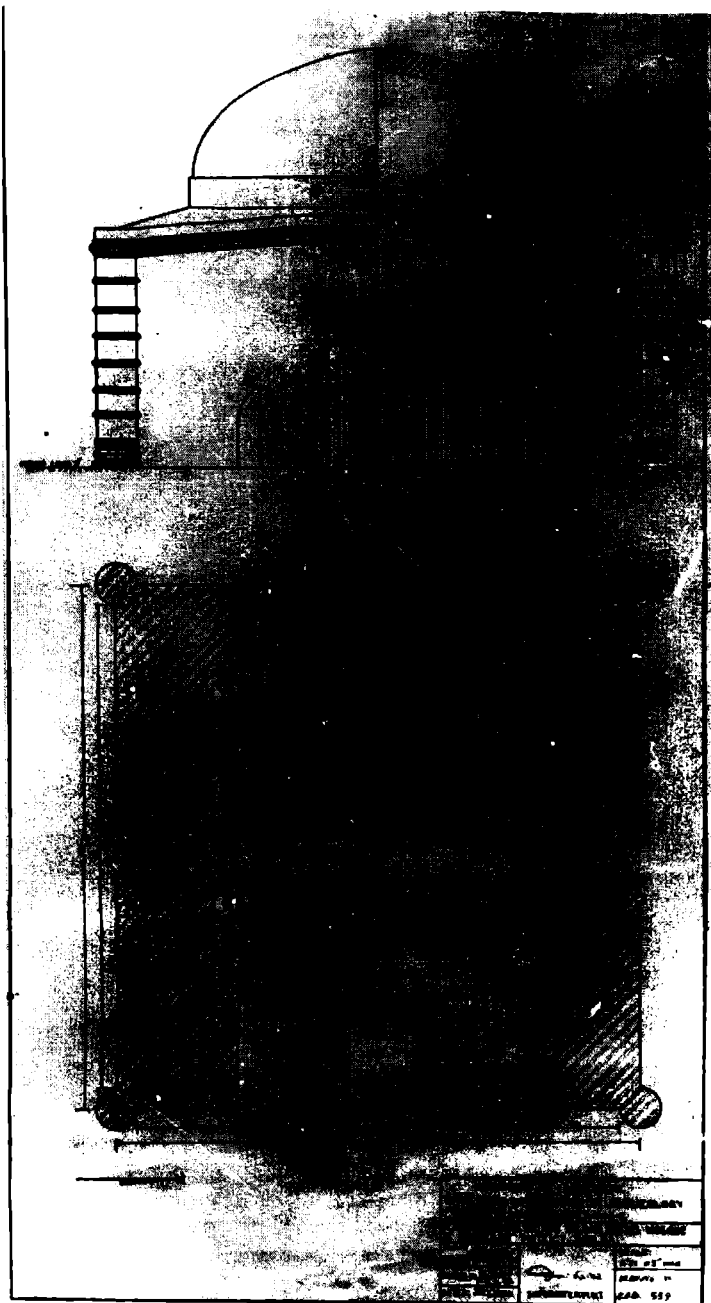


Fig. XI Ground Plan, Elevation and Section Drawing of Bibi Begni's Mosque

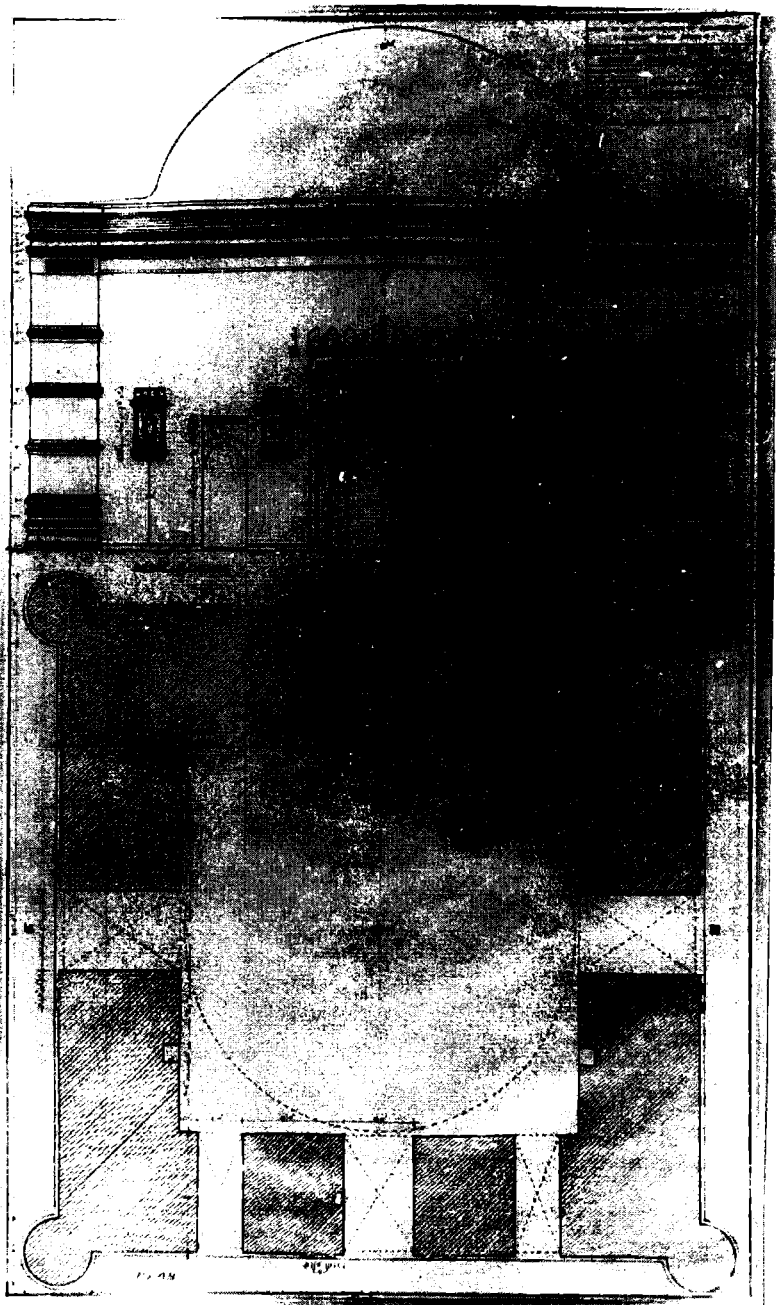


Fig. XII Ground Plan and Elevation of Chuna Khola Mosque

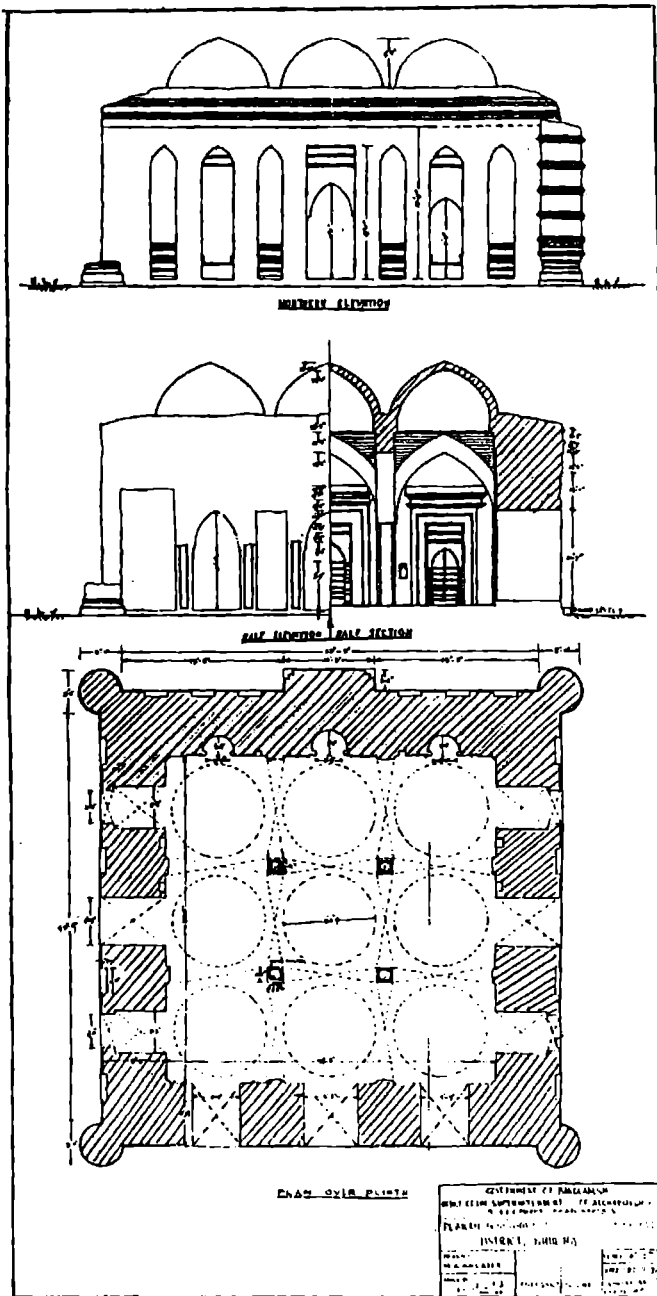
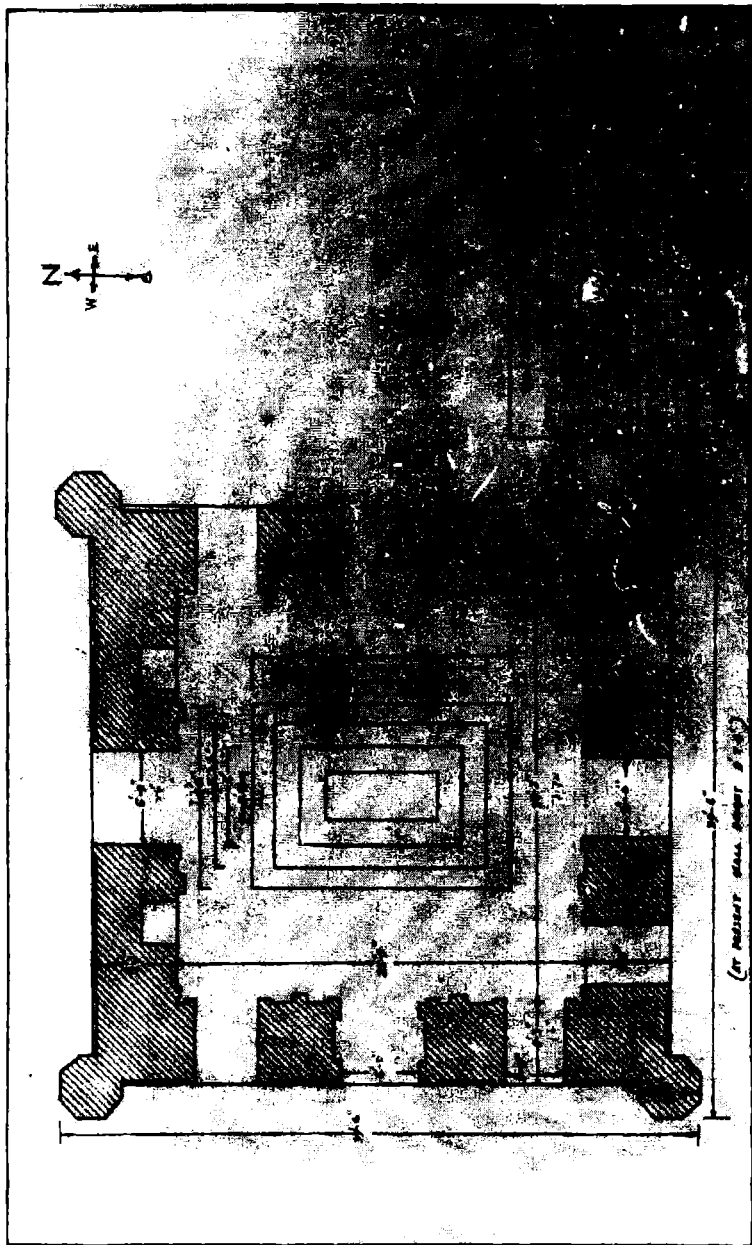


Fig. XIII Ground Plan, Elevation and Section Drawing of Nine Domed Mosque



(Or measure the length of it)

Fig. XIV Ground Plan of the Tomb of Zindapir

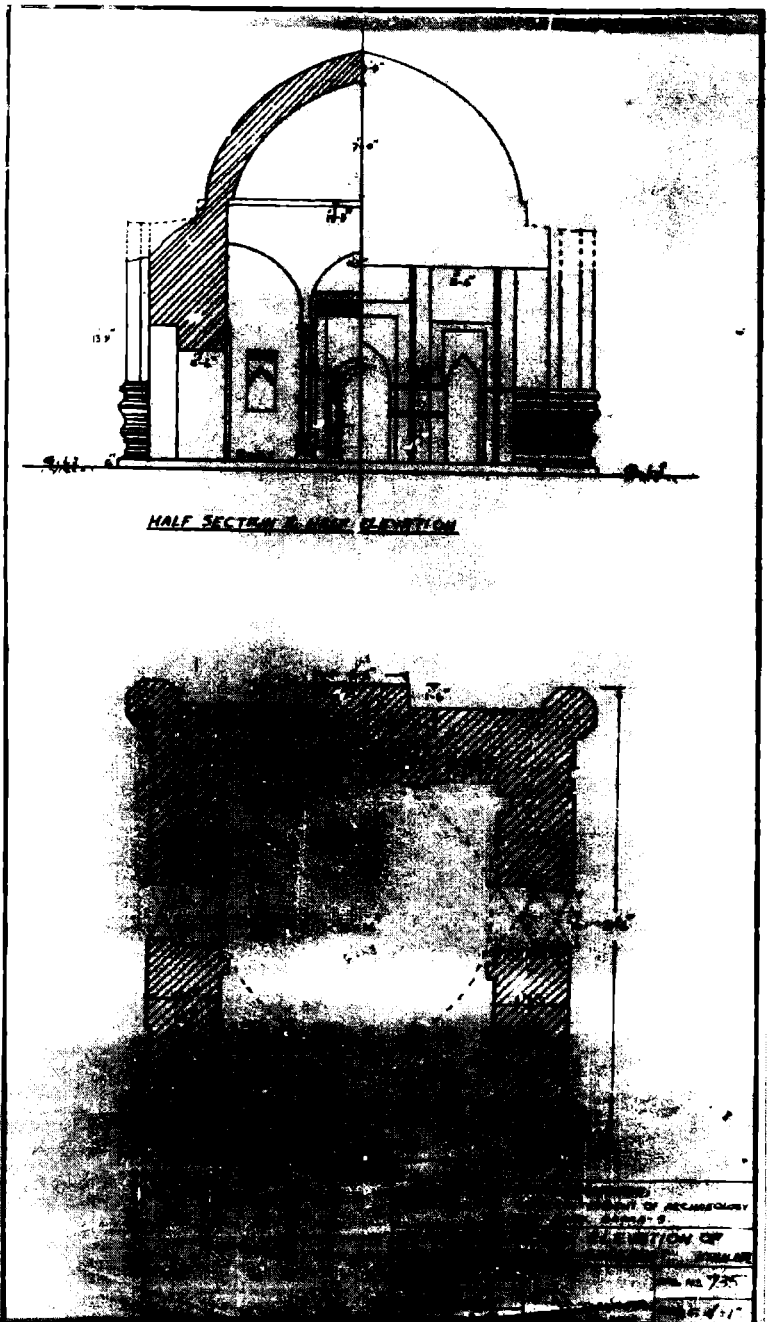


Fig. XV Ground Plan and Sectional Elevation of the Mosque of Zindapir  
[www.pathagar.com](http://www.pathagar.com)





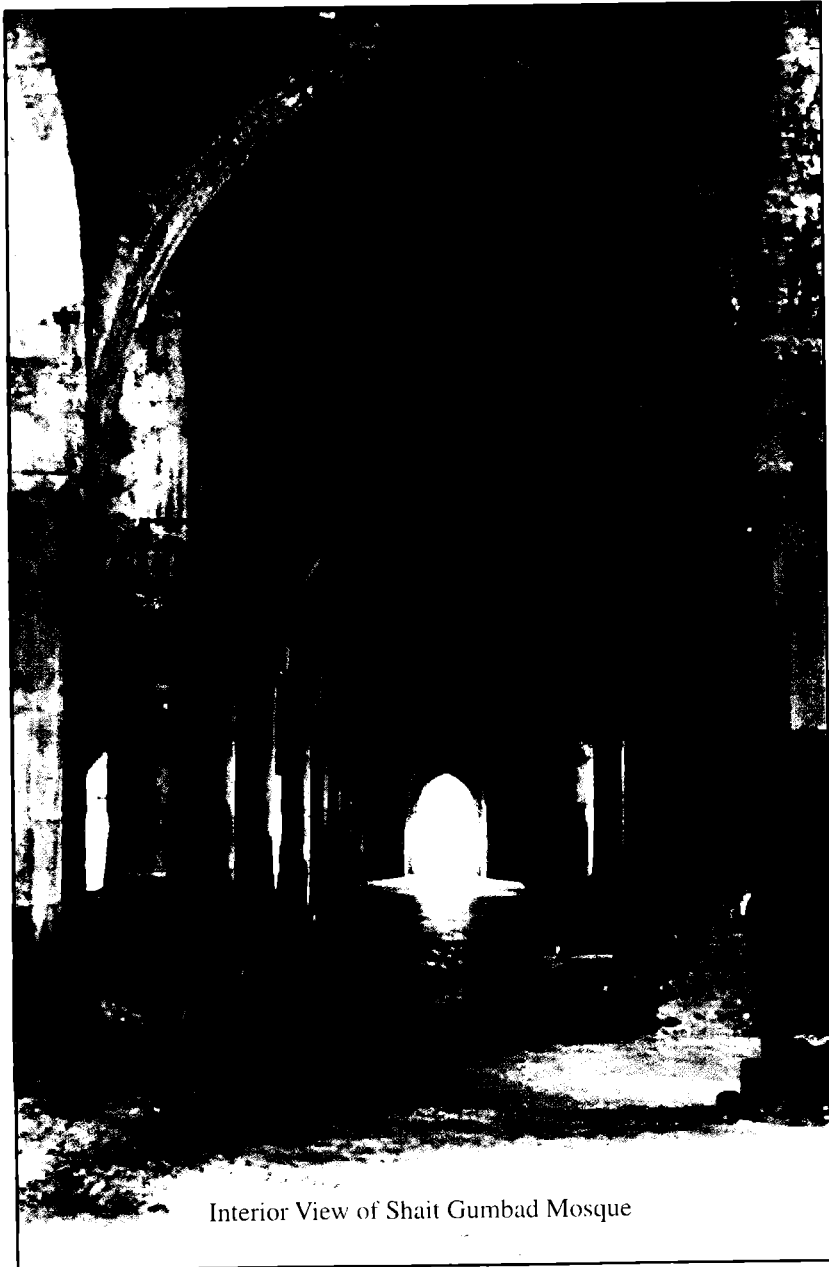
Fig. XVII Section Drawing of Sabek Danga Building







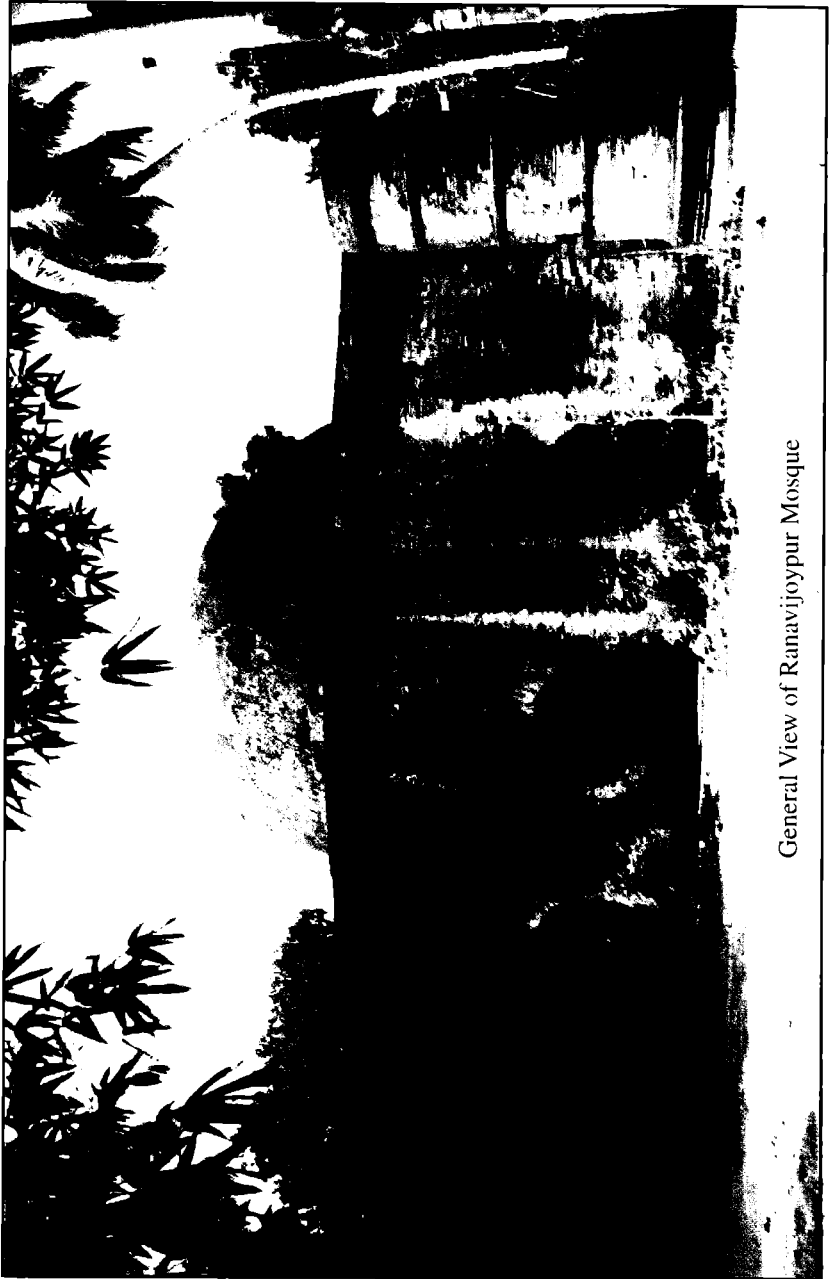
General View of Shait Gumbad Mosque



Interior View of Shait Gumbad Mosque

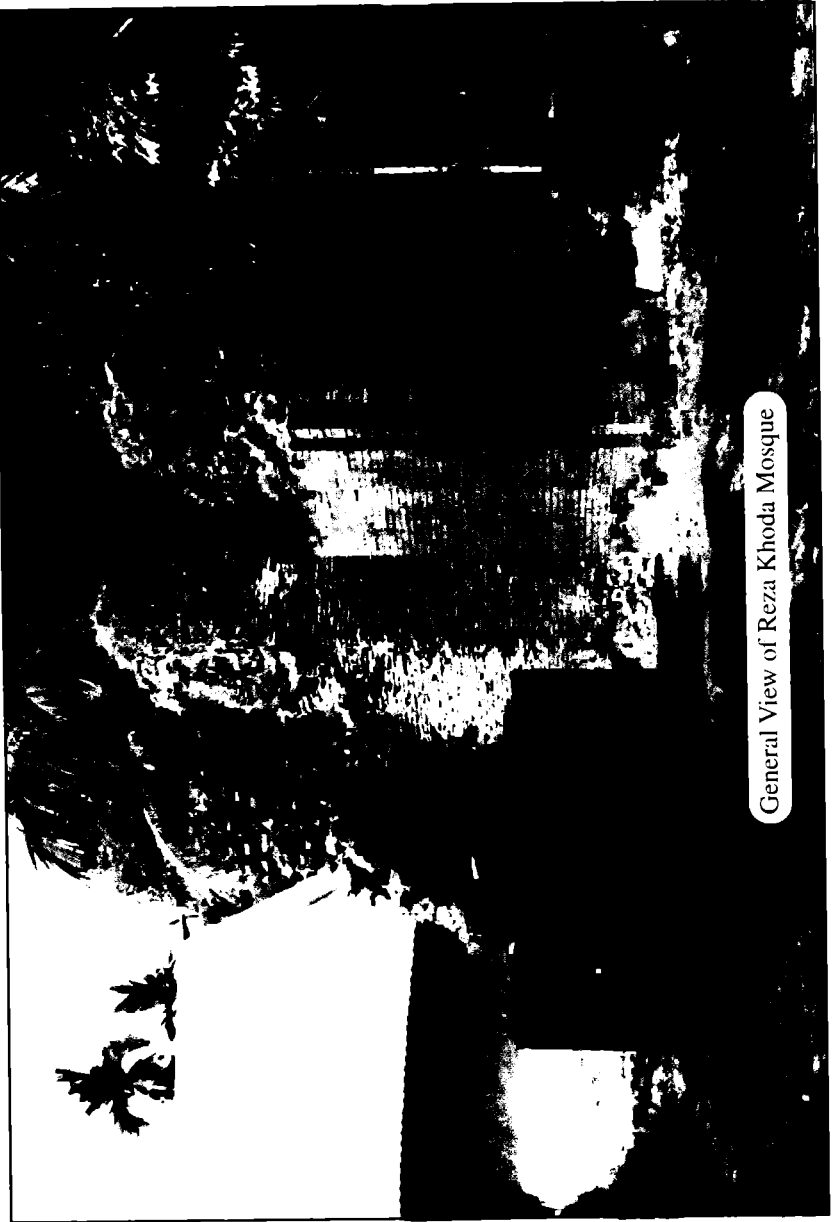


General View of the Tomb of Khan Jahan (R)



General View of Ranavijoypur Mosque

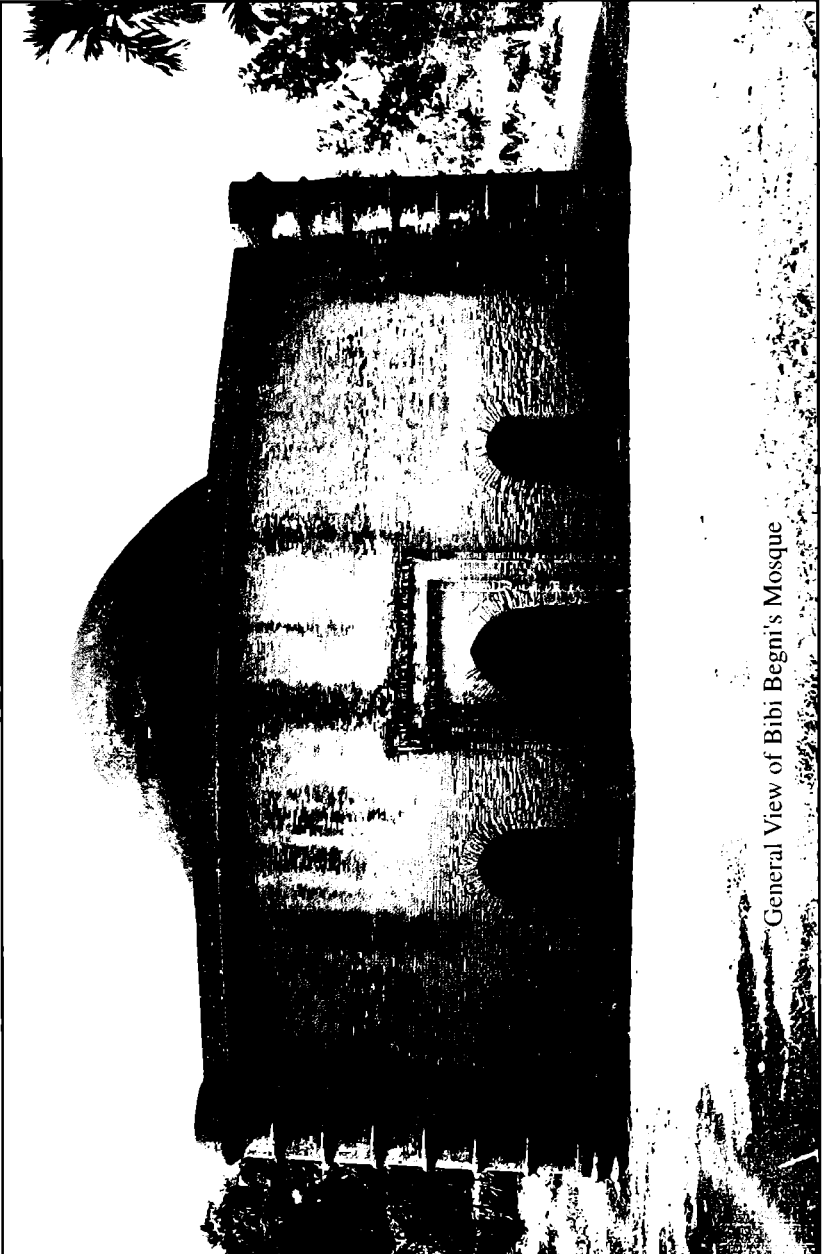
Pl. V



General View of Reza Khoda Mosque

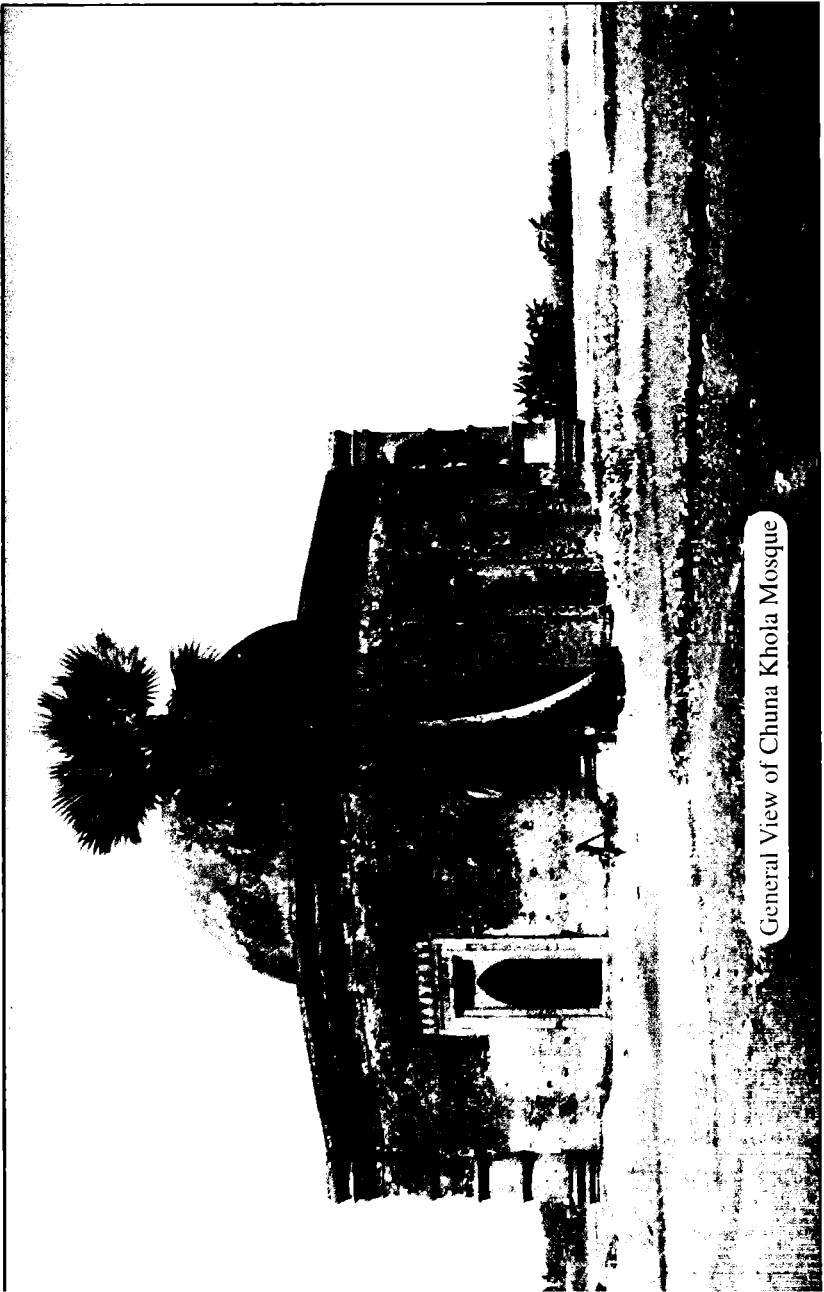


General View of Singar Mosque



General View of Bibi Begni's Mosque

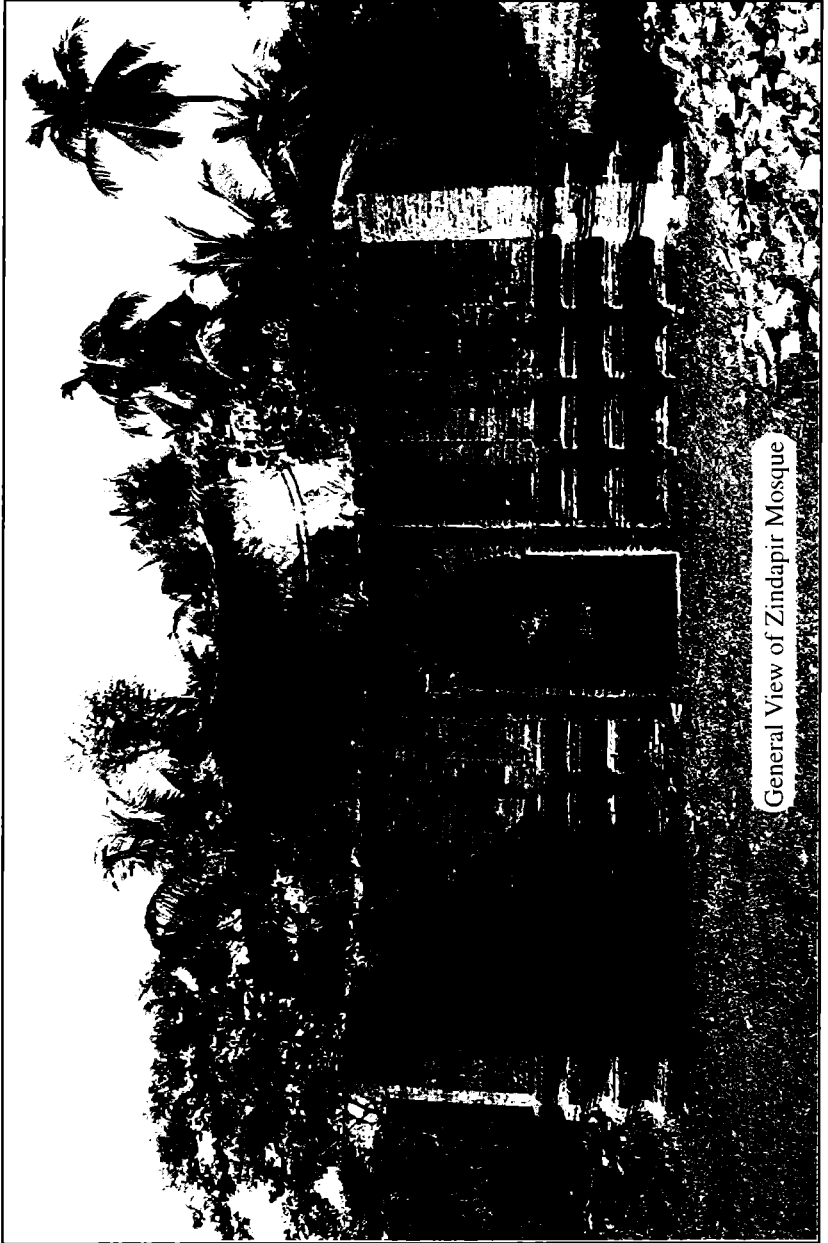




General View of Chuna Khola Mosque



General View of Nine Domed Mosque

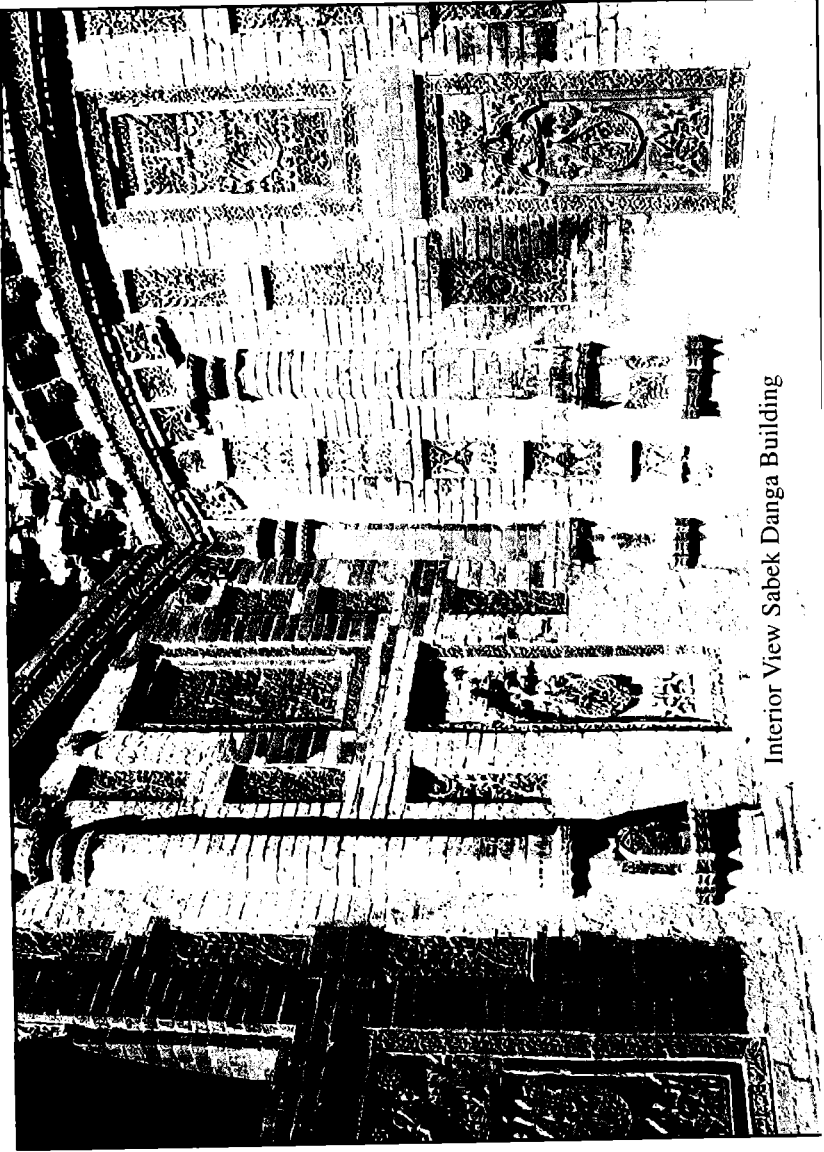


General View of Zindapir Mosque

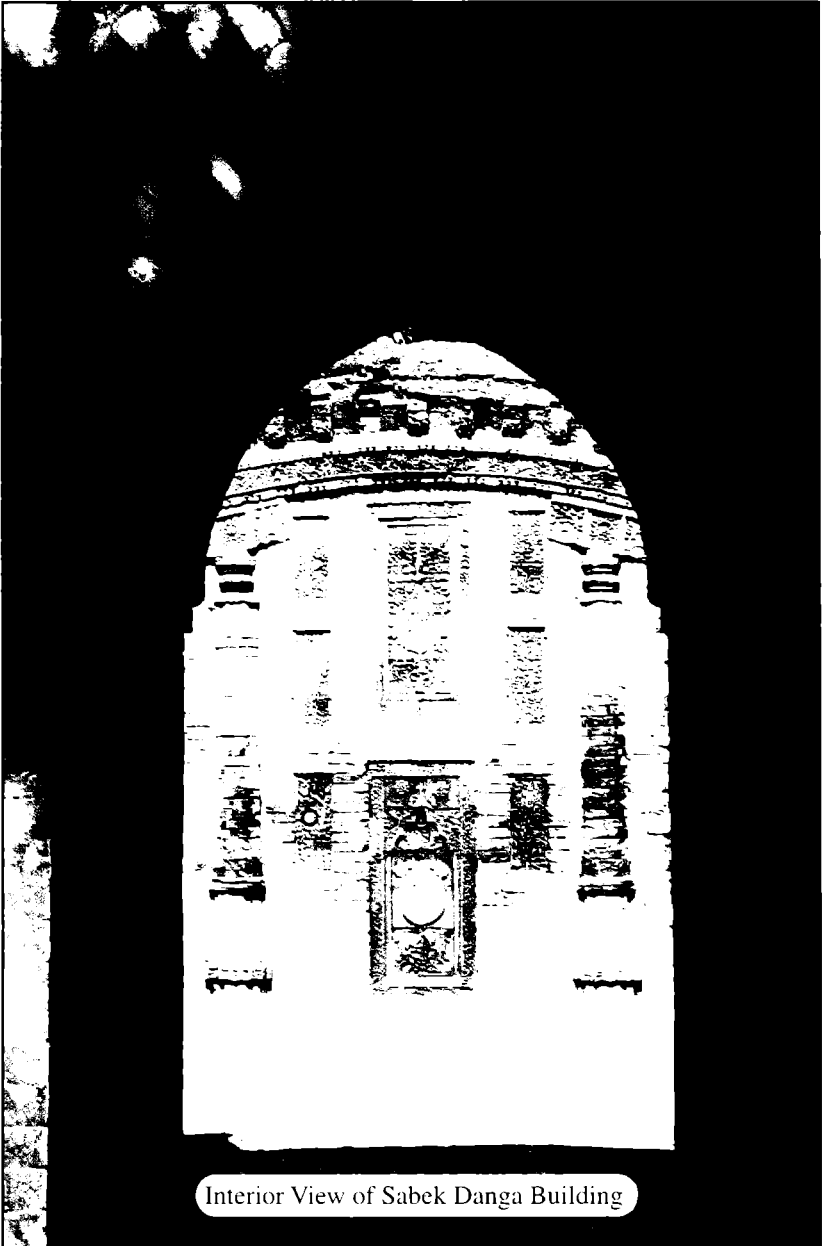


General View of Sabek Danga Building

Pl. XII



Interior View Sabek Danga Building



Interior View of Sabek Danga Building



### About the author



Born in 1953 in Khulna City, Khoundkar Alamgir passed B.A.(Hons) in 1975 and M.A. in 1976 in Islamic History & Culture, Dhaka University, especialising in Islamic Art & Archaeology. He started research about Muslim Architecture of Gaur (Bangladesh) area in 1979 under the supervision of Professor Muhammad Sirajul Islam. He started his career as a College Teacher. Afterwards he joined the Directorate of Archaeology in class 1 gazetted post in 1981 and since then he has been serving there. He has experience of Archaeological Survey and Excavation. He has many research papers published in both national and international journals. Mr. Alamgir started writing from his boyhood. His first poem and short story were published in School Magazine. He also wrote many features and articles in several Dailies and Weeklies published from Khulna, Bagerhat and Dhaka. During his stay in the University he was also associated with extra-curricular literary and cultural activities. He has participated and presented papers in many national and international seminars and conferences. He is a life member of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Bangladsh Itihas Parishad (National History Council of Bangladesh) and Islamic Forum, Khulna. He is also a Registered Graduate (life) of Dhaka University. He is married to Begum Afnan Durrah and they have three daughters.