

Introduction

The objective of my thesis is *spatiality of the religious structures*: It aims to study the history of 'being religious structures' from the dialectics of space: place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory and geography. I propose that the religious structures of certain geographical location are the maps that unfold the trajectories of the spatial history and polity of the community and religion. Religious structures like temples, mosques, dargah, are the most important forms of public art which arrest the gradual transformation in the spheres of culture, society, religion and politics. Such religious structures are meant for certain devotional community as they occupy the land in order to privatize the public domain for restricted community usage. On the frontier between sacred and profane, such religious buildings are the objective of my study. The research probes the religious structures to gauge several layers of spaces in the context of people and time – a space which is enclosed by religious structure, a space where the structures are built in and stand (landscape), a space where the structures are located (geography), a space where the structures are mapped (topography and cartography). The general objective of the research is to create more critically revealing ways of looking at the religious structures in the discourse of time and space, history and geography, place and people, sequence and simultaneity. It analyses the dialectics of space, structure and social being: geography, history and society. The religious structures in a landscape are a living testimony of the dialectics that I aim to look into.

Six years back I began my research with the title 'Religious Structures in Identity Formation in Medieval Bengal from the 1605 to 1757 CE'. I justified the selection of late medieval Bengal. The need of delimiting the period from 1605 to 1757 CE is its conflicting character. It is admittedly an era of transition between Mughals and zamindars of Bengal. However, it was much more than merely that. The former date, as we recall the year of death of Akbar, while central power of Delhi starts disintegrating. Abandoning Delhi, the feudal and provincial lords (zamindars) of Bengal begin to emerge effectively as independent officials. They remain successful right up to the advent of British power through Plassey battle in 1757, including the period after 1712, the year of the death of Bahadur Shah I. Thus, later date more generally marks the beginning of the ratification of British Military domination. This period witnesses a constant defy of power by Delhi Mughals and the feudal and provincial lords of Bengal and the influx of different communities as each group tries to seek its own land for accommodating themselves through various ways.

In the period of my research, the toughest task was to focus on the place of my case study, because the political history of Bengal. The Bengal of the period from 1605 to 1757 CE comprises of present West Bengal State of republic India and Bangladesh, an independent country. The present political and geographical identity of West Bengal and Bangladesh are result of the partition and independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 and independence of the East Pakistan as Bangladesh in 1971. However, the religious architecture of Bengal is studied on the basis of categorization of religion, such as

Temple and Mosque etc. Numbers of comparative studies are made from the paradigm of architectural style, period and region. In most of these cases, the efforts of the studies is to project what is intrinsically typical of 'of Bengal' and how it is connected with the history of pan Indian architecture, especially with the history of 'Indian' Hindu and Islamic architecture. Thus, religious architecture of Bengal is identified, mapped, documented, categorized, and researched in the context of either 'regional via national' or 'regional verses national'. How or what are the ways we can look into the architecture which are built up in the small pockets of the particular place of specific period. Can they have any space in the paradigms of art history and the history of architecture? Features of such structures emerge as a result of borrowings or internal changes over the years. Neither they can be separated from the complex geographical environment at a given moment in which they do not evolve nor they can be isolated from the cultural conditioning to which they are subjected. So, if the area covered is too vast and surveyed from atop an observatory, the study tends to overshoot the target. Only a micro study can help to perceive from close quarters the countless interactions between space, structure and the people whose continual renegotiation conditions sociability. Some time important questions seem to be revolving around the relationship between a small place and the wider domain. I enquire the limitation and delimitation of the study of a small place. How a small place is addressed, meant, understood and used is in vernacular tracts (Bengali) and its dialect. What is the cartographical understanding of *paragaan*, *desh*, *pally* which, indicate small barricaded place, space and territory of settlement. Do these words mean 'local'? What kind of mapping is inscribed through these words?

I chose to probe the religious structures of Burdwan. I chose Burdwan because of my acquaintance to individual, families who belong to Burdwan and I came to know them outside the town. Simultaneously, it is not my home; at the same time, it is in my homeland. Simultaneously, neither I am considered as 'insider' by the local community, nor historically I am an 'outsider'. Thus, I began to examine the religious architectures of Burdwan. Burdwan is a *mofussil* on the deltaic riverbed of Ajay, Damodar and Bhagirathi as the area of my research. The religious structures of the town stand on the boundary between religion and restriction over the period and inscribe 'identity'. This research enquires - identity of whom, where, when, how and so forth. The genesis of my research goes back to the statistics of the historical framework of the religious architecture of Bengal, done by George Michell and Richard M. Eaton.¹ The influx of the different religious and ethnic communities creates anxiety and pressure in Burdwan as each group tries to seek its own land for housing themselves as well as creating new identity through religious architectures. My research do not claim that religious structures of Burdwan represent the religious architecture of Bengal of pre-Independent India or West-Bengal state of independent India. It is not a study of the history of the religious structures of late medieval, but the history of identifying the religious structures in a place. It is an effort to

¹ The geographical distribution of these temples, more-over shows a clear concentration in the delta's western and south western sections. ----- As measured by temple construction, then, the Mughal period, patronage of Hindu institutions decidedly weakened as one moved from the west to east. Michell George (ed.) '*Brick temples of Bengal: from the Archives of David McCutcheon*', Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, pp195 – 254 ; Eaton, Richard M. '*The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204 – 1760*', Delhi, Oxford University Press , 1994, pp184 -185. The systematic transfer of jungle territory from royal domain to members of an emerging religious gentry who had built and/ or managed hundred of mosques and shrines (*dargah*) dedicated to Muslim holy men. ----- Of the total forested area, 91 percent were transferred into domain of religious structures. Eaton, Richard M. '*The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204 – 1760*', Delhi, Oxford University Press , 1994, p. 238

understand the interactive discourses of the various religious structures which are constructed in the late medieval period of Bengal of pre-Independent India and now exist in West-Bengal state of independent India. Thus, the late medieval period (1605 -1757) is an exemplary time. My thesis does not debate on concept and aspect of medieval period, but probes the identification of the religious structures of late medieval period in context of the 'present'. The religious structures of my case studies consist of the permanent architectures and the impermanent structures, grew in the premises. Furthermore, throughout the thesis I shall use the name of the town according to their psychological-cultural meanings, not official fiats. Burdwan *mofussil* is not Barddhaman, head office of the Barddhaman district. I discuss the religious structures of Burdwan in the perspective of mythography of self with which both mofussil and its religious structures live. The *mofussil* cluster around *paragaon*, *desh*, *pally* where "for both rulers and the ruled, the smallness that the small town conveyed was not merely geographical; it was social. For surrounding villages, the small town was not merely an out post of the state; it was a relatively friendly neighborhood town in touch with the village. The pathologies, the absurdities, even the everyday villainies of the small town bore the stamp of rustic and the idyllic. The small town was differently from metropolis by virtue of the fact that it had to define itself with the help of the village but never entirely in opposition to the village. That survives, even if in an attenuated form."²

² Nandi Asis : *Time treks* , New Delhi, Permanent Black p.154

The research deals the questions like - who made those structures. Who takes care of these structures? Who access them? Why those are made, why particular material; like bricks and terracotta plaques are chosen for building up the structures. What are the possible relationships between inside space of the structures and its location? What are relevance of ground plan and elevation? How does visibility of a structure in a landscape connect with its so-called stories/histories, where archaeology intervenes, where present Communist Government of the State mediates? I aim to look into the changing time through which each structure manages to exist today. All religious communities have a tendency to believe that they are different, although they are not really so. Perceptions of socio-religious differences take the upper-hand when they define themselves consciously, reflect on their identity, or answer questions about it. However, this identity is somewhat different when one observes them behaving in their day-to-day life.

Based on archeological data, vernacular tracts, exiting scholarship and empirical experiences of the field trip, I place four arguments. First, religious architectural spaces are the part of cultural cartography that reveal the rank of various agencies such as, the priests and pastors, the chiefs and their allies, youths, daily worshippers and so on. The arrangement of space in the religious architecture is reliant and amenable to local and imperial concerns. Second, multiple donors sponsored these religious constructions which are believed to be from past. Their patronage acts are carved within the religious architectural space and provided the opportunity to the people with different religious denominations and economical status for social and economical mobility. Third, these

religious structures facilitated both devotional and commercial transactions as religious patronage produced and represented kinship, politics, trade and other service affiliations. Fourth, the spatial construction and coordination in religious architectures are part of an internal and a larger discourse of history and politics.

Where and how I began – process and progress: Methodology

I began with scrutinizing a photography exhibition held in 2004 that provided me an opportunity to begin the grounding of the argument of my research. The process of investigation of this particular exhibition fabricated the methodological tools of my thesis and the progress of the research that followed. Therefore, it is mandatory to lay an introduction of the exhibition and its problematic angles.

The Directorate of Archaeology, the State Archaeological Museum, Government of West Bengal, in association with the Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, Eastern India, exhibited one hundred photographs to show the artistic heritage of West-Bengal at three places - India International Centre of New Delhi, Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sanghralaya of Mumbai, and Kalakriti Gallery of Hyderabad respectively³. The

³ In New Delhi 6th to 13th February, in Mumbai 24th to 15th March, in Hyderabad 11th to 17th November

Directorate of Archaeology set out a note of the brief history of *West*⁴ Bengal by selecting few images from one hundred photographs and develops historical narratives. The note acknowledges the book titled 'Bengal: Sites and Sights'⁵, because the theme of the exhibition was borrowed from this book. Further, it also acknowledges the photographer, Mr. Shiharan Nandi.⁶

The genesis of this exhibition goes back to another exhibition of photography, titled 'Medieval City of Gaur; Selected Views' in the State Archaeological Museum of West Bengal, organized by State Archaeological Museum, West Bengal in June 2003.⁷ After seeing this exhibition Ms. Arundhati Ghosh, IAS member, Union Public Service Commission expressed to have the same show in New Delhi. Gaur appears as local in the present geographical map, in spite of its historical significance. Exhibition on '*a local*' of a state in national level is not accepted by the Directorate of Archaeology, West Bengal.

⁴ Italics mine

⁵ Edited by Dr. Pratapaditya Pal and Dr. Eamnuel Haque, Published by Marg Publication , March 2003

⁶ The title of both the exhibitions in New Delhi and Mumbai – it was '*West Bengal: Sites and Sights*' (WB SAS). Dr. Annapurna Garimella, Research Editor of Marg Publications, Mumbai, and I had coordinated the exhibition, in Hyderabad. Marg Publication was associated with the exhibition of Hyderabad because of Dr. Annapurna Garimella and their publication "*Bengal: Sites and Sights*", 2003. We titled the exhibition "*Sites and Sights*". Another note was also displayed with the introductory note from Directorate of Archaeology, the State Archaeological Museum, Government of West Bengal. That note tries to open up various seeing of the same exhibition in Hyderabad.

⁷ The pamphlet of this exhibition acknowledges of Mr. Shiharan Nandi as a photographer and the employees of the State Archaeological Museum, West Bengal for the presentation and the technical support.

Instead, the Directorate decided to have an exhibition of photography on the artistic heritage of West Bengal⁸.

One hundred photographs of the exhibition (WB SAS) display various structures, sculptures, antiquities, and paintings excavated from various sites of West Bengal. The images present buildings and objects which varied in purpose, use and spatial qualities. At their origins, these buildings and objects were religious or secular and could have been placed in a private or public space and date from pre-history to pre-independence. The photographs in the exhibition presented the antiquities in chronological order with dates written on labels behind and beside the photograph. But the photographs, themselves were fairly recent,⁹ and undated. Here fore, the connections between these photographs can only be established through two ways. First is their geographical location - West Bengal, a state of Eastern India. These photographs are created to show artistic heritage of West Bengal. Thus, this particular geographical location becomes a spectacle through these photographs. The second connection concerns the creators of this regional tableau - archaeologists, photographer, cartographer and other experts from the Directorate of Archaeology, the State Archaeological Museum, Government of West Bengal and the Center of Archaeological Studies and Training, Eastern India who decided to exhibit these photographs. In considering, the exhibition WB SAS, two sets of questions came to

⁸ This information has been taken from a letter, sent by Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, West Bengal to the Chief Minister and I&CA Department 2004. This letter sought permission to hold the exhibition in Delhi and other places. It also asked the permission for the Cameraman-cum-Darkroom Assistant and other official of the Directorate of Archaeology to attend and depute the state. This particular exhibition borrowed its name from the Marg book titled 'Bengal: Sites and Sights', as mentioned by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums in a discussion on (22nd Dec 2005)

⁹ The photographs were taken in-between 2003 to 2004.

my mind. First, whose sights construct the artistic heritage of the state? Does choosing sites also mean choosing sides? Isn't there any historical amnesia in showcasing the artistic heritage of *West Bengal*¹⁰?

Second, while constructing this heritage is there any possibility of that the past is interpreted, not just taken for granted? What we construct today ordained to be a representation of history, a simulation that accrues to itself only its own immediate contemporary meaning. How is it possible to recapture the history of sites when time and human activity have erased or obscured the relationships in which they once were embedded?

Third, the exhibited photographs are considered by the producer-institution as a

¹⁰ The photographs of the antiquities which are recognized as 'artistic heritage' of West Bengal are from the period of pre-historic to pre-independence period. The display of the antiquities of pre independent period pushes us to note the political and historical formation of the state. West Bengal was born as a state of eastern India in 1947 as a result of partition of Bengal and a truncated Bengal and became a part of Independent India. Surprisingly this historical occurrence is not even mentioned in the first introductory note, displayed in the exhibition. An imaginary partition of the particular geographical location has been visualized in order to reclaim wholeness of the 'artistic inheritance' of present state - '*West Bengal*'. The name 'West Bengal' itself suggests a sense of being a part of something - the western region of Bengal. West Bengal is carrying in its very history of nomenclature - being a part of a larger whole before the historical and political partition of 1947. Now it conveys the sense of a self sufficient wholeness, yet retaining traces of its history in its name - *West Bengal* - at least in the way it is represented in the exhibition. Furthermore, the present Bangladesh is politically named as East Pakistan as a part of Pakistan, because of the partition and independence in 1947. It was politically born as Bangladesh, an independent country by parting from Pakistan in 1971. Thus, Bangladesh becomes its imaginary 'other' whereas such an 'other' does not exist before the partition. Thus, the chauvinistic apparatus of the institution use the exhibition of artistic heritage as a device to proclaim the sole existence of the State in the past by ignoring the coexistence of 'other part' of it.

reasonable medium of showing art and architecture of West Bengal as Dolores Hayden describes it “storytelling with the shapes of time”¹¹. How the hundred photographs are aimed to be seen – as ‘work of art’ of the photographer (individual) or ‘work of art’ of the institution/group (since produced in collaboration) or just ‘the objects’ (the photographs) which are part of the subject - ‘representation of artistic heritage’? Who are the audiences of the exhibition – the State’s people (Bengali) who are staying/residing outside the state or the people/varied professionals from other States? What is the purpose of the exhibition – educational or entertainment or commercial? Why such unquestioned acceptance of the binary in ‘seeing’ and ‘showing’ a region (*West Bengal*) of the nation?

Fourth, the exhibition is a collaborative work, created by number of employees of the institution/s why one individual like the photographer who holds the designation of ‘cameraman-cum-darkroom assistant’ is acknowledged? Is it an agenda of the government institution to highlight a marginalized employee? What about other contributors like cartographer, writer and so on?

Thus, the methodological grid of my research grew as work in progress in reading this exhibition, existing materials, field work and so on. Moreover, it encouraged me to investigate the geography as cultural and historical production.¹² First I focus on a

¹¹ Hayden, Dolores (1995) : *The Power of Place*. Cambridge, London UK:MIT Press , p226

¹²The writings of Edward Soja laid the foundation in this matter, specifically the theory of *spatiality*. Edward W. Soja critiqued that space (and its institutional personality, geography) has been constantly subverted to a position, subordinate to a time (and its institutional personality and history) in contemporary

locality of the religious structures and religious structures in a local. The research moved further as I started locating how a local religious structures claim its authorship in broader domain of geography and history. Simultaneously how these are engaged in shaping the characteristics of local? How various agencies claim their authority on religious structures? Moreover, how inside the religious structures the 'act of seeing' is produced and reminds the one's identity?

Furthermore, the methodology of my research also encourages me to rewind and forward some thoughts on and about the disciplinary discourses of art-history which initiated my preliminary interest to do research on the religious architecture. We had a course on history of Indian Architecture at and graduation and post-graduation level which used focus mostly on religious architectures of pre colonial India. Simultaneously, we were the frontiers to face the encounters, confessions and dialogues between so-called 'old' and 'new' art history in the academia. Today, the various spaces of the discipline reverberate with each other as transformation in the academics of art history. To speak about art history is perforce to speak of the museum; to speak of both elicits the art historical text book and the disciplinary archive; to juxtapose all of these evokes the identity and positionality of another disciplinary artifact, the historian and critic.

critical theory (*Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London, Verso, 1989). He argued that although history is understood as dynamic, debatable and dialectical and space continues to be treated as 'dead, static, undialectical where as people make their own geography as well as their own history. (*Third Space*; Massachusetts, Blackwell, 1996)

Donald Preziosi argues for “the pressing need to think art history *otherwise*”¹³: to consider it apart from two kinds of inertias: first the obstinacies of millennialist scenarios of traditional disciplinary historiographies, which continue to articulate the ‘histories’ of art historical practices in a social and epistemological vacuum (thus recapitulating and stimulating the ‘art history’ of art history); second is the satisfactions of recanonization and the formulaic assimilation of ‘various new art histories’ that have largely expanded the ground of existing canons and orthodoxies rather than offering substantive alternatives to the status quo”¹⁴ This is what much of the New Art History in India. The academic art history in India is trapped in both forms of inertias. However, the ‘old art history’ is still the spine of pedagogical structures of the most of the art institutions in India. Consequently, the ‘new art history’ has found a hierarchical position within the academic practices since last decade, where ‘old art history’ continues as rich living tradition. Panoptical practices of ‘new art history’ sometime fail to anticipate ‘old’ art histories and their reconstitutions within any innovative and radical impulses whereas the ‘old art history’ suffers from being subordinate. Simultaneously the concept of ‘new art history’ is still alien in other research and commercial institutions like the Directorate of Archaeology, State Archaeological Museum, West Bengal and Research centre like Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training are the examples.

¹³ Italicized by the author

¹⁴ Preziosi, Donald: ‘The Art of Art History’, in ‘*The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*’, edited by the author, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998 , p508

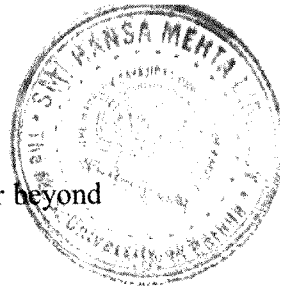
Preziosi argues that art history was always a facet of a broader set of practices which he termed 'museography', and it is necessary to isolate art history and its history from the circumstances and motivation. He suggests the requirement of *forgetting* art history: thinking it *otherwise*, so as to recollect it more completely.¹⁵ Furthermore, Edward W Soja critiqued Preziosi's deep concern with the stranglehold of historicism on the vision of the art history discipline since 1920s. Captivated, perhaps inadvertently, by the phrase 'the space of history', Preziosi unfortunately ventures too far beyond his insightful critique of historicism to demand that we 'position ourselves *outside* or beyond not simply 'post modernism' itself, but outside of time, space and *history*'.—what is missing from Preziosi is critically balanced sense of the ontological trialectic of spatiality-historicity-sociality, trialectic of perceived-conceived-lived space.¹⁶

Chapters of the Dissertation

The thesis is organized as a linked series of case studies of the religious structures of Burdwan. Each chapter focuses on particular issue, connected with Burdwan town and its religious structures and traces those over time. In each chapter I aim to trace the

¹⁵ Preziosi, Donald: 'The Art of Art History', in '*The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*', edited by the author, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 525

¹⁶ Soja, Edward, W. : '*Third Space*', Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, 1996, pp.201-203



trajectory of the way local and mainstream are engaged and encounter each other beyond art historical understanding of adaptation and exchange of style.¹⁷

The first chapter opens with the account of exiting postcolonial scholarship, (1970 onward) on religious architecture of Medieval Bengal. It scrutinizes on the discussion of some important scholarships on the religious architecture of Bengal, such as David J. Mc Cutchion's "*Late Medieval Temples of Bengal*"¹⁸ (1972); George Michell's "*The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*"¹⁹, Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal and Tarapada Santra's the development and the classification of the temples and mosque of the *West Bengal*²⁰, Pika Ghosh's "*Temple to Love: Architecture and Devotion in Seventeenth Century Bengal*"²¹ etc. It focuses on the two sets of excavation. One is the excavation of the established scholarship and another is the dialogues between established scholarship and empirical experiences of the researchers in field trip. It also charts out the various types of religious structures of

¹⁷ Asher Cathrine B.: 'Piety, Religion and the Old Social Order in the Architecture of the later Mughals and their Contemporaries' in *Rethinking Early Modern India*, Barnett, Richard B.; New Delhi; Monohar 2002; pp.193-228

¹⁸ The Asiatic Society, 1993 (First edition 1972)

¹⁹ Michell George (ed.): *Brick Temples of Bengal From the Archives of David Mc Cutchion*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1983; Michell George (ed.): *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, AARP, UNESCO, 1984, Paris, prepared with the assistance of the Aga Khan Award for the Islamic Architecture, Protection of the Cultural Heritage

²⁰ Sanyal, Hitesh Ranjan: "Regional Religious Architecture in Bengal", in *Marg*; No. 27; 1974; pp31- 43. Santra, Tarapada: "*Paschim Banglar dharmiya sthapatya mandir o masjid*" (in Bengali); Kolkata, Paschim Bangla Akademy, 1998

²¹ Indian University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis; (2005).

pre-independent Bengal in the context of socio-political shift in the particular geographical location.

The first section of second chapter investigates the vernacular tracts, literatures on Burdwan town of post colonial period. It discusses how the local authors develop an imaginary tour of the town where, all the religious structures are imagined as 'worth of seeing' without viewers. These authors construct a map by threading its religious structures and sites which are layered by myths, tales, official facts, documented histories of different time. The chapter also discusses why the local authors visualize their own place as exotic and behave themselves as an 'outsider'. The second section of this chapter deals with what lies beneath the tales of each religious structure of Burdwan, Sarbamangala temple, Jumma masjid, Pir Baharam dargah, khakar Shah dargah, Bon masjid and adjacent mazar, Govind Dham and Kankaleswari temple .

In third chapter, I analyze the process of seeing and the acts of seeing inside the religious structures which produces multiple interpretations of the displayed images and the function of the spaces. The various users of the religious structure constantly struggle to adjust the space within the building in order to reclaim the past of the structure in present and proclaim their rights on the structure in present.

Theoretical Frame

‘A man with a critical or self critical concept is a man with an operative theory’. Michael Baxandall,²²

In attempting to understand the mythography of the religious structures of a local and the spectatorship, produced inside the religious structures, I draw the ‘We-self’ of Thongchai Winichakul (1994) as a primary frame of investigation. The works of Thongchai Winichakul²³ on Siam is a paradigmatic example of how representations of space as cartographic productions are debatable in contemporary imperial ideology, domestically invented traditions and the removal of dispossession. Thongchai has argued that in conventional history of Thailand, historians manifest a ‘nation hood’ (Thai-ness) at the expanse of numerous small territorial entities in the region which had divergent notion of space, border, territory and identity. This course deployed the western cartographical technologies and spatial conception. Thus, his theory of ‘geo-body’ is a materialization of nationhood through conscious cartographical tradition and construction of maps that authenticate the small territories into the confined, strictly delineated nation space. The western style of geopolitical maps drew together with sharp boarder and precise lines, serves as a model of visual representation of nation that had defined political boundaries and history and a spirit with which all the inhabitants would identify what Thongchai calls the ‘we-self. Using this Thongchai’s theoretical layout, in the second chapter I

²² *Patterns of Intention. On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* ; New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1985.

²³ Winichakul, Thongchai: *Siam Mapped, A History of Geo-body of a Nation*, Chiang Mai, Silk Worm Book,(1994),

discuss how the authors use the colonial writings to develop an imaginary map of Burdwan *mofussil* to identify their 'we-self and 'ours'. At the same time, I argued that the further analysis reveals that how within 'we self' of small local, there is a demarcation of 'us' and 'them'.

The study also derives the grounds of Irit Rogoff's work on spectatorship, a critique of vision where vision is articulated as texts and objects. 'Much of the practice of intellectual work within framework of cultural problematic has to do with being able to ask new and alternative questions, rather than reproducing old knowledge by asking old questions.'²⁴ As Irit Rogoff calls for a process of continuous translation and negotiation which is often exhausting in its denial of a fixed and firm position and prevents from complete dislocation. The process helps to understand the very moment in which historical specificity can provide liberation and political strength to some of the dispossessed; it also imprisons others within an old binary structure that no longer reflects the condition and realities of their current existence. Thus, Thongchai and Irit Rogoff provided a substantive starting point to intersect the processes of spatiality and spectatorship through cartographical lenses.

²⁴ Rogoff Irit: 'Studying Visual Culture' in *The Visual Culture Reader*; (ed.) Nicholas Mirzoeff; London, Routledge p.14

Chapter I: Excavation of the existing materials

“The very idea of a definitive interpretation seems to be intrinsically contradictory. Interpretation is always on the way.” Hans-Georg Gadamer (in *Reason in the Age of Science*)²⁵

A field trip is very subjective. It aims to reach to the objective analysis of the subject.²⁶ This chapter discusses the fieldtrip as an investigative tool of an enquiry- how it triggered one of the arguments of my research. It scrutinizes the queries, developed in pre and post field trip time, such as, how I mapped the structures of Late medieval period of Bengal. What are the sources- reports, vernacular tracts, interviews? Where and what I was ‘noting’, ‘seeing’ ‘looking’, what I wanted to ‘see’ but was not allowed, where I was not stopped to enter. What are the prejudices, which are built up through reading and experiences, beliefs and verbal words of others. How an empirical experience (field trip) threatens the prejudices, the process of selection, formalization, then academic discourse claims a ‘scientific’ identity and purposefully distinguished itself from other

²⁵ Gadamer Hans-Georg: *Reason in the Age of Science*, translated by Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), p.105.

²⁶ Ricoeur, Paul: *Time and Narrative*, Vol. I; translated by Kathleen McLaughlin & David Pellauer; Chicago & London; The University of Chicago Press; 1983; ---Historical Intentionality - establish the idea of an epistemological break between historical knowledge and our ability to follow a story. This break affects this ability on three levels: the level of procedures, the history is born as inquiry – out of specific use it makes of enquiry. P.175

‘non-scientific’ genres, such as literature and journalism.²⁷ This chapter also summarizes the types of religious architecture of late medieval Bengal and the way various scholars have discussed them. The religious architecture includes a temple, mosque, *dargah*, mausoleum, *mazhar* etc. Is it possible to trace the layers of sights underneath each visual (photographs, drawings, etc.) cited by the authors?

I started my field trip with larger historical processes in my mind. I was confronted with several pioneer scholarships²⁸ and a number of vernacular tracts, news items, and some revelations about the medieval religious architectures concerning religious heritage. I knew the numbers, location of the temples, mosques, dargahs and burial grounds of the heroes of the medieval period of Burdwan. I saw the visuals of many of them, printed in

²⁷ Clifford, James: ‘Introducing Partial truths’ in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*; Berkley, University of California press, 1986, pp.5-23

²⁸ examples: Eaton Richard : *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204- 1760*; Oxford University Publication, Delhi, 1994; Sanyal, Hitesh Ranjan, *Regional Religious Architecture in Bengal: A Study in the Sources of Origin and Character*, *Marg* 27, 1974, p.41; “Religious Architecture in Bengal (15-17th centuries): A Study of the Major trends”, in *Indian history Congress, Proceedings*, 32 session, 1970, p.416; Pika Ghosh: “*Temple to Love: Architecture and Devotion in Seventeenth- Century Bengal*” Indian University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis. 2005. Tarapada Santra: *Paschim Banglar dharmiya sthapatya mandir o masjid*, (in Bengali) Kolkata, Paschim Bangla Akademy, 1998? Haque, Zulekha. *Terracotta Decoration of Late Medieval Bengal: Portrayal of a Society*. Dacca, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1980; McCutcheon, David J. *Late Medieval Temple of Bengal – Origins and Classifications*, The Asiatic Society, 1993 (First edition 1972); Michell George (ed.): *Brick Temples of Bengal From the Archives of David Mc Cutchion*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1983; Michell George (ed.): *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, Art and Archaeology Research Paper (henceforth AARP), UNESCO, 1984, Paris, prepared with the assistance of the Aga Khan Award for the Islamic Architecture, Protection of the Cultural Heritage . Chaudhuri, Joyneshwar : “*Vardhman Itihash O Samskriti*; Vol I, II & III, Kolkata, Pustak Bipani, 1990, 1991, 1998

published articles, photographs in the archives of various institutions, such as AIIS, Indian Museums, and Archaeological Survey of India.

Thus, before the field trip I felt that, I had prior information of what I was going to see. Therefore, my field trip was not only like 'documentation', but had a 'worklike' aspect too.²⁹ Present research calls for fresh re-documentation. Here, I do not want to claim, something in the concerned area or time that has been untouched or not documented. In fact, my queries began from the heavily documented materials.³⁰ Here, a question arises then, what is the purpose of my field trip? The primary intention was physically experiencing the 'seeing' what I saw in the printed materials, photographs, slides and so on. Not only did I intend to see how the 'marked' medieval structures look today, but also understand why and how.

²⁹ I suggest the meaning of 'documentation' and 'worklike' from Dominick LaCapra's "Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts", in *Rethinking Intellectual History* pp. 23 -71. According to Dominick LaCapra 'documentary' situated the text in terms of factual or literal dimensions involving reference to empirical reality and conveying information about it. The 'worklike' supplements the empirical reality—The work like is critical, for its deconstruction and reconstruction the given, (pp29-30) . The historicity of the historian is at issue both in the question he poses and --- in the 'answer' he gives in a text that itself reticulates the documentary and worklike (p. 54).

³⁰ " Just as the historian questions the text, says La Capra, so the text question the historians" in Kieth Moxey's *The Practice of Theory* , Ithica and London ,Cornell university Press, p. 4

Norman Bryson argues that the textuality of the historian's material blurs the distinction between text and context in relation to art history. He states that history is a constructed narrative rather than one that is inscribed in the order of things. What matter is not the historical context in which the works under study were produced, but the cultural context of author's own time? It is the context of present that concludes the approaches and values that seep into our interpretations of the past.³¹ Thus, the field trip contextualizes the presence of religious structures that I probe.

In the process of working on existing materials I noted that there are various times, associated with the religious structures. First is the period when these religious structures are 'believed' and 'proved' to be constructed. Secondly is the, time or date or period when the visuals in the mode of photographs are clicked and looked at, to support the argument and explanation of the authors. Thus, there are several frames of sights. For example: There are a number of sketches³² and photographs of architecture in the article, "*Regional Religious Architecture in Bengal*"³³ (1974) by Dr. Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal, an eminent scholar. The author used these sketches and photos to support his arguments in the article. I got the argument of the author however, I noticed that, there are 'seeing' of

³¹ Bryson Norman: 'Art in Context' in *Studies in Historical Change*, edited by Ralph Cohen, Charlottesville;; University Press of Virginia, 1992, pp 18-42, ; cited in Kieth Moxey's *The Practice of Theory*, Ithica and London ,Cornell university Press, p. 5

³² In colonial period, the drawing and sketches of European artists provide the visual travelogue and display exotic view of 'other's land' (example: Mildred Archer: *Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1980) . When I saw the sketches, used by Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal, the first question came in my mind is that 'whose sights I am seeing'?

³³ Published in Marg 27,

several eyes apart from the author. Who are the photographers or artists who did the drawings? The seeing of the photographer and freehand drawings of the artist are not addressed. The author incorporated the visuals, created by them into this argument, but did not pay attention on the aspect that, it constructs another arena of seeing the same religious architecture. Is it approximately the same time or period when the article was written? Here, I mean the contextualized site and time from which the author (Dr. Histesh Ranjan Sanyal), the photographer and the 'freehand' drawing artist sighted at the religious structures of Bengal. I am not assuming here, that the author, the photographer or the artist of the drawing are different persons. It could be the same person or it could be different. In short, reading the existing materials and empirical experience of my field trip encourages me to probe the position and space of the spectator in seeing and accessing the space of religious architectures. I would argue such experience reminds and determines the identity of both the spectator and the architecture.

Another example: David J. Mc Cutchion, a pioneer scholar on Bengal temple and mosque architecture in his, "*Late Medieval Temples of Bengal*"³⁴ discussed the origin and classification of late medieval temples of Bengal. His empirical experience and documentation of Bengal temples of late medieval period laid the foundation of the research on Bengal temple architectures. He pointed out that the classification is based *on appearance*,³⁵ not structure. Beyond the major grouping, the divisions are somewhat

³⁴ The Asiatic Society, 1993 (First edition 1972). David J. Mc CUTCHION also acknowledges this in the acknowledgement of the book.

³⁵ My italics

arbitrary in detail and not always clearly definable, nor do the subdivisions strictly correspond between larger sections, even where close parallels might be expected. The subdivisions are built up independently within each section solely according to convenience depending on *what actually exists*.³⁶ Here, I point out that classification and analysis are done on the basis of existing structure. David J. Mc Cutchion categorized and analyzed the temples of late medieval Bengal into fourteen main divisions on the basis of his framed sight of the temple sites. Here, I want to stress that his documentation and classification of the temple architecture of Bengal in medieval period is based on 'appearance' and depends on 'what actually exists'. The visual appearance and experience become important for Mc Cutchion's work. It also suggests the position of Mc Cutchion as a researcher and viewer who visually experienced the architecture. My research focuses on this aspect to read medieval religious architectures of Bengal using Burdwan as a case study.

Tarapada Santra traces the development and the classification of the temples and mosques of the *West Bengal* ³⁷ in *Paschim Banglar dharmiya sthapatya mandir o masjid* (Sculptural temple and mosque of West Bengal).³⁸ He also locates the community of patrons, architects and masons³⁹. It reveals from his scholarship that he accompanied as a

³⁶ idbi , p.14, my italics

³⁷ My italics

³⁸ *Paschim Banglar dharmiya sthapatya mandir o masjid* (in Bengali); Kolkata, Paschim Bangla Akademy, 1998

³⁹ Santra, Tarapada; "Late Medieval Temples of Bengal : An Account of their Architects and builders" *Bangladesh Lalit kala*; 1:2 (1975); pp 95- 105

research assistant during the field trip of David J. Mc Cutchion⁴⁰ (Cutchion). The acknowledgement in the articles and the book discloses that Tarapada Santra uses the visuals from and his personal collections, other individual's and different institutions' archive. There is no mention of the time or date of the referred photographs. Once again, the positions of the photographers are denied but his or her site of seeing the architecture exist in the photographs.⁴¹ Moreover, Tarapada Santra discussed the classification of the temples and mosques of West Bengal from the period of early medieval to colonial period. He mapped out the stylistic variations, technique, materials, ground plans, elevations, patrons, artists of the temple and mosques. He also looked into the stylistic and technical exchange in the development of these two religious architectures. In short, Tarapada Santra discusses a temple and mosque as Hindu and Islamic religious architecture, evolved as two different parallel religious architectures in sharing and exchanging artists and formal styles of the architectures. I want to point here, that all the referred and discussed temples and mosques of *West Bengal* are built before independence of India (1947), whereas *West Bengal* as a separate entity does not exist

⁴⁰ *Late Medieval Temples of Bengal*; The Asiatic Society, 1993 (First edition 1972). David J. Mc Cutchion also acknowledges this in this book. 'Any field work is an intervention already virtue of our physical presence influences and contexts and changes the ways in which we experience and interpret them as well as the ways in which we are being perceived by others. Reporting about our experience--- our own first-hand experience and experiences we observe and interpret in others ---means that we are at least one step removed from 'original' thing that we claim to represent.' ("Field Work and Positioning" by Hanne M. De Buin in *Indian Folk Life*, Serial no 23; August 2006)

⁴¹ "The *Spectator* is ourselves, all of us who glance through collections of photographs- in magazines and newspapers, in books, albums, archives.... And the person or thing photographed is the target, the referent, a kind of little simulacrum, any *eidolon* emitted by the object, which I should like to call the *Spectrum* of the Photograph, because this word retains, through its root, a relation to "spectacle" .Barthes Roland: *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard, Vintage, 1993 first published in 1982, p.9

before 1947.⁴² Thus he created linear development of two different religious architectures. As is already pointed out that, he used the photographs from various sources and collections; once again we find that location of viewership is not taken into a serious consideration. Hence, my research probes the varied spectatorship⁴³ inside and outside the confined space of a religious architecture. Thus, the fieldwork crosses the boundary of a sheer methodological tool of any research in case of my thesis and opened up a conceptual entity.

Another instance is Pika Ghosh's research, who, in her book, titled *Temple to Love: Architecture and Devotion in Seventeenth- Century Bengal*⁴⁴ (2005) meticulously probed the sources and development of *Ratna* Temple Architecture and traced routes in the rites of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and political patronage of Vishnupur, in present Bankura District of West Bengal state of Independent India. She traced the missing links of *Ratna* type of temple in the historiography of the Bengal temple architecture. She discussed the *Ratna* Style of temple in Vishnupur as a manifestation of local patronage and religious practices. But her research failed to locate the dialects between different 'period eyes'⁴⁵.

⁴² *West Bengal*, a state of eastern India and Bangladesh, an independent country are formed in 1947 as consequences of Independence of India.

⁴³ Spectatorship as an investigative field understands that what the eye purportedly 'see' is dictated to it by an entire set of belief and by a set of coded language and generic apparatuses. Irit Rogoff 'Studying Visual Culture' in *The visual culture Reader*, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff, London and New York, Routledge; p.22

⁴⁴ Indian University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis.

⁴⁵ "Everyone processes the data from the eye with different equipment. In practice these differences are quite small, --- we all recognize our own species its limbs, judge distance and elevation, infer and assess

How present Vishnupur intervenes in shaping the past of the premises and construction of the temples (specifically Ratna temple of Vishnupur), whereas the whole paradigm of her research is developed seeing today's structure which exist in cited images? I have developed two important issues of my research from Pika Ghosh's research on structure (*Ratna Type*) of the temple in Medieval Bengal. First, she uses the photographs of her collection. She recognized that the spatial recognition of the Ratna temple's bi-axis is not articulated not only in the ground plans, but also terracotta ornament and ritual practice.⁴⁶ The visual reveals that there is a structure where worshippers gathered in the north-south axis courtyard of Madan Gopal temple, Vishnupur⁴⁷ and the ground plan next to this image is Madan Mohan Temple Complex, Vishnupur.⁴⁸ The bamboo structure in the north-south axis courtyard of the Madan Gopal temple appears impermanent. What is the relation between temporary enclosed space of the temple premise and permanently confined space inside the temple? Do the worshippers democratically share the space in the festive occasion and regular ritual rites? How the researchers from other religious denomination locate self in the space of the temple and mosque structures?⁴⁹ Second, it is a basic methodology of any research on religious architecture⁵⁰ to bring a discussion

movement, and many other things. Yet in some circumstances the otherwise marginal differences between one man and another can take a curious prominence." in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Micheal Baxandall New York, Oxford University Press; 1975. p. 29

⁴⁶ Ghosh, Pika: *Temple to Love: Architecture and Devotion in Seventeenth- Century Bengal*, Indian University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis. 2005,p.137

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.158; figure no. 4.1

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p.159; figure no. 4.2

⁴⁹ Soja, Edward W. *Third Space*; Oxford, Black well; pp.53 -82. Eck. Diana L.: *Darsan.Seeing Devine Images in India*; New York; Columbia University Press; (1993), 1998, pp.22 - 31

⁵⁰ Any elevation and ground plan of architecture open up a space for imaginary tour of the architecture. Since I am working on the religious architecture, I directly mention about the type of the architecture on

about and on the religious architecture with its ground plan and elevation. What is ground plan? What is elevation? The ground plan is relatively abstract and analytical convention in representing horizontal space of the architecture. The elevation of architecture is a drawing or diagram made by projection on a vertical plane of the architectural plan or a flat drawing of the front, side, or back of architecture. Prior experience of the architecture is relevant to read and seeing the ground plan and elevation, and one will make inference accordingly.⁵¹ When we see the elevation and the ground plan of what we try to visualize the three dimensionality of the architecture. Here I want to suggest that while seeing the drawing of the elevation and the ground plan, our eyes take an imaginary tour in the space of the architecture. The drawings of elevation and ground plan are like a map of the architecture. These show the demarcation of certain space on a landscape for usage – one is the space inside the architecture and another is the space outside the architecture. The act of seeing and reading ground plan and elevation is that, one can enter and access any space of the architecture through an act of

what I am working. Since I have already mention what I mean by religious structure in the introduction, here onward I would use 'religious structure' to suggest religious architecture.

⁵¹ 'The period eye' in *"Painting and Experience in Fifteen Century Italy"*, by Micheal Baxandall New York, Oxford University Press; 1975. p. 31. "A man used to fifteen century Italian Architecture might well infer that the circle is circular building, with cupola perhaps, and the rectangular wings are the halls. But fifteen century Chinese, once he had learned the ground plan convention, might infer a circular central court on the lines of the new Temple of Heaven at Peking." Academic courses on Indian Religious architecture teach how to read and see the ground plan of temple architecture. One can access the space of *garva – griha* visually in the process of seeing the ground plan. But, it is a matter of fact that the commoners except priests and influential persons are seldom allowed to enter in *garva – griha*. If researcher is allowed, it is not the practice, but consideration. Thus a stock of patterns, categories and methods of inference; training in arrange of representational conventions; and experience, drawn from the environment, in what plausible ways of visualizing what we have incomplete information about. In practice these do not work serially, as these are mentioned here, but together; the process is indescribably complex and still obscure in its psychological detail.

seeing. It allows us to penetrate in every space.⁵² But it does not happen when somebody enters inside the religious structure. The position of the viewers' varies inside the religious structure. The space shown in the ground plan determines, restricts, opens up, and discloses various kind of spectatorship when one takes a tour inside the architecture. Today, a digitally created ground plan and elevation gives a virtual experience of being inside the architecture, but the experience of being in the physical space of the architecture and seeing it, creates an immense difference from experiencing that virtually. My research enquires the space or place we visualize in the ground plan and the elevation of a religious architecture, how, when, why we can or why we can not access that space visually or physically or both? The scholarship's preoccupation with the ground plan as a sign of the knowledge of the space of religious architecture and as key to invisible power of grasping the space often clashes with experiential reality embedded in the lives and real world of the space of the religious architecture. My research focuses on experience and interpretation that exist within the unsplit triad of space, spectator and the religious structure.

Thus the field trip of my present research starts with a certain prejudice. The prejudice on proposed research area was formed, because of the expectations and attention towards written materials. First, I traced the religious structures of the period from 1605 to 1757

⁵² Seeing the elevation is like single point perspective view, whereas seeing the ground plan is like using multiple perspectives. Architecture, Metaphor and the Mind' by John Onians, *Architectural History*, Vol. 35 (1992), pp. 192-207, Published by: SAHGB Publications Limited. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1568576>
Accessed: 04/01/2009 10:35

after CE. , mentioned, marked, in the printed materials and vernacular tracts. I did have a list of the religious structures before I started; I also saw some printed visuals of those structures too. But, during the field trip, I found some religious architecture which was not recorded anywhere but the local people believe that it belongs to the concerned time of my research. Local people trace the time from past not by particular date or approximate time but by political reign such as, the time of Akbar or Ali Vardi khan, the English times or during the time of Maha Raja (Burdwan Raj). In short, I depend on the dating of Archaeological Survey of India, the local writers and people in order to probe the process of dating the religious architectures by different agencies and groups. Thus numerous overlapping and conflict around the understanding of past is noted in oral tradition which would be discussed in the third chapter. I would investigate Pir Bahharam Dargah, Khakar Shah Dargah, Kankaleshwari Temple, Sarbamangala Temple, Bon Masjid, Jumma Masjid, Govinda Dham and the *thakur ghar* of the house which share a common boundary wall with Jumma Masjid .These religious structures exist in the townscape of Burdwan,

Religious Architecture in Late Medieval Bengal

Whole medieval period of Bengal is described in Bengali language as '*matsyanya*' which means larger fishes gobble up the smaller ones. It is used to describe the lawlessness or

chaotic political condition in which the strong exploits and oppress the weak.⁵³ In 1204, the Turkish attack and the defeat of the ruling king is noted as the beginning of medieval period of Bengal. The governors of the Delhi Sultanate ruled Bengal between 1204 and 1338. After that, new dynasties asserted its independence from Delhi. The independent sultans during this period are Ilyas Shahi Dynasty (1342 – 1415), House of Raja Ganesh (1415 -1433), restored Ilyas Shahi Dynasty (1433 -1486), Abyssinian Sultans (1486 - 1493), Hussain Shahi Dynasty (1493 -1538), House of Sheh Shar(is it ok) Sur/ Afghan Sultans (c1553 -1576). After Sher Shah's death in 1545, Bengal was in a state of turmoil until the first decade of the seventeenth century, when the Mughals were able to assert their authority effectively. Bengal had been under the control of various Afghan houses until 1575, when Akbar defeated the last Afghan ruler. Bengal was then incorporated officially into the Mughal Empire, although Mughal control during this early period remained largely nominal. Several effective revolts against the Mughal authority were staged to renegade nobles of the Mughal camp. Ironically, during this chaotic period, rebel patrons introduced the Mughal style of architecture.⁵⁴

Mughals always felt alienated in the land of Bengal. Their imperial attitude is reflected in the statement of Abu'l-fazl, Akbar's chief advisor. In 1579 he wrote, "*The country of Bengal is a land where, owing to the climate's favoring the base, the dust of dissension is*

⁵³ Samsad Bengali to English Dictionary. (1968) 1994. Refer Kaliprasanna Bandyopadhyay's *Modhyoyuge Bangla* (Bengal in Medieval Period); Dey's Publishing; 2002

⁵⁴ Eaton, Richard M : 'Islam in Bengal' in *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, Michell George (ed.), AARP, UNESCO, 1984, Paris, pp. 23-28.

*always rising. From the wickedness of men families have decayed and dominions [have been] ruined. Hence in Id writings it was called Bughakkhana (house of turbulence)."*⁵⁵

Here, in this Mughal colonial discourse, we find a theory of political decentralization; a debilitating climate corrupts men and corrupted men ruin sovereign domains, thereby implicitly preparing the conquest by stronger, uncorrupted outsider.⁵⁶ Similar kind of comment on Bengal is also made by Shah Ni'mat Allah Firuzpuri (d.1669), an *Ashraf* shaikh from Punjab. He settled down in Malatipur near Malda early in the reign of Shah Jahan.⁵⁷ The Mughals' feeling of alienation from the land was accompanied by a sense of superiority to or condescension toward its people. In matters of dress, language and diet, newly arrived officials' experienced great differences between Bengal and the culture of North India. The delta's diet of fish and rice disagreed with many immigrants who were brought up on wheat and meat, basic to the diet in Punjab.

Furthermore, The Mughal rule had consolidated in Bengal, not only because of the enervating climate, but also twelve chieftains and other local ensconced zamindars's adroit policies to deal with the Mughals. For example, Isa Khan, Bengali Muslim

⁵⁵ Abu'l-fazl 'Allami: *Akbar Nama*, edited by Abdur Rahim, Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal translated by Henry Beveridge, reprinted New Delhi, Ess Ess Publications, 1979, Vol. 3:427; text, 3:290

⁵⁶ Eaton Richard: *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204- 1760*; Oxford University Publication, Delhi; 1994, pp 159 -170.

⁵⁷ Cited in Richard Eaton's *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204- 1760*; Oxford University Publication, Delhi; 1994. p.169, footnote 30. Imam al-Din Rajgiri: *Manahij al-shattar*, Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna, pers. MSS. Nos.1848, 1848-A; 2: fol.383b.

chieftain, whose government was in the delta's eastern riverine tracts in the town of Katrabo near the ancient city of Sonargaon. In 1586, Ralph merchant, looking for possibilities of opening up trade between England and India, traveled through eastern Bengal, wrote: *"They be all hereabout rebels against the king Zebaldin Echebar [Jalal al-Din Akbar]; for here are so many rivers and island, that they flee from one to another, whereby his horsemen can not prevail against them..... The chief king of all these countries is called Iscan ['isa Khan] and he is chief of all the other kings and is great friend of all ."*⁵⁸

Another example: in December 1600 the annual letter of the Jesuit Mission in Goa commenting on the Mughal drive against Bengal's former Afgan rulers, mentioned: *"Twelve princes , however called Boyones [bhuyan] who governed twelve provinces in the late king's name, escaped from this massacre . These united against he Mongols [Mughals] , and hitherto, thanks to their alliance, each maintains himself in his domains. Very rich and disposing of strong forces , they bear themselves as kings, chiefly he of Siripur [Sripur] , also called Cadaray [Kedar Rai] , and he of Chandecan [Raja*

⁵⁸ Federici Cesare; 'Extracts of Master Cesar Frederike his Eighteen Yeers Indian Observations" in Hakluytus *Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes*, by Samuel Prchas (1625), Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1905; p.184, Cited in Eaton Richard: *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204- 1760*; Oxford University Publication, Delhi; 1994p.147. Akhtar Shirin : *The Role of The Zamindars in Bengal 1707 - 1772*; Asiatic Society of Bangladesh ; Dacca ; 1982; pp.3-16

Pratapaditya of Jessore], but most of all the Mansondolin [Masand-I 'Ali, title of 'Isa Khan]. The Patanes [Afgans], being scattered above, are subject to the Boyones."⁵⁹

Outwardly Mughal rule was huge system, reinforced by an unwieldy military power. Thus by the eighteenth century Mughal states failed due to deficiency in their administration, by strengthening the local ruling power. By 1720 – 1750 the imperial Mughal withdrew to their own domains, building up more secure power base of Nawab in Bengal.⁶⁰

Seventeen and eighteen century Bengal is not only mapped by the establishment of Mughal power, relocation of *zamindar* to *jagirs* and entry of foreign traders and travelers, but also entry of merchants, bankers and money lenders from other regions of the Indian subcontinent. Augustinian missionary, Fray Sebastiao Manrique, who was in Bengal in 1629 -1630 and again in 1640, wrote: "*Many strange nations resort to this city on account of its vast trade and commerce in a great variety of commodities, which are produced in profusion in the rich and fertile lands of this region. These have raised the city (present Dhaka) to an eminence of wealth which is actually stupefying, especially when one sees and considers the large quantities of money which lie principally in the*

⁵⁹ Hosten, H; Jesuit Letters from Bengal Arakan and Burma (1599 – 1600)". *Bengal Past and Present*, No.30, 1925, pp 53- 54

⁶⁰ Calkins, P. : 'The Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal 1700- 1740' ; *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. xxix, 1970, pp. 799 -806. Refer appendix for the principal ruler of Bengal of the period from 1605 – 1757.

houses of the Cataris (perhaps Khattris), in such quantities indeed that, being difficult to count, it is usually commonly to be weighed”⁶¹. Richard Eaton identifies Manrique’s reference to wealthy Khattris as Marwaris, because they came from Marwar in Rajasthan and points to the prominence of this caste⁶² of Hindu merchants, bankers and money lenders who accompanied their Mughal patrons to wealth and success.⁶³ Furthermore, he states that “in fact the Marwaris and Mughals collaborated in the conquest of Bengal. Where Mughal provided the Marwaris with political security essential for transacting business, the latter provided the Mughals with financial capital obtained through their network of fellow caste members residing all over north India.”⁶⁴ Richard Eaton failed to understand the caste and community relationship. First, Khattris are neither today’s Marwari nor are they only Hindus, but both Hindu and Jain⁶⁵ They are two different clans. Second is that Khattris are not only Hindus, but also Jains, Sikhs and sometime Muslims⁶⁶.

⁶¹ Manrique, Fray Sebastien: *Travel of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643.*; Translated by by E. Luard and H. Hosten. Hakluyt Society Publications; 2nd ser., nos. 59 -61. Vol. I Oxford, Haklyut Society. 1927, pp. 45 – 53.

⁶²Eaton Richard : *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204- 1760*; Oxford University Publication, Delhi; 1994p.156

⁶³ Abdul karim: Dacca, the Mughal Capital; Dacca, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1964, p. as cited by Richard Eaton in *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204- 1760*; Oxford University Publication, Delhi ; 1994; p.156 footnote 81

⁶⁴ ibid: p. 156

⁶⁵ Timberg, Thomas a...: *The Marwaris. From Traders to Industrialist*. New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. 1978

⁶⁶<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khatri>, accessed on 20 May 09 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shekhawati>; accessed on 21stMay09. <http://www.rajasthaninfoonline.com/rinfo/marwarih.htm>, accessed on 21st May 09

But it is a fact that in the sixteenth and seventeenth century's different merchant communities migrated towards both east and southern part of Indian subcontinent.⁶⁷

J. C. K. Peterson cited "*Sangam Rai, a Khattri Kapur of Kotli in Lahore, who on his way back from a pilgrimage to Puri, being much taken with the advantages of Baikuthapur a village near the town, settled there and devoted himself to commerce and money lending.*"⁶⁸ Abu Rai⁶⁹, grandson of Sangam Rai was appointed as Choudhuri and Kotwal of Rekhabazar in the Burdwan town in 1657 under the Fauzdar of Chakla Burdwan. He is first member of the house of whom there is any historical record.⁷⁰ He owed his appointment to the good service rendered by him for supplying to the troops of the Fauzdar with provisions at a critical time. His son Babu Rai who owned pargana Burdwan and three other estates, was succeeded in his turn by his son Ghana Sam Rai. Upon the death of Ghana Sam Rai, his son Krishna Ram Rai succeeded to the zamindari and among other new estates acquired the *pargana* of Senphari. In 1689, he was honoured with a *farman* from the emperor Aurangzeb in the thirty eighth year of his reign

⁶⁷Chaudhuri, Susil: Trade and Commercial Organization in Bengal 1650 -1720, Calcutta, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay; 1975, pp 98, 223 Bayly, C. A.: *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars North India Society in the Age of British Expansions 170 -1870*; New Delhi; Oxford University Press; pp31. 140

⁶⁸ Peterson, J. C. K.: *Bengal District Gazetteers, Burdwan*; Calcutta, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Government of West Bengal, (1910), 1997, p. 34

⁶⁹ This 'Rai' was abbreviated to 'Ray' later on. Example is Kirti Chandra Ray who built Sarbamangala Temple.

⁷⁰ Frowde, Henry : *The Imperial Gazetteers of India, (Bomjura to central India) ; Vol IX, Oxford; The Clarendon Press, 1908; p.101*

confirming his title as Zamindar and Chaudhuri of pargana Burdwan.⁷¹ The title of 'raja' was first posthumously conferred on Chitra Sen Rai in 1741.

Temple Architecture of Bengal in medieval period is traditionally, scholarly and popularly known as terracotta temple architecture. Most of the temples are made of well-fired bricks and covered with terracotta plaques.⁷² Brick sizes vary not only region to region and from century to century, but also within same building bricks were laid in mortar composed of powder bricks and lime, the latter obtained by processing snails shell. The fine but very hard plaster coats roofs, vaults. Walls of temples are made from snail lime mixed with river sand.⁷³ Such materials and technique like processes of laying brick, putting mortar, filling the gaps, plastering along with architects and artisans are intrinsically exchanged in building mosque, dargah, mazhar and mausoleum.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Mukhopadhyay, Rakhaladas: Bardhman Rajbanshanucharit; Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, 1321, pp. 1-9; Mukherjee B. K.: "Annals of Burdwan Raj", The Calcutta Review, January 1910. pp.119 -120

⁷² The temples, entirely built or even faced with stone are rare. Examples are mostly confined to the southwestern periphery of Bengal: a coarse grained laterite is used in Midanapore, Bankura and Purulia districts. Yellow 'baraka' sandstone is sometime used in northern Burdwan district and adjacent Purulia districts. Local outcrops of sandstone are found in Birbhum district. A fine grained crimson laterite locally known as 'phulpathar' (flower stone) appear in the Bolpur-Suri-Rampurhat region. 'Phulpathar' is used only for facing. Michell, George: 'Materials and Techniques' in *Brick temples of Bengal from the Archives of David, Mac Cutchion*., edited by George Michell ; Princeton, Princeton University Press; 1983, p.64

⁷³ Michell, George: 'Materials and Techniques' in *Brick temples of Bengal from the Archives of David, Mac Cutchion*., edited by George Michell ; Princeton, Princeton University Press; 1983, pp.63-75

⁷⁴ for the basic styles of Bengal brick temple and mosque refer the Drawing 1 and Drawing 2 in appendix.

The terracotta plaques depict the bas relief sculptures or regional flora and fauna in the ornamentation. The subject matter of bas relief sculptures of terracotta plaques are varied scenes of Ramayana, Mahabharata, myths of Durga, Kali, Uma, Parvati, Jagadhatri, Laxmi, Sarawati, Manasa, Siva, Kartika, Ganesh, Vishnu, lives of Sri Chaitanya, foreign Traders, foreigners, quotidian lives of people, shifts in Bengali social lives and so on. Thus, temple walls reflect visual history of Bengali culture through time. Zulekha Haque's in-depth research⁷⁵ and George Mitchell⁷⁶ categorize the images into various sections such as castes, position of women, the Europeans, religious cults and sects, economic life, daily life, recreational activities, arms and weapons, dress and ornaments, and so on. The categorization is done out of documented images and then the categories are justified using the plaques as examples. In short, the scholars describe the sections exemplifying the terracotta plaques from different religious monuments from divided Bengal to construct the time of undivided late medieval Bengal. They locate the terracotta plaques as reflection of the late medieval Bengal. Thus, both of them detach the terracotta plaques from the structure of the monuments and connect those plaques with the categorized section. However, these plaques may be the decoration of the monuments, specifically religious monuments; they are inseparable from the existence of the religious structures. See them as fragmented and separated from the monuments do not suggest how those as visual tapestry on the surface of the religious monuments are perceived by the scholars and daily users. Thus, both George Mitchell and Zulekha Haque do not

⁷⁵ Haque, Zulekha: *Terracotta Decoration of Late Medieval Bengal*; Dacca; Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1980; 'literary Sources' in *Brick temples of Bengal from the Archives of David, Mac Cutchion*, edited by George Michell; Princeton, Princeton University Press; 1983; pp171-184

⁷⁶ Michell, George: 'Iconography' in *Brick temples of Bengal from the Archives of David, Mac Cutchion*., edited by George Michell; Princeton, Princeton University Press; 1983; pp.129 -169

probe what are the purposes of the terracotta plaques on the monuments? Are those only to decorate the surface? What kind of impact they create in regular ritualistic practices of living temple?

The stylistic classification of Bengal temple architecture is *Rekha, Pirha, Bangla, Chala, Ratna*, Domed, Spired, Octagonal, Flat-Roofed, Porches, *Dolmancha, Tulshimancha, Rasamancha*, etc. David J. Mc Cutchion made classifications of fourteen kinds of temples on the basis of appearance and evidences.⁷⁷ He traced the origin and development of each style. He also pointed out one to eight subdivisions of each basic division.⁷⁸ His significant documentation is considered as the basis of the most of the research on Bengal Temple architecture. Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal, who was the co-researcher of David Mc Cutchion traces three major groups according to the shape of the superstructure – *chala* (hut shaped), *ratna* (pinnacled) and *sikhara*. The first two types are created during the revival, while the *sikhara* type is a modified form of Orissan and central Indian temple super-structures. This *sikhara* type is also known as *Nagara* type, and *Rekha Deul*. The curvilinear tower of the temple is embellished with vertical bands of vines or *lata*. This type was common in Bengal and throughout North India from seventh century onwards.⁷⁹ The *chala* is the imitation of the residential thatched hut of the people of Bengal. In *chala* temples, when two gable roofs consist of two elongated

⁷⁷ *Late Medieval Temples of Bengal*; The Asiatic Society, 1993 (First edition 1972), pp. 17-80

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.18

⁷⁹ Meister, M. W., 'Prasada as Palace: Kutina Origins of Nagara Temple', *Artibus Asiae*, 49.3, 1988-89; pp.254-80

eaves that join at a curved ridge, it is known as *do-chala*, where four triangle eaves converge to a point at the top it is known as *char-chala*. An aath-chala is constructed in two levels, with *char-chala* roof on the lower structure, surmounted by a smaller *char-chala* upper structure. A temple with two *chala* roof, with common shared long wall is called *jor bangla*. The *ratna* type consists of a low sub structure, with low roof, which is surmounted by one or more pinnacles. The substructure looks like the chala hut with its low façade, curved cornice and curvature of the roof. The pinnacle is the miniature temple form usually *sikhara* type.

Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal also traces the patrons and donors who were occupied in the temple building in Bengal from 1600 to 1900 CE. He points out that *zamindars* (landowners) and *baniks* (business community) were the main occupational groups involved in temple building.⁸⁰ He developed a statistical account of temple building by tracking the donor and patrons. His research investigates four hundred temples, as he mentioned “400 temples --- were first dated, as far as possible accurately⁸¹, and the caste and occupational background of the persons who commissioned the temple were noted”.⁸² The service holders, priests, pundits and indigenous physicians started appearing as other prominent patrons of temple building from the first half of the eighteenth century. From

⁸⁰ Sanyal, Hitesh: ‘Social Aspect of Temple Building in Bengal : 1600 to 1900’ ; in *Man In Indian*; vol. 48; no. 3; July- Sep 1968; pp.202 – 209.

⁸¹ Italics mine. It is significant to note how the scholar or researcher mark the date of the architecture is pone of the enquiries of my research, discussed in the next chapter.

⁸² Ibid, p.202 The dating of temples is based on inscriptional evidence, architectural and stylistic traits or genealogical histories of prominent families.

1600 to 1630 CE, there is no evidence of this class as being involved in temple building, while in the second half of the century, four percent of the total number of temples built is marked by the scholar.⁸³ Furthermore, Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal also traced out the caste of zamindar, baniks and other professions such as service holders, priests, pundits and indigenous physicians. He traced/noted that *Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Kayasthas* are the common caste of the patrons. The *Navasakha* and *Ajachala* caste, which are marginalized in hierarchical caste structure, are found as dominant contributors in temple building from the eighteenth century. The *navasakha* cases are found to build temples from the beginning of the seventeenth century. He mentioned that the *Navasakha* and *ajachala* appear significant contributors in temple building, because of the downfall of the conventional hierarchical structure of the caste in 18th century of Bengal. The *navasakha* builders of temple include the *gandhabanik, kamsabanik, sankhabanik, tili, tantubaya, karmakar, lohar* and *putuli, sadgope,, napit, modak, barujibi* and *ugrakshatriya*. The *ajachala* consists of the *suvarnabanik, teli, gop, jele kaivarta, jogi* and the *Halik Kaivarta* who are now known as *mahishya*.⁸⁴

Since my research focuses on the period from 1605 to 1757, I stress his calculation of temple building during this period further. The first quarter of the seventeen century was the period when experimentation with new ideas was encouraged under the patrons and donors. The prosperity of temple building faced a decline from 1696 to 1727 due to

⁸³ Ibid; p.210

⁸⁴ Refer appendix for the statistical account of temple building in late medieval bengal.

warfare between the zamindar houses⁸⁵ and the periodic invasion of the Marathas on Radh and present district of Nadia and eastern subdivision of Murshidabad from 1742 – 1751⁸⁶. From 1751 to 1766⁸⁷, temple building enjoyed unprecedented prosperity and security.

⁸⁵ With the rebellion of Subha Singh of Barda from Radh, Bengal was marked by continuous battle with zamindars. In course of time number of zamindars (popularly identified as 'baro bhuiyan' and 'rajas') were uprooted or denied their states and mughal established a regular administration. . Eaton Richard : *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204- 1760*; Oxford University Press; pp.147, 147n.35, 149- 156

⁸⁶ Marthas invaders are known as *bargi* in Bengali. Surprisingly Richard Eaton did not mention anywhere maratha invasions about the invasion of Marathas in his book *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204- 1760*(OUP, 1994); The military accounts of Robert Orme mentioned the huge Maratha threats to the new Nawab of Bengal, Alivardi Khan, who had seized power in 1742 . (Robert Orme. MDCCLXXVII; A History of Military Transactions in Indostan from the year MDCCXLV, 1745, II London, John Nourse.) James Mill referred to the sever strain of these invasions on people. (James Mill: 'The New Government', *History of British India*, II , New Delhi, Associate Publishing House, 1818, reprinted 1972) Samarendra Chandra Nandy: "On Maratha Raid, Citra Campu of Mahamahopadhyay Banessvara Vidyalankara" *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol.CII, Part 1, 194, 1983, pp.55-59; The bengali popular lullaby, "*chhele ghumalo, para judalo, bargi elo deshe, bulbulite dhan kheyechche khajna debo kiske*" - The boy sleeps, the neighborhood's at peace, bargi have come to the country, bulbuli (name of a regional bird) have eaten the paddy, how will I pay tax? -- reflect the political and economical disaster.

"In 1748, the main body of Mahrattas was near Burdwan" p. LXIII; "Messrs. Watt and Howitt being returned from Burdwan and Kishnanagar and report that---- Mrathas plundering," p. 277. "Three months the Mahrattas remained here burning , plundering and laying waste the whole country—the inhabitants have lost all they were worth" p.313 ; Revd. J. Long *Selection from Unpublished Records of Government for the years 1748 to 1767*; Calcutta Mahdevaprasad Saha Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay ; (1969); 1973

⁸⁷This is time, when Nawab of Murshid Quli Khan (Ja'far Khan) and his ancestors were culminated by the East India Compant in Plassey Battle (1757). But this political shift in Bengal did not create any impact in temple building. Sanyal, Hitesh: "Social Aspect of Temple Building in Bengal: 1600 to 1900"; in *Man in Indian*; vol. 48; no. 3; July- Sep 1968; p.204.

Tarapada Santra added further extensive documentation on Mc Cutchion's work with the incorporation on Islamic architecture of Bengal.⁸⁸ The significant aspect of his research is that he traces the genealogy the temple architects and masons.⁸⁹ Tarapada Santra points that inscriptional reference to the temple architects date mainly from eighteenth century. The absence of the architects' name during the preceding centuries due to the social prohibition of the time, which prevented recognition of the temple architects, who usually used to be from the marginalized caste. The artisans of the *sutradhara* community were the architects, sculptors and painters. He emphasized that the *sutradharas* are mentioned by their affiliation of the caste.⁹⁰ Moreover, in some areas of Burdwan and Birbhum districts, architects refer to themselves as *karigar* or *raj*, meaning architect and mason respectively. In certain cases temple architects mention their name by prefixing or suffixing "*mistry*". Tarapada Santra also pointed out that 'even in an area like Daspur', it had a large number of *sutradhars*; a Muslim architect named Mokshed Mistri of Hatgache worked on Sitala temple at Radhakrishnapur in 1927⁹¹.

⁸⁸ *Paschim Banglar dharmiya sthapatya mandir o masjid* (Temples and Mosques of West Bengal); Kolkata, Paschim Bangla Academy, 1998

⁸⁹ "Architects and Builders" in *Brick Temples of Bengal From the Archives of David Mc Cutchion*, Michell George (ed.): Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1983

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 53. Sutradhars are involved in constructing temples, wooden chariots, stone carving, terracotta works as well as various kind of pata paintings.

⁹¹ Tarapada Santra, somehow failed to locate shifts within sutradhar community and shifts of sutradhar community within Bengali social structure. Anyway, social status of Sutradhar community is low. 'Brhamans will not take water from their hands'; Risley, H. H.: *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*; Calcutta, P. Mukherjee, 1st edition 1891, Bengal Secretariat Press; Vol.II; reprint 1998, used reprinted version. p. 290, http://www.archive.org/stream/foundationsofind00mukeuoft/foundationsofind00mukeuoft_djvu.txt.

Downloaded on 7th December 2008. University Of Toronto Press, Mukherjee, Radhakamal: "*The Foundations of Indian Economics*", Longman, London; pp.131-132.

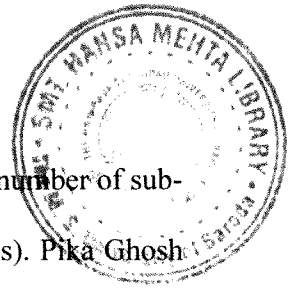
Pika Ghosh probes the missing links of *Ratna* style of temple architecture, using Bishnupur temples as a case study.⁹² She draws attention to the whole structure of *Ratna* style, the new two storied temple formula, with separated upper shrines that accommodate specific ritual practices. The upper shrines can be of different forms, and there can be many of them. She critiques David Mc Cutchion's analysis of *Ratna* style as

"The movement from the lower to the higher rank in society is, however, much easier among the Muhammadans than among the Hindu castes, and is tersely described in the well-known saying: "The year before last I was a jolaha; last year a Sheikh (or respectable Muhammadan); this year, if the prices rise, I will become a Sayyied (or descendant of the Prophet)"; though the process of promotion, as Mr. Gait has pointed out, is not quite so rapid in reality as it is in the proverb. The advantage of an easy rise in the social scale is, indeed, the chief cause of the success of the Muhammadan Pirs in securing converts for Islam. In the Punjab and in Eastern Bengal, among the lower Hindu castes, a man engaged in an occupation which renders him contemptible in the eyes of his neighbours, such as the currier or sweeper, when he aspires to rise in social rank, adopts Islam and starts one of the minor industries which require little training. Thence the progress to a higher life and improved social standing is not difficult. " In order to get social upward mobility community from lower strata like chitrakar, some of the sutradhar etc. converted into Muslim.

See http://www.archive.org/stream/foundationsofind00mukeuoft/foundationsofind00mukeuoft_djvu.txt. Downloaded on 7th December 2008. University Of Toronto Press, Mukherjee, Radhakamal: "*The Foundations Of Indian Economics*", Longman, London. pp. 34-37; 43-44.

But the theory of local conversion and of lower caste origin has been scrutinized through the references of local conversion from upper class. Roy, Asim: '*The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal*'; Princeton, Princeton University Press, pp. 22 -29; p.footnote no 16 . "*Sek (Shaikh)- subhoday* , one of the earliest literary works of Medieval Bengal , doubtfully ascribed to Halayudha, a court poet of Lakshman-sen, depicted conversion by a Muslim divine. (Ed. And English tr. By S. Sen, Calcutta, 1963). Vrindavan-das mentioned *brahmans* accepting Islam on their accord. (Vrindavan-das, *Chitanya-bhagavat* , ed. By S. N. Basu; Calcutta, 1955).

⁹² Ghosh, Pika: "*Temple to Love: Architecture and Devotion in Seventeenth- Century Bengal* Indian University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis; (2005).



derivation from *Latina*⁹³ and *Chala* model and then classifies them by the number of sub-spires: *ekratna* (one ratna), *pancharatna* (five ratna), *navratna* (nine ratnas). Pika Ghosh rejects the formal classifications of Mc Cutchion in giving importance to shape, number and origin of roofing elements, as the primary criteria for defining *Ratna* temple, without considering the functional consequences for the architect and the architecture.⁹⁴

Of the total of 127 dated Mosques constructed in Bengal in the entire period from 1200 to 1800, fully ninety-two, or almost three quarters of the total, were built in the period 1450 to 1550.⁹⁵ These figures clearly point to profound changes that were taking place in the Bengali Society during the critical hundred-year span of time and no doubt relate to growing size of Bengali Muslim community.

⁹³ Michel Meister has describe the *latina* form as curvilinear in outline, made up of laminated planes, this type of tower is marked into 'storeys" by ribbed *amalaka* stones on the corner and divided into vertical 'creepers' (*latas*) by offsets, established in the plan and extending into superstructure. This 'unified' (formula with *latas*) temple spread rapidly across north India and into the Deccan b the seventh century as a visible and vital symbol of Hinduism. Meister, M. W.: 'Prasada as Palace: Kutina Origins of Nagara Temple', *Artibus Asiae*; 49.3,1988-89; pp.254-80

⁹⁴ Ghosh, Pika : *Temple to Love: Architecture and Devotion in Seventeenth- Century Bengal*, Indian University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis; (2005).p.11

⁹⁵ Based on data in Shamsud- Din Ahmed (ed. And trans.), *Inscription of Bengal* , Vol.4. Rajshahi, Varendra Research Museum , 1960, pp 317-318 as cited by. Eaton in "Islam in Bengal" in *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, Michell George (ed.), AARP, UNESCO, 1984, Paris, p. 28. footnote, 14. Refer appendix for the statistical account of the dated mosque of late medieval Bengal.

Bengal mosques are described unlike the mosques built under royal patronage in the other parts of India, the regional mosque of Bengal are modest, unpretentious structure, rising to moderate height.⁹⁶ There is nothing in the structures of the mosques that may show an attempt to represent the strength and dynamism of Islam, or the power and authority of the state.⁹⁷ Economical constraints, the limitations of the strong permanent building materials, and the extreme humid climatic condition are responsible for the low profile of the mosque architectures of Bengal. Percy Brown points that ecological factors determined the form of fragile hut structure (*chala*⁹⁸) of rural Bengal that in turn, became the stylistic feature of Bengal Mosque.⁹⁹ But, Brown does not explain why the characteristics of the fragile hut were adopted in the Mosque, built in permanent materials, although Muslims had a great tradition of well developed religious architectures. A. H. Dhani points out that some of the essential elements of the conventional mosque were discarded because of heavy rainfall.¹⁰⁰ Sanyal stresses that with the help of the accurate methods, that Muslims had introduced dome, the vault and true arch and use of concrete mortar for laying bricks, it was not difficult to build elaborate and imposing structures. In fact, the Muslims built such structures in brick in Persia. Moreover, long before the Muslims had arrived in Bengal, brick structures of immense proportion were built, as evident in the ruins of the Paharpur, Mahasthan and Mainamati and temples of tenth to thirteen century. The sources of inspiration of the regional style of mosque seem to lie in

⁹⁶ Sanyal, Hitesh Ranjan : 'Regional Religious Architecture in Bengal: A Study in the Sources of Origin and Character', *Marg* 27, 1974, p.33

⁹⁷ Bandopadhyaya, Amiya Kumar; *Bankura Jelar Purakriti* (in Bengali), Calcutta; 1971, p.14

⁹⁸ *chala* consists of a square or oblong room proceeded by a rhombus porch. In some cases, the porch is continued other sides of the room

⁹⁹ Brown, Percy: *Indian Architecture (Islamic Period)*; Bombay ; Taraporevala & Sons; 1942, pp36 -37

¹⁰⁰ Dhani, A. H: *Muslim Architecture in Bengal*, Dacca; Asiatic Society of Pakistan; 1961, pp. 21-22, 80-81

the inherent nature of Bengali. Essentially and predominantly agrarian people restricted within their own immediate environment, the people of Bengal have limited opportunity to accrue material.¹⁰¹ Though in Pala period (eighth–ninth century) Paharpur shows the ambitious architectural project, but it lies behind ninth century onward because of the isolation of the territory in terms of economics and politics.¹⁰²

Most of the mosques have a rectangular hall with longer horizontal sides according to the conventional prayer hall planning.¹⁰³ Some of the essential features of a typical mosque, such as enclosed compound imposing gateways, the *minars*, cloisters and *maqsura* screen are dispensed with. The closed in or covered room was adopted to cope with the heavy and long lasting rainy season. Its exterior consists of low facades, carrying carved cornice above and accommodating a range of pointed arched openings below, usually three or four in number and an octagonal turret terminating in a pinnacle form at each corner. The dome surmounts on the roof without neck. Some times, the dome was replaced by *charchala* shape. Although the *chala* roof derived from indigenous Bengali architecture is seen first outside of Bengal in Mughal period; thus it seems probable that *dochala* and *charchala* vaults in plaster were first used as decorative motif outside of Bengal.¹⁰⁴ We

¹⁰¹ Eaton, Richard: *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204- 1760*; (OUP, 1994), pp.3-21

¹⁰² Ray, Nihar Ranjan: *Bangalir Itihash* (in Bengali), Calcutta, Adiparba Book Emporium, 1949, p. 84

¹⁰³ Sanyal, Hitesh Ranjan :Regional Religious Architecture in Bengal: A Study in the Sources of Origin and Character, *Marg* 27, 1974,p.41; “Religious Architecture in Bengal (15-17th centuries): A Study of the Major trends”, in *Indian history Congress, Proceedings*, 32 session, 1970p.416

¹⁰⁴ Dhani, A. H: *Muslim Architecture in Bengal*, Dacca; Asiatic Society of Pakistan; 1961,pp181-182
Asher, Cathrine B.: “The Mughal and post-Mughal Periods” in *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, George Michell (ed.):AARP, UNESCO, 1984, Paris, pp.206-208

thus get the classification of Sayed Mahmudul Hasan of Bengal Mosques in major five categories – i) rectangular *five* aisled multi-domed, ii) rectangular double aisled single/multiple domed, iii) rectangular seven aisled multi domed with char-chala vault, iv) squared with/without corridor single domed, v) square without corridor triple aisled multi-domed.¹⁰⁵

Kathrine Asher questions the analysis of A. H. Dhani as he recognizes the Mughal architecture of Dhaka during the late seventeenth century as the imperial style, while architectures of other places such as Murshidabad or Rajmahal was a product of local or regional style.¹⁰⁶ She suggested that architecture constructed in imperial Mughal tradition appears much before the late seventeenth century. She identifies that the stone faced mosques which are divide into two aisles were originally surmounted by ten domes. Further more, she said that not only is the mosque constructed in a traditional Bengali style, but also the inscription is in Arabic, the language of most pre-Mughal inscriptions in Bengal.¹⁰⁷ According to her, stone faced mosques marks end, were not built again in Bengal until the twentieth century. Small double aisled rectangular mosques were not

¹⁰⁵ Hasan, Syed Mahmudul: "Classification of Mosques according to ground Plan" in *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, Michell George (ed.):AARP, UNESCO, 1984, Paris, prepared with the assistance of the Aga Khan Award for the Islamic Architecture, Protection of the Cultural Heritage .pp.141 -154

¹⁰⁶ Dhani, A. H: *Muslim Architecture in Bengal*, Dacca; Asiatic Society of Pakistan; 1961, pp. 168 - 278

¹⁰⁷ Ahmed, Shamsud-Din: "Inscription of Bengal", Vo. IV; Rajshahi , 1960;pp.259-260

preferred until the nineteenth century. She also traces the journey of particular element of the architecture within the regional territory.¹⁰⁸

The dargah and mazhar is recognized as tomb of *pir*, and studied as a part of Islamic architecture.¹⁰⁹ In many cases we find a mosque and sometime a *madrassa* or mausoleum along with dargah and mazhar. Usually the mosque and *madrassa* are built by the particular *pir*¹¹⁰. Moreover, every scholar discussed about the share, adoption, absorption, use of the styles, technique, artisans, masons, patrons and architects in constructing Hindu and Islamic architecture of Bengal.

Richard Eaton locates a total of 188 *dated mosques*¹¹¹ built in the course of six hundred years of Muslim rule in Bengal that have survived into the present. Of these, 117, or 62 percent of the total were built in the relatively short span of the time, especially near to the old Muslim capitals of Gaur and Pandua; almost one third of the total are in the

¹⁰⁸ Asher, Cathrine B.: "The Mughal and post-Mughal Periods" in *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, Michell George (ed.):AARP, UNESCO, 1984, Paris, pp.193-212

¹⁰⁹ Wali Abdul Maulavi: "The Antiquities of Burdwan"; *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*; No.. XIII, 1917, pp. 177 -184; more reference

¹¹⁰ "There came a Mahomedan *pir* to that village. He built a mosque in its outskirts." in "*Ballads of Bengal*"; Dinesh Chandra Sen , Vol:I; Delhi, Mittal Publications, University of Calcutta , (1923) 1988; pp.219-220.Jadunath Sarkar: "A Description of North Bengal in 1609 A.D."; in *Bengal Past and Present*; No. 35; 1928; p.144

¹¹¹ italics mine. The mosque which carry inscriptions, are dated by epigraphers, scholars and researchers. What about the religious structure, which do not have date or inscription. How the age of those religious structures is set out, would be discusses in the following chapters.

present day of Malda and Murshidabad District. Conversely, eastern districts of Bengal have only few. There is a problematic correlation between location of dated mosque and the distribution of Muslims in the delta – surviving mosques predominate in western Bengal¹¹², whereas Muslim population came to predominate in the east¹¹³. Mosques *patronized by ruler and wealthy patrons, were typically monumental structures built of durable materials like brick or stone which explain why they have survived into the present*¹¹⁴. On the other hand, there are many more smaller and humbler mosques that have not physically survived into the present, and that were not endowed with dated inscription tablets. Built of ordinary bamboos and thatching, and patronized not by court but by local gentry, hundreds of such mosques appeared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹¹⁵ I would argue in the third chapter that survival of the religious structures do not only depend on the durability of the materials, but also extensively on local people and their understanding and practices of the seeing and accessing the space of the religious structure in that particular landscape and intervention of the state's policy .

The religious architecture of Burdwan town does reflect the regional style of the temple and mosque architecture, as classified by Mc Cutchion and Mahmudul Hasan. Abdul Wali stressed that the late seventeen century which may be considered the high point of Bengali Mughal architecture, the most refined monument is not in Dhaka but in Burdwan

¹¹² today's West Bengal State of India and part of present Bangladesh, an independent country.

¹¹³ Present Bangladesh

¹¹⁴ Italics mine. I would address the problematic of this statement in the third chapter.

¹¹⁵ italics mine. Eaton Richard : *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204- 1760*; (OUP, 1994), pp.230 – 231

citing Khwaja Anwar-i Shahid, of Burdwan town.¹¹⁶ It is a tomb complex of Khwaja Anwar-i Shahid, a noble who was treacherously murdered in 1698 while serving the Bengal governor, Sultan Azim al- Shan, Aurangzeb's grandson. It includes splendid gateway, tank, mosque and tomb within a fort like enclosure. The three bayed mosque's interior is replete with cusped niches. Such ornamentation is unprecedented on any seventeenth or early eighteenth century Bengali Mosque. The style of the mosque perhaps derived from the imperial architecture such as Aurangzeb's Badshahi Mosque (164) In Lahore.¹¹⁷ Kathrine Asher points out that the interior of the Burdwan mosque in eighteenth century seems to serve as basis for the later eighteenth century architecture at Murshidabad.¹¹⁸ Pir Baharam Dargah in Burdwan town is protected by the Archaeological Survey of India, whereas Khwaja Anwar-i Shahid, (locally known as Khwaja Anwar Ber) is a disputed land. As more than two hundred and fifty families have claims on the land. One can go and see the place, but can not photograph the site. If anybody tries to do so a number of voices warn you. A visitor like me suddenly realizes oneself as a subject of panoptic gaze. Surprisingly if anybody introduces oneself as an art student, the person is allowed to do sketches and drawings. Thus a number of religious architectural sites of Burdwan town appear as heterotopic sites to me that I would discuss in next chapter.

¹¹⁶ Wali, Abdul: 'The Antiquities of Burdwan', *Journal and Proceedings of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XIII; 1917; p.187

¹¹⁷ Chaghatai, M. Abdullah: *The Badshahi Masjid: History and Architecture*, Lahore, 1972, plate no. 7, cite by Cathrine B Asher in "The Mughal and post-Mughal Periods" in *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, Michell George (ed.):AARP, UNESCO, 1984, Paris, p. 206

¹¹⁸ Asher, Cathrine B.: "The Mughal and post-Mughal Periods" in *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, Michell George (ed.):AARP, UNESCO, 1984, Paris, p. 206