

## ADDRESSING THE COLONIAL IDENTITY OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS THROUGH EVALUATING THEIR STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS: A CASE STUDY OF RANGPUR CITY

Anika Sharmila<sup>3,1\*</sup>, Urmi Das<sup>3,1</sup>, and Kawshik Saha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Student, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh, e-mail: [urmi13@student.sust.edu](mailto:urmi13@student.sust.edu)  
[anika06@student.sust.edu](mailto:anika06@student.sust.edu)

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh, e-mail: [kawshik-arc@sust.edu](mailto:kawshik-arc@sust.edu)

**\*Corresponding Author**

**Author notes - <sup>3</sup> Equal Contribution**

### ABSTRACT

Colonial architecture is characterized as an architectural style obtained from a region of origin and subsequently adapted into buildings in distant regions. The colonial architectural style in Bangladesh emerged as a consequence of colonists integrating their home country's architectural components with the design features of this region. Building components of this period were the amalgamation of different styles from various regions and periods. Many remarkable structures in several regions of Bangladesh reflect the legacy of colonial architecture and are famous for their architectural and historical relevance. The Greater Rangpur district is an integral part of the oldest inhabited North Bengal in present-day Bangladesh. Rangpur city itself accommodates a number of historic structures with a variety of hybrid structural characteristics that depict the grandeur of the colonial architecture. The study aims to address the colonial identity of the heritage structures in Rangpur city, through analyzing and characterizing the architectural style of their structural elements. To accomplish this, the heritage structures are first surveyed and methodically documented, and then they are analyzed to determine how the structural components of colonial architecture are incorporated into these structures. An observation of these distinctive architectural features can provide insights into the significance and historical relevance of these heritage structures. This would assist us in recognizing the origins of these structural features as well as their significance in understanding the diversity of our heritage buildings. Furthermore, the discussion of the structural elements adopted in the structures in a framework of time will aid in the measures to preserve these architectural edifices with notable historic value.

**Keywords:** Structure, Heritage Buildings, Evaluation, Colonial, Rangpur

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Rangpur, one of the major cities of Bangladesh, is located in the country's northwestern area and encompasses a vast portion of that area. Rangpur was previously the administrative center of the Greater Rangpur district (*Journey to Rangpur City Corporation*, n.d.). Since ancient times, the area has had a glorious and varied past, rendering it historically and geographically significant (Sarkar, 1982). Rangpur came under British control when the East India Company acquired "Deoani" in 1765. Rangpur was proclaimed a district headquarters on December 16, 1769, and incorporated as a municipality in 1869, making it one of Bangladesh's oldest municipalities (*Journey to Rangpur City Corporation*, n.d.). Under the colonial discourses, rapid changes have occurred in every aspect of socio-cultural and economical perspectives in Bengal, especially in Bangladesh (Afzal, 2018). These changes had direct influences on the field of development of architecture (Reza, 2008). Evidently, throughout history, it has been influenced by a wide spectrum of political and cultural developments, which prompted the emergence of a variety of architectural styles. The majority of the heritage structures, that give testament

to the glory and legacy of the city, date back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Ray, 2014). They encompass a wide range of structures, based on their functional purposes, such as Zamindar houses, Kachari houses, and residences. The heritage buildings of Rangpur also include significant educational institutes, civil courts, post bungalow buildings, and several institutes established to foster the growth of the culture. These architectural-historical structures display and preserve the city's memories from classical antiquity.

Rangpur municipality was announced to be upgraded to a city corporation following the establishment of the new division (M. M. Rahman, 1987). The city is rapidly developing as a consequence of the newly formed city corporation's development plans. The layout of Rangpur city illustrates that it has grown around a linear route over a long period of time. As a consequence, the city's heritage structures are likewise concentrated along this prominent artery. These development efforts are proving to be completely contradictory to the city's historical image, resulting in the destruction of a number of historical buildings. The recent observations of the remaining structures clearly show an active process of decay and destruction owing to unplanned growth, random alterations, and lack of maintenance. Given the city's recent and ongoing growth, it is critical to address the significance and relevance of these historic structures and preserve them. There is virtually little comprehensive data available on Rangpur's historic buildings considering that some of the structures have already been demolished and others are in a deteriorating condition. This research aims to compile information on these existing structures, as well as others that have recently been demolished, in order to determine their relevance and value in preserving the city's essence.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Heritage documentation is regarded as the compilation of records and information on a building or site collected to make notes observing its condition and register any changes affecting it. Architectural documentation of heritage buildings is a systematic process compiling all the relevant information available about them. Documentation of heritage buildings from an architectural point of view is a dynamic and time-consuming process that requires sufficient resources. For this research, authors adapted a systematic method including several tangible and intangible techniques such as oral, literary, graphic, photographic documentation.

### Methodological Steps

#### Field Survey & Documentation

- Documentary Research/Literature Study
- Analyzing architectural significance relating to the history
- Oral Historical Survey
- Photographic documentation
- Archiving

#### Analysis of the heritage structures

- Analyzing Architectural Characteristics
- A comparative study with other Historical structural refs.
- Identification of current condition.

**(i) Documentary Research/Literature Study:** The first phase of the research was carried out through a literature study based on books, the internet, papers, and articles relating the buildings to their historical and functional value. An analysis of the existing literature was essential to establish the value or significance of a building or site and get a better insight into its historical background.

**(ii) Oral Survey:** The oral survey of the historical building compensated for the lack of adequate literature regarding their background. An oral survey was conducted to collect further information. The

testimony of the local people helped to accumulate knowledge about the buildings that are already demolished, owing to the inadequacy in the existing literature.

**(iii) Photographic Documentation:** In terms of the documentation of a heritage building or site, photographs play a vital role. Even if there is written documentation available, photographs help to be more precise and detailed with the data collection (Hassani & Rafiee, 2013). In this phase, the authors opted for an extensive photographic survey of the buildings including their architectural details.

**(iv) Archiving:** In this final phase, all obtained data, documents, images were analyzed, documented, and archived in digital format for presentation. By compiling and combining historical and contemporary information from different sources, a survey report documented all relevant data.

### 3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RANGPUR CITY

According to Hindu theology, in ancient times, Rangpur was under the Pragjyotisha kingdom of Kamrup in India (Khan Chowdhury Amanatullah, 1936). Rangpur has been a part of the Mughal Empire since 1687 AD. A review of the history reveals the names of two parts mainly where all the development activities of Rangpur were carried out at different times. One is Mahiganj which was the headquarters of Rangpur city during the Mughal period; And the other is Nawabganj, established by the British, which became the new headquarters during the Company rule (J.A. Vas, 1911). In the Mughal city of Mahiganj, there were many small and big zamindar houses of Rangpur including Dimla, Tajhat, Gosaibari zamindar houses, and kacharibari and residences. Almost all the zamindars, talukdars used to keep their kacharibari in Mahiganj for timely payment of installment of the sunset law of the permanent settlement. The post-Mughal Nawabi court and the Naib Nazim Court (jail) were in the area (Dr. Muhammad Muniruzzaman, 2012). Moreover, Mahiganj was also widely used as an ancient trade center (J.A. Vas, 1911). Due to the change in the course of the river Tista during the catastrophic floods of 1787, the eastern tributary of the river Ghaghat became weak and began to lose its dominance as the district's main town in the late 18th century.

In 1793, the headquarters of Rangpur city was shifted from Mahiganj to Nawabganj (Glazier, 1873). To the west side, the administrative zone began to develop in the Dhap area. Commercial and educational institutions, including new police stations and residential areas, were established in the Nawabganj area on the eastern side. Some notable educational institutions including criminal court, municipality office, post bungalow building were established. Many Kuthis of the company were set up on the banks of the river Ghaghat. Besides, the houses of several zamindars of Rangpur were on the north side of the racecourse ground (east of the present criminal court) (Abdul Aziz, 2000). Rangpur Public Library, Town Hall, Mohammedan Association, Kayastha Shava, Rangpur Dramatic Association, and Rangpur Sahitya Parishad were formed at different times for the development of literature and culture in the new city. Previously, during the Colonial era, all of these structures were either owned by the private sector or the government sector (Islam & Muntasir, 2020).

Mahiganj and Nawabganj; there was a distance of three miles between these two old and new towns (M. Rahman, 2013). The town of Lalbagh has been built in the middle to bridge this gap. As a result of establishing the railway line here in 1878, many people from different districts of North Bengal, including Assam, started gathering for business (Dr. Muhammad Muniruzzaman, 2012). It became an important business center as the tobacco company factories, jute godowns, railway stations, etc were developed. Carmichael College, the largest educational institution in the Kochbihar region of North Bengal and Assam, was established in 1918 in this Lalbagh. Mahiganj, Nawabganj, and Lalbagh - these three old towns have undergone various types of infrastructural development at different times in the past; And the combination of these three is today's Rangpur city. The city still bears the marks of those many years old traditions.

#### 4. COLONIAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS IN RANGPUR CITY

Greater Rangpur is an essential part of old North Bengal, with many heritage structures that help to establish an image of the city as historically rich and give it a unique identity. The majority of these heritage buildings are not designed to recreate one particular colonial style. Instead, it is the combination of diverse design elements and characteristics, as well as the impact of regional features, that distinguish these heritage structures. The following buildings on the map are the heritage structures within the Rangpur city corporation.

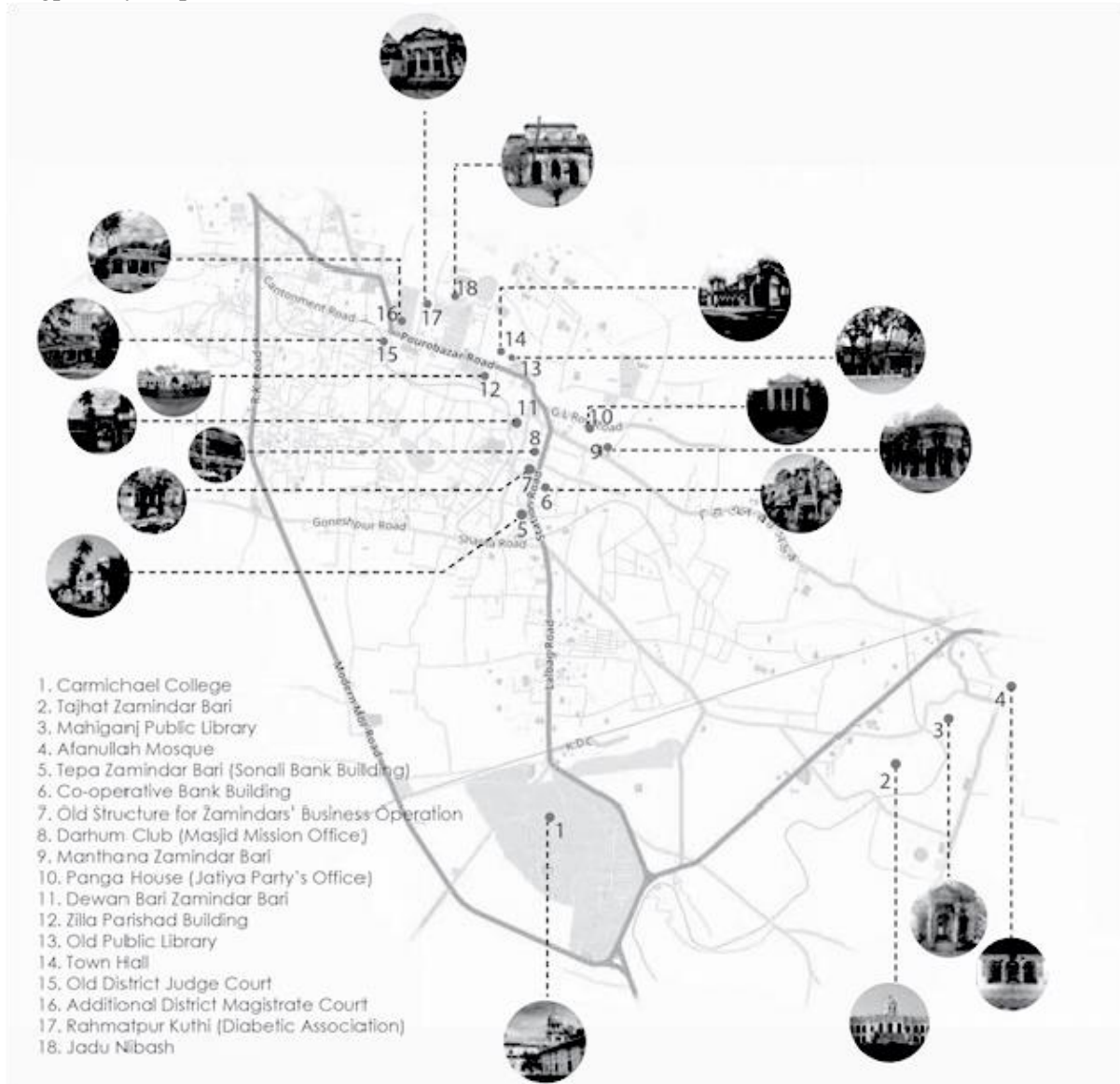


Fig:1 Map of the heritage buildings of Rangpur City Corporation (Photograph)

##### 4.1 Rangpur Carmichael College, Tajhat Zamindar House and Rangpur Zilla Parishad

Rangpur Carmichael College, Tajhat Zamindar House and Rangpur Zilla Parishad, three prominent heritage buildings of the city were built during the turn of the twentieth century, and the architectural aspects embody the splendor of the era, following the **Indo-Saracenic style**. Indo-Saracenic Architecture style is an eclectic mix of **European, Hindu and Mughal** building elements (J.Sheeba & Dhas, 2018). Being an emblem of colonialism, the style was “modern” and incorporated much of the taste of its time (Choudhary et al., 2018).

Carmichael College, one of the oldest and prestigious educational institutions in the country, is located in the Lalbagh area of the city. The vast college campus was established on about 300 acres of land with

the generous help of several landlords (Dr. Muhammad Muniruzzaman, 2012). The top of the building and octagonal towers of the corners are adorned with chhatris and cupolas which create a captivating look of the building. Buttresses are used to support the chhatri (Alam, 2018).

Tajhat Palace is a magnificent structure located two kilometers to the southeast of the city. Zamindar Gopal Lal Roy built this palace in the first decade of the twentieth century. A ribbed conical dome with a tall octagonal neck sits in the center of the roof, partly supported by a series of slender semi-Corinthian columns (Babu, 2019). At both ends of the front facade are two semi-octagonal projections, as well as a projecting center porch. The balustrade on either side of the majestic staircase was originally adorned with different Italic marble sculptures of ancient Roman figures, but these are now completely missing (Ahmed, 1986). Four elegant Corinthian columns with spherical shafts support the balcony roof above the porch, while two identical columns on each of the projecting ends of the building support a triangular gable.

The emergence of the traditional Rangpur Zilla Parishad, formerly named Rangpur district board office, was an administrative necessity during British rule, but it developed gradually (M. M. Rahman, 1987). The building is divided into three rectangular sections connected to each other. At the four corners of each rectangular part are attached octagonal giant towers. The tops of which are adorned with miniature umbrellas. The arches are made in horse-shaped and angular style, and the beauty is enhanced by arranging a large one into a small one.



Fig:2 Carmichael college



Fig:3 Tajhat zamindar House college

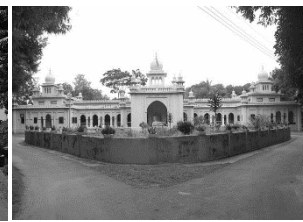


Fig:4 Rangpur Zilla Parishad

## 4.2 Rangpur Town Hall Complex

Rangpur Townhall Complex is one of the most significant public spaces of the city and is being used as a center for meetings and cultural activities. It was built in 1913 and some of the building elements are inspired by the **Portuguese Colonial Architectural style**. The Portuguese foot in many places created sustainable settlements and they followed the architectural style of Lisbon as models of references and incorporated it with the current place (Nisha & Jayasudha, 2019). The east-west elongated (36.1 x 15.18) building on the east-west side is centered on a large hall. Inside the hall, a platform about 1.22 m high has been set up on the west side. To the south of the room is a verandah covered with a 2.8 m wide flat roof. The 91 cm projectile and 5.4 m wide entrance in the center of the main verandah of the town hall is divided into two parts by a rectangular pillar. A two-story room has been built at the top of the entrance. There is also a room on the second floor of the entrance. The upper half of the town hall, as well as the entrance, have given the structure an architectural significance.



Fig 5: Town Hall



Fig 6: DewanBari



Fig 7: Gateway of DewanBari

### 4.3 Dewan Bari and the Gateway

Dewan Bari is a traditional and elegant house that was built by a landlord. The architectural style of Dewan Bari was adopted from the **Victorian Colonial style**, where the prominent features are Victorian cast-iron columns, two-storied buildings, symmetrical plans, centered entrance, etc. This is a style commonly practiced in the houses of Australia (Myrtlenvw1767, n.d.). Dewan Bari has Pre-cast iron columns and decorative ironwork with rosettes, buds, and tendrils are used. There is a decorative floral pediment on the top of the building. Doors and windows and roofs are wooden. The gateway of this zamindar house was built in the late nineteenth century and it is significant for the prominent features of **Mughal architecture** (Alam, 2018). The long rectangular design of the entrance gate consists of two guardrooms on both sides and an entrance at the center. Four towers are connecting the rooms on either side of the entrance. The whole gateway is made of burnt bricks, iron cores. Its entire walls are covered with plaster.

### 4.4 Rahmatpur Kuthi and Panga House

Rahmatpur Kuthi and Panga House are two such Kuthis that are very similar in character and inspired from **Italian Renaissance Architectural Style**. Columns, pilasters, pediments, entablatures, arches, and domes are examples of classical orders and architectural features seen in Renaissance structures. Harmonious form, mathematical proportion, and a measurement system based on the human scale are all hallmarks of Renaissance architecture (Elizabeth A. Weinfield, 2002). The triangular pediment of the entrance, inoperable wooden shutters, and free-standing columns have given an identical look to them. Rahmatpur Kuthi and Panga House carry Corinthian columns and ionic columns, those are very common features of Italian renaissance architecture.



Fig 8: Rahmatpur Kuthi (Photograph taken by authors.)



Fig 9: Panga House (Photograph taken by authors)

### 4.5 Manthana Kachari bari and Tapa Zamindar Bari

Manthana Zamindars' Kachari Bari is located inside the premises of the Fire Service Regional Office in Kamal Kachna. For a long period, the structure has been abandoned. The structure is rectangular in shape, and it has a semi-circular entrance at the front. It is ornate with decorative double columns, palladian doors and windows, and a cupula at the top. The roof is made of steel rafter and flat bar purlin. A stairway leads from the rear of the structure to the top, where an iron minaret stands.



Fig 10: Manthana Kachari Bari (Photograph taken by authors)



Fig 11: Tapa Zamindar Bari (Photograph taken by authors)

Tepa Zamindar Bari is located on the Station Road area, the main road of Rangpur city and is currently being used as the main branch of Sonali Bank. In addition to the main residential buildings, there were several non-major residential buildings (Alam, 2018). Two of them still exist in dilapidated conditions.

The front of the narrow rectangular verandah on the west side of the central hall of the residential building is opened by an angular archway. The huge octagonal towers at the four corners of the entrance extend beyond the parapet and the top is adorned by a picturesque cupola. The building was constructed to establish communication with the city and for administrative convenience. It was built by Annada Mohan Roy Chowdhury, one of the Tepa zamindars of Rangpur, in the late nineteenth century (Dr. Muhammad Muniruzzaman, 2012).

#### 4.6 Central Co-operative Bank Building, Durham Club, and Marwari Businessman's House











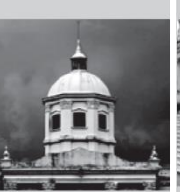



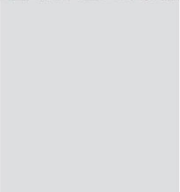


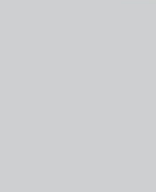




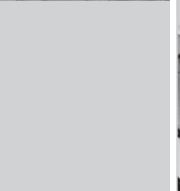



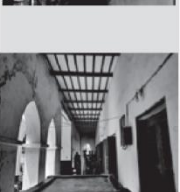

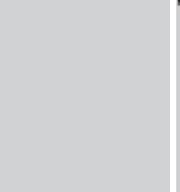
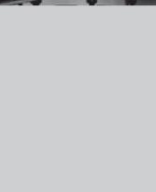









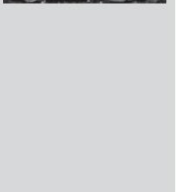
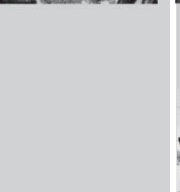

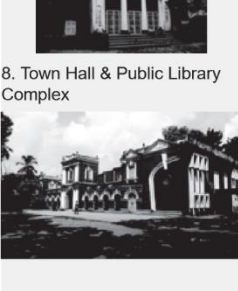



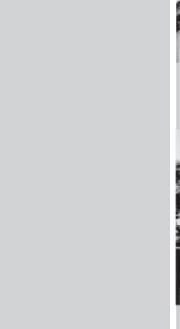

These three buildings along the Station Road of the city were built in the early nineteenth century. These were demolished a few years ago during road widening. The central co-operative building had a very attractive Jali work. Also, the use of horseshoe-shaped openings and numbers of decorative pediments over this red brick building gave it an elegant look and created a very beautiful elevation from the road. The Durham Club building hosted a variety of indoor games as well as various cultural activities at that time. This two-story building had beautiful double columns and steel columns as well as wooden shutters. The use of pointed arches and Corinthian columns in the beautiful red brick residence of Marwari businessman Shree Meghraj Dulee were the most prominent colonial features of this building with the two-sided octagonal projection with a rectangular form. This building was used for commercial purposes before it was demolished.



Fig 12: Co-operative Bank Building, Darham Club and Marwari Businessman's House (Collected from Riyadh Anwar Shubho)

## 5. ASSESMENT OF BUILDING ELEMENTS

From the field survey and analysis of their features, it has been observed that the buildings are designed to have different elements that have their origin in varied regions of Europe owing to the diversity of the colonial architectural style. The following chart identifies the structural and ornamental features of individual buildings that exemplify the colonial architectural style

Heritage Buildings	Column	Roof	Arch	Dome	Decorative elements
					
2. Tajhat Zamindar Bari 					
3. Zilla Parishad Building 					
4. Dewanbari Zamindar Bari 					
5. Tapa Zamindar Bari (Sonali Bank Building) 					
6. Manthana Zamindar Bari 					
7. Rahamatpur Kuthi & Panga House 					
8. Town Hall & Public Library Complex 					



## 5.1 Analysis of Heritage Buildings in Rangpur & Their Colonial References

### 5.1.1 Italian Renaissance Architecture

Ancient Greek and Roman ideas and styles were revived in the Renaissance. Both the Roman and Greek civilizations were Mediterranean where the Renaissance took place. In the Classical world, Renaissance architecture was characterized by the harmony between human and mathematical proportions. (Elizabeth A. Weinfield, 2002) One of the biggest characteristics of the renaissance is the emphasis of humanism. The major characteristics of sixteenth-century structures, which combined classical Roman technique and Renaissance aesthetics, were founded on several fundamental architectural concepts: facades, columns and pilasters, arches, vaults, domes, windows, and walls.



Fig 14: Example of Italian Renaissance Architecture (St. Peter's Basilica)

The kuthis of Rangpur built in the British period follow a number of features from Italian Renaissance Architecture. **Rahmatpur kuthi** and **Panga House** possess few features like - use of classical roman columns, use of triangular pediments lying upon the columns and symmetrical building plans.

### 5.1.2 Portuguese Colonial Architecture

In general, Portuguese settlements can be found along the shores of Brazil, Africa, Arabia, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia, China, and Japan. These settlements represented both Portuguese cultures and the cultures of the regions with which Portugal came into interaction. They kept moving around from one region to another, adapting to the local culture and climate. As a result of cross-cultural compositions, this adaptive nature resulted in the emergence of distinct architectural styles.



Fig 15: Example of Portuguese Colonial Architecture (Holy House of Mercy of Macau)

Many of the Portuguese colonial buildings are neo-classical practiced over the world in overall architectural treatment (Fang, 2019). The construction of the column, archways, and passageway behind the row of double columns in **Rangpur town hall** adheres to the Portuguese style prevalent on the Indian Subcontinent.

### 5.1.3 Indo-Saracenic Architecture

The Indo-Saracenic style is a late-nineteenth-century British architectural development that derived elements from native Indo-Islamic and Indian architecture and merged them with the Gothic revival and Neo-Classical forms popular in Victorian Britain. The Indo-Saracenic movement originated in the 1870s as an attempt to establish authority through classical ideals, with the latter phase focusing on Colonial Architecture (J. Sheeba & Dhas, 2018). The Indo-Saracenic architecture is a hybrid of Indian and Islamic styles, yet it retains a British spatial organization and composition. The hybrid effectively integrated Hindu and Mughal architectural elements with cusped arches, domes, spires, tracery, minarets, and stained glass. The architectural style in India was developed in accordance with advanced British structural engineering standards of the 1800's, which included infrastructures of iron, steel, and poured concrete.

**Rangpur Carmichael College, Tajhat Zamindar House and Rangpur Zilla Parishad** follow some prominent features from Indo-Saracenic style. They have towers or minarets, dome chhatris on the rooflines, different arches like pointed, cusped or scalloped arches.

#### 5.1.4 Victorian Colonial: Filigree Style

Victorian architecture is not restricted to one specific style. Instead, it is a wide word that encompasses the numerous styles that emerged during Victoria's 63-year reign. Victorian architecture's Classical or Neoclassical style mirrored ancient Greek and Roman inspirations. The characteristics in victorian filigree-style houses include the use of cast-iron in verandahs, or 'iron-lace,' double or even triple-story houses with filigree design, iron gates, iron staircases (especially the spiral staircase), and filigree on entrance corners and entrances (Myrtlenvw1767, n.d.). **The Dewanbari Zamindarbari**, with its notable iron columns and other decorative features, reflects the characteristics of Victorian filigree style.

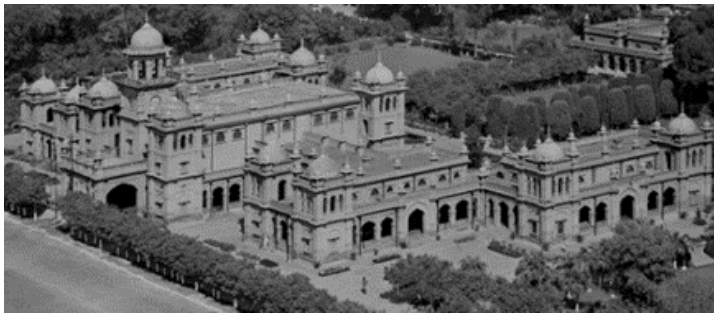


Fig 15: Example of Indo-Saracenic Architecture (Islamia College, Peshwar)



Fig 16: Example of Victorian Filigree Style

#### 5.1.5 Findings

One of the primary goals of this research was to assess the building elements and determine their colonial origin. A comparative analysis of architectural aspects was undertaken by the authors. The site survey data and images were compared to the colonial architectural styles practiced worldwide. As a result, after inspecting the structures based on their features, the authors attempted a graphical comparison. They have developed a list of visual characteristics which resonate with different architectural styles. The study findings highlight the building elements to identify them as the representation of the influence of colonialism in the architectural heritage of Bangladesh. A variety of heritage structures and architectural characteristics in Rangpur city are influenced by the Indo-Saracenic style, the Portuguese Colonial style, the Victorian Colonial style, and the Italian Renaissance style. In the other heritages where one prominent style cannot be identified, a distinct architectural expression is formed by fusing regional qualities with the fragment of colonial construction materials.


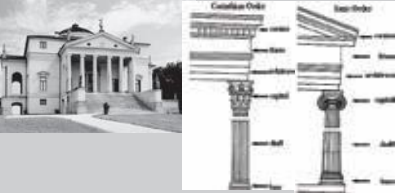






Building Elements	Colonial Origin	Characteristics
	<p data-bbox="603 241 914 271">Italian Renaissance Architecture</p> 	<ul data-bbox="1026 253 1431 465" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of pediment which lies upon the columns.</li> <li>• Use of Classical Roman columns: Ionic, Corinthian Columns</li> <li>• Have a square, symmetrical appearance</li> <li>• Proportions are usually based on a module.</li> </ul>
	<p data-bbox="603 495 770 524">Portugese Colonial</p> 	<ul data-bbox="1026 506 1366 640" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of small Pediments.</li> <li>• Round arches with thick squarish columns</li> <li>• Use of round double columns</li> </ul>
	<p data-bbox="603 741 770 770">Victorian Colonial</p> 	<ul data-bbox="1026 763 1361 920" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cast iron Filigree Work</li> <li>• Cast iron columns at center</li> <li>• Peaked roof</li> <li>• Victorian filigree terrace over the entrance</li> </ul>
	<p data-bbox="603 987 938 1016">Indo-Saracenic Revival Architecture</p> 	<ul data-bbox="1026 999 1431 1200" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• towers or minarets</li> <li>• lawns, in the form of entrances set back from the facade, under an arch.</li> <li>• domed chhatra kiosks on the roofline</li> <li>• vaulted roofs</li> <li>• pointed arches, cusped arches, or scalloped arches</li> </ul>

Figure 17: Colonial references of different European and Indo-European architectural styles used in the historic buildings of Rangpur. (Prepared by authors)

## 6. Conclusion

According to the preceding discussion, the architectural history of Rangpur city possesses significant heritage values in terms of social and cultural significance. This heritage buildings are the amalgamation of many colonial and regional structural features. The colonial structural components that were incorporated and integrated with regional influences established a distinct character for the heritage of Bangladesh. Moreover, apart from being historically and architecturally significant, the structures of these buildings also endowed them with the strength to weather numerous changes and persist through time. However, the main threats to these heritage structures are a lack of maintenance, natural degradation, unexpected modifications, and the city's present growth ambitions. Rangpur City is gradually losing its distinctive character and historic legacy earned over the previous decades, owing to the current development plans that exclude any consideration of the city's historical image. The aim of this article is to conduct a comprehensive and interpretive analysis of the structures that bear the image of Rangpur city in order to address their significance and relevance to our past glory. To retain Rangpur's identity as a historic city and to project a well-planned image, its development must coexist with the preservation and protection of its historical inheritance.

Our historical inheritance is the connecting thread to our past and cultural heritage of our present and future. Our heritage, recalling the memories of the city's past should not be ruined by our negligence. It is evident that, in this critical state of our fading heritage, the primary concern of all should be to project

the development plans in support of the historic legacy and preserve Rangpur's architectural insights. Through the preservation of the built forms of historical and cultural significance, a sense of pride and a common purpose in the community can be established in Rangpur.

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