

A STUDY OF THE MUGHUL ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN CHITTAGONG CITY

DR. SALMA BINT SHAFIQ¹

Associate Professor

Department of History

University of Chittagong

e-mail: salma_ctgu@yahoo.com

The objective of this research is to present a concise but vivid analysis of Mughul Architectural heritage established in the city of Chittagong. Chittagong is now the second most important city of Bangladesh. Apart from natural beauty bent through hills, and mountains, rivers and lakes, the seaport in the heart of the Bay of Bengal attracted people from diverse ethnic origins throughout the centuries. Those people left the marks of their footsteps especially through various structures around the city, which have been incorporated into local heritage. Among those nationals, Mughul relics survived most, though currently they are under threat of oblivion due to massive urbanization and unplanned modernization of the city. Research on architecture highlights this issue in their own perspective while historic aspect in regards to Mughul architecture has not been studied extensively. To this end the study first presents a brief analytical discussion on heritage, and a short historical background about the city of Chittagong, and then focuses on some of the significant monuments established during Mughul reign in the city of Chittagong. The study concludes by stressing on the threat to the architectural monuments due to the lack of proper maintenance.

Key words: *Architecture, Heritage, Mughul, Chittagong*

Introduction

Heritage is a term which is used to denote cultural properties or resources of a country or a nation. It can be divided into two broad

¹I would like to pay my gratitude and thanks to my teacher Professor Dr. Mohammad Ali Chowdhury, and my father Professor Dr. Shah Muhammad Shafiqullah for sharing their insightful thoughts and recommendation while preparing this article.

categories - non-material and material aspects. Languages, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, values and traditions are considered as non-material, while art and architecture such as buildings, monuments, bridges, gates, tombs etc. are regarded as material heritage.¹ Material heritage reflects the socio-economic condition of the time and place the structure was built. Furthermore, religious institutions such as mosques, temples, pagodas, and churches are symbol of heritage and authentic sources of reconstructing history.

It is, therefore, no wonder that heritage study is increasingly emerging as an important research topic among the scholars in different areas, such as anthropology, archaeology, architecture, art, history, psychology, sociology and tourism. However, different disciplines focus on different perspectives of heritage - "some may see heritage as their inalienable right, while for others it is a construct; yet others see it as timeless and belonging to all."² Along this line, the main objective of this study is to provide a brief account of Mughul architecture in Chittagong city in Bangladesh from historic perspective.

Mughul architecture has been an interesting research area among the medieval experts. However, their focus is mainly on Mughul architecture in the Northern Indian cities such as Delhi, Agra. Mughul architecture in the other parts of the Indian sub-continent attracts less attention among the researchers. To this end, this study thus focuses on the Mughul architectural heritage with particular focus on the religious monuments of Chittagong city in Bangladesh.

The port city of Chittagong is the second most important city of Bangladesh. It is a versatile city with long recorded history. Mughul historian Abul Fazl states that "Chittagong is a large city situated by the sea and belted by woods. It is considered an excellent port and is the resort of Christian and other merchants."³ Natural harbor and sea port in the heart of Bay of Bengal built a natural gateway to welcome people from different regions of the world. Hindus from Tripura, Buddhists from Arakan, Mohammedans from Arabs, and central Asia, and Christians from Portugal and England entered into the seaport and adjacent land areas. These ethnic and religious communities left their footsteps in the city by constructing various architectural structures. Thus, the city inherits a rich architectural heritage from those people.

However, the architectural heritage scattered around the region has not been studied extensively. Research on architectural heritage of the city was mostly conducted by the researchers and students of modern architecture to investigate or analyze the techniques of building structures.

It appears that the major concern of those studies is to preserve heritage in order to sustain tourism. History reconstruction is not their principal objective. This study attempts mainly to portray the Mughul architectural heritage of Chittagong city, in particular, and other pre-Mughul architectural heritage in general in order to have a previous indication of the city. However, before commencing the descriptive study a theoretical analysis is included to delineate history, heritage and also the role of architecture in history. Finally, the current situation of some major Mughul architectural structures in Chittagong city is observed on the basis of recent visit (by the author) and contemporary studies with recommendation to preserve the heritage. Therefore, the paper is structured in four sections; role of architectural heritage in history, a short study on history and heritage of pre-Mughul and Mughul regime in Chittagong, and present features of the Mughul heritage.

It can be noted that before commencement of Mughul era in 1666, Chittagong came in contact gradually with the Buddhists, Hindus, Arabs, Afghans, and Portuguese. However, after about a century Mughul rule in Chittagong had collapsed with the advent of British rule, and many of the Mughul architectural heritages ruined in oblivion. This study asserts that Mughul architecture in Chittagong is notably different from the rest of India due to the availability of ingredients required to build a structure. Furthermore, weather, geographical location, and economic affluence may be taken into consideration for the difference.

Role of architectural heritage in history

History and Heritage are likely to refer to similar notions, yet there is a basic difference between these. As Susan Marsden observes, history is everything which has happened in the past. In another words, history is the interpretation one makes of the past. On the other hand, what has survived from the past is heritage.⁴ Heritage could be history, but history may not always be heritage.

Among the various aspects of heritage, architecture is one of the oldest and most important sources of reconstructing history. Architecture possesses a universal language irrespective of time zone.⁵ Architecture is also considered as unwritten history of a nation and society. This can be taken for granted on the basis of the fact that bricks and stones never lie, and they cannot be bribed as much as writers of documents are likely to be.⁶ Architectural structures talk about the life of the people and society, and also reveal identity of the nation.⁷ Emotion is also an

indispensable part of architecture.⁸ Furthermore, the ingredients used in structure reveal how the economic condition was in the past (time of construction), and ornamentation talks about the taste and cultural stand or vision of the founders.⁹ Susan Marsden further observes “Architecture is but one of many hundreds of aspects of human existence in the past”.¹⁰

History in pre-historic or ancient period was mainly reconstructed with architectural disposal, because no written evidences were discovered. As a matter of fact, writing scripture was not invented that time, and therefore, art and architecture were the only sources that offered untold story of mankind.¹¹ However, Muslim or Islamic architecture is rather new compared with other ethnic or religious sects. It can be noted that there was no Muslim art and architecture in the early days of Islam. S. Shafiqullah observes that since the Arabs were mostly nomadic, and had to struggle against nature to live, they had no time and means to create art or build any structure that could last long. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and his successors did not believe in creating fine arts and building beautiful structures due to their unworldly thoughts and beliefs. After the conquests outside Arabia, such as Persia, Syria, and Egypt Muslims became familiar with the artistic activities of those nations that eventually made the nomad Arabs masters of civilization in a century. However, Islam prohibits use of living forms in art craft or structures. Therefore, early Muslim arts and architecture were different from contemporary works of Christian, Buddhist, Hindu or other sects.¹²

Due to the reservation about representing living figures Muslim (artists) introduced a new kind of ‘floral and geometric forms and range of colors’. Ornamentation through calligraphy therefore, emerges as a remarkable feature of Islamic architecture. Another aspect of Muslim art is that it is an “electric creation produced by a mixture of elements of the East and the West, but impressed with a distinctively Islamic character.”¹³ For instance, dome and minaret are not exclusively Islamic innovation; Roman architecture used these much earlier in great extent.¹⁴ Yet, Islamic arts and architecture have thrived with their own exclusiveness.¹⁵

A Short History of Chittagong: Pre-Mughul episode

Bengal was called ‘paradise on earth’¹⁶ and Chittagong was the ‘gateway to that paradise’¹⁷ due to the strategic location particularly hills, mountains, forests, rivers, and sea around the city. The topography of

Chittagong is different from the rest of Bangladesh, for it is a part of the hilly regions that branch off from the Himalayas.¹⁸ History of Chittagong dates back to the pre-historic era and is grossly blended with the history of its neighbouring regions.¹⁹ Heritage of Chittagong articulates that population of diverse origins and regions left their footsteps and emblems of settlement. The diversity is observed through numerous material and non-material cultural properties of the people who once lived in this port city.²⁰ Campos states in regards to Portuguese relics in Bengal- ‘they have left important vestiges that no time can erase’.²¹ This statement can be simultaneously taken for granted for all the previous and subsequent nations who came to trade, settle or rule this region. However, many of those relics are now under a threat to disappear due to natural and geographical factors, as well as rapid urbanization and unplanned wave of development. The following paragraphs demonstrate a brief outline of diverse religious and ethnic contact in Chittagong.

Buddhist connection

Early Buddhist concentration in Chittagong was observed in the second half of the seventh century.²² This coastal region was then known as *Harikela* kingdom, located to the north and south to river *Karnafully*, where many Buddhist monasteries had been discovered.²³ Seventeenth century Tibetan historian of Buddhism Lama Taranath referred to a monastery named the *Pinda-Vihara* in the town of *Chatighabo*, while Sarat Chandra Das (1898) named the large monastery as *Pandita-Vihara*, which was located in the city of *Châtigraama* or *Chatigaon*.²⁴ This *Chatigaon* has later been changed as *Chatgao* during the Sultanate period, and renamed Chittagong during British colonial rule.²⁵ Images of Buddha and metal sculptures of Buddhist deities found in Chittagong indicate the significance of this place. The images discovered in Mainamati, currently located in the district of Comilla also demonstrate a close connection between the Buddhist centers of Chittagong and Comilla districts.²⁶

However, no Buddhists’ place of worship or temple of olden days has been found in Chittagong that could serve as a source of architectural heritage of Chittagong during Buddhist era. B. N. Sarkar observes that Buddhist temples were likely to convert into Hindu temple. As a supporting example of his assumption Sarkar explains, “The Buddhists of Chittagong even now pay annual visits to Chandranatha hill (in Sitakunda) where a temple of Siva has been erected by the Hindus in later times”.²⁷ Apart

from Hindu influence, Muslim invasion in the thirteenth century was responsible for the destruction of Buddhist monasteries. Negligence to preserve is also responsible.

Hindu connection

Chittagong was once a part of the extensive independent Hindu kingdom Tipperah (*Tripura*). Being situated at the disputed frontier of Hindu Bengal and Buddhists Burma, the region witnessed constant warfare between the two kingdoms.²⁸ A number of Hindu temples established around the region more than 500 years ago, had been listed,²⁹ such as the temple of Sambhu Nath at Sitakuna, temple of Shiva on the western slope of the Chandranath hill in Sitakunda, and temple of Barabkunda. Apart from the temple many shrines are also seen around the hill.

Arab connection

Arab contact in Chittagong goes back to the Ninth century. There is no particular source in regards to identify an independent Arab colonial settlement in the district. However, economic and cultural relation was observed, further it has been established that political motive was not that significant to the Arabs.³⁰ “The early Portuguese visitors saw the port of Chittagong crowded with Arab sail”³¹, which reveals that Arab trade in Chittagong continued till the Portuguese arrived in the middle of the Sixteenth century. As a matter of fact, Arab trade and commerce in Chittagong started to decline due to hostile attitudes of Portuguese pirates.³² The Arabs left their marks through words and names of places. The colloquial/dialect (local language) that is widely spoken all over the region has absorbed many Arabic words. S. B. Qanungo observes, “the infiltration of Arabic vocabulary in Chittagong dialect testifies to the close relation that prevailed between Chittagong and Arabia.”³³ Jinjira, Sulk bahr, Al-koron are some of the many names derived from Arabic words, though no architectural evidence of Arab heritage has been found so far.

Afghan connection (Sultanate episode)

Chittagong first came in Afghan contact in the middle of the fourteenth century under the rule of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah (AD 1338- 1339).³⁴ Historian Shihabuddin Talish asserts that Sultan Fakhruddin beautified Chittagong with both religious and secular buildings. Ruins of

various architectural structures, such as mosques and graves demonstrate the Sultan as an enthusiastic ruler who possessed a passion for arts.³⁵ The conquest of Fakhruddin made Chittagong an integral part of the Bengal Sultanate that soon broke the age long isolation of this region. Chittagong remained as the chief sea port of Bengal till the seventeenth century.³⁶

Sultanate rule was carried out in Chittagong by the successive sultans, and then by Raja Ganesha (1418) and his successors. Coins and inscriptions found in Chittagong are authentic sources which help to come up with this statement.³⁷ Furthermore, a number of architectural evidences discovered across the city demonstrate a deep connection and activities of the Sultans in Chittagong.³⁸ For example, Fakir Mosque in Hathazari established in 1474-1481, Alaol mosque in Jobra established in 1474, Nusrat Shah Mosque in Chikandandi, Hathazari are some of the oldest mosques built in the district of Chittagong during the Sultanate regime. Furthermore, Hammadyar mosque in Qumira, Pargal Khan and Chuti Khan mosques in Mirsrai and Bakshi Hamid mosque in Banshkhali are some of the remarkable [instances] sultanate architecture... Although many of the monuments are not currently in their original shape, some of the features still show the glory and heritage of the Sultanate period.

Portuguese connection

Contemporary Portuguese sources reveal that the Portuguese first landed in Chittagong in 1517 AD, when the port city was controlled by the Bengal Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah. Later Sultan Mahmud Shah asked for Portuguese help to fight against Sher Shah, in return granted them permission to build up factories and fortresses. Later they were given the right to establish custom houses, and also granted land with many houses, empowering them over the local people. These privileges surprisingly strengthened their positions in Chittagong and helped them established first Portuguese settlement in Chittagong in 1536-1537.³⁹ However, they proved themselves as troublemakers eventually, by violating laws, and participating in local politics.⁴⁰

Portuguese trade expanded gradually to other parts of Bengal. British annexation made them leave the prime position of Bengal trade with Europe. However, the Portuguese left significant marks over the city of Chittagong, which has obviously been incorporated to the local heritage. The remains of Portuguese houses and churches are still seen around the city.⁴¹

Mughul Episode

Mughul rule commenced in Chittagong in 1666, more than hundred years after the Mughul Empire was established in India, under the leadership of Shayesta Khan. The Mughul conquest immediately declared the port city of Chittagong as headquarter of the Mughul *Sarkar*. He appointed many Portuguese men in Mughul navy that increased Mughul power and secured Chittagong from Arakanese pirates.⁴² His son Bujurg Umed Khan built a fort and established a mosque in a place now named Andarkilla to commemorate the victory. Chittagong was named Islamabad-the residence of faithful⁴³ according to the wish of the emperor Aurangzeb. After the emperor died in 1707, Bengal formally became independent.⁴⁴

A significant number of Mughul monuments were found in Chittagong. Apart from the Andarkilla Jami Mosque built by Bujurg Umed Khan, Qadam Mubarak mosque, Wali Khan mosque, Haji Khan mosque, Shrine of Bayezid Bostami are some of the prominent monuments built during Mughul reign in Chittagong. Shihabuddin Talish also pointed to 99 bridges constructed on different canals criss-crossing the road from Feni to Chittagong under the command of Subahder Shayesta Khan.⁴⁵ Many of the monuments (and also the bridges) are not currently in their original shape due to British intervention and also due to the renovation gone subsequent periods on unplanned way. Therefore, they lost their historic value in course of time. However, since Mughul rule was predominantly a Muslim rule, the religious, that is why Islamic ideals are largely reflected in architecture.

Enamul Haque notes that Bengal came in contact with Islam after more than half a millennium of its exposure in Arab, and by that span of time it acquired 'enormous wealth of varied experience', introduced as an 'ascending force politically and culturally', in all the continents. Yet the 'desert-born' Islam had been welcomed in deltaic Bengal with great enthusiasm by the local people.⁴⁶ However, since Muslim occupation commenced in Bengal without physical destruction or massacre, Muslims inherited pre-Muslim cultural facets. That is, Buddhist and Hindu influence is clearly visible in Bengal art and architecture.⁴⁷

This characteristic is evident in the architectural heritage of Chittagong both in Sultanate and Mughul architecture. Indigenous ingredients such as clay, brick made out of clay, bamboo, wood and also terracotta were mostly used to build a structure, since they were available locally and originated exclusively from Bengal.⁴⁸ Furthermore, stones, largely used in Indian architecture were not much common in Bengal

because importing stones from far away province of North India was expensive in terms of money and time.⁴⁹ Another common facet was that Bengal houses were mostly square or rectangular shaped with two or four parts of roof (*do-chala* or *char-chala*) on the top, derived from common thatched hut of rural Bengal.

However, when making religious structures especially mosques, tombs and shrines Islamic style was followed that derived from common Muslim architecture. By then arch,⁵⁰ dome,⁵¹ minaret,⁵² mihrab⁵³, etc., had been recognized as fundamental features of Islamic architecture.⁵⁴ Bengal architecture absorbed those features gradually, and altered any object in order to fit in with the environment. In order to protect from monsoon rain, covered domed roof had been adopted instead of an open court in front of mosques or palaces.⁵⁵

The monuments built in Chittagong during Sultanate regime had been imbued with these distinct features. For instance, most of the Sultani mosques are either square or rectangle with one, two or more than two domes. Fakir mosque in Hathazari (AD 1474- 1481), and Chuti Khan's mosque in Mirsrai (AD 1515-1524) have six domes each. Alaol mosque (still standing with the relics) situated in the vicinity of Chittagong University campus, which has been claimed as the first brick built mosque in Chittagong,⁵⁶ established by Rasti Khan in 1474 AD during the reign of Rukunuddin Barbak Shah.⁵⁷

Therefore, Sultani architecture established in Chittagong firmly inserted local style, as well as adopted Islamic approach that matches with local socio-cultural and economic aspect, as well as fit with the environment. Mughul architecture followed common features to some extent, though articulated new facets that are stronger and luxurious compared to the pre-Mughul works.⁵⁸

Mughul architecture, though derived from Muslim ideology, 'incorporates many elements from local Hindu Architecture. At the same time, an effect of pre-Mughul Islamic architecture is evident that reflects a connection with the early days of Islam in India. Furthermore, Persian influence is visible though the extensive use of tile work, the use of domes, the *charbagh*, or garden, divided into four and the four-centre point arch.⁵⁹ Shafiqullah further states, "Shimmering domes and minarets of the Mughul buildings ...ingenious use of the Arabesque by combining skillfully the Arabic and geometry thereby producing an art of unparallel intricacy and beauty."⁶⁰ The glory of Mughul architecture increased gradually with the patronization of successive rulers. For example, Jahangir's regime witnessed the transition from stone to marble.⁶¹ Taj Mahal in Agra, Red Fort and Humayun's tomb in Delhi are some of the

finest buildings constructed by the Mughuls, are still admired by the world.

However, as a province of Mughul India, Bengal did not receive much attention and sponsorship to establish magnificent buildings. Therefore, Mughul architecture in Bengal was not as glorious and luxurious as it was in central India, e.g. Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, and Lahore. As observed by A. B. M. Husain, Bengal architecture in Mughul regime demonstrates a provincial form of Mughul works, which was a miniature version of Mughul architecture. Husain further explains that Bengal architecture in Mughul reign was derived from Mughul design, while being different from those built in the heart of Mughul Empire. The reason is that unlike sultanate administration, Bengal was not an independent province during Mughul reign. The region had been under the direct supervision of Mughul Subedar, and received socio-economic and infrastructural development as much a province did. Although Mughul style was followed in most cases, due to less funding and attention, and also local environmental features Bengal monuments were not as enormous as the ones in Delhi.⁶²

Yet, Dhaka being the provincial capital has been home to numerous mosques and monuments that had been built in the Mughul reign. The Mughul rulers were concerned about the beautification of Dhaka city, so they built a variety of buildings, such as pleasure houses, palaces, *Katras*, *mausolea*, mosques, and bridges.⁶³ One of the remarkable differences between Sultanate and Mughul architecture was the replacement of plaster, instead of traditional terracotta plaques. Moreover, carved roofs turned into plain ones, two-centered arch changed to four-center point.⁶⁴

Impact of local influence contributed to the development of a distinctive indigenous style.⁶⁵ The indigenous Bengal style had been evolved later in imperial Mughul architecture. *Do-chala* and *char-chala* forms of roofs, which were made of bamboo and thatch in Bengal, transformed into brick and stone and enriched the architectural traditions of the subcontinent, and also Islamic architecture as a whole. Furthermore, in order to ensure protection from rain *Chatri*⁶⁶ was incorporated as an environment friendly design.

Mughul Architecture in Chittagong

The above feature is largely visible among the architectural structures in Chittagong established during Mughul reign. It is noted that “Soon after the Mughul conquest mosques and shrines began proliferating

throughout the Chittagong hinterland”.⁶⁷ A list of the significant Mughul mosques in Chittagong, and their principle features is presented in the table below.

Table 1

| Name of the Monument | Date of establishment | Where is it situated | Shape | Dome | Aisle | Bay |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|---|-------|--------|-------|
| Andarkilla Shahee Jami mosque | AD 1667-1968 | Andarkilla | Rectangular shape | Three | Single | Three |
| Haji Mosque at Pahartali | AD 1692-1693 | Pahartali | Original features disappeared. Only the gate and enclosure have survived. | | | |
| Wali Khan Mosque | AD 1713-1716 | Chawkbarzar | Rectangular | Six | Two | Three |
| The Qadam Mubarak mosque | AD 1723 | Rahamatgonj | Rectangular two vaults, and three bays. | Three | - | Three |
| Three domed Mosque and Shrine | Early 18 th century | Bayezid, Nasirabad | Rectangular | Three | - | Three |

Source: *Banglapedia* (2015); Shamsul Husain (2006)

The table demonstrates that the architectural structures which had been built in close time zone; from the late Seventeenth to early Eighteenth century and also the features are almost similar. Furthermore, these mosques are located in the same city. Therefore, these buildings are

categorized as Mughul architectural heritage in Chittagong city. This section now focuses on these particular Mughul structures of the city of Chittagong.

Andarkilla Shahi Jami mosque

As mentioned earlier, Mughul rule commenced in Chittagong in 1666 under the leadership of Shayesta Khan. His son Bujurg Umed Khan renamed the place Islamabad (the residence of the faithful) and annexed it to the province of Bengal.⁶⁸ Umed Khan further reorganized the local administration and built a mosque, to commemorate the conquest, which is now familiar as Andarkilla Shahi Jami mosque.⁶⁹

The mosque followed the typical three-bay style of Shayesta Khan. It is rectangular, crowned with a big central dome flanked by two smaller domes resting on humped vault.⁷⁰ It is observed that Shahi Jami mosque adorned with typically central Asian features – minarets and curved arches. “It has four connected octagonal towers. The central entrance on the east wall has an enlarged fronton with relatively two small octagonal minarets on its sides. It is identical with the projection on the back of the west wall. Two sides mihrabs on the western wall were brought down to make room for the windows at a later renovation.” (Husain)

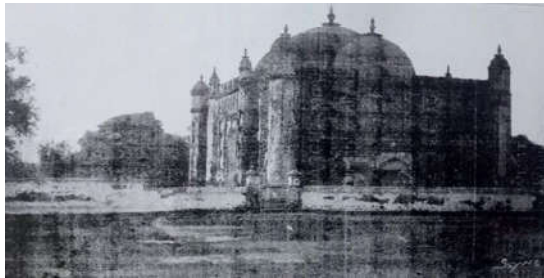


Fig 1:
Andarkilla Jami mosque (before)



Fig 2:
Andarkilla Jami mosque (now)

This is one of the Mughul monuments that survived the invasion of Moghs and Portuguese pirates, and still remain standing. During the British period the mosque was turned into an arms magazine. It was handed back to the Muslim community in 1855. Renovation occurred in different phases; the structure was greatly enlarged and many unique features were completely altered. Furthermore, due to the massive expansion of the city, numerous buildings, such as hotels and markets have been established in the vicinity of the mosque. All those newly formed structures have damaged its exquisiteness that clearly demonstrates that more than three hundred years of heritage has been under a menace. Yet, a number of original inscriptions are evident, that demonstrate exclusive Mughul heritage.⁷¹

Haji Mosque at Pahartali

The Haji mosque was built during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1692-1693. It is situated beside the Dhaka-Chittagong train-track on the west of Dewanhut over-bridge, though it has almost been ruined. Yet, the Persian inscription found on a black stone in the remaining low enclosure demonstrates its oldness and relic.⁷² The inscription also contains the mention of the new name of Islamabad given to Chittagong by the Mughuls.”⁷³ There is also an abandoned tank in the vicinity of the ruined mosque. Although the mosque and the tank lost their original features over time, the Persian inscription shows in photo 3 ‘some marks of excellence in its execution in the art of calligraphy and embellishment.’⁷⁴ The mosque has been reconstructed and the inscription was placed next to the mihrab.

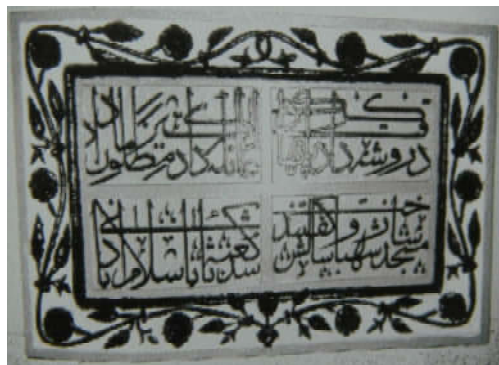


Fig 3:

The Persian inscription of Haji mosque (source: S. Husain 2006)

The Qadam Mubarak mosque

Another notable Mughul mosque is the three domed Qadam Mubarak mosque situated at Rahamatgonj area (in Jamal Khan ward under Chittagong City Corporation) of Chittagong. Built in 1723 AD, by a local Foujdar Muhammad Yasin,⁷⁵ the mosque was well-known for preserving the holy foot prints of the Prophet (ﷺ). It is believed that those foot prints were brought from Arabia by a saint of Noakhali. Muhammad Yasin bought the footprints and placed them in the northern room of the mosque and from then on the mosque was named after the holy foot-prints; *Qadam Mubarak*.⁷⁶



Fig 4:

Qadam Mubarak mosque (old look)

Source: <http://en.banglapedia.org/images/6/62/KadamMubarakMosque.jpg>

The mosque has been renovated a number of times by local devotees. Yet it largely retains the original features, unlike most of the Mughul structures.⁷⁷ This rectangle mosque roofed over with three domes and two vaults, stands on a platform with an ablution tank nearby. “Framed with ornate recesses and enclosed with two octagonal turrets, the fronton of this mosque is most elegant and attractive”- *Banglapedia*. Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani has observed that among all the monuments of Chittagong, Kadam Mubarak Mosque deserved special attention due to its architectural style.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the north and south rooms adjacent to the main mosque were vaulted in the *Chou-chala* hut design that derives from local Bengal as well as Mughul style.

However, the new look of the mosque shows that after renovation the main mosque lost many of its former features. Especially the enormous domes built on top of the mosque are not visible (photo no. 5). Furthermore, the place around the mosque is covered with buildings and hazardous electric wires thrown up mostly in unplanned way (as seen in Photo 6).



Fig 5:
Qadam Mubarak mosque (new look); main mosque with the mazar; domes are hardly visible



Fig 6:
Qadam Mubarak mosque (new look); the front gate of the mosque.

Wali Khan Mosque

The six-domed masonry mosque situated at Chawkbazaar, in the heart of Mughul Chittagong was built in between A.D. 1713-1716.⁷⁹ Mughul Fojdar Wali Beg Khan built this imposing mosque.⁸⁰ The rectangular double-aisled mosque has four engaged octagonal towers at the outer angles, and three mihrabs in the qibla wall. However, the central mihrab has lost all its original features and adornment due to unplanned renovation, yet its projection on the back of the qibla wall is still noticeable.⁸¹

**Fig 7:**

Wali Khan mosque, front view (previous look). Source: *Banaglapedia*

**Fig 8:**

Wali Khan mosque, front view (new look); a recent photograph

**Fig 9:**

A recent photograph of Wali Khan mosque (inside view)

**Fig 10:**

A recent photo of Wali Khan mosque, (rear view)

**Fig 11:**

A recent photograph of Wali Khan mosque, Chawkbazar

The previous photograph of Wali Khan Mosque shows that there were no other buildings around, while recent photos snapped in early May 2018 show numerous high rise buildings around the mosque. Photo 8 shows the mosque is about to collapse though the graceful domes are still remarkable. Photo No. 9 and 10 show the inside and rear view of the mosque respectively. The condition of the mosque is clearly visible from these photographs. It is noted that a renovation scheme has been undertaken. Photo No. 11 displays the giant billboard with the appeal to welcome charity for the reconstruction of the new building as well as renovation of the older one.

Three domed Mosque and Mazaar in Nasirabad

The three domed mosque, situated at Nasirabad is assumed to be

named after the famous sufi saint Bayezid of the Bostam city, in Persia. The adjacent mazaar or the tomb, in the same way is believed to be the shrine of the same saint. Yet, there was no proof that the saint had ever come to the east.⁸² Whether the Persian saint had ever lived and had been buried in this corner of the city is unsettled due to authentic historic sources, yet mosque and the adjoin tomb are believed to be built in the seventeenth century, and they resemble typical Mughul style.⁸³



Fig 12:

An early photograph of mosque at the foot of the tomb- hill of Sultan Bayezid Bostami. (Source: Shamsul Husain's PhD thesis, photograph no. 121.)

The photograph 12 demonstrates an elegant feature of Mughul architecture. However, this is currently nowhere to be seen around the place. As Shamsul Husain asserts this has now been replaced by a modern structure.⁸⁴ Even the ruin of the mosque is not visible due to the massive construction of enormous buildings.



Fig 13:

A big pond in front of the mosque (previous look)

As seen in the photograph 13 there is a big pond in front of the mosque. A number of giant turtles swim around the pond. Both tale and myth have been popular among the people in regards to the turtles have been living on the pond for hundreds of years. People believe that these turtles are supernatural creatures⁸⁵, and possess power to grant their wish. They pay visit with a wish that their dream would come true once the soul of the saint is happy with their prayers and offerings. Though attracting visitors for enormous turtles on the pond situated in front of the mosque, the place is rapidly losing historic value, due to massive construction around the sight, therefore, heritage is disappearing too.⁸⁶



Fig 14:
Commencement of the foundation of modern structures around the mosque.



Fig 15:
A recent photograph of the entrance of the mosque. The famous three domes cannot be seen due to the high rise buildings under construction.



Fig 16:

A recent photograph of the tomb. The domes and minarets are still displaying the elegant features of Mughul architecture.

It is observed that countless devotees gather around the tomb each day. What is more, not just the Muslims, people from other religious faiths also visit the tomb, as well as the pond full of turtles. Moreover, hundreds of monks, beggars, vendors, as well as vagrant people mingle in the shrine area. They particularly look for a chance to exploit the visitors. Many of them make substantial amount of money on the basis of their activities around the place. Instead of offering a calm and quite atmosphere to the visitors the place therefore, makes them afraid and even sometimes they are waylaid by robbers.

Conclusion

The objective of this research has been to explore the Mughul architectural heritage of the city of Chittagong. Based on the literature on historic and architectural studies, the paper has focused on the history of the city of Chittagong from pre-Muslim to Muslim era, and also discussed the historic relics different traders, travelers and invaders left to this region. Those historic relics are commonly deemed as heritage. Therefore the study highlighted the architectural heritage constructed during Mughul reign in the port city.

It is observed that Muslim architecture in Chittagong, as like as the same in Bengal had been guided and influenced by the then political conditions. Therefore, the commencement of the Mughul rule ignored

indigenous sources and ingredients and forbade local artisans to join in. The Mughuls had built enormous and beautiful monuments around their empire through the ‘accumulation of richness and consolidation of power’⁸⁷.

The research has shown that Mughul architecture in Bengal was a combination of Islamic, Indian as well as local influence. That ‘fusion contributed to the development of a distinctive indigenous style.’⁸⁸

However, many of the monuments lost their originality and were given modern look during renovation.⁸⁹ The series of renovation are growing threat to the monuments, since they are most likely to run through a ‘misguided zeal,’ or motivated by self advancement by giving them a modern look, and thereby stripping them of their original historical character.⁹⁰ Apart from the unplanned renovation, rapid expansion of the city as a result of over population and urbanization also grounds threat to the monumental heritage. Many of the mosques are currently not visible properly due to the construction of many shops and residences around them. For example, Andarkilla Jamee mosque is surrounded by numerous shops and high rise buildings. Similarly, Wali Khan mosque, Qadam Mubarak, the mosque and the tomb in Nasirabad are almost hemmed in with numerous commercial and residential buildings.

The study has briefly explained the historical background and demonstrated the principle features of some of the Mughul monuments constructed in between the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries around the Chittagong City Corporation. These mosques talk about the early development of Muslim society in Chittagong, at the same time help to reconstruct the history of Medieval Muslim Bengal. Although the monuments were primarily of Islamic origin, multi faith people pay visit, especially around the tombs, that demonstrates notable social and religious harmony in the city.

Notes and References

1. M. Louise, S. Sørensen and J. Carman, *Heritage Studies, Methods and Approaches*, 2009, p. 12
2. *Ibid*, p. 3
3. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, translated by H.S. Jarrett, corrected and further annotated by J. N. Sarkar, (Bibliotheca Indica Series, Calcutta, 1949), p. 137
4. S.Marsden 1980, *Community History* 2, 2, June 1992, published by the History Trust of South Australia, retrieved from <http://www.sahistorians.org.au/175/documents/is-heritage-history-history-and-the-built-envirnm.shtml>

5. K. Frampton "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance", in H. Foster (ed.) *The Anti-Aesthetic Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Bay Press, Port Townsend, Washington, p. 20
6. This is taken from a seminar lecture delivered by Dr S. Shafiqullah, Professor (former) in Islamic Art & Architecture, Chittagong University
7. A.B.M. Husain, 2003, *Bangladesher sthapotto: otit o bortoman*, in Shamsul Hussain (ed.) *Aitijjayan*, Chittagong University Museum, 2003
8. A.B.M. Husain, 2003,
9. Taken from the seminar of Professor S. Shafiqullah as mentioned earlier
10. S. Marsden 1980, *Op. cit*
11. Taken from the seminar of Professor S. Shafiqullah as mentioned earlier
12. S. Shafiqullah 2012, "Calligraphic Art in Sultanate Architecture", *Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, Dhaka- 1000, p. 1
13. S. Shafiqullah 2012, *Ibid*, p. 2
14. E. Kuhnel 1966, *Islamic Art and Architecture*, translated in Bangla by Moslem Ali Bishwash, Chittagong, 1978.
15. *Ibid*, 1966
16. S. Darian 1978, *The Ganges in Myth and History*, The University Press of Hawaii, US
17. S. B. Qanungo, 1988, *A History of Chittagong*, Volume II, From Ancient time down to 1761
18. *Banglapedia* 2014, Chittagong City, *National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*.
19. S. B. Qanungo, 1988,
20. S. Husain, 2006, *Heritage of Chittagong. A Study of the Muslim Monuments*, PhD thesis, University of Chittagong
21. J. J. A. Campos, 1919, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 169
22. B. K. Sarkar 2016, Aspects of Buddhism in Early Chittagong, *Global Journal of Indian History and Culture*, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 15
23. Vasant Chowdhury, 2003, "Hitherto Unknown Harikela coins- Some Analytical Comments", in Shamsul Hussain (ed.) *Aitijjayan*, Chittagong University Museum, 2003, pp. 43-49.
24. S. C. Das, 1899
25. S. B. Qanungo, 2010, *A History of Chittagong*, Volume II (1761- 1947), p. 1
26. B. K. Sarkar 2016, p. 18
27. *Ibid*, p. 20
28. W. W. Hunter 1876, *Statistical Account of Bengal*, vol VI, London, p. 110
29. S. Husain, 2006, *Op. cit*
30. S. B. Qanungo, 1988, 112
31. *Ibid*, p. 113
32. *Ibid*, p. 113
33. *Ibid*, p. 116
34. Seventeenth century historian Shihabuddin Talish' *Chatgaon* and Moorish traveler Ibn Batuta's *Sadkawan* have been identified as the same and early names of Chittagong by Dr. Abdul Karim (A. Karim, 1999, *Banglar Itihas*, p. 57) which was conquered by Fakhrudding Mubarak Shah.
35. S. B. Qanungo, 1988, p. 128
36. *Ibid*, p. 128

37. A. Karim, 1999, *Banglar Itihas* (History of Bengal, from Muslim victory to the Sepoy Mutiny 1200- 1857)
38. S. Husain, 2006, *Op. cit.*
39. J. J. A. Campos, 1919, *Op. cit.*, p. 37
40. S. B. Qanungo, 1988, p. 170
41. S. Husain, 2006, *Op. cit.*
42. A. Karim, 1999, *Op. cit.*, p. 182
43. J. J. A. Campos, 1919, *Op. cit.*, p. 113
44. M.M. Khan 2013, *The Muslim Heritage of Bengal: The Lives, Thoughts and Achievements of Great Muslim Scholars, Writers and Reformers of Bangladesh and West Bengal*, Kube Publishig, UK.
45. *The Daily Star*, 30 November, 2005 <http://archive.thedailystar.net/2005/11/30/d511303501102.htm>
46. E. Haque 1984, Introduction, in G. Michell (ed.) *Protection of the Cultural Heritage: The Islamic heritage of Bengal*, UNESCO, p. 17
47. *Ibid*, p. 18
48. A.B.M Husain, 2003
49. A. Karim 1999, *Op. cit.*, p. 128
50. “*Method of vaulting area between two walls, columns or piers*”- A. Peterson 2000, p. 24
51. “*Circular vaulted construction used as a means of roofing*”- A. Peterson, p. 68
52. Tower-like structure associated with mosques or other religious buildings introduced during the Abbasid Period- A. Peterson, 1995, p. 187
53. “A mihrab is usually a niche set into the middle of the qibla wall of a building in order to indicate the direction of Mecca”- quoted from A. Peterson , p. 186
54. E. Haque 1984, *Op. cit.*, p. 18
55. N. Ahmed, 1984, “*Discover the Monuments of Bangladesh*, A guide to their History, Location & Development” , University Press Limited, Dhaka Bangladesh, p. 113
56. A. H. Chowdhury , “*Chottogramer somaj o songskritir ruporekha*”, p. 387
57. A. Karim, 1992 “Corpus of the Arabic and Persian Inscription of Bengal”, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, p. 173
58. A.B.M Husain, *Op. cit.*, 2003
59. A. Peterson 2000, *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture*, New York, p. 199
60. S. Shafiqullah 2012, *Op. cit.*, p. 2
61. P. Brown 1942, *Indian Architecture* (The Islamic Period), Calcutta, p. 107
62. A.B.M. Husain, *Op. cit.*, 2003
63. N Ahmed, 1984, *Op.cit.*, p. 166
64. A.B.M. Husain, *Op. cit.*, 2003
65. E. Haque 1984, *Op. cit.*, p. 20
66. A *chatri* is a sloping stone overhang at roof level, used to deflect rain water away from the walls of a building and usually supported on heavy carved corbels (A. Peterson 2000, p. 200)
67. S. Husain, 2006, *Op. cit.*
68. W W Hunter 1876, *Op. cit.*, p. 112-114
69. A. Karim, 1999, *Banglar Itihas* (History of Bengal, from Muslim victory to the Sepoy Mutiny 1200- 1857) , p. 183

70. S. Husain, 2006
71. N. Ahmed, 1984, *Op.cit.*, p. 187
72. S. Husain, 2006, *Op. cit.*.
73. A. M. Chowdhury 2014, "Book Review, Shamsul Hossain's Eternal Chittagong, published by Mahfuz Anamas part of The *Daily Star's* Adamya Chhattragrama Festival, 2012", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, Vol. LIX(2), 2014, p. 386
74. S. Husain, 2006, *Op. cit.*
75. S. Husain, Banglapedia....http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Kadam_Mubarak_Mosque.
76. A. H. Chowdhury 1994, *Bondar Shohor Chhottogram*, Banglabazar, Dhaka
77. N. Ahmed 1984, *Op.cit.*, p. 188
78. S. Husain, 2006, *Op.cit.*
79. Banglapedia.. http://en.Banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Wali_Khan_Mosque
80. S. Husain, 2006, *Op.cit.*
81. Banglapedia, 2014, http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Wali_Khan_Mosque
82. A. H. Dani, 1961, *Muslim Architecture in Bengal*, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca
83. N. Ahmed 1984, *Op. cit.*, p. 188
84. Banglapedia, 2015http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Bayejid_Bostami_Tomb_and_Mosque.
85. *Ibid.*
86. *The Daily Star*, March 21, 2015, <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/rare-bostami-turtles-ctg-dire-straits-72071>
87. S.Husain, 2006, *Op.cit.*
88. E Haque, 1984, *Op. cit.*, p. 20
89. A. M. Chowdhury 2014, *Op. cit.*
90. N. Ahmed, 1984, *Op. cit.*, p. 12