



INFLUENCE OF ISLAM ON ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF TRIPURA

Minu Borah

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Ledo College, Ledo

Abstract:

The art and architecture of Tripura is very ancient. The evidence of this truth can be found in ancient royal documents, inscriptions and copper plates. There are various sites in Tripura which represents rich art and architecture of Tripura. Among them, Pilak in South Tripura, Udaipur and Amarapur and Unakoti in North Tripura sites are significant. Among the objects obtained in art and architecture, stone terracotta, bronze carvings, coins and statues of Gods and Goddesses are important. However, many experts thought that as a result of more excavations, many artefacts of art and architecture can be found in Tripura. Islamic influence on the art and architecture of Tripura, a state located in the northeastern part of India, is distinct yet intertwined with the region's rich cultural and historical context. Tripura's art and architecture reflect various influences, including those of the indigenous Tripuri people, as well as the cultural and architectural legacies of Muslim rulers and traders who settled in the region over the centuries. The aim of this paper is to highlight the impact of Islam on art and architecture of Tripura. The study is based on secondary sources.

Keywords: *art and architecture, excavations, Islamic influence etc.*

I. INTRODUCTION:

The art and architecture of Tripura is very ancient. The evidence of this truth can be found in ancient royal documents, inscriptions and copper plates. There are various sites in Tripura which represents rich art and architecture of Tripura. Tripura's art and architecture reflect various influences, including those of the indigenous Tripuri people, as well as the cultural and architectural legacies of Muslim rulers and traders who settled in the region over the centuries. The impact of Islamic culture on the art and architecture of Tripura, a northeastern state of India, is a significant but often subtle part of the region's rich cultural fabric. Over the centuries, especially from the 16th century onwards, the interaction between Tripura's indigenous cultures



and the Islamic world, particularly the influence of Bengal and Mughal rule, left an indelible mark on the art, architecture, and cultural practices in the state.

II. OBJECTIVE

The aim of this paper is to highlight the impact of Islam on art and architecture of Tripura.

III. METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on secondary sources and descriptive in nature. The secondary sources are collected from books, journals, e-journals, e-books, newspapers etc.

IV. DISCUSSION

• Historical Context of Islamic Influence in Tripura

Islamic influence in Tripura can be traced back to the 16th century, when Muslim rule expanded across the Indian subcontinent and reached the northeastern regions. The **Tripura kingdom**, a princely state, had interactions with both Hindu and Muslim dynasties, particularly after the arrival of the Mughals and the spread of Islam in Bengal. Over time, Muslim traders, artisans, and rulers contributed to the local cultural fabric, leaving a significant impact on art and architecture.

• Islamic Architecture in Tripura

Islamic architecture in Tripura is largely represented through mosques, tombs, and other Islamic monuments that combine elements of Mughal, Bengal, and regional architectural styles. The use of Islamic architectural features in Tripura is an example of the fusion of local traditions with Islamic influences, which became an integral part of the region's built heritage.

Mosques and Tombs: The **Ujjayanta Palace** in Agartala, though primarily a Hindu structure, incorporates some elements influenced by Mughal architecture, with arches and domes. However, the Islamic influence in Tripura is more evident in the design and layout of mosques. **Mosques with domed roofs, minarets**, and the use of arches can be seen throughout the state, especially in urban centers like **Agartala**, which has a significant Muslim population.

Domes and Arches: Islamic architectural style in Tripura features large domes, pointed arches, and minarets, which are symbolic of Islamic design principles. Many mosques in the region incorporate these features, blending them with local architectural traditions.



Bengali Muslim Architecture: Since Tripura shares historical and cultural ties with Bengal, its Islamic architecture has been influenced by the Bengali style of mosque architecture. This includes the use of **curved roofs, mihrab (prayer niches)**, and ornamental motifs, which are typical of Bengali Muslim architecture.

Notable Mosques: In Agartala, Tripura's capital, several mosques built during the period of Muslim rule and influence are significant examples of Islamic architecture in the region. Some of these include **Akhra Masjid, Tariq Masjid, and The Sadar Masjid**, all of which feature traditional Islamic architectural elements, such as domes and arched doorways.

The Tripura Sultanate Period (16th-18th Century): The Sultanate period, when Muslim rulers ruled parts of Tripura, is an important chapter in the state's history. During this time, Islamic-style buildings, such as mosques, were constructed, often with distinct **Bengali Muslim architecture**, characterized by large domes, curved arches, and the use of red brick.

Mosques in Agartala: The **Akhra Mosque** and **Tariq Masjid** in Agartala are notable examples of mosques built in the Islamic architectural tradition, though influenced by local practices. These mosques incorporate traditional Mughal and regional Bengali styles, including wide arches, intricate carvings, and large domes.

- **Islamic Influence on Local Crafts and Art**

The artistic traditions of Tripura show the interplay of Islamic influences, especially in the decorative arts. Though traditional Tripuri art forms are primarily indigenous, Islamic artistic styles brought new techniques and aesthetics.

Calligraphy: Islamic calligraphy has had a profound influence on the decorative arts in Tripura. Arabic script, often used for Quranic verses or religious inscriptions, is seen in the ornamentation of mosques and other religious buildings. This calligraphy, while rooted in Islamic culture, often blends with local design motifs.

Carpet Weaving and Textiles: Weaving traditions in Tripura also show the influence of Islamic art, particularly in the use of geometric patterns and intricate designs. Though the textiles of Tripura are mostly indigenous in origin, certain elements of Islamic design, such as repeating geometric patterns and floral motifs, have appeared in the region's fabric arts.



Tilework and Inlay Art: Another key feature of Islamic art is the use of intricate tilework and inlay techniques in architecture. In some mosques and religious structures in Tripura, one can observe the use of ceramic tiles with decorative patterns, similar to those found in Mughal and other Islamic architectural structures across India.

Geometric Design: A hallmark of Islamic decorative arts is the use of **geometric patterns**—intricate, symmetrical designs that are used to adorn buildings, carpets, textiles, and pottery. In Tripura, these patterns were adopted in local art and craftwork, particularly in **handwoven textiles**, carpets, and decorative pottery.

Floral Motifs: Floral patterns, another key aspect of Islamic art, can be seen in the decoration of both Islamic and indigenous Tripuri textiles. These motifs often include stylized versions of **lotuses, pomegranates, and vines**, which were incorporated into the traditional art forms of the region.

- **Sufism and Religious Art**

Sufism, a mystical form of Islam, has had a spiritual influence in Tripura. **Sufi shrines and tombs** are present in the state, and these religious sites are often adorned with artistic expressions of faith, including symbolic motifs and inscriptions in Arabic.

Dargahs and Sufi Shrines: The tombs of Sufi saints, such as the **tomb of Hazrat Shah Noor** in Tripura, have become places of worship and pilgrimage. These shrines are typically simple but are often decorated with **symbolic art**, reflecting Sufi beliefs about the transcendent nature of spirituality.

- **Fusion of Hindu and Islamic Art**

Tripura's art and architecture exhibit a unique blend of Hindu and Islamic influences, particularly in the state's historic temples and Islamic structures. This fusion can be seen in the way **Hindu temple architecture** was influenced by Islamic design elements and vice versa.

Architectural Synthesis: The Islamic domes, arches, and minaret-like structures have occasionally been adapted into local Tripuri designs. While the indigenous Tripuri architecture is primarily centered around wooden structures, when Muslim rulers constructed buildings in the region, they incorporated brick and mortar into local traditions, often blending these materials with traditional forms.



Sculpture and Decorative Arts: In some temples and mosques, elements of Islamic-style decoration such as geometric patterns, floral motifs, and calligraphy have been incorporated into Hindu temple art, creating a distinct regional art form that blends Hindu and Islamic iconography.

- **Mughal Influence in Landscape Design**

While the Mughal Empire's direct influence on Tripura might not have been as strong as in other parts of India, the wider cultural influence of the Mughal period can still be felt, especially in the design of garden spaces and royal architecture.

Chowmuhan Gardens: The **Chowmuhan Garden** near Agartala, with its meticulous planning and water features, bears a resemblance to the Persian-style gardens that were popular during the Mughal era. These gardens often include water channels, fountains, and symmetry, elements seen in both Mughal and Islamic architectural traditions.

- **Modern Islamic Art in Tripura**

In contemporary Tripura, there is also an ongoing development of Islamic art, particularly in the urban centers. **Modern Islamic calligraphy, graphic art, and digital representations of Quranic verses** are becoming more prominent in both private homes and public spaces.

Islamic Art Exhibitions: With the increasing cultural exchange, Tripura has seen the rise of Islamic art exhibitions and the influence of Islamic art through various platforms, showcasing the blending of Islamic and regional styles.

V. Conclusion

The impact of Islamic culture on the art and architecture of Tripura is both significant and nuanced. Islamic influence on the art and architecture of Tripura is characterized by a harmonious blend of Islamic elements and local Tripuri traditions. The legacy of Muslim rulers, traders, and Sufi mystics has shaped the region's cultural and architectural heritage. From mosques and tombs to decorative arts and textiles, Islamic art in Tripura reflects the region's historical connections with both the wider Islamic world and the indigenous Tripuri culture. The fusion of these cultural and religious influences continues to shape the artistic landscape of the state, creating a distinctive and diverse architectural and artistic identity.

VI. REFERENCES:



-
1. Choudhary, M (2000). *Tribes of Ancient India*. Calcutta, West Bengal, Indian Museum
 2. Jaitley, J (2012). *Craft Atlas of India* (1st ed). New Delhi, India, Niyogi Books
 3. <http://gosikkim.in/sikkimese-traditional-dance.html>
 4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northeast_India <http://ncw.nic.in/frmnecell.aspx>
 5. www.ejournal.com
 6. www.wikipedia.com
 7. <http://www.ncert.nic.in/publication/>
 8. <https://www.nelive.in/assam/business/neglected-metal-crafts-assam>