

## DOCUMENTATION AND CONSERVATION OF HAJI BABA SALEH MOSQUE AND TOMB, NARAYANGANJ, DHAKA, BANGLADESH

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### ABSTRACT

Mosques, Tombs and Shrines of famous religious people are one of the examples of South Asian Islamic Architectural Landmarks. Saints or famous preachers of ancient times were generally buried near mosques after their death. Due to the prejudice and religious beliefs of local folks these tombs were preserved in a decorative fashion after the death of these saints or religious men. Thus, these tombs are carrying historical importance as archeological establishments for decades. For restoration work, it is very important to know and follow the proper preservation or restoration rules. There are many heritages are now facing a lot of identical crisis because of improper restoration work especially in Bangladesh. Tomb of Baba Sales and His mosque are facing similar difficulties which have already lost its historic values. This historical monument is situated in Narayanganj region of Bangladesh. For lacking proper preservation and conservation of this historical architecture is losing its uniqueness and its own historic identity. Previously there was an attempt to restore the structure of the tomb. However, that attempt failed because of not maintaining a proper procedure of restoration. As a result, it led to a different set of problem.

This paper illustrates the documentation, Photography, and Restoration this old and historic building and preserved to its previous glory. This paper also deals with the different set of problems, solutions, and maintenances for preserving this monument which is standing for decades with its own historical rights.

**KEYWORDS:** Mosque and Tomb's, Documentation, Maintenance, Photography, Restoration

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### Article History

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### INTRODUCTION

The historic Sultanate and Mughal buildings of today's Narayanganj, eroded by the ancient eclipse. These installations include mosques, madrasa, temples, tombs, wharfs, crematorium ghat, guest houses, bridges, zamindari houses, palaces, dargahs, khankahs, darbar sharifs, and castles. What remains of these installations still astonishes the mind of tourists and antiquities today. One of the most striking examples of archaeological remains of the Sultanate period is the "Haji Baba Saleh Mosque" and the adjoining tomb.

In Islam, Muslims are buried after death. Religious patrons of the region have simultaneously played a role in the construction of the tomb on the grave. They did not show courage in the beginning. At that time, due to religious fanaticism, they used to keep up open tombs. In the case of a special person, they used to cast black basalt stones over the tombs on top of the grave. Then it was covered with thick and expensive clothes.

In recent time, another trend came into the focus. Historical mosques are built adjacent to the tomb of great People, Sufi, Saints and again, they are also buried in the places adjoining to the mosque. Baba Saleh Tomb is one of the unique examples that are built near Baba Saleh Mosque.



**Figure 1: Haji Baba Saleh Mosque & Adjoining Tomb.**

#### **Location of the Mosque and Tomb**

Haji Baba Saleh Mosque and Tomb is resided in the village of “Saleh Nagar” under the Bandar police-station of Narayanganj district called “Dandy fame of the East”. This is located on the same straight line on another sultanate architecture called Bandar Shahi Mosque. That is half a kilometer away from each other. Another aesthetic establishment of Mughal and Sultanate period is "Kadam Rosul Dargah" which is located just 2.7 kilometers away from this establishment. The magnificent establishment of the Mughal period "Sonakanda Fort, Tribeni ditch and Mughal bridge are only 1.2 km away from this mosque. This eye-catching “Tribeni ditch” of the Mughal period extends from Sonakanda to Sonargaon, the capital of ancient Bengal via Saleh Nagar.

#### **History of Haji Baba Saleh Mosque and Baba Saleh Tomb**

Inscriptions related to architecture are most helpful in identifying and analyzing ancient architecture. And if that building is a historic installation then there is no problem to understand it. An inscription was also found from Haji Baba Saleh Mosque. This rare inscription is currently on display in the Gallery No. 20 of the National Museum of Bangladesh, Dhaka. Like other architecture of Sultanate Bengal, this inscription is made of black basalt stone. Above this stone, there are 3 sentences engraved on the Arabic writing style. According to an ancient inscription, during the reign of Sultan Ala-ud-din Hussein Shah in (1493–1519) AD, Malik Haji Baba Saleh (R) was a high-ranking official and an honorable man in Sonargaon. In 1505–1506 AD he built this mosque in Bengal. The inscription provided references to two other mosques built by Baba Saleh © such as Bandar Shahi Mosque (1481 AD) and Azim Nagar Mosque (1495 AD).

Besides, three more fragments of black basalt stone are found inside Baba Saleh tomb. Which are still preserved inside the Baba Saleh Tomb. Baba Saleh (R) returned to Bengal after performing Hajj in the Holy Ka`bah. And then he built this annalist mosque. That’s why this is called "Haji Baba Saleh Mosque". In 1506s, when Sufi saint Baba Saleh died, he was buried at the adjacent place of Haji Baba Saleh Mosque. A tomb structure was developed on it. From that point, a well-known name in the area becomes "Saleh Nagar". Local people knew it the Premises of “Baba Saleh Shirni”. People from different classes and religions of the community came to this place

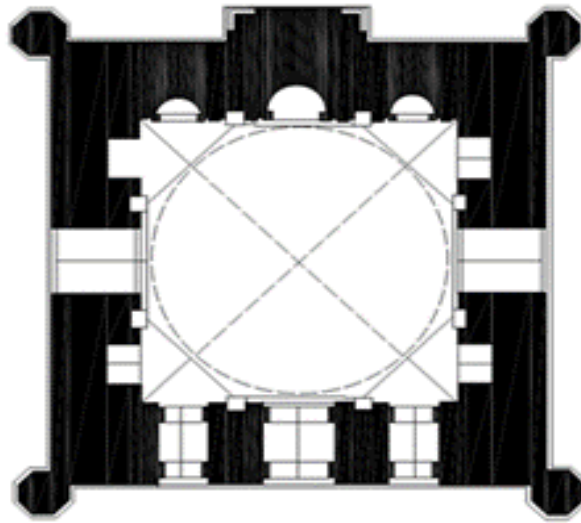
According to the original plan, Haji Baba Saleh Mosque is a square domed mosque. But in reality, we see a 3-domed mosque. In the Sultanate period, a square domed mosque was converted to a 3-domed mosque. This is a brick-built mosque. The square domed mosque is 3.6 square meters long and 5 square meters in outside. The mosque has 3 entrances on the east and 2 entrances on the north-south. The central entrance is larger in size than the two adjacent entrances. The eastward conversion we see 7 doors inside the mosque. The north-south door was then converted into a window. There are 4 octagonal towers and a kiosk on the towers in the 4 corners of a square domed mosque. The west side of the kibra section is slightly widened. It has a semi-dome above it. This half dome is attached to the outer wall on the west side. The height of this section is lower than the height of the original mosque. The 3-domed mosque is another significant chapter of the Sultanate period. Many people believe that this mosque had three-domed mosques from the beginning. But studying the characteristics of the dome structure, some concepts are easily understood that this mosque is three-domed.



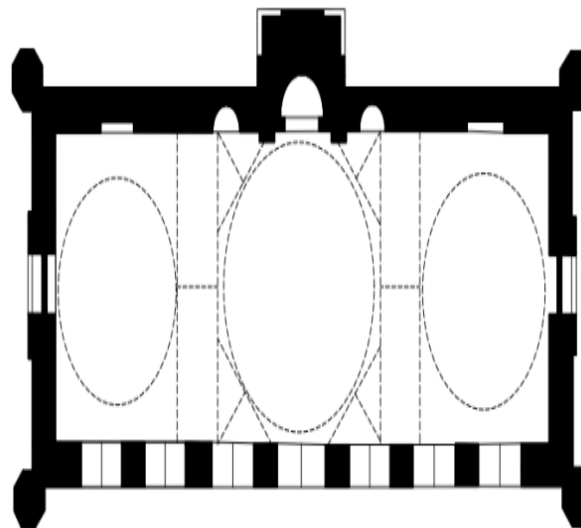
**Figure 2: Shape of Stone Preserved Inside the Mausoleum**



**Figure 3: Architectural Layout of "Haji Baba Saleh Mosque and Tomb" with its Premises Haji Baba Saleh Mosque Architectural Plan and Layout**



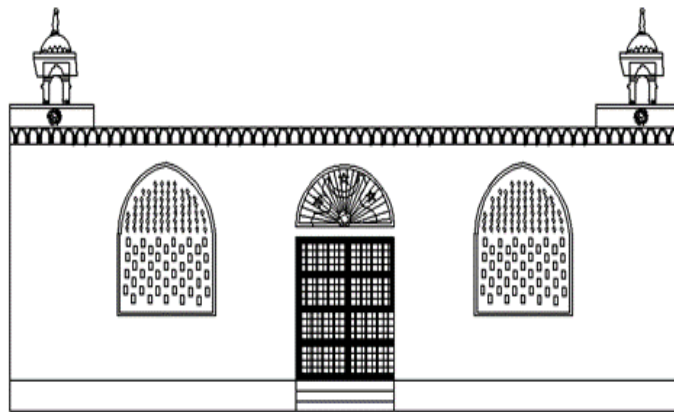
**Figure 4: The Original Plan Included the Proposal of a Single Domed Mosque.**



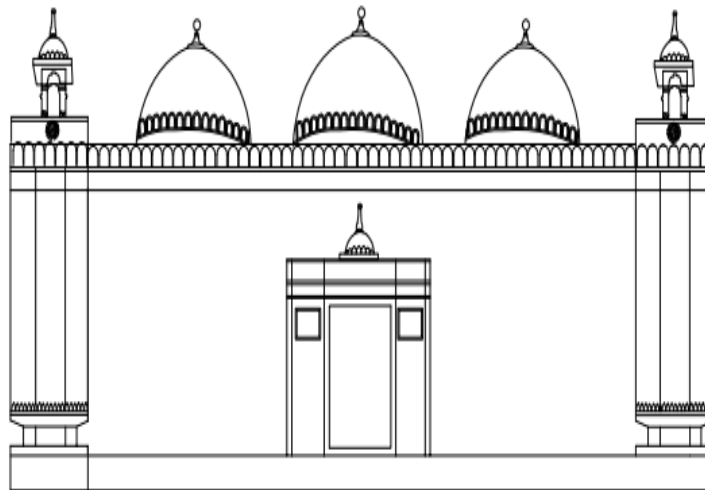
**Figure 5: The Plan of a Three-Domed Mosque.**

### **Building Material of this Mosque**

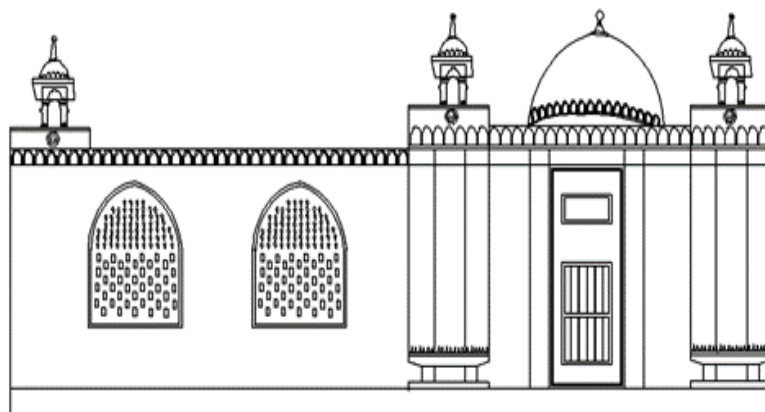
According to the structure of the architecture of Sultanate Bengal, this mosque is also made of bricks. At the beginning, there was no plaster. Later, white lime was made inside and outside the mosque. Edges color is converted to sky color. The exterior of the mosque has recently been used with a greenish glow that makes the mosque sight to the visitors. The white limestone and light sky color make the mosque a cozy atmosphere. Due to renewal and unconscious reform, other architectural patterns of the mosque, such as cornish, parapet, kiosks, parapet, pi, dome chain, dome, and marlon have a colorful arrangement. Tiles and mosaic use are seen in the interior of the mosque.



**Figure 6: East Elevation of Haji Baba Saleh Mosque.**

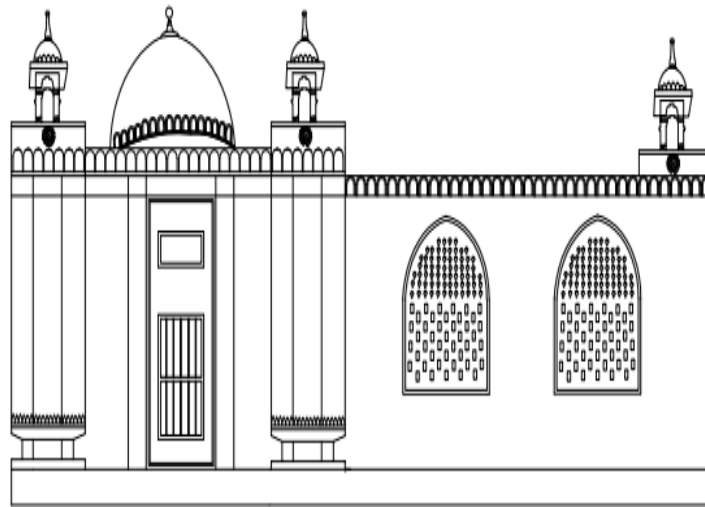


**Figure 7: West Elevation of Haji Baba Saleh Mosque.**



**Figure 8: North Elevation of Haji Baba Saleh Mosque.**



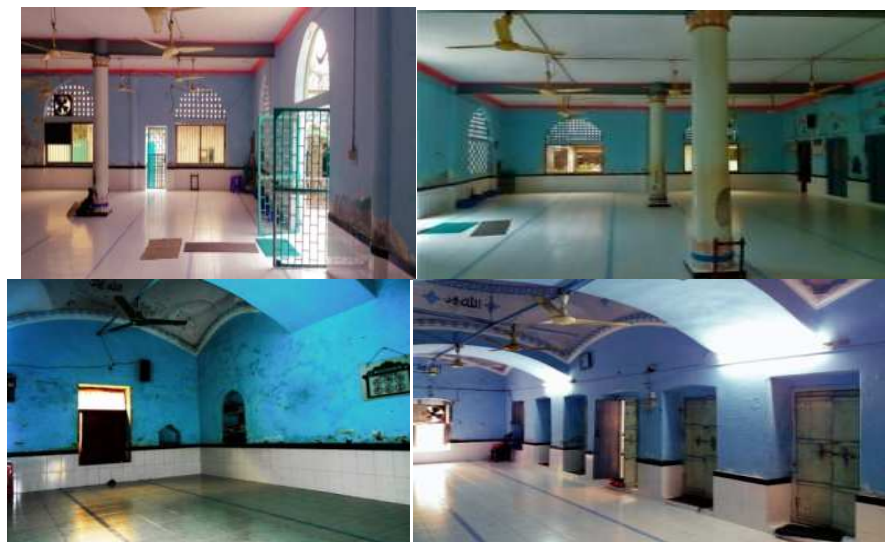


**Figure 9: South Elevation of Haji Baba Saleh Mosque.**

### **Mosque Ornamentation and Decoration**

Although the Haji Baba Saleh Mosque is an important installation of Sultanate Bengal, the aesthetics and decoration of the time have become much faded today.

The use of tile, mosaic and color has destroyed its own propriety. Likewise, the exaggeration of the exterior color has made it stand out. The decorative style of the mihrab of this mosque is completely extinct. Modern tiles and mosaics are more desirable than the context of the Sultanate period. The mimber is still in its normal state. However, the Sultanate architecture is still visible in the mosque's dome, lintel, kiosks and dome chain, pit, etc. However, the mark of the original decoration is only here.



**Figure 10: Interior Part of the Mosque.**

### Dome

The main feature of the mosque deployment is the dome. The mosque without the dome was built in the era, but at that time the mosque without the dome could not be thought of. In the original plan, the Haji Baba Saleh mosque was a domed mosque, but two more domes were added to the north-south side of the dome during construction. Marlon is decorated with every dome. The central dome is bigger than the dome on both sides. The domes of the mosque have been replaced by the traditional Pendentives quench system of Sultanate Bengal. Currently whitening the interior of the dome and whitening green. That is very intriguing.



**Figure 11: Exterior & Interior of the Dome.**

### Marlon

The interior of the domes and the outer most part is decorated with Marlon. The marlins that adorn the drum on the outer wall are divided into two. The white color is seen in the outer exterior of them.

No Marlon exists inside the dome. Marlon was also supposed to be inside the mosque, like Baba Saleh Mosque, another establishment of Sultanate Bengal. In place of Marlon there is a re-addition of the reverse image of the English letter "L". Below the dome, there is a row of Marlons in the roof, with the full plastered white color.



**Figure 12: Marlon Exists Inside the Dome**

### Dome Chain and Pit

On top of the dome, there is a lotus on upside-down position. The inverted lotus is wrapped around it. On top of the inverted lotus, the pit is decorated. In the mosques built on the Sultanate architectural style, the decoration of pit is often seen on the inverted lotus. At the apex, a flattened section of the arrow is seen. The bells on the dome and the towering corners of the corner tower are made of brass.



Figure 13: “Dome Chain” and “Pit” of this Mosque.

### Mihrab

There is a large mihrab on the western wall of the mosque. There is no trace of original ornaments in the mihrab. Another mosque of the Sultanate has shown a lot of ornaments in their mihrab but this mosque is a failure.



Figure 14: “Mihrab” and “Mimbar” of this Mosque.

### Mimbar

The mimbar of the mosque is on the right side of mihrab. This is very common.





**Figure 15: Change and Erase Radically Curved Cornice.**

### **Cornice**

At present, Haji Baba Saleh Mosque does not have this curved cornice. Over time the reforms have simply transformed this curve. Many marlins are also adorned with this Cornice.

### **Re-Conversion of Mosque in the Sultanate Period and Mughal Period**

**1st Phase:** This mosque commemorates the Sultanate period. According to the original plan, the square was converted into a rectangular mosque at the time of construction. A single domed mosque was converted into a 3-domed mosque and became known.

**2nd Phase:** According to a lot, replacement of the extra dome was done during the Mughal era. The parapet was straightened out. Little curved cornice changes at this time. The whole Cornish is straight and horizontal. The use of Marlon and kiosks during the Mughal period is a radical change. Exterior decoration, decoration and art style were performed during the Mughal period on the exterior and interior of the mosque.

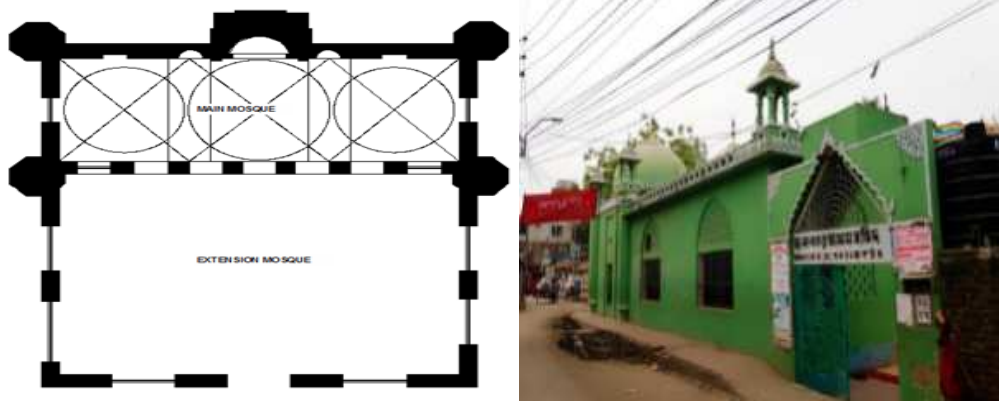
**3rd Phase:** During the colonial period there was a great change in this mosque. To the east of the mosque, the circumference is increased by 1.2 meters.

This mosque has a flat roof. The length of the roof with this extended section is smaller than that of the original mosque. The main entrance to the enlarged section is large, with half-blinded arches on both sides and two windows on the north-south side. A semi-blind arch with a focus on the window is used so that sufficient light can enter the mosque. Two more kiosks are added to the roof of the north-south corner of the extended section. On top of those kiosks, inverted lotus, pits were used. The Total number of kiosks about 6. In addition to the north, south and east roofs of the extended mosque, rows of Marlons are also used. Every Marlon is full. The valid contributions of all periods to the building of a monument must be respected since the unity of style is not the aim of a restoration. When a building includes the Superimposed work of different periods, the revealing of the underlying state can only be justified in exceptional circumstances and when what is removed is of little interest and the material which is brought to light is of great historical, archaeological or aesthetic value, and its state of preservation good enough to justify the action. Evaluation of the importance of the elements involved and the decision as to what may be destroyed cannot rest solely on the individual in charge of the work. (Charter of Venice, Article 11, 1964)

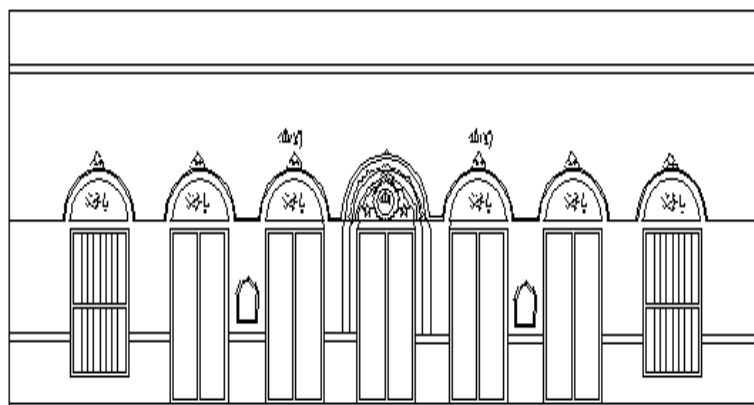
Historical Haji Baba Saleh Mosque started from the Sultanate period, occupied the Mughal period and migrated to the colonial period.

Inscriptions, architectural plan, drawing, documentation and some architectural features such as wall thickness, installations height, domes, and short-range function shingles are also found in Sultanate style. Likewise, some features such as extended dome, Marlon, pits, parapets, carnishes, kiosks, alteration curvature, decoration, and hospitality reveal the Mughal architectural style of this mosque. Another religious clergyman in the colonial period "Hazrat Mozaffar Hossain Chishti (R) liberated and developed the abolition of this religious establishment. At that time, rich inscriptions of Islamic calligraphy were engraved inside and outside the mosque. The columns of the colonial period were seen inside the mosque. Since Haji Baba Saleh Mosque is a unique architecture of the Sultanate, Mughal and Colonial Bengal, it is a great responsibility to maintain those architecture and features of this mosque. But the constant renovation, exaggeration, and excesses have ruined the mosque's propriety and lead to extinction. In this case, the mosque became questionable to many because of the fact that it was the establishment of the sultanate, Mughal or colonial period?

Haji Baba Saleh Mosque is currently being used as a Jame Mosque. The local Saleh Nagar residents offer prayers at the mosque for five times. The people and elders of the mosque are using the mosque very modestly. From the actual observation, it is unacceptable that the cruelty or abuse of the neighboring Bandar Shahi mosque is different, as is the case with this mosque. Who knows Maybe there is a tomb here because people are kind to this installation. Historical Haji Baba Saleh Mosque started from the Sultanate period, occupied the Mughal period and migrated to the colonial period.



**Figure 16: Extension of the Mosque.**



**Figure 17: Internal Drawing.**

### Baba Saleh Tomb Architectural Layout, its Extension, and Architectural Feature

Baba Saleh tomb is a single domed tomb. The tomb was rebuilt when the original tomb structure became eroded. The tomb was built as the Baba Saleh Mosque. In that case, characteristics and passions of the Sultanate should not be destroyed

When the original tomb structure was rebuilt, the porch was expanded around the adjoining tomb. On the south side, there are 4 numerous uneven arches. To the east, there are 5 numerous notched arches. Other functions are added to the north and west sides of the expanded porch. An extended porch on the east and south sides still exists. In addition to the main entrance to the tomb establishment on the south side, there are also entrances to the east and north. On the southern side of the extended porch, khadem sits down to get a bed. When a visitor wants to know about the mosque and the tomb, khadem elaborates.



**Figure 18: Original Pic of Baba Saleh Tomb (Table of Content Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh).**



**Figure 19: Baba Saleh Tomb (Interior).**

#### Dome

This is a wonderful tomb from the Sultanate period of Bengal which is a single domed structure. Originally, the dome is thought to be replaced by the conventional pendentive squinch method.

Figure shows: the exterior and interior part of the dome The exterior and interior part of the dome. After the renovation of this mosque, the pendentive squinch is not seen. This shows a round shape. The ceiling of the tomb with the dome also has a gap. The exterior of the dome is painted by green color, which is very sight. Inside the mosque is white limestone. Draw flowers, leaves, stars, inverted lotus around the dome. They have to be painted each. For example, the star is in red color and all the other is painted with green color.

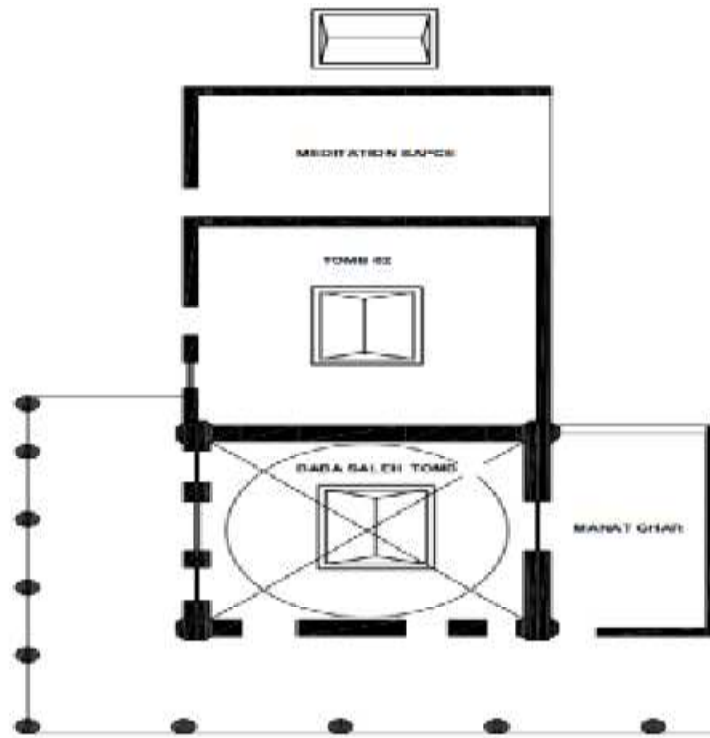


Figure 20: Layout of Baba Saleh Tomb.

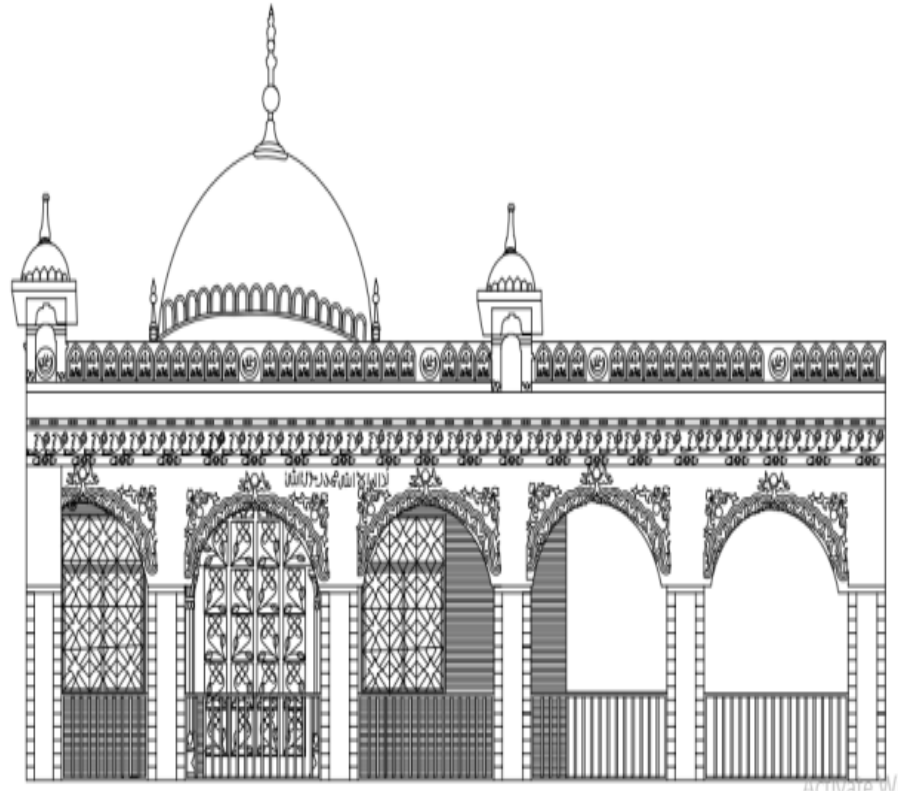


Figure 21: Front Elevation of Haji Baba Saleh Tomb.



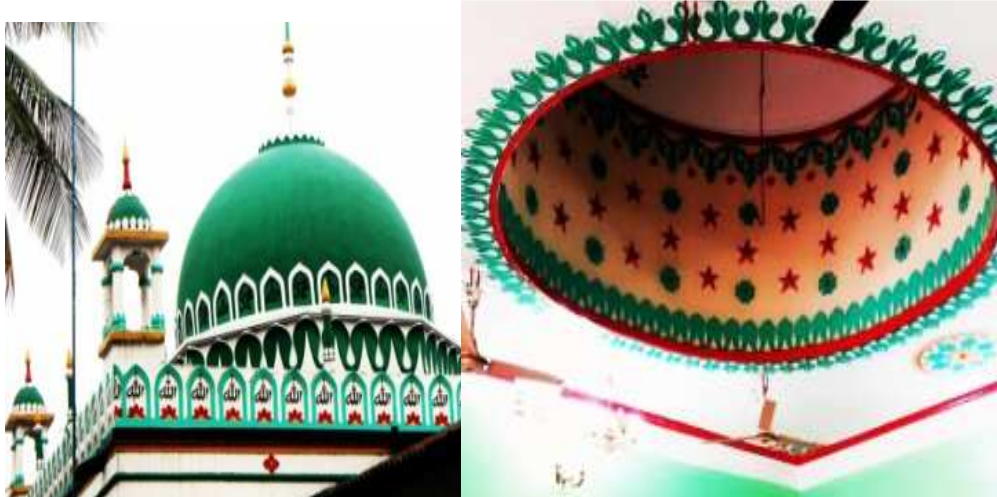


Figure 22: Exterior and Interior Part of the Dome

### Marlon

A row of marlons are decorated around the dome. There are also rows of Marlons in the ceiling space. Although there are Marlons on the outside of the dome, no Marlon exists on the interior. Only the appearance of the inverted lotus is seen inside.

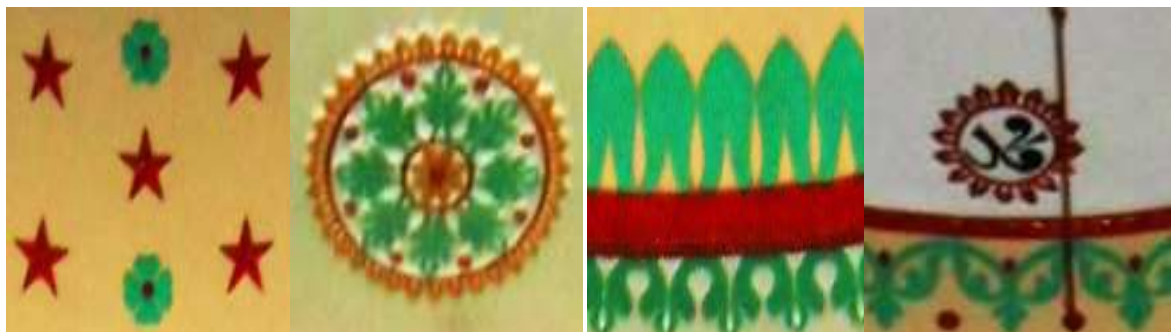


Figure 23: The Ornamentation of the Dome.

### Lotus and Pit

On the dome, the existence of the inverted lotus can be seen. One of the most unique forms of architectural features of the Sultanate period. Also on top of the inverted lotus is a pit.



Figure 24: The Marlon of the Dome.



### Kiosks

There are 4 kiosks at the corners of the flat roof of the tomb. The tree-leaf decoration can be seen in the section. Above the kiosks are small domes that adorn marlons. The dome bearer creates two arcs each. The top of the kiosks is made of brass.



**Figure 25: Kiosks of the Dome.**

### Tomb Ornamentation and Decoration

Baba Saleh's grave is built during the Sultanate period, so it will be the presence of ornamental style. However, due to the rebirth of old age, the initial decoration of this establishment has been eroded very much. Many of Sultanate decorations have been influenced by the tomb built in conformity with the mosque. The use of lotus outside the dome, the presence of the Marlon, the name "Allahu" in the middle of the Marlon, the use of kiosks, pits and colored circles, flowers, shrubs, and plant branches inside the dome express the aesthetics of the dome. The decorative arches used on the extended porch show considerable ornamentation. The appearance of the flowers, the leaves and the carvings on the cast iron is seen here. On top of these designs is a complete ink written in Arabic font. The main entrance to the tomb is also made of cast iron. The highest decoration is seen in the windows of these gates and tombs. Also in Arabic, "Allah" and "Muhammad" are inscribed on the top of the ceiling and the roof adjoining the tomb. Looking at the whole tomb structure, the maximum use of Arabic calligraphy in Islamic architecture and the cast iron usage during the colonial period can be understood.

### Tomb development

There is a different significance in the tombs in our country. Soft soil of this country, the weather of the country-climate and culture make the people of the country sophisticated. The human mind has softened Emotions have transformed into thinking. People respect the naturalist, the Sufi-saint and the saints, who are near the Creator and pray to the mind. So, in the context of this country, the auspicious time is unique excellence.

Baba Saleh Tomb is also the emotional place of the people. It is special darkness of religious power. Many people of the local and exotic people visit this tomb. Work inside them all, devotion and love. Irash Festival is celebrated every year around the tomb in the grave premises. In addition to religious festivals, this tomb also has a light of peace.

### Inscription of Baba Saleh Tomb

Haji Baba Saleh's grave is located just a few yards northeast to Haji Baba Saleh Mosque. An inscription is engraved on the southern wall of the tomb reveals much about the construction and period of the tomb. This inscription was written on the white stone. The inscription is still in the tomb. The full statement was written in this inscription is exactly mentioned. Many religious

people organize many spiritual activities in their lifetime. Baba Saleh (R) is also not so different from that. He established this tomb before his death. He asked his successors to bury him in this place after his death.

### **Restoration and Preservation**

Baba Saleh mosque and burial ground are not in the primary condition. How much has changed over time? And the existence of them will once again reach a stage of the crisis.

Restoration and preservation works are done by the government, ministries, department of archeology, and local bodies. The mosque was erected after it was covered under the eyes of experts from the archaeological department of the historic buildings. The mosque is losing its original existence and appeal. Because this is a religious establishment that expresses the Sultanate and the Mughal period. It was not in consideration that, it is needed to follow the international rules.

Excavations should be carried out in accordance with scientific standards and the recommendation defining international principles to be applied in the case of archaeological excavation adopted by UNESCO in 1956. Ruins must be maintained and measures necessary for the permanent conservation and protection of architectural features and of objects discovered must be taken. Furthermore, every means must be taken to facilitate the understanding of the monument and to reveal it without ever distorting its meaning. All reconstruction work should, however, be ruled out "a priori". Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognizable and its use should be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form. (Charter of Venice Article 4 and 5, 1964)

The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting which is not out of scale. Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. No new construction, demolition or modification which would alter the relations of mass and color must be allowed. (Charter of Venice, article 6, 1964)

In this building, we can easily distinguish that they reformed the mosque in a new manner and the international rules were not followed. Now it is not possible to identify the original forms, materials, and structure. Still, the previous restoration work shows the architectural feature of Islamic architecture, not in a real manner. Color has been changed, no original materials left and techniques have not been used, no original status left on it. The mosque has totally lost its heritage value. Now only preservation of the newly built mosque is the ultimate solution for the next few generations who could learn the Islamic architecture and detail.

The preservation could be done by the local community groups, wealthy individuals, NGO's, or by the charitable fund (zaqat). Time to time observation of problems and maintained and restored the mosque through endowed trust income or by the administrated individual trust group.

### **Tourism**

Revenues obtained through tourism. It is necessary to preserve the historic building for the future generation.

According to UNESCO declared a world heritage list in 1960, the only one mosque in Turkey listed as a world's heritage mosque because it is maintained its original form, and included several designed urban areas included mosque as an Islamic world built heritage. The historic mosque city Bagerhat, Bangladesh is also included in it. It is also possible to propose the Narayanganj city as historic Islamic city which also included lots of mosques and other heritage building to increase tourism and the foreign help for restoration work.

## CONCLUSIONS

Conservation or preservation not only to keep the historic buildings but it also needs to grow the cultural and traditional Values. It is our duty to keep the heritage value for the next generation, apply the all policies and strategies to maintain and preserve the heritage building as a masterpiece. It is also recommended that the changing need of the people and reuse the historic structure, with the balancing of professionals and experts, is needed for the good restoration work.

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